



PHOTO: STAR

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman distributes Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited Foundation scholarship among the meritorious students at a function yesterday.

## Find out alternatives to toxic chemicals

Policy makers say at workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Scientists and academics have been asked for finding out alternatives to toxic chemicals to protect human health and environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

Addressing an inception workshop titled 'Bangladesh: Preparation of the POPs National Implementation Plan under the Stockholm Convention', the ministers and policymakers said toxic chemicals are being used in the country for decades mainly for food production.

So alternatives to harmful pesticides and chemical fertilisers are a must to discourage the stakeholders from using toxic chemicals, they added.

Bangladesh is one of the 120 signatory countries in Stockholm Convention on POPs, and took up a

project at a cost of Tk 4 crore to phase out the POPs with the financial assistance of the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Department of Environment has been selected as the executing agency of the project while Department of Agricultural Extension and Bangladesh Power Development Board will act as co-implementing agency.

The Stockholm Convention has identified 12 POPs, popularly known as 'dirty dozen'. Nine of the POPs including DDT, endrin and dieldrin started to arrive in the market as pesticides since 50s. Besides, some are industrial chemicals like PCBs used in electric transformer and capacitors.

Speaking as chief guest, Environment and Forest Minister Tariqul Islam asked all concerned for a massive study before allowing the import of anything because the

chemical items, now found containing POPs, were imported in 50s without thinking about future consequences.

"Countries like Bangladesh need enhancement of food production in limited land to cope with the population growth. So the demand for chemical fertilisers and pesticides is being increased day by day. But at the same time, harmful toxic substances are entering the human body through the food chain," he added.

Tariqul said pesticides and chemical fertilisers are being used in the country for decades and it would not be possible to stop their use by imposing a mere ban on them because there is no substitute for them.

He said people are habituated with the toxic chemicals as fertilisers and pesticides, and are not aware of their harmful effects.

"We will not achieve anything if we try to implement the programmes in the way the developed countries resolve their problems because they have less population and huge resources," he added.

"So think everything from our own perspectives before taking up any project," the minister suggested.

Presided over by Environment and Forest Secretary Syed Tanbir Hossain, the workshop was addressed by State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, State Minister for Environment Jafrul Islam Chowdhury, Secretary of the Power Division SM Shamsul Alam, Director General of the Department of Environment M Ibrahim Hossain and National Project Director of POP QSI Hashmi.

## Opposition MPs' participation to make democracy more functional

PM tells chairmen of JS standing committees

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the opposition MPs' participation in the parliamentary standing committees would make the watchdog bodies more effective and the democracy more functional.

"It will cast a positive impact on the parliamentary democracy," she told the chairmen of various parliamentary standing committees at her office.

Khaleda Zia underscored the need for further strengthening the parliamentary standing committees that are the 'lifeline' of parliamentary democratic politics.

Welcoming the joining of the opposition members, she expressed her confidence that their participation, though belated, would make the

committees more effective.

Chairmen of the parliamentary standing committees on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Advocate Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed, chairman of the committee on Ministry of Information Ebadur Rahman Chowdhury, Chairman of the committee on Defence Lt General (Retd) M Mahbubur Rahman, Chairman of the standing committee on Finance Ministry Mushfiqur Rahman and chairman of the standing committee on Shipping Ministry Golam Mohammad Siraj were present.

Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury later told reporters that the meeting was part of a continuous interaction between the standing committee chiefs and the Leader of the House.

So far, a total of 30 standing com-

mittee chairmen have met the prime minister in six phases and the remainder will also call on her later, he added.

The chairmen of the standing committees apprised her of their activities over which the PM expressed satisfaction.

She appreciated the reform programmes of the Ministry of Finance on the basis of the recommendation of the parliamentary body.

She underlined the need of reducing rate of interest in the private banks and addressing the default culture in the banking sector. She assured that steps would be taken so the real beneficiaries get loans.

SSKOP submits

memo to PM's office

BSS, Dhaka

Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) yesterday submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister's Office demanding announcement of the sixth wage board and 60 per cent dearness allowance.

Earlier, the SSKOP held a grand rally at the Jatiya Press Club in support of its seven-point demand.

Journalists, employees and press workers of different newspapers and news agencies attended the rally.

Presidents of both factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Gias Kamal Chowdhury and Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Secretaries General of BFUJ Ruhul Amin Gazi and Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Presidents of the two factions of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Elahi Newaz and Altaf Mahmud and General Secretaries Abid Shahid and Shah Alamgir, President of Newspaper Press Workers Union Fazle Imam, Secretary General Abul Hashem, President of Bangladesh Newspaper Employees Federation Mohammad Matuir Rahman and Secretary General Mohammad Khairul Islam addressed the rally.

The SSKOP leaders demanded of the government to take steps for full implementation of the Fifth Wage Board Award.

They also demanded formulation of a newspaper policy immediately.

Human rights activist Dr Hamida Hossain presided. Ayasa Khanam read out the written statement.

Shahin Anam, Kohinur Begum, Jahanara Haque and Krishna Das Gupta were present at the conference.

## Ratify 2 CEDAW articles

ASK, BMP and STD urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three non-government organisations (NGOs) yesterday urged the government to take necessary steps to eliminate all forms of discriminations against women.

The NGOs also called upon the government to ratify Article 2 and Article 16.1(c) of the 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)' before submission of its fifth periodic report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

The government will submit its fifth periodic report on July 9.

