

Strengthen movement against domestic violence

Speakers tell nat'l confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Noted economists, social activists, singers and litterateurs of the country yesterday gathered in the city in protest of the domestic violence with a call to strengthen the movement against the injustice across the country.

Some 1000 social activists, including students, housewives, teachers, lawyers and elected leaders regarded as 'change makers' from 19 districts of the country pledged to combat domestic violence.

Alliance to End Domestic Violence, comprised of some 200 NGOs, organised the national conference at the Engineers' Institution.

"Achievements of individuals depend on how they are treated in their families, and the peace in a family is subject to the good relationship between the husband and wife," said Professor Muzaffer Ahmed, speaking as the chief guest.

The family's roles in raising the kids depend mostly on the mothers, he said, adding, "My wife also played a major role for my achievements today."

Criticising the indirect election to the women seats in the national parliament, he said this proves that the women in the country are not yet

in a good status.

Professor Abdullah Abu Sayeed said the history of women repression in the sub-continent is very cruel, and it must be stopped through robust movement.

"Women must overcome the hurdles by using their talents and we are not so far from the era when there will not be any dominance of muscle power, rather intelligence and honesty," he said.

Women for Women President Professor Mahmuda Islam noted 47 percent women in the country are subjects to regular physical torture, while 95 percent fall victims to psychological and economical pressure.

Fewer women of the low-income groups become victims to domestic violence, as they can make their incidents public and the legal aid bodies can go to help them, she observed.

The educated women from middle and higher middle class suffer more due to such violence, as they are afraid of their status, good will of their families, she added.

She alleged that there is no specific law on domestic violence, and the victims also consider those types of violence as familial and personal matters.

"This has made the situation even worse." She regretted calling

for political will to stop domestic violence.

Oxfam Bangladesh Country Director Anil Tambe cited that domestic violence is one of the major causes for women sufferings, and reduction of poverty is almost impossible without eliminating it from across the globe.

He stressed the need for improving the educational and economic status of the women and changing the patriarchal attitude towards women dignifying both men and women equally for a better world.

Alliance to End Domestic Violence, in association with some 200 NGOs, began a campaign titled 'We Can' last year across the country. The objective of the campaign is to educate the grassroots level people and use them as tools to raise awareness on women violence, the Alliance Convenor MB Akhter said.

There are some 30,000 such change makers who have already conveyed the primary theme of the campaign to some 6 lakh families, he noted.

Singers Mahmuduzzaman Babu and Mita Haque performed at the function where Mehreen, Fahmida Nobi, Lucky Akand and novelist Selina Hossain were present among others.

DOHA SUMMIT

Dhaka to pursue global zero tariff policy: FM

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh will pursue the market access policy aimed at global zero tariff for all products of the least developed countries (LDCs), Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said.

He said this at the Zia international Airport before leaving for Doha as an entourage member of the Prime Minister and leader of Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia will lead a 30-member delegation to the two-day second South Summit in Doha from June 15. Khaleda will leave here for Qatar on June 14.

She will address the Summit on the opening day on June 15. The inaugural session will also be addressed by Jamaica as the current chair of the group of 77, host Emir of Qatar and the UN Secretary General.

Bangladesh delegation, he said, will play its due role for consensus among the developing countries on the issues before the Hong Kong ministerial meeting.

Describing the two-day second South Summit as very significant, he said Bangladesh will seek greater South-South cooperation. He said the leaders will review global agendas, including the UN reforms and millennium development goals and the challenges faced by them.

Morshed Khan said the Summit leaders will have opportunity to discuss the peace process in the Middle East.

He said, "We have to address the issue of global terrorism, which can be combated through collective cooperation among countries of the world."

He said the Summit will provide the leaders opportunity to review progress of bilateral, regional and sub-regional groupings like Saarc,

BIMST-EC and ACD.

They will discuss development challenges facing the South with special reference to high level plenary meeting of the 60th session of the UN General Assembly, he added.

