

'Include women journalists in policy-making level'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women journalists should be included in policy-making level in the media organisations to recognise their full dignity as professionals, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Geeti Ara Safiya Choudhury said yesterday.

She also called on the media owners and policymakers to change their attitude towards women journalists.

"Women are making their way in almost all professions, contributing a lot to the national economy, but they are not given opportunities to take part in policy-making process," Geeti Ara said while speaking at the second national council of women journalists as the chief guest.

Bangladesh Nari Sangbadik Kendra organised the national

council at the National Press Club in the city in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation. The theme of this year's council is 'Pen is our main tool for establishing women's and human rights'.

"When we started journalism, it was difficult for women to join the reporting team, but now the scenario has changed. Today women are taking interviews and covering all kinds of risky and important events," said Geeti Ara.

She called on women journalists to highlight the struggles of grassroots women and write against social prejudices.

Noorjahan Begum, editor of the 'Begum', called for more reports on early marriage and dowry system.

Nasimun Ara Haq, president of the Kendra, said about 6000

journalists are working in the mass media, but the number of women journalists is only 200.

She demanded that 25 percent of journalists appointed in the media organisation should be women.

Kaniz Almas Khan, editor of 'Canvas' magazine, said women journalists are doing the same job as their male counterparts but do not get equal salary and other opportunities.

Reazuddin Ahmed, editor of The News Today, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Bangladesh Observer, Taslima Hossain, editor of the fortnightly Ananya, Ferdousee Ali, editor of the Purbanchal, Luva Nahid Chowdhury, editor of the Jamini, and Setara Musa, adviser to the Kendra, also spoke.



Women and Children Affairs Adviser Geeti Ara Safiya Choudhury addresses the second national council of women journalists as the chief guest at National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Husband burns wife to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A cruel husband burnt his pregnant wife to death at Kawla in the city as she did not tolerate his extra-marital affairs.

Sabina, who was pregnant for eight months, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday eight days after she was set on fire by her husband Abdul Hamid, a painter by profession.

The attack on Sabina took place in the early hours of March 8. Hamid was talking to his girlfriend on his mobile phone at around 2:30am. But Sabina could not tolerate it. In a fit of rage, she smashed the cellphone.

At this, her husband flew into a rage. He dragged Sabina out of their house at Madhyapara and took her to a graveyard nearby along with a container of kerosene. He then set fire to her body after dousing her with kerosene.

Lying on the hospital bed, Sabina had told all this to her mother Jamila Khatun.

Local people ran to the graveyard when they heard Sabina screaming and took her to DMCH, said Sabuj, a local youth.

But they did not find her husband at that time. Hamid has been at large since then, family sources said.

Hospital sources said more than 95 percent of her body were burnt in the fire.

Jamila Khatun filed a case with Dhakhlin Khan Police Station against Hamid.

Poster exhibition on urban conservation begins

DU CORRESPONDENT

A poster exhibition on urban conservation and regeneration titled 'Old but New, New but Old' that brings together one set of posters from the UK and three sets from Bangladesh, began at British Council in the city yesterday.

Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs ABM Abdul Howk Chowdhury inaugurated the exhibition jointly organised by British Council (BC) Bangladesh and North South University (NSU).

In relation to the development of its economy, legislation and conducive practice have influenced the display on UK posters. On the contrary, Bangladeshi posters represent a few of many such sites that have the merit to be conserved by injecting new life which is being prevented by commerce, legislation, lack of awareness and expertise.

The posters from the UK explore and celebrate the diverse variety of urban regeneration projects that have grown up across the UK. They also feature key urban neighbourhoods, including Gateshead Quays, Birmingham's Bull Ring, Coin Street in London's South Bank and Manchester's Shipping Canal.

The three sets of posters from Bangladesh are on selected heritage buildings in three different sites – Bahadur Shah Park, Panamnagar and Shankharibazar – with potential for regeneration through conservation.

The first set of posters is on Bahadur Shah Park, initially known as Victoria Park, originally housed a club for the Europeans living in Dhaka in mid-nineteenth century, and grew as the centre of the colonial city in European style with

several civic, cultural and other important buildings around it.

