

# Promote women's leadership for their empowerment

## Speakers tell convention of women leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a convention yesterday called for establishing leadership of men and women on equal footings for a better future of the

country.

The first national convention of women leaders was held at the auditorium of the social service department in the city under the

banner of 'Bikoshito Nari Network'.

A total of 300 women leaders at grassroots level from across the country took part in the convention.

The Hunger Project has been

working with these women with a view to build up a self-reliant Bangladesh.

These women leaders are already engaged in income-generating programmes and social reformation.

At the same time they are preparing themselves as leaders to take strong stand in decision-making process at local and national level.

They also vowed to become self-reliant and work as pressure group to resist dowry, early marriage and dropout of girl students from educational institutions.

Inaugurating the convention, eminent litterateur Selina Hossain said the issue of leadership is closely related to women's empowerment.

She however said the progress that the country made under the women's leadership in last 15 years is questionable.

Selina urged all to use the power appropriately and remove patriarchal mentality from the society.

"We, who are leading the women's rights movement, have failed to realise our demands although we are struggling for a long time," writer and researcher Maleka Begum said, adding that women are still the victims of dowry-related violence.

Speaking as chief guest, eminent economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmed said women should be given complete independence in taking decisions.

"A flock of confident women leaders at grassroots level has been working to change the state and position of women in society and it is not NGO activities at all, rather it is a concerted effort," said Prof Badiul Alam Majumder, global vice-president and country director of The Hunger Project.

Former director general of the Directorate of Women Affairs Nilufer Begum, cultural activist Afroza Banu, Executive Director of For You Forever Rehana Siddiqui and women leader Tazima Hossain Majumder were present at the convention.



PHOTO: STAR

Eminent litterateur Selina Hossain inaugurates the first national convention of women leaders at Agargaon in the city yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Energy, Science and ICT Adviser Tapan Chowdhury speaks at a seminar titled 'Promotion of biotechnology in Bangladesh: National and international perspective' at Sasakawa auditorium of ICDDR,B at Mohakhali in the city yesterday.

## Poetry festival begins in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A two-day Regional Poetry Recitation Festival 2007 began at Chashara in the district yesterday morning.

Language Movement veteran poet Mahbub-UI-Alam inaugurated the festival at Shaheed Zia Hall.

Presided over by Intekhab Hossain, the inaugural session was addressed by litterateur Hasan Azizul Haq, Samannaya Parishad President Asaduzzaman Noor, General Secretary Ahkamullah, former president Bhaswar Bandopaddhay, festival celebration committee's convener Rafiur Rabbi and member secretary Dipak Bhowmik.

A total of 13 organisations from Dhaka, Mymensingh and Narayanganj districts are participating at the festival.

## 90pc tubewell water contains unacceptable level of arsenic

### Experts tell conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 90 percent of the tubewells across the country providing 97 percent of drinking water contain unacceptable level of arsenic, said the experts at a conference yesterday.

The three-day international conference on 'Promotion of biotechnology in Bangladesh: National and international perspectives' began at Sasakawa auditorium of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) in the city.

"Arsenic concentrations in drinking water in Bangladesh have been found to be higher than World Health Organisation (WHO) recommended standards of .01 mg per litre. Several recently con-

ducted surveys showed that about 90 percent tubewells were found to contain unacceptable levels of arsenic ranging from .05 to 3.0 mg per litre," said AK Azad Chowdhury, professor of pharmacy department of Dhaka University, while speaking at the second session of the conference.

"Around 75 million people are exposed to the risk of chronic arsenic poisoning, many of them showing early changes in skin and arsenic accumulation in scalp hair and finger nail," said Prof Azad, while presenting the keynote paper on 'Biotechnology to solve some local health problem: Arsenicosis, Molecular characterisation of Pathogens, Emergence of Multi Drug Resistance and Development of Drugs for Multi-drug Resistant Pathogens'.

He said arsenic is known to cause severe adverse effects on human health including cancers of the skin and urinary bladder.

At the conference, eminent national and foreign biotechnologists shared their research data and views especially in the field of health and agriculture.

The participants said modern biotechnology has opened up a wide range of opportunities for the development of new and good types of crops, improvement of farming and controlling pests and diseases through enhanced genetic resistance and use of bio-control agents.

Around 300 renowned and young scientists from public and private organisations of home and abroad are taking part in the conference.11