Announcement of summit to add impetus to Saarc process

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday said the much-awaited announcement of the dates for 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka will infuse new impetus to the slowed down process of South Asian Regional Cooperation.

"I think the announcement of the summit will add spirit and impetus to the Saarc process which was unfortunately postponed twice," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told reporters at the airport before his departure for Doha to attend the ministerial meeting of the second South Summit.

Current Saarc chair Pakistan on Saturday announced that the 13th Saarc Summit would take place in Dhaka on November 12-13.

Morshed Khan said, "We hope some of the important agendas, including the SAFTA that was slowed down due to the postponement, would be put on track at Dhaka Summit."

The pre-summit meetings will start with Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on November 9. Saarc Standing Committee comprising the foreign secretaries will meet on November 10 while Council of Ministers representing the foreign ministers will meet on November 11.

Power minister's skewed statistics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud in the Jatiya Sangsad has come up with 'skewed statistics' on the present government's contribution to the country's power generation.

The state minister yesterday claimed during the question-answer session that power generation has increased by 1,020 megawatts (MW) since the alliance government assumed office in October 2001.

He said that the ruling coalition government has set up a 450-MW power plant at Meghna Ghat, a 210-MW power plant at Siddhirganj, a 120-MW at Haripur, a 105-MW at Tongi, a 100 MW at Baghabari, and a 35 MW RPCL power plant. These new plants undertaken by the four-party alliance government have led to the 'increase' in power generation, he added.

The Finance Minister, in his budget speech on Thursday, claimed the same.

Experts, however, say the increase in power generation has been possible because of projects initiated by the previous governments. Most of the works of those projects were completed during the previous government's tenure, and the plants went into operation at different times in the last three years.

They said the government could claim credit only for setting up a 105-MW plant at Tongi as it was constructed and went into production during its rule. However, it was again the previous government that laid all the groundwork for the project, they added.

Replying to another query, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud said that to attract private investment in the power sector, the government has taken

several steps that include among others formulation of Private Sector Power Generation Policy, Policy Guideline for Small Power Plant (SPP) in the Private Sector, and the Private Sector Infrastructure Guideline.

Besides, he said, the government has given private enterprises permission for setting up small power plants (1050 MW).

Systems Loss In Power State minister for power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud told the House that if the systems loss could be pegged at a tolerable level, the government would earn an additional revenue of about Tk 650 crore.

He said the government loses Tk 65 crore annually from just one percent systems loss in the power sector.

Mahmud said the ministry has taken a number of steps to contain the systems loss, including ensuring power meters for the consumers, computerising the billing system, introducing pre-paid meters in some sectors, and cutting off power supply to illegal and defaulted consumers.

Death anniversary

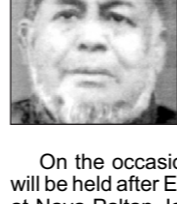


Today is the sixth death anniversary of Dr. A H Shahadat Ullah, an economist, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at House No-5/A, Road No-13, Sector-3 at Uttara in the city after Asr prayers.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the milad.

LA Chowdhury



Today is the 29th death anniversary of LA Chowdhury, a close associate of Sher-e-Bangla A K Faziul Haq, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held after Esha prayers today at Naya Paltan Jame Masjid, (VIP) Road in the city.

Shraddha

Shraddha of Usha Das Purakayastha, an organiser of the War of Liberation and women's rights leader, will be held at her residence at Dariapara in Sylhet today, says a press release.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina discusses a point with Awami Aijnibi Parishad President Sahara Khatun while former mayor Mohammad Hanif looks on at a discussion commemorating the slain city AL leader Khorshed Alam Bachchu at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Proposed budget to encourage corruption: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the proposed budget has been designed to benefit the ruling party men and encourage their corruption.

"The common people will not be benefited by this budget. This will line the ruling coalition men's pockets only," she said speaking at a meeting commemorating Khorshed Alam Bachchu, a city Awami League (AL) leader who was murdered last month.

