

# 'Enforce birth registration law to prevent child marriage'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday called for strict enforcement of birth registration law in order to prevent child marriage.

They also underscored the need to enact a law that will not permit registration of marriage without the bride and bridegroom having birth registration certificates.

They also identified the absence of the rule of law and the degradation of social and moral values as major obstacles to preventing child marriage.

South Asia Partnership (SAP)-Bangladesh organised the national workshop titled 'The role of marriage registrars and matchmakers to prevent child marriage' at Cirdap auditorium in the city under its project 'Women's rights' supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

Speaking as the chief guest, former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal stressed the need to establish a system to properly monitor the implementation of birth registration law.

Criticising the existing law regarding the prevention of child marriage, Sultana Kamal, also the executive director of Ain O Shalish Kendra, called for amendment to the law by incorporating provisions specifying the role of marriage

registrars in checking child marriage.

She also called for mobilising political will to ensure accountability and changing the mindset at all levels of society to this end.

Speaking as the special guest,

Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam underscored the need to recognise women's social and reproductive roles in order to safeguard their dignity.

Presenting the keynote paper,

Reazul Haque, coordinator of the project 'Women's rights', said the rate of child marriage in urban areas has come down due to advancement in society, but it is quite high in rural areas largely because of poverty and supersti-

tions.

According to a survey conducted by Steps Towards Development in 2005, one girl in every two and one boy in every 20 aged between 10 and 19 are married and the country ranks third in the world with regard to child marriage, he said.

Although the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) have been working to prevent child marriage, the rate has fallen by only two percent in the last 30 years, he quoted from the report.

He also pointed out that marriage registrars often cannot do anything to prevent child marriage in the absence of birth registration certificates.

Executive Director of Mass-line Media Centre Kamrul Hasan Monju suggested arranging training for

the marriage registrars and matchmakers to motivate them to prevent child marriage.

He also called for provision of tougher punishment in order to check child marriage.

Marriage registrars, UP chairmen and representatives from NGOs from the project areas took part in the workshop.

The speakers said marriage registrars and matchmakers must be accountable to the authorities for their action.

They also suggested incorporating the issue of child marriage into textbooks to make the children aware of its negative impacts.

Executive Director of Acid Survivors Foundation Monira Rahman and Prof Dr Sadeka Halim also spoke at the workshop.

## BDR-BSF border confce begins in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) began a three-day meeting at a hotel in the port city yesterday to discuss border issues.

SM Golam Rabbani, deputy director general of BDR, led the 11-member Bangladesh side while PK Mishra, inspector general of BSF of Assam-Meghalaya states, led the 15-member Indian team at the 'Border Coordination Conference'.

A wide range of bilateral issues, including smuggling of drugs and firearms from Indian border states through Bangla Bazar, Chhatak, Sylhet and others points, encroachment of land inside Bangladesh territory, trespassing, and killing of innocent Bangladeshi villagers, was discussed during the four-hour meeting on the first day, BDR sources said.

The Bangladesh side expressed concern at the prevailing tension in border areas in Mymensingh, Comilla, Sylhet, Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Sunamganj, they added.

After the meeting, the Indian delegation left for Cox's Bazar on a visit. They will return to Chittagong today and attend a dinner hosted by BDR at Foy's Lake, sources said.

## Youth found dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police recovered the body of an unidentified young man from a paddy field at Badda in the city yesterday.

The hands and legs of the victim, aged around 30, were tied and his head bore marks of injuries, the police said.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

The police suspect that criminals might have dumped the body on to the field after killing him somewhere else.



Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal speaks at a workshop at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right are Kamrul Hasan Monju and Prof Dr Sadeka Halim.

## 2 listed criminals held in city: 4 firearms seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized four firearms and arrested two listed criminals in separate raids in the city yesterday.

A team of Rab-10 raided Rokeya Kindergarten School at Sutrapur at 2:10am and retrieved two foreign pistols, one foreign revolver, a cut rifle, two pistol magazines and seven bullets from beneath the floor of a schoolroom.

The raid was conducted following information from Mokter Hossain, an active member of an organised gang of criminals, Rab officials said.

After a weeklong intelligence, Rab arrested Mokter from Alamganj the same day.

In another raid, Rab-3 members arrested Golam Mostafa Pappu, 38, an accused in seven cases including murder and arms cases, from Ramna area.

## Arrest of Hajong leader's killers demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Hajong Unnayan Sangathan in a statement yesterday demanded arrest of the culprits responsible for the killing of Satyaban Hajong, former general secretary of the organisation, and their exemplary punishment.

They also urged the government to take measures to stop repression on the ethnic minority communities.

The Sangathan will organise a memorial meeting at Durgapur today, marking the first death anniversary of Satyaban.

Satyaban was beaten to death by a gang of identified criminals on April 23 last year while he was going to his village home Laxmipur from Susong Durgapur, Netrakona.

Tushil Hajong, father of Satyaban, filed a case with Durgapur Police Station accusing Suruj Mia, Kazimuddin, Swapan Hajong and Suman Hajong in this regard. Now the case is under trial at the Netrakona district court.