

283 killed in crossfire in nine months

Says Odhikar report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT Odhikar, a human rights watchdog, yesterday said a total of 324 people were killed by the members of different law enforcement agencies across the country in first nine months of the year.

Of them 283 were killed in crossfire. In its report Odhikar said the number of total killings in the hands of the law enforcers during the same period of last year was 111.

The report was compiled on the basis of news items run by 12 leading national dailies, says a press release.

According to the report, political violence left 224 killed and 6,496 injured.

Police arrested 900 people for their alleged involvement in violence, it added.

Odhikar said many innocent people were also arrested following the August 17 blasts across the country from whom confessional statements under section 164 were collected forcibly.

The report said one journalist was killed, 120 were injured and 40 others were the victims of repression. Besides, 178 received death threats, 86 faced lawsuits and nine including two newspaper officers were attacked throughout the country during the period.

As many as 729 women and children were raped, of whom 107 were killed after rape while 13 others committed suicide, it added.

A total of 80 women, 25 children and 44 men received acid burns in nine months.

As many as 310 women were victimised for dowry and of them 189 were killed, the report mentioned.

Odhikar also said 959 children were tortured, of them 240 were killed, 264 raped, 165 abducted and 69 went missing, 52 smuggled out, 25 suffered acid burns, and 32 committed suicide.

Besides, 17 people were killed and 71 others injured in human rights violation incidents in hill tracks during the period.



Asma Kibria, wife of slain former finance minister SAMS Kibria, bursts into tears while speaking at a publication ceremony of a book titled 'Shah AMS Kibria - A Legend' at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

'SHAH AMS KIBRIA - A LEGEND' LAUNCHED Int'l investigation into Kibria killing demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asma Kibria, wife of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, yesterday demanded an international investigation into the gruesome murder of her husband to track down the culprits.

Termining the current investigation incomplete and flawed, she said, "We will never accept such a trial based on an incomplete investigation. We will continue to carry out our movement to get justice."

Asma Kibria broke down in tears while speaking at a publication ceremony of a book titled 'Shah AMS Kibria - A Legend' at the Liberation War Museum in the city.

Kibria dedicated his life to serving the countrymen, but he was killed while doing his duty, she said.

Speaking on the occasion, Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil also demanded an international investigation into the killing of Kibria, an AL leader.

The current investigation is aimed at protecting the real killers, he said, adding that the government should take the help of international investigators to ensure justice in the Kibria murder case.

"If we can track down the real killers, we will be able to save lives of many other heroes like Kibria in future," he said.

Kibria, who became a well-known personality for his outstanding achievements, made significant contribution to securing a prestigious position for the country in the world, Jalil observed.

Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, paid tribute to Kibria, describing him as a learned, competent, enlightened and patriotic personality.

"Shah AMS Kibria was highly regarded for his competent leadership while he was serving as the executive secretary of ESCAP (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), which always makes me feel very proud," he recalled.

Kibria set a great example of patriotism for the nation by sacrificing his life, Anam added.

Dr Qazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association, said, "If the initiatives taken by Kibria had been promoted, we would not have faced the present crisis."

Presided over by Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, the publication ceremony was also addressed by former secretaries Dr Mashiur Rahman, Mohammad Zamir and Syed Moazzem Ali, AL leader Abul Mal Abdul Muhit and Editor of the weekly Banglabarta Mohammad Shahjahan.

Earlier, Prof Salahuddin Ahmed formally unveiled the cover of the book. The Bangla Prakashani has published the book edited by Mohammad Shahjahan.

Prominent writers, journalists, former government high officials and family members of Kibria have contributed to the book.

'Govt won't restore original Nat'l Women Development policy'

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The government will not restore the National Women Development Policy (NWDP) of 1997 in the face of criticisms by different women's organisations for the changes made to it.

"As the allegations of women leaders against the reforms in the policy in 2004 are not substantial, there is no possibility of restoring the original policy," said Khurshid Zahan Haque, minister for Women and Children Affairs.

She however said a committee has been formed and a meeting will be held soon to discuss the new policy. If needed, it will be further reformed, he added.

The women leaders have rejected the changed policy claiming that fundamental changes have been brought to hinder women's empowerment in the country.

Vague terms have been used to make the policy complicated and to fish in the muddy water, they alleged.

The women leaders said there were words like 'equal rights' and 'equal participation' in the original policy, but these have been replaced by words like 'suitable', 'if necessary', and 'according to the constitution' in the reformed policy with an ulterior motive.

"Though the constitution envis-

ages equal rights of male and female, there are inherent contradictions in it. Equality clause and religious sentiment both exist in our constitution," said Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) Sultana Kamal.