Hasina, also president of AL, said the BNP-led government has miserably failed to check the price spiral of essentials and downside of law and order in the country.

"When the people are struggling to have square meals a day, the family members of the prime minister and the ministers are amassing wealth," she alleged.

Referring to the arrest of Bidisha, beleaguered wife of Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Hasina

criticised the government for "torturing" her in the name of interrogation. "This kind of torture on a woman in police custody is unthinkable in a civilised country," the opposition leader said, questioning the motive behind her arrest.

She accused the government high-ups of interfering in the family life of others.

About the High Court order that banned lawyers' agitation on the court premises, Hasina said, "This has restricted the lawyers' constitutional rights."

Pointing finger to Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, the former prime minister questioned, "If a convicted person who got presidential indemnity becomes the law minister, then how rule of law could be established in the country?"

Hasina slammed the government for its failure to punish the criminals involved in the series of grenade attacks including that of August 21.

"Had proper investigation into

the grenade attack been conducted, the names of the prime minister's son and the home minister would come up," she claimed.

She alleged the government had released about 70,000 listed criminals from jails and started killing the leaders and activists of AL branding them as criminals.

Hasina said the government has prepared a list of AL leaders and activists across the country to kill them in the so-called crossfire.

Awami Aijnibi Parishad organised the meeting, which was presided over by its President Sahara Khatun and addressed by AL leaders Obaidul Quader, Mohammad Hanif and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, and Supreme Court Bar Association leaders Enayetur Rahim, Ozaer Faruk and Abdul Baset Majumder.



Bangladesh Jatra Shilpa Unnoyan Parishad forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday to realise its seven-point demand.

'Geopolitical position demands strong Sino-Bangla ties'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Geopolitical position of Bangladesh demands strong relations with China, said Chairman of parliamentary standing committee on defence Lt General (ret'd) M Mahbubur Rahman yesterday.

"Presently, a heavy monsoon is taking place in Sino-Bangladesh relationship," he said while speaking at a seminar on China's Evolving Relations with South Asia organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) in the city.

China, which is going to emerge as the world's largest economy by the year 2020, does not support any hegemony and big brotherly attitudes in the international relations, said General Rahman.

India, as a regional power, makes its smaller neighbours feel that she is powerful, he said, adding that India's river-linking project and frequent clashes along the Indo-Bangla

borders are worrisome.

"China may dissuade India from pursuing its river-linking project that poses serious threat to lives, livelihood, economy, flora and fauna in Bangladesh," he said.

The new Chinese policy towards South Asia has added a certain degree of uncertainties in regional development, said BIISS Research Director AKM Abdus Sabur while presenting a paper at the seminar.

The uncertainties surround the central question on what kind of relationship is emerging between New Delhi and Beijing and what will be its implications for other South Asian countries, he said.

"China has displayed a distinct unwillingness to be entangled in inter-state conflicts in South Asia," Sabur said, adding, "Instead, it is encouraging the regional countries to concentrate their efforts on the reconstruction of their economies and societies and move away from conflict to a course of cooperation."

A four-member delegation from China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS) that collaborated with the BIISS in holding the seminar, also presented a paper on Evolving Sino-Indian Relations: Implications for South Asia.

Recent exchange of premier-level visits has picked speed in Sino-India relations with New Delhi's recent recognition that Tibet is a part of Chinese territory, the delegation said, adding that both sides still need to address a number of other issues to boost up the bilateral ties.

Led by Major General (ret'd) Luo Bin, the Chinese delegation comprised of Major General (ret'd) Xu Lingen, and senior colonels Chen Yongxing and Wang Shixi.

A number of former ambassadors, retired and serving army officials and university teachers also spoke at the seminar chaired by BIISS Chairman Mufteh R Osmany.