Panamnagar, a 200-year old urban settlement, now ruined from neglect and abuse, is one of the most vulnerable heritage sites in the world. Part of Sonargaon, the capital during Bengal's golden era which pre-dates Jahangirnagar and is 24 km to the south-east of it, Panam contains more than 50 houses.

The third set of posters is on Shankharibazar, an artisan's quarter, which is among the oldest settlements of Dhaka. These about 100 shop-houses on a narrow street have very fascinating form and ornate facade. Inhabited by conch shell artists and craftspeople, these are used as workshop and sells centre at the ground level, and family quarters above.

Students of NSU and volunteers of Urban Study Group on the basis of some studies undertaken basically by architects and students of architecture prepared these posters.

British Council Acting Director Richard Sunderland, Institute of Architects Bangladesh President Architect Mobasshar Hussain and Prof Mahbub Rahman of NSU also spoke on the occasion.

Abdul Howk said it is an obligation to preserve these heritage sites for future generation. "For architectural conservation raising funds is not a problem. It only needs will and dedication," he added.

The exhibition will run till March 31, from 10:00am to 6:00pm daily, except Fridays. A three-day workshop on architectural heritage conservation also began yesterday at British Council and NSU.

Yunus invited to BFA conference in China

UNB, Dhaka

Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), a non-government organisation of Asian countries, has invited Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus to its annual conference in China on April 19-22.

Prof Yunus is expected to be the keynote speaker at the conference. Syed Abul Hossain, a founding member of BFA, will also attend it.

BFA comprises 27 countries of Asia plus Australia to promote regional economic integration to bring the member countries closer for development.

The theme of this year's annual conference is "Asia winning in today's global economy - Innovation and sustainable development".

Automobile showroom owner kills self

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An automobile showroom owner allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself in the head with his licensed pistol inside the showroom at Banani in the city yesterday.

Employees of the showroom heard the gunshot at around 5:00pm, police said. They rushed the owner, Yasin Arif, to a hospital in Gulshan but the doctors declared him dead.

The reason behind the suicide could not be known as of 12:30am today.

Muggers shot NGO official, snatch Tk 1 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers shot an NGO official and snatched away Tk 1,10,000 from him in Gazipur district yesterday.

While Saiduzzaman, 40, an engineer of an NGO located at Uttara in the city, was going from his office to Boardbazar in a rickshaw at around 11:30am, nine muggers riding on three bikes intercepted him on the way.

As Saiduzzaman tried to resist them, the muggers shot him in the leg and snatched away the money.

The victim is now receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Valuables worth Tk 25 lakh looted from Ctg trader's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A daring robbery was committed at the house of a businessman in the city in broad daylight yesterday.

The robbers decamped with valuables worth about Tk 25 lakh including over 100 tolas of gold ornaments after injuring a woman.

Witnesses said a group of 10 robbers entered the house of Javed Afsar Chowdhury, owner of NAC Auto Mobiles at Agrabad, after knocking the door at Chandanpura under Kotwali Police Station at around 12:00 noon.

But Javed's younger brother Junayed, who was at the house during the robbery, said, "I didn't hear any sound of the calling bell or the knocking of the door. What I saw that one of our maid servant opened the door and the robbers entered the house."

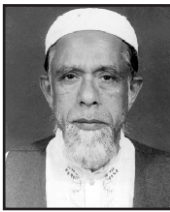
Keeping the inmates hostage at gunpoint the robbers began to looting four rooms of the house.

"They looted 80 tolas of gold ornaments from my mother's almirah, 25 tolas of gold ornaments from my wife's almirah, a diamond set worth around Tk 4 lakh and cash money of around Tk 4 lakh," claimed Javed while talking to this correspondent.

At one stage of robbery, Shahajadi Afsar Chowdhury, 55, mother of Javed, tried to resist the robbers who hit her with a revolver and fled the scene.

Seriously injured Shahajadi was first rushed to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital and then admitted to Royal Hospital in the city, police said.

