

# Violence still haunts women

Women leaders tell the Star City on the eve of International Women's Day

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Times have certainly changed for today's woman striving to attain "development, equality and peace" from the conventional mother, wife and homemaker roles tagged to her identity.

On the eve of International Women's Day some eminent women in Bangladesh shared their views with Star City on women's stand in society focusing on various aspects of their development.

Most believe that women in Bangladesh are subject to oppression though they have achieved much in different sectors.

"Though our movements

intensified after independence an increase in violence against women was seen in the 1980s," said Hena Das, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) president.

She said that a number of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) worked on projects like women's education, cottage industry, health projects and microcredit project that thrust women's empowerment.

"However, violence against women did not reduce," she said. She added that BMP along with other democratic forces continued the movements, which resulted in enactment of new laws upholding women's position in society.

Ayeasha Khanam, BMP's secretary general regretted that

violence against women is becoming rampant by the day.

"On an average, nine to 10 women are confronted with violence in some form. At least 5,689 cases were reported in 2003 in 11 national dailies," she said, adding that they included rape, killing after rape, acid attacks and domestic violence.

She expressed frustration that despite existing laws like the Dowry Prohibition Act-1980, Violence against Women and Children Act-2002 and constant women movements, violence against women is not decreasing.

"Violence against women increased because women are now in the limelight," said Advocate Sigma Huda, secretary general of Bangladesh Manabadhikar Bastabayan

Sangstha. She said that though women have been recognised in every sphere they lacked assertiveness.

"Women lacking self-confidence are vulnerable and are easy targets of violence in the present social situations where people have lost patience," she said. "In fact, men feel threatened by the heights that women have reached that leading them take control over women by violence," she added.

Talking about women achievements, Tasmima Hussain, editor of Anonya and former member of parliament (MP), cited examples of millions of adolescents and young women earning forex working 10-12 hours a day in garment factories. She did not fail to mention the numbers of rural women turned entrepreneurs assisted by microcredit loans despite the high interest rate.

"These examples depict the immense participation of rural and urban women in our national life," Tasmima Hussain said. But she thinks that women will lose all their achievements because of a single reason -- insecurity. Women rural or urban, are very vulnerable, oppressed at home, educational institutions, factories or any other workplace. "This results in women searching for security, sometimes provoked to commit suicide," she said.

Most well-known women termed the prevalence of society's patriarchal attitude and culture a major hindrance to women's development.

"Women are still not accepted at decision-making level," commented Sigma Huda. "Even if they reach the top, they are not considered the right choice. Opportunities are open to them

only when the male counterpart is not found eligible," she said. Patriarchal attitude is not always cultured by men -- it is innate within women, she quipped.

Ayesha Khanam said lack of clarified idea of gender equality, proper political will and democratic culture in politics for a long time hamstrung development of women in the country. "People, mostly women, are illiterate and lack awareness on women's rights," she said.

The women leaders stressed elimination of discrimination among women in family law. They said the rights of women regarding marriage, divorce, guardianship or inheritance vary in religious denominations, which is unfair.

There is discrimination of men and women regarding inheritance. All the leaders stressed a uniform family code. They said no government had shown any signs to enact such a law to date.

The women leaders stressed unanimously that true representation of women in society is a must for women's development.

Most leaders feel that indirect election to 30 reserved seats for women in parliament hinders the women's contribution to social and national development. They demanded women seats to be reserved for two to three terms in parliament, direct election for women and also increased number of seats.

"Direct election will enhance women's empowerment," said Sigma Huda. However, she added she hopes those women willing to be in parliament will nurse their own constituency so they can achieve their goal under normal process rather than reserved seats.



STAR PHOTO

## Farm chicken price back to Tk 65

Bird flu fear 'seems over'

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Price of farm chickens that tumbled due to the bird flu fear last month has recovered from slump and shot up to Tk 65 a kilogram.

"The bird flu fear is over. Prices have returned to normalcy and sales are going up everyday," said Salauddin, owner of Bismillah Chicken House at Charulata Kitchen Market at Moghbazar.