"From our experience we have seen that people and the government prefer religious sentiment to others. So 'according to the constitution' is a vague term that should not remain in the WDP," she added.

Though a long time has passed since the changes in policy, officials concerned were reluctant to tell anything about the changes. They only said they didn't know how the changes took place and who were involved with the process.

Even Chairperson of Jatiya Mahila Sangstha Masuda Hossain could not tell anything about the policy changes saying most probably these are yet to be finalised.

"If the policy was approved, I am sure it would have come to me. But I have not received it," she said.

The paramount change in reformed policy includes omission of the provision for direct election to women's reserved seats in parliament by adding the word 'all necessary effective arrangements will be followed in the reserved seats by increasing them.'

In place of ensuring women's active and equal participation in all economic activities, the new policy said constitutional rights of women will be implemented.

The new version has omitted the word 'partnership' from resource, employment, market and business sectors.

The concept of equal sharing of economic power, right and opportunity has also been changed.

The provision for equal inheritance in resource, and equal opportunity and control over property, information, education has been changed in the new policy by omitting the word 'equal inheritance.'

The concept of appointing a large number of women 'in cabinet' has been replaced by 'at all level.'

The new policy also failed to provide de facto equality, and the exclusion of the provision 'inheritance of property' will also lead to the oppression of women.

Besides, a total of 30 percent women were scheduled to be recruited at policymaking level but the new policy spoke of increasing the present quota system.

The vague term on quota system in administration can be used according to the interest of different governments at different times, said

Advocate Sultana Kamal.

The achievements of the women community in realising their rights will suffer serious setbacks as the reformed policy has withdrawn the provisions for their empowerment in politics, economy as well as social sector, she added.

The government has cleverly initiated the new version and backtracked from the original policy. It is as if the rights of women depend on the will of the ruling party," said President of Karmojibi Nari Shirin Akhtar.

But high officials of the government said reforms in National Women Development Policy do not bear any qualitative change and women's rights are not undermined.

They said all the changes are made in favour of the women community, not in their against.

A total of 17 women's rights organisations submitted a memorandum to the prime minister demanding cancellation of the policy and restoring the original one a few months ago.

Sources in the prime minister's office (PMO) said the memorandum has been sent to women affairs ministry and a reply would be given on the basis of its recommendation.

But the minister said she was not asked for making any recommendation.

TRADE ACT US senator assures FM of working together

UNB, Dhaka

US Senator Lincoln D Chafee, chairman of the Senate Sub-committee for Near East and South Asia of the Foreign Relations Committee, has assured Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan of working together on the TRADE Act.

"I am a supporter of free trade," the senator said when Morshed Khan met him at his Senate office in Washington DC on Thursday.

The bill, titled TRADE Act of 2005 that proposes duty-free access for textile and other products from 14 Asia-Pacific LDCs, including Bangladesh, has recently received the support of a number of key senators, making its prospects bright.

Stressing the need for duty-free access for textile products from Bangladesh, the foreign minister said, "Such access is not only important for the economy of Bangladesh, but also crucial for sustaining empowerment of women as readymade garment industry employs over 1.5 million female workers."

The foreign minister reiterated Bangladesh's commitment to fighting extremism in all its forms.

He said the government is seriously dealing with the August 17 bomb blasts, and has already arrested a large number of people involved in the incident.

Khan assured Senator Chafee of the government's sincerity in bringing to justice the perpetrators of all political violence, including those responsible for the killing of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria.

Protest against move to shift Ramna Kali Mandir

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Hindu community yesterday began a road march from capital's Ramna Kali Mandir to Narayanganj Pagalnah Temple protesting the recent government decision to shift the Ramna Kali Mandir.

Different Hindu religious organisations, including Bangladesh Minority Sangram Parishad and Bangladesh Chhatra Jubo Oikya Parishad, protested the move to shift the temple.

The leaders of the organisations said a vested quarter, working at the government different sectors especially Ministry for Housing and Public Work, are conspiring to grab the property of the Ramna Kali Mandir in the name of beautification of Suhrawardy Udyan.

The quarter has already occupied two acres and 22 decimal property of the temple and now conspiring to grab all the property in the name of shifting, they said.

They urged the government to take measures to stop the move to shift the temple in the greater interest of the Hindus. They also called upon the Prime Minister and the authorities concerned to retrieve the grabbed property.



Child artistes of Chayanaut perform at a function in celebration of autumn festival at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

Ensure nutrition for girl children Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Girl Child Day 2005 was observed yesterday with a call to ensure nutrition for girl children.

The day is observed in the country since 2000.

This year the theme of the day was "Our pledge: No more malnourished girl child."

Different organisations chalked

out elaborate programmes to mark the day.