Qulkhwani



Qulkhwani of Alhaj Akhtar-uzzaman, a retired Rupali Bank officer, will be held at his residence at 275 Dhania and at Rasulpur Shahi Jame Mosque at Dhania after Juma prayers today, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the qulkhwani.

Akhtaruzzaman passed away on March 9 due to a cardiac arrest at the age of 75.



President Iajuddin Ahmed speaks at the 35th annual general meeting of the National Council of Bangladesh Scouts at Mouchak in Gazipur yesterday.

Groom children, adolescents with human qualities: President

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed has called for grooming children and adolescents with human qualities, including patriotism, for making them ideal citizens of the country.

"I think scouting can play a significant role to this end," he said yesterday while he was addressing the Youth Parliament Session of the 4th National Srijani Scout Camp

organised by Bangladesh Scouts at Mouchak in Gazipur.

The President stressed the need for undertaking programmes so that the children and adolescents of Bangladesh can cope skillfully with the challenges of the 21st century with other parts of the world.

He called upon all concerned to work together, reminding that ideal citizens are the resources of the country.

Iajuddin appreciated the lively and rational discussions and debate on intellectual rights in the Youth Parliament by the scout members.

"We always motivate children, adolescents and youth to take lessons from their elders. But we must also bear in mind that lessons can also be learnt from them," he said.

Bandar Sramik League leader held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of joint forces held General Secretary of Bandar Jatiya Sramik League Shamsul Haq Shafi yesterday.

Shafi was held from a house in the city's Halishahar K-block area at around 10:15am.

With these four leaders of different workers' organisations that kept the country's premier seaport hostage for decades, were held by the joint forces.

The other three leaders are Bandar Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal General Secretary Nur Ullah Bahar, Bandar Dock Workers' Union CBA General Secretary Abdul Ahad and Bandar Islami Sramik Sangstha General Secretary Jahangir Alam.

Five ex-Islami Bank officials arrested

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested five former officials of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited from their houses in the city yesterday in connection with a case regarding misappropriation of Tk 50 lakh from its Mahakhali branch.

The arrestees are former managers Sheikh Moshir Rahman and Abdur Rahman, former second officer (audit and inspection section at its Kakrai head office) Mahbubur Rahman, former investment officer Khorshedul Islam and former second officer Mizanur Rahman.

The case was filed with Gulshan Police Station in November 2002 accusing them of embezzling Tk 50 lakh from the bank's Mahakhali branch by sanctioning a loan of the same amount in the name of one Kamal Uddin through forged documents sometime between February 28, 1999 and June 10, 2001.

CID Inspector Akbar Hossain, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, produced the arrestees before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka with a prayer for a seven-day remand.

But the court rejected the remand prayer and also the bail petition filed by defence lawyers, and sent them to Dhaka Central Jail.

TANIA MURDER

Two confess to crime

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Two people arrested on charge of killing Tahmina Sharmin alias Tania, a teacher of Shaheed Babul Academy in Dhaka, confessed to the crime to Superintendent of Police (SP) Abu Kalam Siddiq at his office here yesterday.

Tania's husband Zahid Hasan Jewel, 35 of Khlgaon area in the capital killed her on the way to Dhaka from Kuakata on January 30.

The accused identified as Miznur Rahman, 38, son of late Abul Hashem of Khlgaon in Dhaka and Shahin Alam, 36, son of late Khorshed Alam of the same area, were arrested on Wednesday.

Of them, Mizan was arrested at Khlgaon area in the capital and Shahin at Asadnagar village under Banchharampur upazila in Brahmanbaria.

They made confessional statement to the Superintendent of Police

(SP) Abu Kalam Siddique at his office in presence of Deputy Commissioner (DC) AGM Mir Mashiur Alam.

They said Tania's husband Jewel hired them to kill Tania in exchange for Tk one lakh. According to the plan, Mizan and Shahin killed her with sharp weapons at Rajpara area under Kalapara upazila on Kuakata-Dhaka route.