The price of farm chicken fell to Tk 40 in mid-February when bird flu fear gripped a dozen Asian countries. Many countries slaughtered and destroyed millions of chickens to get rid of the virus. More than 20 people died in Vietnam and Thailand.

"We used to buy chickens at Tk 27 a kilogram from the whole-sellers and sell them at Tk 40 in mid-February. But still we had to count loss," said Salauddin.

Salauddin said the prices started increasing in the last 7-10 days. Even two weeks ago he had to persuade customers at Tk 50-55.

"But now we buy chickens from the whole-sellers at Tk 58-60," said Omar Ali at

Karwan Bazar market.

Omar said he used to sell two to three hundred chickens a day. In February it fell below 100.

But now the number is increasing fast. We sold around 200 chickens yesterday," said a beaming Omar Ali.

Salauddin said he used to supply around 200 chickens to a restaurant at Moghbazar but they almost stopped buying from mid February.

However, they have started placing orders again from last week, he said.

The salesman at the cash counter at Three-Star Kabab House near Moghbazar crossing admitted "we could not sell even ten grilled chickens a day. So, we stopped it. But people are again asking for grilled chickens and we now sell 40-50 a day".

Before February, the Kabab house used to sell around 100 grilled chickens a day, the salesman informed.

Tauhid Kabir, a consumer at Karwan Bazar said he believes that the bird flu has died down.

"We don't see any story on bird flu in newspapers these days. Besides, no such case

has been detected in Bangladesh," said Tauhid.

The poultry farmers in the last two weeks launched several campaigns to allay bird flu fear. They alleged that "a vested quarter" was out to destroy the industry. They also blamed some newspapers.

About 1.5 lakh poultry farms have invested over Tk 7 thousand crore and about six million people are involved in the industry, leaders of Coordination Committee of Poultry Farms told a protest rally at Muktangan recently.

Quoting WHO (World Health Organisation), they said there is no existence of bird flu in the country and termed it a 'conspiracy'.

Some experts at a seminar at BAU (Bangladesh Agriculture University) last month also allayed fear that there was no bird flu case in the country.

But they suggested setting up of a 'reference laboratory cell' to test any suspected case.

Meanwhile, the poultry sellers feared that farm chicken prices may increase further as a huge number of small farm owners had to shut down their business in the last three weeks.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Women at work .... still a long way to go

# City protection dam unprotected

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The Dhaka city protection dam is under threat of damage from land grabbers and waste dumping of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC).

"The illegal occupiers are setting up structures on the slope of the dam. However, the most damage is being caused by the DCC's waste dumping along the slope," said Iqbal Hossain, executive engineer of Water Development Board (WDB).

The maintenance of the dam is the responsibility of the Water Development Board under the water ministry. WDB complained that it had sent a letter to the DCC but didn't receive any satisfactory answers.

The chief conservancy officer of DCC Sohail Faruquee, however, denied any wrongdoing. "We have not yet come up with a site for waste dumping other than the one at Matuail. I don't know anything about disposal of waste along the slope of the

dam," said Faruquee.

The estate officer of DCC, Ruhul Amin, said that his department was surveying the place for future waste dumping but nothing has been made official yet.

There is some empty space left along the slope of the 30 km dam from Mitford Hospital to Tongi. Slums, tanneries, bricks and sand businesses, bus and truck stands have been set up on the dam or along its slope. The land grabbers have also fenced off the area.

"Every year we evict the illegal occupiers but after some days they come back again," said chief engineer of WDB Kazi Golam Mustafa.

This year the WDB have asked for a fund of Tk. 87 lakhs for pillars and barbed wire to demarcate WDB dam area but so far no money has been sanctioned by the ministry. Failing to manage funds, the WDB has planned a Tk. 4 lakh project of eviction and also social afforestation along the slope of the dam so that evicted people

do not return again.

But this strategy seems insufficient to solve the problem as the dam needs constant maintenance and monitoring from the

WDB. WDB is also trying to tag the project with the Forest Department for social afforestation.