2 months for Ctg CNG-run 3-wheelers to install meter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has set a two-month deadline for installing meter to every compressed natural gas (CNG)-run three-wheelers in Chittagong Metropolitan City.

As many as 13,000 CNG-run three-wheelers are allowed in the city streets. However, no such vehicle would be allowed without a meter after the July 31 deadline, decided a high-powered meeting at the communications ministry yesterday.

The meeting was told that among 500 registered three-wheelers, only five have so far installed meters in Chittagong.

He also said his ministry will provide necessary railway land in Chittagong to set up a truck terminal and parking lots, meeting sources said.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6:00pm today.

Mild heat wave over Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Pabna may continue, Met Office said predicting slight fall in day temperature during the period.

Highest temperature 38.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 22.5 degree Celsius at Chuadanga.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:47pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

UK new visa fees effective from July 1

UNB, Dhaka

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in London has announced new fees for passports, visas and changeable consular services provided by British consular posts overseas.

The new fees will be effective from July 1, said a British High Commission news release in the city yesterday.

Fees are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to represent the full cost of processing. Visa fees were last increased in July 2002, the release added.

The details of new consular fees are available on the FCO website: www.fco.gov.uk/consularfees.

DHAKA TODAY banner with date and time.

Conference: The sixth conference of Anatomical Society of Bangladesh will be held with Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain as chief guest. Venue: Shaheed Dr Milon Hall of BSMU, Shahbagh. Time: 9:00am.

Human chain: Samajik Protirodh Committee (Social Resistance Committee) will form a human chain demanding direct election to reserved seats for women in parliament. Venue: In front of Rajdhani Boys School, Manik Mian Avenue. Time: 5:00pm.

Roundtable: The inaugural session of the third South Asia high level roundtable on Regulatory Reform will be held with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman as chief guest. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 9:00am.

Budget discussion: Jatiyatibadi Peshajibi Parishad organises a discussion on 'National Budget 2005-2006 and its influence' with State Minister for Finance Anwarul Kabir Talukder as chief guest. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium, Topkhana Road. Time: 11:00am.

Lecture: Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani Parishad organises a lecture session with Language Veteran Abdul Matin as main speaker. Venue: 45, Aziz Market, Shahbagh.

Film show: Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Five Easy Pieces'. Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6:30pm.

Film show: Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Secret Ballot'. Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6:30pm.

KALPANA CHAKMA'S ABDUCTION 'Make probe report public'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Hill Women's Federation (HWF) yesterday demanded immediate publication of the probe report on the alleged abduction of its leader Kalpana Chakma who went on missing from the hill area nine years ago.

Following the incident, the then government had formed an investigation team under national and international pressure, but the probe report was never published, said the federation leaders at a rally.

Addressing the rally in front of the National Museum, they also urged the authorities concerned to stop rehabilitation of settlers in the hill-tracts.

They said the government has been rehabilitating the 'Bangali people' in the hill areas in a planned way to create unrest and evict the indigenous people from there.

They also called for meeting their eight-point demand including a halt on repression by the army personnel and immediate release of its 14 leaders and activists.

The federation leaders said the army and BDR have been occupying the hill lands in the name of expanding their camps and operations.

Presided over by federation President Sonali Chakma, the rally was also addressed by its General Secretary Antarica Chakma, Democratic Jubo Forum President Dipankar Chakma, Pahari Chhatra Parishad Leader Riku Chakma, Prakash Datta, and Shamiul Alam Richi.

Jatiya Chhatra Dal and Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, two left-leaning student organisations, Pahari Chhatra Parishad, United People's Democratic Jubo Forum and Nari Sangha also expressed their solidarity with the federation at the rally.

Later, the federation organised a discussion titled "Women's security question in military-ruled area: CHT context" at the seminar room of the Public Library.

1,441 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,476 people on various charges during their country-wide drive in the last 24 hours as of 6:00am yesterday.

During the period, the law enforcers recovered two firearms and 585 bullets, says a police headquarters press release.