After killing, Mizan and Shahin managed to flee to Dhaka while Jewel was arrested on the spot. Their 10-month-old son Zaymon Al Zahid was with Jewel.

Jewel gave his confessional statement under Section 164 to the magistrate's court. According to his statement, police arrested Mizan and Shahin.

Victim's brother Raihan filed a case with Kalapara Police Station on January 31 in this connection.

SP Kamal Siddique said, "We will submit the charge sheet to the court very soon as all the accused in the case have been arrested."

320 election officers

FROM PAGE 1

Examination," Election Commission (EC) Secretary Humayun Kabir told reporters yesterday.

The EC has decided to examine efficiency of the election officers as their appointment was mired in controversy, the secretary said. "The commission will decide the fate of those who will not qualify in the examination."

Terms and conditions of service of the upazila election officers however allow the EC to dismiss any of them from service within two years of joining without consulting the PSC, if he or she is found incapable of doing the job.

The election officers joined their service on September 26, 2005 and will complete two years' probationary period in September this year, the secretary said.

A spate of controversy followed their joining since they were recruited on political considerations and through bribery. A large number of them were involved with Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student front of the BNP. Last year, the election officers were entrusted with updating the voter list and it contained an unusually large number of fake voters, triggering widespread protests.

Recently, an intelligence agency report mentioned corruption in recruiting these election officers and recommended taking action to free the EC from such controversy.

The home ministry sent the probe report to the EC requesting it to take

action in the light of the recommendations contained in the report, sources said.

Meanwhile, a delegation from the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday met the EC and discussed the issue of electoral reforms.

The delegation comprised Syed Manzur Elahi, Prof Anisuzzaman, Laila Rahman Kabir and Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya and Dr Mustafizur Rahman.

Later, Debapriya told reporters that the EC informed them about the ongoing electoral reform initiatives.

"After holding dialogues across the country, we had earlier submitted a set of proposals for reforms in the political parties, election laws and code of conduct. We are happy to hear that ninety percent of our recommendations have been accepted by the Election Commission," said the CPD executive director.

They will again hold dialogues across the country before and after July, and will submit recommendations to the EC, Debapriya said.

The EC however informed them that it would complete electoral reforms by July, he added.

Another delegation comprising Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry leaders met the EC yesterday and had a discussion on electoral reforms and preparation of the voter list.

CA kicks off car rally for Saarc tourism

FROM PAGE 1

across the member countries is an appropriate conclusion to the yearlong celebration.

He said the action plan adopted during the second Saarc tourism ministers meeting in Cox's Bazar last year should be prioritised.

Fakhruddin said for facilitating tourism as well as other forms of economic and cultural contacts, Saarc countries should also expand direct air links among themselves.

For countries like Bangladesh, there is also a need for collaboration in developing human resources in the tourism sector, he said, adding: "This can provide yet another opportunity to increase people-to-people contact in South Asia."

Indeed, he said, these vital efforts are not just the provenance of Saarc governments, the private sector can also play an active and constructive role in the promotion of tourism, both intra-regionally and internationally.

The CA said tourism is a priority sector in Bangladesh and "We have developed a national tourism policy to foster growth in tourism at the domestic and international level."

The policy, he said, emphasises both tourism marketing and human resources development. The government has also taken steps to develop Cox's Bazar, Sundarbans, Chittagong hill districts and seaside resorts of Kuakata as special tourist zones.

"I'm optimistic that sustained efforts will be made by the Saarc countries in the coming days to promote rich cultural and ecological heritage of our region through tourism," Fakhruddin said. "This will help us project the distinct identity of South Asia to the outside world and also help us to come closer together as a region."

Civil Aviation and Tourism Adviser Maj. Gen. (ret'd) MA Matin and Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury also spoke at the function.

Envoys of Saarc countries, representatives of international organisations, civil and military officials and elite were present.

The chief adviser flagged off the car rally at about 12:25pm. He put his signature on a colourful flag of the rally declaring it open.

The caravan of 30 decorated Tata Safari cars will travel 1,300-km inside Bangladesh before entering India on March 18.

