

'Forge solidarity among women across world for empowerment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for building solidarity among women across the world to ensure their rights, empowerment and gender equality.

They said discrimination against women still prevails although they have achieved a lot with regards to empowerment.

The Indian High Commission organised the discussion titled 'Celebrating women as leaders' at the Canadian Club in the city to mark the International Women's Day. Women diplomats and outstanding women leaders from different fields attended the programme.

Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri, Canadian High Commissioner Barbara Richardson, Norwegian Ambassador Aud Lise Norheim, Swiss Ambassador Dora Rapold and Swedish Ambassador Britt Hagstrom were present as panel-

lists while Chairperson of Arlinks Group Rokia A Rahman, Chairman of Narayanganj Pourasava Dr Selina Hayat and Sammilita Garments Sramik Federation President Nazma Akhter also took part in the discussion.

Team Leader of Manusher Jonno Shaheen Anam moderated the discussion and placed the demands of women, including recognition of and support to women's productive and reproductive roles, violence-free environment at home and outside and a uniform family code for all women.

Speaking on the occasion, the diplomats highlighted the status of women in their countries, their advancement and obstacles to empowerment.

"In governmental sectors, women are much advanced and their achievement is higher than in the private sectors," said Swiss Ambassador Rapold. Constant efforts are needed to keep up what women have achieved, she added.

Swedish Ambassador Hagstrom said women's rights activists played an important role in enacting progressive laws in her country.

Indian envoy Veena Sikri said Mahatma Gandhi had recognised the women's strong power and contribution to independence of India, which led to women's advancement and empowerment.

"Not only social justice but also political growth is important. The policy to achieve emancipation and empowerment through education has played an important role in the advancement of women in India," she added.

Highlighting Bangladeshi women's role in business, Chairperson of Arlinks Group Rokia A Rahman said they have been working hard in their professional life as well as in their families.

It is a good sign that husbands are now coming forward to help their wives, which improves the quality of family life, she added.

Sammilita Garments Sramik

Federation President Nazma Akhter said that although women have been protecting themselves, working hard and fighting everyday to establish their rights, they are neglected at the decision-making level in professional sectors.

"We want the government to show respect to the garments sector, in which mostly women are employed, as we have been earning 77 percent of foreign exchange," she said.

She also urged the NGOs to help the garments workers realise their demand for safety at workplaces.

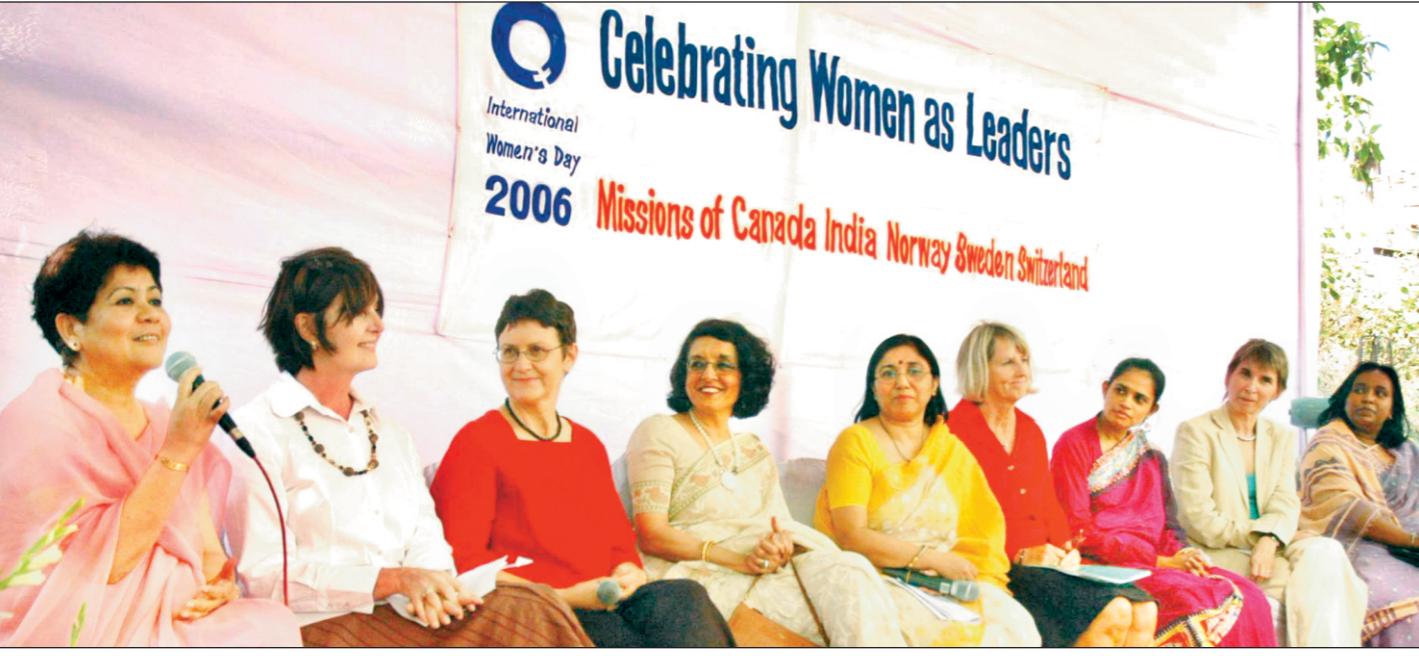
Women leaders Hena Das, Ayesha Khanam, Maleka Begum, Hamida Hossain, Shirin Akhter, Hasna Moudud, Salma Khan and Sigma Huda, cultural activists Kabari Sarwar, Progga Laboni, Shampa Reza, Ferdousi Priyabhashini and Nashid Kamal and Chairman and Managing Director of Adcomm Ltd. Geetara Safiya Choudhury were also present.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at the 14-party divisional grand rally in Barisal yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR



Chairperson of Arlinks Group Rokia A Rahman speaks at a discussion marking the International Women's Day at the Canadian Club in the city yesterday. On her left are Canadian High Commissioner Barbara Richardson, Swiss Ambassador Dora Rapold, Indian High Commissioner Veena Sikri, Team Leader of Manusher Jonno Shaheen Anam, Swedish Ambassador Britt Hagstrom, Sammilita Garments Sramik Federation President Nazma Akhter, Norwegian Ambassador Aud Lise Norheim and Chairman of Narayanganj Pourasava Dr Selina Hayat.

Diabetes need not hamper normal life

Says ex-Pak cricket captain Wasim Akram

TAREQ SALAHUDDIN

In a message of encouragement to diabetes patients, former captain of Pakistan cricket team Wasim Akram asserted that the ailment could be kept in check and need not come in the way of leading a normal life.

"If I can live life the way I want to, why can't you do it," said Akram, a diabetic himself, at a function organised by sanofi-aventis Bangladesh and the Diabetic Association of

Bangladesh at a city hotel yesterday.

Akram is the brand ambassador of Accu-chek meter produced by Roche and marketed by sanofi-aventis Bangladesh in this country. Accu-chek, the most reliable home monitoring blood glucose meter, is known for its quick result which is reliable and same as laboratory.

Diabetes is recognised as an emerging silent global epidemic. Worldwide, there are 171 million

diabetics and by 2030 the figure is expected to be 366 million.

At present the number of diabetic patients in this country is 4.1 million which is expected to be 11.2 million by 2030.

In his inaugural speech Iftekharul Islam, managing director of sanofi-aventis Bangladesh, said the company is now producing several medicines to treat diabetes including the top selling insulin Lantus.

Prof Dr AK Azad Khan, secretary general of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, presided over the function.

He said Type 2 diabetes or non-insulin dependent diabetes is preventable.

He laid emphasis on home monitoring of blood glucose level since it is more patient-compliant and helps them more to keep their diabetes in control.

Prof Dr Hajera Mahtab made a presentation on 'Importance of self-monitoring and good glycaemic control.'

S Johar, regional director of Asia Pacific, Roche India was also present.

In an open discussion with doctors, patients and media, Akram described diabetes as a "touchy subject" in this part of the world where people are even reluctant to disclose that they have diabetes.

"People who are not aware of the disease and hesitant about diabetes often seek for alternative medicine. They have to know that there is no alternative of medicine to treat diabetes and awareness is the key to cope with the concern," he added.

Akram suggested launch of a strong information campaign about symptoms of diabetes and steps needed to keep it in check, particularly among the illiterate and low socio-economic group of population.

He also disclosed his plan to go a long way to inspire people with diabetes and conquer the disease.

He advised medical fraternity to "be positive" and tell patients to check blood sugar levels regularly."

Akram, who was diagnosed as a diabetic at the peak of his career but did not allow the condition to affect his performance, said he has "proved that diabetes did not really make people tired."

He also noted that family support is vital to live a normal life for diabetic patients.

Five patients with diabetes, who had accomplished significant achievements despite their physical and metabolic restrictions, were facilitated with free Accu-chek home monitoring glucose meters and strips at the function.

