

World Assembly on ageing begins in Madrid today

BSS, Dhaka
The 2nd World Assembly on Ageing begins in Madrid today to address the challenges associated with the ageing of world's population.

The Madrid assembly will focus on different action-oriented measures to be taken by the societies to respond to the challenges of the ageing process, relationship between ageing and development and measures to strengthen solidarity between generations.

The first World Assembly on Ageing was held in 1982 in Vienna.

The number of older persons will rise to about 2 billion from present 600 million in the next 50 years, said a press release of the United Nations Information Centre.

"Today, one in every ten is 60 years. By 2050, one out of every five will be an older person, one third of the people in the world are expected to be 60 years of age or older," UNIC said.

Discussion on Pahela Baishakh
April 14

UNB, Dhaka
On the occasion of the Pahela Baishakh Bangladesh Sangskritik Jote will hold a discussion meeting in front of the Bangladesh Museum at Dhanmondi on April 14.

Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina will be present in the meeting as chief guest while poet Shamsur Rahman, Justice K M Sobhan and Prof Momtazuddin Ahmed as special guests.

Intellectuals, poets, litterateurs, journalists and cultural personalities will take part in the discussion to be followed by a cultural function, says a press release.

Malaysian HC call on Nasir

BSS, Dhaka
High Commissioner of Malaysia to Bangladesh Ashaary Bin Sani called on State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin at his office in the city yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR
Palestinian envoy Mohammad Shahta Zarab called on Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday.

Taxicab operators asked to follow service rule or face action

UNB, Dhaka
Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) have asked the taxicab operators to follow the Taxicab Service Rule properly or face punitive action.

The DMP warning came on Saturday following allegations of widespread violation of the Taxicab Service Rule 1998.

In the past, the DMP had repeatedly asked the taxicab drivers to abide by the rules but they did not pay heed to it although they started their business with a commitment to ensure a better service to the city dwellers.

According to a DMP press release, many cab drivers do not follow the metre and the fare chart, and in some cases they demand extra fare from the passengers. "Although it's mandatory to keep the fare chart in every cab, the drivers hardly do that," the release said.

Gender parity still elusive in ADP
Official survey reveals

UNB, Dhaka
A donor-financed official survey found implementation of projects aimed at gender parity and allocation for those very upsetting in most of the Annual Development Programmes (ADPs) taken during the outgoing five-year plan.

The observations came from a policy research finding titled "Review of WID Components of past Five Year Plans to Derive Lessons for Future Planning", undertaken by the Policy Leadership and Advocacy for Gender Equality (PLAGE) of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

ADP is the primary tool of the government to achieve gender-related objectives set in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1997-2002).

The study, supported by Canadian CIDA, categorise these ADP programmes into three types -- women-focused programmes, gender-sensitive programmes and programmes that benefit men and women equally but have no direct effects on women's lives.

The exercise was undertaken to find the levels of implementation of gender objectives in the development schemes, as equal rights for women remained a far cry.

Among various sectors, agriculture, industry, planning, water supply and housing carried out a few gender-sensitive projects or allotted low budget compared to their other projects despite women-friendly objectives and strategies having been laid down in the FFY plan.

The study shows that in the agriculture sector, FFY plan has women-focused and gender-sensitive objectives considering women's contributions, both direct and indirect. But not a single development project under ADPs was taken up in first four years of FFY for women, although Tk 50 crore was allocated for women in agricultural development.

In 1997-98, the first year of the FFYP, 160 development projects were undertaken, only 46 being identified as gender-sensitive. And

for these projects about 46 per cent of the total development budget for the agricultural sector was allotted. Women have no direct share in the rest 54 per cent of the development budget.

In Rural development, Cooperatives and Local government sector, most of the objectives and strategies of FFYP were not adequately followed in project preparation. The analysis reveals that "except one or two, none of the development programmes undertaken in this sector target women's development exclusively".

It also shows that gender-sensitive projects also account for not more than a fourth of total projects in this sector.

The Plan has also women-uplift objectives and strategies in industrial sector that prioritised export-oriented industrialisation. But the study reveals that in the first year of FFY Plan, only three development projects were undertaken focusing only on women's development for which development allocation was Tk 7.10 crore.

The study indicated decrease in both number and allocation for women-focused development projects in the 2000-01 fiscal year.

Although the health sector's programmes focused on women, no gender-specific target was set in the plan to redress the gender gaps.

In the education sector, projects undertaken during the Fourth Five Year Plan period are more women-friendly than those undertaken during the outgoing one. But a large number of the gender-sensitive projects undertaken in 2000-01 are related to development of higher education where women have very little access.

The examination of ADPs and public expenditure on women-focused projects reveals that very little has been done during the last few years to reduce gender inequalities in literacy, although it was one of the main objectives of the FFY Plan.

Although women development was a multi-sectoral matter, it was observed that more than half such projects were concentrated on social welfare.

In the last fiscal year, some 26 women-focused development projects were undertaken in the social welfare sector whereas in the same year the numbers of women-focused projects in industry, health and education sectors were 1, 8, and 9 respectively.

"It indicates that issue of women's development still remains welfare-oriented since programmes of the social welfare sectors are directed towards benefiting socio-economically disadvantaged group," the survey report says.

In the ADPs, women and children development was combined with the social welfare and youth development targets. In the ADP for fiscal year 1998-99, out of 69 projects allotted for the social welfare sector, 37 were to be implemented by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs.

In the Labour and Manpower sector, only 4 out of the 10 projects have been identified to be relevant to women. Out of these, two projects are exclusively designed for women, namely the Establishment of Technical Training Centres for women in Dhaka and Chittagong.

But very small amount has been allocated for these projects, giving an impression that the proposition of equal rights for women remains a far cry.

'Speedy express trains to be introduced'

BSS, Dhaka

Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda said yesterday that steps were being taken to connect the big cities with the capital by introducing speedy express trains.

He urged the officials and employees to work with sincerity to improve the railway service while presiding over a meeting of the Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Railway Workers and Employees' Dal in the Railway Conference Room in the city.

Huda underlined the importance of reducing railway's dependence on government revenue by raising income through building multi-storied hospitals, commercial complexes and industrial units on the illegally occupied lands of Bangladesh Railway.

He expressed dissatisfaction over the negligence of railway administration in protecting railway property worth crores of taka and checking pilferage.

The minister said some officials and employees of railway were involved in such malpractice and corruption.

Huda said an ultramodern national car parking lot would be built at Fulbaria Old Railway Station to ease traffic jams.

Mohammad Ataur Rahman, Director General of Bangladesh Railway, Kabir Hossain, president of the Centre Committee of Bangladesh Jatiyatabadi Railway Workers and Employees Dal, Mohamad Mosharrar Hossain, general secretary, Ferrozur Rahman, adviser, attended the meeting.

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