

16 Bangladeshi women nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 16 Bangladeshi women have been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005 for their contribution to peace building.

These 16 women are part of a unique nomination, consisting of 1,000 women worldwide, who have been collectively nominated as a single candidate for the prestigious accolade.

The regional coordinators of the '1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize Project' yesterday announced the names of the women at different parts of the world simultaneously.

The Bangladeshi nominees are Shirin Banu, Rafiza Begum, Ebadon Bibi, Ashalata Baidya, Nanda Rani Das, Hena Das,

Angella Gomez, Khushi Kabir, Rokeya Kabir, Rahela Khatun, Sufia Khatun, SM Monwara Begum, Begjadi Mahmuda Nasir, Mohua Paul, Masuda Khanam Ratna and Sandhya Roy.

These women have been promoting women empowerment at grassroots levels, contributing to development through microcredit loans and fighting against fundamentalism.

The names of the Bangladeshi nominees were announced at a press conference at the Liberation War Museum in the city. Cultural activist Sara Zaker, human rights activist Sultana Kamal and women leaders Fowzia Khondaker and Dil Monwara jointly organised the press conference.

"The one thousand women

symbolise the contribution of millions of women across the world who are working to establish peace and human rights," said Sultana Kamal while announcing the names.

"We are the representatives of the women community and the credit goes to all," said Khushi Kabir.

The 1,000 women have been nominated from more than 150 countries. Of them, a total of 157 women have been nominated from South Asia, including 91 from India, 29 from Pakistan, 12 from Sri Lanka and nine from Nepal.

Kamala Bhasin of India is the South Asia convener of the programme for selection of 1,000 women.

Resist anti-people budget thru' today's hartal: Hasina

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina criticised the BNP-Jamaat coalition government for placing an anti-people budget in the parliament.

She called upon the people to resist this anti-people budget by observing hartal today.

Hasina, also leader of the opposition in the parliament, said the budget will increase sufferings of the millions of people.

"This budget will not only protect the interest of the BNP-Jamaat men but also encourage their corruption. AL can't be a party to legitimise this anti-people budget," she said this while she was talking to the leaders and workers of United Kingdom unit at the Heathrow Airport on Tuesday night, according to a message received in Dhaka.

A large number of UK unit leaders and workers received her at the airport.

The former prime minister said a suffocating situation is prevailing in the country due to misrule of the BNP-Jamaat government. The people are facing very hardship to meet their basic needs due to price hike of essentials but the government is indifferent to these vital problems, she said adding, rather it has given scope to its men to earn black money as well as whiten their money.

After completion of her visit to France and Moscow Hasina arrived at Heathrow Airport on Tuesday night.

The UK unit leaders greeted her for receiving honorary doctorate degree from the prestigious People's Friendship University of Russia and her role in the conference of Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP), in Strasbourg, France.



A six-storey export-oriented Biswas Textile and Garments Factory in Savar was damaged in a fire yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Make OIC a functional body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, now in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a to attend the 32nd session of the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (ICFM), had a series of bilateral meetings with his counterparts from the member countries.

While discussing the situation in the Islamic world and various challenges of the new era in the context of the global scenario at ICFM, Morshed Khan highlighted the need of transforming the OIC into a functional and result-oriented body.

He laid emphasis on bringing the focus of OIC on economic and commercial cooperation among the member states and turning the vast human resources of the Islamic world into human resources through proper training to make the body more viable.

In his speech and interventions, the foreign minister said it is neces-

sary to ensure resource flow from the wealthier member states of the OIC to least developed countries as well as the duty-free access of LDC products to their markets.

He called for visa waiver system for certain categories of visitors among the member countries enabling more people to people contacts.

Earlier, Morshed Khan, along with other heads of delegation, called on President of Yemen Ali Abdullah Saleh at the Presidential Palace and exchanged views on the restructuring and reform of OIC to meet the demand of the present time.

Morshed Khan also had a meeting with OIC Secretary General Prof Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and discussed issues related to further reform of OIC to make it more result-oriented.

He assured the secretary general of Bangladesh's total commit-

ment towards making OIC an organisation which truly represents the hopes and aspirations of the Ummah, according to a press release of the foreign ministry here.