BLDG COLLAPSE
Phoenix Centre
MD seeks bail
without
Vokalatnama

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Managing Director (MD) of the Phoenix Medical Centre, an accused in connection with its recent tragedy, did not surrender to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday even though he submitted a petition for bail.

Dr. Jahangir Alam, MD of the collapsed medical centre, through his lawyer Rashid Ahmed Ganguee, submitted a surrender petition for bail without Vokalatnama to the court. But he was not present when the petition was placed before the court for hearing.

The petitioner also submitted another petition on Sunday but did not turn up.

As per law, if any person accused in any case surrenders to a court for bail, he or she has to submit a bail petition with Vokalatnama and mention his or her full address in the petition. But Dr Jahangir violated the law not submitting any Vokalatnama and mentioning his address.

Earlier on February 25, the Phoenix Medical Centre was collapsed and 21 people were killed while 50 injured.

Meantime, Deen Mohammad, owner of the Phoenix Building through his lawyer submitted a bail petition to the High Court on Sunday in his absence. But the court did not hear it.

Arrest of Bangla Bhai second act of drama Say 14-party leaders

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan today will brief the foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka about the arrest of two most wanted militant leaders.

The briefing will take place at the State Guesthouse Padma this noon, a highly placed source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said.

Apart from the latest arrests, the foreign minister will also talk about government's sincerity in eliminating all sorts of religious fundamentalism, terrorism and militancy in Bangladesh.

Since the August 17 countrywide serial blasts and suicide attacks, there had been demands from different levels to arrange a briefing for the foreign diplomats on these attacks.

The government, however, refrained from arranging any such briefing, as the situation was not in favour, said an official on condition of anonymity.

With the arrest of militant kingpins Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai, the government now finds the time right for holding the briefing. Besides, the arrest of several hundred JMB cadres and recovery of huge bomb materials and weapons by the law enforcement agencies are also considered a success of the government, the official added.

He further said that the government is determined to dismantle all terror networks as well as to capture the terrorists in hiding and bring them to justice.

Australian minister due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Australian Federal Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Senator Amanda Vanstone, arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day visit.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials yesterday said this would be her first visit to Bangladesh since the senator was appointed to the ministry. She is expected to hold talks with top government leaders.

The officials said the visit of the minister would contribute greatly towards further strengthening ties between the two countries.

Sources said Vanstone would discuss trade and commerce, Australian development assistance in Bangladesh as well as sports. Australian Cricket team is expected to visit Bangladesh in April.

Official sources said Australia has been funding large-scale programs for food security, primary education, governance, micro-finance, HIV/AIDS and arsenic mitigation, as well as Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) in Bangladesh.

AUG 17 SERIAL BLASTS

**JMB ehsar
Sagor
confesses
involvement**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) ehsar Shabbir Hossain alias Sagor on Sunday gave confession statement to a first class magistrate in Bagerhat in the August 17 serial bomb blasts.

Magistrate Md Sabur Hossain recorded the statement of Sagor.

Sagor, who claimed himself as a JMB regional leader, in his judicial statement said he monitored serial bomb blasts in Khulna, Bagerhat and Gopalganj on August 17 last year.

He was brought to the court amid tight security after seven-day remand from Bagerhat jail. He was arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Khulna city on December 31 last year. He told the court that he had supplied bombs to cadres at the instruction of Khulna divisional operation commander Hafez Mahmud.

The bombs were distributed among the JMB cadres on August 15 at a secret meeting in the house of cadre Zillur Molla of Mollahat upazila of Bagerhat district, he added.

Brought to Bagerhat from Gopalganj on February 26, Sagor looked pale and scared hearing the news of Shaikh Abdur Rahman's arrest. He told magistrate Sabur Hossain and police officers that decision of countrywide serial bomb explosions was wrong and fatal.

He told police, during interrogation during his seven-day remand, that he came in touch with Siddiqui Islam Bangla Bhai last year.

are now being brought out one by one, he added.

Hasanul Huq Inu, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) president, said the government had all along been aware of their locations and presence and the arrests are part of a government play.

Tofail Ahmed, presidium member of AL, said AL demanded the arrest of Bangla Bhai when he was killing and torturing people in Rajshahi but the government had denied even the existence of Bangla Bhai. The government had told people Bangla Bhai was the media's creation.

Rashed Khan Menon, Workers Party president, said it appears militant kingpins were arrested before every grand rally of the 14-party alliances. They (the militant kingpins) had been in (the government's) custody all along and

He however said these arrests should not be viewed negatively and it was necessary to find out the forces behind them.



Former Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram speaks at a function at a city hotel yesterday.

