

UN convention ratification to benefit 1.40cr people with disability

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations working with the persons of special needs hailed the decision of the government to sign and ratify the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disability (PWD).

The UN Convention on PWD was adopted at the 61st session of the General Assembly.

The convention was opened for signing and ratification by UN member countries from March 30 last.

Although a total of 81 countries including the EU signed the convention on the very first day, Bangladesh took the decision to sign and ratify it at a meeting of the Council of Advisers on April 28.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) yesterday, Chairperson of National Forum of Organisation Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) Monsur

Ahmed Chowdhury said the decision followed a meeting between the Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and a 12-member delegation of NFOWD on April 25.

Appreciating the decision, he urged the authorities concerned to take immediate initiatives for completing the ratification process of the convention.

In a written statement, Monsur said Jamaica is the first country to ratify the convention. Nineteen more ratifications are required for the convention to come into force, he added.

The 50-article convention highlights the inequality and indiscriminate PWD in education, employment, health, sports including social and political activities.

Speaking on the occasion AHM Noman Khan said that the government had been treating the persons

with special needs from the viewpoint of social welfare over these days.

But from the date of signing and ratifying the convention, the government will be accountable to the UN for the development of the condition of PWD, he added.

Action on Disability and Development Country Representative Mosharraf Hossain said the initiative will promote civic, social and economic rights of 1.40 crore people with disability in the country.

Besides, the decision to ratify the convention as the second country will raise the status of Bangladesh before the international body, he observed.

Mosharraf suggested the inclusion of disability issue in the recently proposed human rights commission to accelerate the implementation process of the

convention.

Talking to The Daily Star, Monsur Ahmed said in order to endorse the implementation process of the convention, a national level body titled 'Disability Rights Watch Group' will be formed comprising adviser of caretaker government, government official, lawyer, human rights activists and media personality. It will be led by NFOWD.

The watch group will start its operation as soon as the government sign and ratify the convention, he added.

The watch group will prepare reports addressing the condition of PWDs' education and employment including disadvantaged disabled women across the country and press the government to take initiatives for the development of their condition, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of National Child Task Force (NCTF) pose for photograph at The Daily Star office at Karwan Bazar in the city yesterday following a view exchange session with its Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam.

'Ban children's involvement in political programmes'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Involvement of children in political programmes should be totally banned.

This was the demand of a group of children who met Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam to share their bitter experiences with him at his office yesterday.

They said the political parties involve the children with their programmes alluring them to money, food and amusements.

In some cases they are also forced to attend the political rallies and processions, they added.

As a result, many children drop out of schools, run the risk of involving in criminal activities after being detached from families, and are often physically assaulted, they said.

Saiful Islam, 15, a street children, said, "Once a political leader tempted me to show film stars if I go with him with my friends, but when we went there we saw only some political leaders addressing some audiences, but no hero or heroine."

Shafiqul Islam Shafiq, 16, who hails from Kamalapur, said a political activist beat up and implicated one of his peers with a false case, as he did not join the procession.

He said in many cases the political leaders also threaten them with eviction from the slums if they do not join the procession and other political activities.

"Many children also participate in political programmes, as they are allured to taking part in picketing and vandalising," Shafiq added.

The children, belonging to National Child Task Force (NCTF), an organisation of children, said they would submit a memorandum to Election Commission today demanding formulation of laws to stop involvement of children in political programmes.

After listening to the children, Mahfuz Anam assured them that The Daily Star will promote children's rights.

NCTF members Mamun, Runu Akter, Shahidul Islam Shanta, Hosne Ara Akter, Shafiq, Merina Rahman Rima, Padma Rani Chowdhury, Raihan Ahmed, and Kanak Rahman Palash were present at the meeting.

Meanwhile a survey by NCTF finds that around 73 per cent of children participate in political activities as they are allured to money and food, while another 37 per cent children think that they take part in such programmes just for pleasure.