National Girl Child Advocacy Forum in association with The Hunger Project organised essay and drawing competitions, brought out procession from Shishu Academy and organised a discussion at the National Press Club in the city.

Speakers at the discussion stressed the need for more invest-

ment for girl child to ensure a bright future for them.

They called for making girl child nutrition issue a national one and taking steps to remove gender disparity from the society.

Speaking as chief guest, eminent cultural activist Mustafa Monwar said the movement to ensure girl child's rights and nutrition has to be started from the family first.

Dr Halima Khatun of Dhaka University, Zinat Afroz of Plan Bangladesh, rights activist Latifa Akhund, Taleya Rehman of Democracy Watch, Principal Yasmin Banu of Begum Badrunnesa Government Girls' College were present on the occasion.

The discussion was presided over by Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, country director of The Hunger Project.

Later prizes were distributed among the girl children who participated in essay and drawing competitions at different categories held at Shilpakala Academy on September 22.

Another discussion was organised jointly by Steps Towards Development, Dhaka Development Forum (DDF) and Oxfam-GB at Biam auditorium in the city.

Speakers at the discussion called for changing the attitudes of the family and society towards girl child.

They stressed the need for an amendment to property inheritance law to ensure equal rights for girl child. They said girl child must be provided with education, entertainment, freedom of movement and other equal opportunity at every stage of life.

Dr Mahmudur Rahman of DDF, Mona Mehta of Oxfam-GB, noted filmmaker Subhash Dutta, rights activist Sheela Momen, and cartoonist Shishir Bhattacharya spoke on the occasion.



Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB) form a human chain at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday demanding that encroachers be evicted from all playgrounds across the country.

WEATHER TODAY logo with sun and cloud icons.

Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions till 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also expected at places during the period. Met Office said predicting slight fall in day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 34.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and lowest 23.7 degree Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5.46pm today and rises at 5:50am 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.

Zonta confce begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 8th biennial conference of Zonta International District-25 began in the city yesterday, with the theme -- 'Rising to the challenge, making a difference'.

During its three-day conference, different sessions would focus on the issues of trafficking in women and children, domestic violence and women's health, which need immediate attention and action.

Apart from District-25 members from India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, international representatives from Germany and the USA are taking part in the conference.

At a press conference in the morning, the organisers said 33,000 members of Zonta International are working in 67 countries for the empowerment of women.

"In India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Zonta clubs are rendering service to the communities through regular assistance to hospitals, literacy centres, medical facilities and vocational centre and care for the homeless, disabled and distressed women," said District Governor Dilruba Ahmed.

Solar eclipse on Oct 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A solar eclipse will take place on October 3.

The eclipse, starting at 5:02pm at Dhaka, will be visible from across the country if the sky remains clear, says an ISPR press release.

However, the sun will set during the eclipse.

Roundtable on 'Biotech Communication'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Participants at a roundtable discussion on 'Biotech Communication: Potential Role of Journalists' underscored the need for better understanding of the frontier science by the media people for proper dissemination of the biotechnological developments to the readers and viewers.

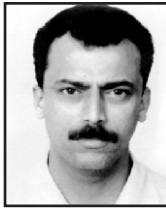
International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA) and Bangladesh Biotechnology Information Centre (BdBIC) organised the discussion at a city hotel yesterday.

ISAAA National Coordinator Prof DR KM Nasiruddin, Country Coordinator of South Asia Biosafety Programme Prof Dr M Imdadul Hoque, Executive Vice-President of Canada-based biotech organisation Agbios Donald J MacKenzie, The New Nation editor Mostafa Kamal Majumder and a Pakistani journalist specialising in agricultural biotechnology Ijaz Ahmed Rao made presentations at the discussion.

Though Bangladesh has long been lagging behind in pursuing the research and development works in crop biotechnology, the experts said priorities have been attached to research on gene technology applications recently in rice, brinjal, potato and papaya to gain extra nutrition value and fight pests and diseases.

Dispelling misconceptions on genetic engineering, the participants said there were risk factors associated with all technologies but those could be taken care of if proper regulatory measures are kept in place.

Qulkhwani



Qulkhwani of Ali Waris Khan (Jani), managing director of Murichura Tea Estate and son of former lawmaker late Nawab Ali Sarwar Khan of Pritimpassa, Kaulaura, Sylhet, will be held at the Nawabbari of Pritimpassa at 2:00pm today, says a press release.

Ali Waris Khan passed away due to multiple organ failure caused by Leukemia at the age of 39 on September 27 at the Apollo Hospital in Chennai, India.

He had been under treatment for the last six months in the hospital. He was buried at his village home.

All have been requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.