The cross-border caravan will cruise through seven member states of the Saarc and end in Maldives on April 14. Some 110 participants from the member countries are taking part in the event. They will drive along an 8,200-km path, across varying terrain, over a 30-day period.

Two cars from each member state have joined the historic event.

Partial solar eclipse on Monday

UNB, Dhaka

A partial eclipse of the sun will occur on Monday.

It will start at 18 seconds 38 minutes past 6:00am (Bangladesh time) and will end at 54 seconds 24 minutes past 10:00am, said an ISPR release.

The maximum eclipse of the sun will occur at 54 seconds 31 minutes past 8:00am.

The eclipse will be visible all over Bangladesh if the sky remains clear. However, the eclipse will be visible for about two hours after the sunrise on Monday.

Tk 62 lakh Japanese grant for arsenic mitigation

UNB, Dhaka

Japan will provide a grant worth Tk 62 lakh to a Bangladesh NGO for implementing a project on arsenic-free safe water.

To this effect, Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue signed a grant contract amounting to 89,626 US dollar (approximately Tk 62 lakh) with SMA Rashid, Executive Director of NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, yesterday.

Ryuji Ogata, Arsenic Mitigation Adviser of the ministry of LGRD and Co-operatives and an expert of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Bangladesh, was also present at the signing ceremony.

The NGO Forum will utilise the grants to implement a project titled "Implementation of Arsenic-Free Safe Water in selected villages of Jhikorgacha upazila in Jessore" for improving the level of awareness among arsenic-affected people.

With the assistance, the NGO will conduct appropriate diagnosis and rehabilitate the arsenic-affected patients.

Ex MP Prof Khorshed Alam passes away

BSS, Dhaka

Prof M Khorshed Alam, a former lawmaker, died of old age complications at Comfort Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 86, said a press release.

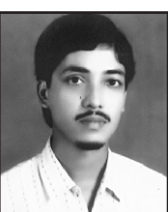
He left behind four sons, five daughters, grandchildren and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

The first namaj-e-janaza of Khorshed Alam was held in Comilla. He was buried at his family graveyard following the second namaj-e-janaza at his village Kharera under Kashba upazila in Brahmanbaria.

Prof Alam was elected member of the parliament in 1973. Earlier, he was elected member of the Pakistan National Assembly in the 1970 general elections from Comilla Sadar constituency.

He was also a member of the Constituent Assembly of Bangladesh.

Md Abdul Hamid



Md Abdul Hamid, principal officer of Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, Anderkilla Branch, Chittagong, passed away yesterday due to brain tumour at the age of 40, says a press release.

He left behind two daughters.

Doa Mahfils for the salvation of the departed soul were held at the head office and all the branches of the bank yesterday.

DHAKA

TODAY

Cultural function

Fisheries Directorate of Fisheries and Livestock Ministry organises a cultural function on the last day of Jatka Protection Week 2007. Venue: Shishu Academy auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Recitation

Bangladesh Abridged Samannaya Parishad organises 'Waheedul Haque Jatiya Shishu Abridged Utsav '07'. Venue: Public Library auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Art exhibition

An art exhibition by Wakilur Rahman, organised by Shilpangan, will begin. Venue: Shilpangan Contemporary Art Gallery. Time: 5:00pm. The exhibition will run till March 31 everyday from 10:00am to 01:00pm and from 05:00pm to 09:00pm.

Book launch

Khelar Bhuvan, a sports fortnightly, will launch two book titled 'Cricket Fact Book' and 'Bangladesh in World Cup'. Venue: Jatiya Krira Parishad. Time: 3:00pm.

WEATHER

TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country having chances of rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

Highest temperature 33.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 15.1 degree Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:08pm and rises at 6:06am 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	29.8	19.4	56	54
Chittagong	32.2	20.3	44	59
Rajshahi	29.6	17.4	91	45
Khulna	30.0	19.0	75	64
Barisal	31.0	17.6	58	58
Sylhet	30.5	18.4	98	54
Cox's Bazar	33.0	22.0	45	50