Morshed Khan also had a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Yemen.

At the sideline meetings, Foreign Minister of Italy Alfred Mantica called on Bangladesh Foreign Minister at his hotel suit on June 27 and discussed bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on major international issues including UN reform.

Foreign Minister of Thailand Kantathi Suphamonkhon also called on Morshed Khan at his hotel suit on June 28 and discussed issues of mutual interests.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin and other high officials are accompanying the foreign minister at the three-day ICFM.

AL holds rallies to realise 13-pt demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) and its front organisations yesterday held rallies in six parliamentary constituencies in the capital to protest against the new budget and press home a 13-point demand.

AL leaders alleged police prevented their activists from joining the rallies in Dhanmondi, Motijheel, Jurain Rail Gate in Shyampur, Balur Field in Lalbagh and outer stadium in Mirpur.

Around 5,000 activists from Dhanmondi and Mohammadpur led by AL leaders Mokbul Hossain and Abu Sayed joined the rally on Dhanmondi Road No. 32.

Participants of the rally alleged police had threatened them not to chant slogans against the alliance government and the budget.

The AL demands include withdrawal of the 19 percent increased tax on essentials like salt, milk powder, diesel and kerosene and new tax on SIM cards and software export.

'2011 train accidents took place since '02'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

A total of 2011 rail accidents occurred since 2002 leaving 59 killed and 252 injured, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

Replying to a question from main opposition Awami League (AL) lawmaker Col (Retd) Faruk Khan, he said they also received 13 applications seeking compensation and the railway authorities have provided compensation to four of them.

"Six applications seeking compensation are now under process while three others were rejected as the injured were proved workable," he added.

A total of 1,376 employees were responsible for the accidents, he said. Five of them were sacked, two were given demotion, salaries of 560 were suspended and 770 were warned.

Besides, 39 cases were under process in this regard, he added. The Bangladesh Railway incurred a loss of Tk 188.62 crore in 2003-04 FY, he said.

Mostafa-e-Jamil, director of Public Relations and Publication of Bangladesh Railway (BR), said the railway incurs a loss of around Tk 185 crore every year and it is being met through subsidy under Public Service Obligation (PSO) scheme.

In replying to another question, Huda said that the government has to spend Tk 23.91 crore for 34,474 officers and employees as salary every month.

Replying to a question, he said the government has earned Tk 254.72 crore as toll from the roads and bridges under communications ministry.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League presidium member Abdur Razzak speaks at a rally on the Motijheel Colony Ground in the city yesterday to protest against the proposed budget and press home a 13-point demand.

Teenage girl killed as truck hits rickshaw in N'ganj

BDNEWS, Narayanganj

A teenage girl was killed and her father and sister were injured when a speeding truck rammed into their rickshaw at Chashara in the town last night.

The dead was identified as Salma Khatun, 18, daughter of Abdul Hai Pramanik of Belkuchi in Sirajganj district. Pramanik and his other daughter Sumi were admitted to hospital in a critical condition.

The truck hit the rickshaw on Nawab Salimullah road at about 8:00pm.

Abdul Hai and his two daughters came to Narayanganj to visit his elder daughter's house.

NON-ALLOCATION OF FUND Hunger Strike observed in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Greater Khulna Development Action Coordination Committee (GKDACC) leaders observed a token hunger strike yesterday at Shaheed Hadis Park to protesting non-allocation of fund in the national budget for implementation of different development projects in Khulna.

Leaders of all political parties, including ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) joined the token hunger strike.

Renaming of DU hall protested

DU CORRESPONDENT

Eighteen senate members of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday protested the decision of the authorities concerned to rename the proposed Begum Sufia Kamal Hall as Begum Khaleda Zia Hall.

They said this is the first time in the history of the university that a hall is being given the name after a living person.

At a press conference at DU Club, the senate members also pressed for their demand to keep the hall's name unchanged.

They said the previous Awami

League government allocated railway land to build the women's hall adjacent to Curzon Hall, and a committee was formed which named it after the name of Begum Sufia Kamal.

But the BNP-led alliance government renamed it after the name of the existing prime minister, they added.

"Vice-chancellor SMA Faiz is violating the university rules as he runs the administration from political point of view," said Dhaka University Teachers' Association President AAMS Arefin Siddique.