"The forest department is

looking for a space to develop a tree plantation and we are trying to utilise the slope along the dam for that," said Iqbal Hossain.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Illegal structures on the slope of the city protection dam

## healthouting,taxicab&train

### HEALTH

#### Hospitals

##### Heart

National Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases (NICVD), - 9130800, 9122560-59

##### Burn

Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6

##### Cancer

National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9

##### Diabetes

Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)- 9661551-5, 8616641-50

##### Mother & Child Care

Shishu Hospital- 9119119, 8116061-62  
Azimpur Mother & Child Health

Training Institute- 8624827, 8624980  
**Eye**

Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315  
National Eye Hospital- 8117202, 8114807

##### Dental

Dental College -9002035

##### Orthopaedics

National Orthopaedics (Pangur) Hospital- 9114075, 9112150

##### General

Dhaka Medical College Hospital- 8626812-6  
Rushmono General Hospital- 8317819  
Holy Family Hospital- 83111731-25  
Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital- 8612550-4, 8614545-9  
Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital- 8115443, 9118202,

Shamarita Hospital- 9131901  
Suhrawardy Hospital -- 9130800, 9122560-69  
Salimullah Medical Collage Hospital -- 7310061-4, 7319002-6  
Cholera Research Hospital (ICDDR)- 8811751-60  
Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135

##### Blood Bank

Red Crescent Centre- 9116563  
Sandhani (DMCH)- 8624040  
Sandhani (SMCH)- 7310061, 7310061, 7319022  
Dhaka Medical Collage Hospital- 8626812-9

##### Eye Bank

Sandhani International Eye Bank- 8614040

##### Ambulances For

##### Dead Body

Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail) 9336611, Gandaria 7319808, 7318166,  
Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday  
Elephant Road-Friday  
Bishal Center-Friday  
Baitual Mukarram Market-Friday  
Polwell Market-Friday  
BCS Computer City-Friday  
Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.  
Rajlaxmi Complex-Friday  
Stadium Market-Friday  
Bangabazar Market-Friday  
National Museum-Thursday  
Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.  
New Market-Tuesday  
Gausia Market-Tuesday  
Mouchak Market-Sunday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday  
Eastern Plaza-Sunday  
Farmview Super Market-Sunday  
Muktijuddha Jadughar-Sunday  
Dhaka Zoo-Sunday  
Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

### TAXI CAB

#### Yellow Cab

Navana 9558065  
Salida 9344477, 0171620881  
Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191  
Cab One 7113282-3  
Nihon 8624741-2  
Orion 9347277  
Anudip 8125285 and 8127611  
Capital 9352847

### TRAIN TIMING

Subarna Express  
Mahanagar Prabhati  
Mahanagar Godhuli  
Turna  
Parabat Express  
Joyantika Express  
Upaban Express  
Tista Express  
Ekata Express  
Upakul Express  
Padma Express

Leaves Dhaka at 4:00 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 7-30 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 3-05 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 6-30 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 12-30 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 9-30 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm  
Leaves Dhaka at 6-00 am  
Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

Cab One 7113282-3  
Palki 0171052500  
Cab I 7113282  
Jatri 0171540074  
Nipun 9572277  
R-Cab 8914782  
Star Cab 9571919  
Shihab 018202477 & 018228675  
KGN 8620011

Reaches Chittagong at 10:15 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 2-55 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 9-11 pm  
Reaches Chittagong at 7-05 am  
Reaches Sylhet at 2-30 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm  
Reaches Sylhet at 6-40 am  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm  
Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-55  
Reaches Noakhali at 1-35 pm  
Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

### LIBRARY & INFO

#### Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers

Central Public Library- 8626001-4,  
Shishu Academy- 9564128  
Shilpakala Academy- 8614673  
Bangla Academy- 8619550  
Islamic Foundation- 9550280, 9556407  
Nazrul Institute- 9114602  
Ford Foundation- 8116133  
Alliance Francaise- 8611557  
British Council- 8618867-8, 8618905-7  
Community Development Library- 8113769, 8113604  
Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka- 9126525-6  
Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library- 8615096  
The Russian Cultural Centre- 9116314, 9118531, 9118314  
Drik Photo Gallery- 9120125, 8112954, 8123412