The study said 24 per cent children get involved in political activities out of dream to be a leader in future, while 23 per cent children to get familiarity in the area, 17 per cent to prove themselves important to others and another 11 per cent children participate out of their political leanings.

The NCTF conducted the survey on 664 children of 64 districts.

BSF returns body of Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned the body of a Bangladeshi after a company commander level flag meeting with Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday, BDR sources said.

The dead identified as Md Mozahar Ali, 36, son of Khoda Boksh of village Dharmapur under Biral upazila of Dinajpur was gunned down at Anayetpur border by the members of BSF of 116 Gobrahill camp in India in the early hours of Saturday, sources said.

The flag meeting was held at Anayetpur border under Biral upazila yesterday afternoon.

Later, the body was handed over to the victim's family members after autopsy at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

Iftekhar condemns attack on Pak interior minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday strongly condemned as cowardice the attack on Pakistan Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao.

"We grieve at the unnecessary deaths of so many innocent persons and pray for early recovery of those injured including Sherpao," he said in a statement.

The advisor said violence can only breed violence and such actions disrupting societies are absolutely abhorrent.

Another report adds: Iftekhar yesterday congratulated the new Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jie Chi on his recent appointment.

In a message to his Chinese counterpart Iftekhar said, "Bangladesh and China are the closest of friends and I have every confidence that we can work closely together to further strengthen this relationship in the times ahead."

Work according to STP for better city transport system

Brac University VC tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different government bodies should work in an integrated way according to the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) for a better transport system in Dhaka city to meet the future challenges in this sector.

Vice Chancellor of Brac University Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury said this yesterday while presenting the keynote paper on 'Strategic plan for development of transport system in Dhaka city'.

The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh organised the seminar at the Society auditorium in the city on the occasion of its 14th general meeting.

Prof Jamil, the head of the 32-member advisory team of STP, which is now awaiting government approval for its implementation, said it would be very hard to manage the traffic system in future if the bodies concerned do not work in an integrated way according to the

STP.

By the year 2024, the population of Dhaka Metropolitan City, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, Gazipur and Manikganj would be no less than 35.9 million while the population of Dhaka metropolitan city would be at least 20 million.

"So we need to think about the future transport system from now on," added Prof Jamil.

The STP was designed to let a lot of people commute together. Right now only eight percent of the Dhaka city surface area has road coverage, whereas in a modern city the figure should have been three-fold.

Citing STP, he said that six major roads were proposed to mitigate the transport problem. The first one would be from Uttara to Sayedabad via Kuri-Bishwa Road. According to the plan, there would be a lane dedicated to buses, he said.

Three metro rail roots have also been suggested inside the pro-

jected areas to meet the future challenge.

The STP was also designed for providing pedestrian safety, he said. About rickshaws, he said, they did not recommend withdrawal of rickshaws from the city.

"The facilities should increase in a way so that people do not want to ride on rickshaws," he said.

One of the major challenges at this moment is to build communications between eastern and western parts of the city. He stressed on enhancing the Bijoy Sarani with Tejgaon road and Panthapath with the Rampura bridge area through Hatirghel to resolve the problem.

He said different development partners, including World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB), were interested in implementing the STP.

A question-answer session followed the speech of Prof Jamil. Former vice chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed presided over the seminar.



PHOTO: STAR

Viewers admire the pictures on display at an exhibition on National Press Club premises in the city yesterday. Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust (COAST) organised the exhibition on the cyclone of April 29, 1991.

Recover mangrove forests to save coastal areas from disaster

Experts say at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Disaster management experts and environmentalists yesterday demanded that the government recover all the mangrove forests grabbed by various quarters in the coastal areas since the independence of the country.

They said a committee should be formed to investigate such cases and punish all the land grabbers and government officials, who were involved in destroying the forests and hills illegally.

The observations came at a seminar on 'Role of Mangrove Forest in Natural Disasters: Potentials and Threats' organised by Coastal Association for Social Transformation (COAST) Trust at the National Press Club in the city.