Earlier, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (BMP) and Steps Towards Development (STD) also submitted their recommendations on the articles to the government.

The three NGOs at a press conference at the National Press Club said the government should withdraw its reservation on the articles to enhance image of the country globally.

Bangladesh ratified CEDAW in 1984 with four reservations. After fourth periodic report in 1997 Bangladesh ratified the Article 13(a) and 16.1(f) but continued its

reservation on Article 2 and 16.1(c) saying that they contradict with the Sharia Law.

The three NGO leaders said that more than 165 countries had signed CEDAW, including 26 Muslim countries and 19 countries, already ratified the Article 2 and 16.1(c).

"Our recommendations are not against our constitution and government but the government has not yet taken necessary measures to ratify the articles," said Ranjan Karmaker, Director of the STD.

They said that different countries would submit their country report on CEDAW in New York from July 1 to 25.

Mohila Parishad General Secretary Ayasa Khanam said that non-government organisations of different countries would submit their 'shadow' reports on it to UNCEDAW. ASK, BMP and STD have already submitted their reports, she added.

Human rights activist Dr Hamida Hossain presided. Ayasa Khanam read out the written statement.

Shahin Anam, Kohinur Begum, Jahanara Haque and Krishna Das Gupta were present at the conference.

<p><b>Drama</b></p> <p>Subachan Natya Sangsad will stage three dramas titled '1971' by Humayun Ahmed, 'Nikhaj Nasika' by Asadul Islam Asad, and 'Oarish' by Mannan Hira. Venue: Rayerbazar Intellectuals Mausoleum. Time: 5.00pm.</p>	<p><b>Scholarship giving ceremony</b></p> <p>Bangladesh Organisation for Disabled Advancement organises a function for giving scholarships to disabled students. Venue: BIRDEM Auditorium, Shahbagh. Time: 3.00pm.</p>
<p><b>Musical evening</b></p> <p>Muldhara International Centre organises a musical evening. Venue: House-15, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 6.30pm.</p>	<p><b>BAB discussion</b></p> <p>Bangladesh Association of Banks (BAB) will hold a discussion on the proposed budget for 2004-05 fiscal year. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 1.00pm.</p>
<p><b>Reception</b></p> <p>A reception will be accorded to prominent journalist and cultural personality Kamal Lohani to mark his 70th birth anniversary. Venue: National Museum Auditorium, Shahbagh. Time: 5.00pm.</p>	<p><b>Film show</b></p> <p>Academy Film Society will screen an American film titled 'Prizzi's Honour' (1985). Venue: Society Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.</p>

## 2 murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants beat an electrician to death at Badda while police recovered the slaughtered body of a fish trader from Mohammadpur in the city yesterday.

Rumy Howladar, 20, son of Abdur Rahman of North Badda, was working at Khanpara when a gang of around five including Kaiyum and Mizan picked him at 8:30pm.

The miscreants took him to Badda Girls High School and beat him severely.

Rumy, who had cardiac problem, was first rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH)

at around 11:00pm and later shifted to Suhrawardy Hospital where the doctors declared him dead at 12:30am, said her family sources.

Badda police arrested Abdul Kaiyum, 30, Mizan, 20, Abdul Aziz, 50, Abdul Halim, 30 and Tofael from Badda area in this connection on Friday night.

Meanwhile, the body of Mohammad Sohel, a fish trader at Rayer Bazar, was found on the roof of Graphics Art Staff Quarters at Sat Masjid Road at 11:00am yesterday.

His sister Rani Begum said Sohel went out of her Rayer Bazar house Friday at 2:00pm to collect some money but did not return home since then.



PHOTO: STAR

Sangbadik, Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) took out a procession yesterday.

## 'No govt tries war criminals for vested interest'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

None of the successive governments since independence tried the war criminals for some kind of 'mutual understanding' with them, said the speakers at a discussion yesterday.

The discussion was organised by Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of its leader Jahanara Imam at WVA auditorium in the city.

"Though the civil society has demanded the trial of war criminals time and again, the politicians who assumed the state power by turn, have invariably failed to bring

the human rights violators to justice," said Prof Muntasir Mamun.

Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir said none of the governments, who successively came to power, wanted to try the war criminals.

Shyamoli Nasrin said neither of the country's two major political parties would try the war criminals as it would jeopardise their vested interest.

Both the Awami League and the 11-Party will have to pledge in their election manifesto that they would try the war criminals if voted to power, said the acting president of Nirmul Committee Shahriar Kabir.

Former Justice KM Sobhan said, "One of the foremost reasons behind the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was his effort to try the war criminals."

Advocate Sultana Kamal said as war crime is a violation against humanity, it has to be tried from that viewpoint.

The Nirmul Committee awarded Justice KM Sobhan and Ain O Salish Kendra memorial crests for their contribution to the protection of human rights in the country.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury presided over the discussion.

DELWAR MURDER

## HC acquits 3 of charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday acquitted three persons convicted by a lower court in Pirojpur in the sensational Delwar murder case.

The Additional Sessions Judge's Court of Pirojpur in a verdict sentenced Sima Begum to death and Saiful Islam and Ruby Begum to life-term on January 30 in 2001.

Delwar's mother filed a case in this connection alleging that her son was killed over an illicit love affair with Sima.

Later, the three convicts appealed to the High Court against the judgement. After a three-day hearing, the High Court division bench comprising Justice Ali Asgar Khan and Justice Mohammad Ashfaqul Islam acquitted them of murder charges.