Moderately heavy falls likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty to squally wind is likely at most places over the country till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also expected at places over Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions. Met office said predicting a nearly unchanged day temperature over the country during the period.

Highest temperature 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 24.2 degree Celsius at Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:50pm today and rises at 5:15am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	27.6	25.5	83	87
Chittagong	27.3	25.2	90	93
Rajshahi	32.0	25.6	87	83
Khulna	28.5	25.5	96	90
Barisal	28.6	26.0	100	100

Reduce rich-poor disparity to ensure sustainable dev

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Minimising the disparity between the rich and the poor is a must to ensure sustainable development in the country, experts at a seminar said yesterday.

They also called for strengthening the cooperation among the government, NGOs and the private sector at the grassroots level and bringing reforms to necessary policies to address the issue.

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and its management body Interooperation organised the seminar on 'How to address poverty: The lessons learnt from SDC's Sustainable Land Use (SLU) Programme' at the Brac Inn Centre in the city.

The three sectors - public, private and NGOs - have some weaknesses and strengths; so the important job is to minimise the weaknesses and maximise the strengths through mutual coordination, said Md Abdur Razzak, member director of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC).

Due to human resource and

financial constraints, the public sector is sometimes unable to reach the grassroots level where the private sector and the NGOs have the opportunities to work, he said.

"Access to adequate information and market opportunities, and capacity building are the topmost priority for the poor through which they themselves can change their fate," Razzak added.

The NGOs, which are operating micro-credit programmes in the country, do not include the extreme poor, which is a setback for the expected development, said ATM Azmul Huda, project director of Livelihood, Empowerment and Agroforestry (Leaf), the implementing agency of SDC.

Sharing the lessons from SLU Programme, which has been in operation in Rajshahi division since 1987, he suggested that the unconditional credits should be given to the extreme poor to upgrade their level. About 51 percent people in the division are extreme poor, he noted.

"An NGO should not form new groups or impose any development methods in the beginning. Rather, it should first identify the conventional

village or union level clubs and help them find out their problems so that they themselves can solve those," he said.

Dr M Nurul Islam, research coordinator of Sustainable Access to Agroforestry Knowledge, Technology and Information (Saakti), an associate project of Leaf, said the arable land in the country is rapidly decreasing and called for enacting laws to preserve maximum amount of such lands.

The SDC through its partner organisations in the country are helping the poor build capacity through training, social mobilisation, dissemination of information on market opportunities and developing bargaining power.

SDC Deputy Country Director Christian Poffet, Interooperation Programme Officer Hosneara Khondker, its delegate Alain Cuvelier, Leaf Advisor Bruno Poitevin and Saakti Team Leader Dr ASM Akhtaruzzaman also spoke at the seminar, moderated by Fariduddin Ahmed, coordinator of Agroforestry Improvement Partnership.

South Asian govts spend 1pc of GDP on health

Says Human Dev Report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government spending on health in South Asian (SA) countries remains at one percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), said the Human Development Report-2004 which was formally launched yesterday.

The report titled 'Health Challenges' presents the condition of health in South Asia, and its links to poverty reduction and economic growth.

The 265-page report, published by the Islamabad-based Mahabub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre, highlights the condition of healthcare delivery and its impact in three SA countries - India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The report points out that around 30 percent children in SA (20 percent in Bangladesh) still do not receive immunisation against preventable childhood diseases.

About one-third of SA population live in absolute poverty and cannot afford quality healthcare, the report said, adding that 92 children out of every 1000 die of various diseases in the region.

Highlighting some commendable progress in the health sector in Bangladesh, the report said Bangladesh has made notable progress in reducing its maternal mortality rate.

Besides, Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in improving its access to safe drinking water.

Speaking on the occasion, Health Secretary A F M Sarwar Kamal said, "In a bid to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure, we have taken some steps by diversifying some of our conventional health delivery programmes and bringing reforms in the healthcare system."

"We have already introduced a pilot programme to run voucher scheme to identify the genuine poor in 21 upazilas which has already gained popularity. In fact, we are also planning to launch similar pilot programme in eye care facilities," he added.