The seminar was organised to mark the devastating cyclone on April 29 in 1991 in the southern part of the country that killed around 1.40 lakh people and destroyed resources of thousands of crores of taka.

Speakers said the mangrove forest, which could be a major protection for the 19 coastal districts from major natural disasters, is under tremendous threat for extensive shrimp cultivation, its excessive

use in agricultural activities, salinity and industrialisation.

Coast Coordinator Mahmud Selim in his keynote presentation said mangrove forest functions as a safety net for the coastal zones by weakening the speed of typhoon or tsunami, but unfortunately such ecosystem is being destroyed in the coastal zones leaving more than three crore people under serious threat.

Around 4.5 lakh Sundari trees in the Sundarbans have become sick, while petroleum materials discharged by engine boats and ships are threatening its eco-system. On the other hand, cutting trees illegally and cultivating in the forestland and shrimp cultivation are speeding up the deforestation, he said.

Mahmud Selim said land grabbers have totally destroyed the mangrove forest at Galdia Island of Cox's Bazar for shrimp cultivation, and over 6000 hectare of mangrove forest at Chokoria have already been destroyed.

"The whole Sundarbans might go under water due to sea level rise, as the scientists said it will increase by 4 to 26 inches in the next 100 years," he noted.

The keynote presentation, therefore, suggested a green safety

net by preserving and developing the mangrove forest in the coastal zone and more forestation in the areas by including it under the budget.

According to Bangladesh Coastal Zone Policy 2005, the government should undertake a forestation programme, but there is no such programme under the forest department.

Mahmud Selim said the people of the coastal zone should be involved in creating awareness on maintaining the mangrove forest, impose ban on any new shrimp cultivation project in such land, and give budgetary allocation for creating mangrove forest.

Chittagong University Prof Tofael Ahmed said an integrated plan of action should be taken in the coastal zone to prevent the production of salt and shrimp cultivation and to preserve mangrove forest.

Former minister AKM Jahangir Hossain said the Sundarbans might be destroyed in the next 20 years due to lack of sweet water.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal leader ASM Abdur Rab attended the seminar as chief guest while Aminur Rasul Babul of Coast and former lawmaker Begum Tasmin Rana also spoke on the occasion.

Kidnapped boy rescued in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A boatman's intelligence helped police rescue a kidnapped boy in the port city yesterday.

Police also arrested the kidnappers- Sujan, 25, and Md Hannan, 23, both hailing from Chakhlil of Noakhali, and Rasel, 24, of Ranganj under Laxmipur.

The rescued boy identified as Monwar Hossain Babu, 15, son of Md Abul Kashem, is a resident of Agrabad Bahutala Colony under Double Mooring Police Station.

Sources said Sujan along with his two friends Hannan and Rasel kidnapped Monwar from outside the Bahutala Colony at around 9:30pm on Saturday when the victim went out of his house for a walk.

They took him to Karnaphuli river, got on a hired boat and phoned Monwar's parents demanding a ransom of Tk 10 lakh or they will slaughter the boy, threatened the criminals.

On information, police raided different city areas on Saturday night.

Officer in-charge of Double Mooring PS Khandaker Rezaul Karim said the kidnappers changed their destinations several times when they contacted victim's parents over phone and we also raided the areas the whole night but could not trace them.

Then the boatman helped us rescue the boy, he said.

Quoting the boatman, the OC said hearing the conversation of the kidnappers the boatman cleverly managed to bring the boat to the bank near Banglabazar area of West Madarbari at around 4:30am and contacted police over phone.

Police arrested Sujan and rescued the victim from the boat at around 5:00am.

Acting on the confession of Sujan, police arrested Rasel and Hannan from Goshaldanga of Barik Building area and Nintala respectively.

Obituary

Ashrafur Rahman (Munna), son of late Wing Commander (Retd) Badiur Rahman, passed away in Moscow, Russia.

on April 23, says a press release.