Kamal said the health ministry is considering giving autonomy to rural healthcare facilities and expanding

partnership between government and non-government organisation for improved and quality healthcare delivery system.

Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, said the launching of the report was very timely and appropriate considering the MDG targets in mind.

Khadiza Haq, lead author of the report and president of the centre, was present at the Brac Centre to present the report among the lead-

ing health experts and development professionals working in the country.

With Brac Executive Director Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury in the chair, the launching ceremony was also attended by Vice-chancellor of Gono Bishwabidyalaya Dr Abul Qasem Chowdhury, and International Director of the James P Grant School of Public Health Prof Demissie Habte.

'Lawyers to continue movement'

SASP to observe 'Justice Day' on July 6

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Sammilita Ainjibi Samannay Parishad (SASP), a forum of pro-opposition lawyers, yesterday formed a human chain on the premises of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Bhaban to press for their demands.

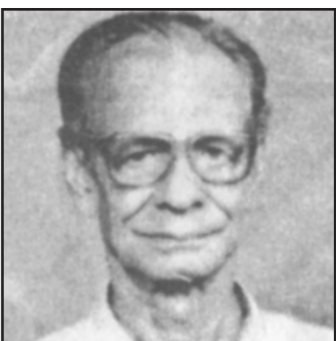
The demands include separation and independence of judiciary, appointment of efficient, skilled, honest and experienced judges in the Supreme Court, protection of image and dignity of the Supreme Court, judges and judiciary, establishment of the rule of law and justice in the society.

Addressing a meeting at the venue, the SASP Convenor Barrister M Amir-ul Islam said the lawyers of the country are waging movement against what he said the autocratic government, since it (government) is destroying all the institutions, including the Supreme Court, by politicising those.

"The lawyers will continue their movement until the demands are met," said the former vice-chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council.

The SASP will wear black badges and observe 'Justice Day' on July 6.

Chaired by Barrister M Amir-ul Islam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by SCBA President Advocate Mahbubey Alam, former SCBA presidents Abdul Baset Majumder and Ozair Farooq and Secretary of the SCBA Advocate Enayetur Rahim.



Romen Mitra passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Romen Mitra, a pioneer leader of the historic Tebhaga movement and communism movement, passed away at a hospital in Kolkata due to a cardiac arrest on Tuesday at the age of 91.

Born at Ramchandrapur village in Chapainawabganj in 1914, he got himself involved in the communist movement when he was a college student in Kolkata.

A dedicated communist, Romen and his wife Ila Mitra led the Tebhaga movement in Nachole in the 1950's.

He was cremated at Kewratula crematorium in Kolkata.

Romen left behind his only son, grandsons and a host of relatives, admirers and friends to mourn his death.

In a condolence message yesterday, some noted personalities, including Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, architect Mazharul Islam, Nirmal Biswas, Amena Ahmad and Monayem Sarkar, paid tribute to the memory of Romen Mitra, saying that his contribution to the cause of Liberation War in 1971 will be ever remembered by the freedom fighters of the country.

The progressive forces have also lost a guardian and friend at his death, they added.

Blue for Peace

Family members of slain finance minister Shah AMS Kibria organise the Blue for Peace programme demanding a fair trial of the killers. Venue: Road-3/A, Dhanmondi. Time: 6:00pm.

Academy film show

Academy Film Society will screen two films titled 'Dil Chata Hai' and 'Guantanamera'. Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 3:30pm and 6:30pm.

FPAB meeting

An extra-ordinary general meeting of Family Planning Association of Bangladesh will be held. Venue: 2, Naya Paltan. Time: 10:00am.

Meeting

Chattagram Charu Shilpi Parshad will hold meeting. Venue: Abakash, 344 Palashbagh, Rampura. Time: 6:00 pm.

Poetry evening

Muldhara, a forum of writers, journalists and artists, organises an evening of poetry. Venue: Zakia Alam Auditorium, House-15, Road-7, Dhanmondi. Time: 6:30pm.

Film show

To celebrate the 150th anniversary of Santal rebellion against the British rule, the High Commission of India will screen a film titled 'Mrigayaa' starring Mithun Chakraborty and Mamata Shankar. Venue: Indian Cultural Centre, House-25, Road-96, Gulshan-2. Time: 6:30pm.