His body will reach Zia International Airport by an Emirates flight at around 9.00am tomorrow.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Gulshan Azad mosque after Asr prayers the same day.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the janaza.

Prof Abu Hanifa

Prof Abu Hanifa, a teacher of Khulna Shaheed Suhrawardy College and a leader of Bangladesh College Teacher's Association (BCTA), passed away due to prolonged illness at his residence in Khulna on Friday night at the age of 57, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a son.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Gopalpur village at Kotalipara upazila on Saturday.

Death anniversary

Today is the first death anniversary of Prof Husna Banu Khanam, former senate member of Dhaka University (DU), teacher of Home Economics College and principal of Ikbana School, says a press release.

Relatives, friends, admirers and colleagues have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Adolescent empowerment project changes lives of thousands

Says Baseline Survey Report

Thousands of adolescents across the country have been equipped with knowledge on social issues and life skills-based education through the 'Kishori Abhijan' project supported by the UNICEF.

This was one of the main findings announced at the formal launching of the Kishori Abhijan project's Baseline Survey Report at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday, says a press release.

The baseline survey, undertaken between November 2006 and January 2007, was conducted jointly by the Johns Hopkins University, Centre for Communication Programmes, and a local research agency SURCH.

It is aimed to measure the social and behavioural aspects of the Kishori Abhijan project which includes child marriage, birth registration, dowry, HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and drug abuse.

The five-year project, covering

27 districts and aiming to serve 600,000 adolescents including 50,000 boys, looks to improve the quality of life of vulnerable adolescents by empowering them to participate in decisions that affect their lives through education, livelihood strategies and increasing the age of marriage.

The Baseline Survey found that domestic violence against adolescents is still pervasive with self-reporting of physical abuse above 75 per cent among adolescent boys and above 50 per cent among girls of the same age group.

Moreover, among the country's 28 million adolescents aged between 10 and 19, gender discrimination and child marriage are still prevalent and has life-long damaging consequences.

Prof Israth Shameem, president of the Centre for Women and Children Studies, and Judith Allen Graeff, programme communication officer of UNICEF, took part in the discussion.

Ghasan Khalil, chief of the

Protection Section, also spoke on the occasion.

Through using a peer education approach, the Kishori Abhijan project aims to help such vulnerable adolescents become active agents of social change and create a supportive environment, especially for adolescent girls' development at the household and community levels.

The project is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, national and international NGOs including Brac, CMES and Save the Children.

European Commission is the primary funding agency.

In Bangladesh, adolescents constitute 22 percent of the population. Among them 13.8 million are girls.

Given the socio-cultural environment of pervasive gender discrimination, girls are treated differently from birth, resulting in inequalities of nutrition, health, education and financial status, the release added.

Appeal for help



Mamun Hasan, a meritorious student of class nine, is suffering from kidney disease, says a press release.

Both of his kidneys have stopped functioning, and he is now undergoing hemodialysis thrice a week which costs around Tk 5000.

The doctor treating Mamun has advised for kidney transplantation which will cost a total amount of Tk 500,000.

He is the only child of his poor parents who are not in a position to manage such a huge amount of money.

So they have appealed to generous people of the society to provide financial assistance to save his life.

Mamun is now receiving treatment at Shefa Hospital, House-33, Road-12, Nikunjo-2, Dhaka. Phone No 8931019.

Contributions can be sent to Md Najim Uddin (Father), Sonali Bank Uttara Model Town Branch, Dhaka.

Savings Account No - 002114434.

The mobile phone number of Najim is 01719-527137.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 22.0 degree Celsius at Patuakhali.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.26pm today and rises at 5:25am 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	33.5	24.2	63	51
Chittagong	33.0	25.4	63	61
Rajshahi	36.8	22.6	64	50
Khulna	35.4	22.6	76	54
Barisal	34.5	23.3	72	69
Sylhet	34.3	23.2	64	53
Cox's Bazar	32.7	23.4	63	59