

Women deprived for lack of political empowerment

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women are deprived of their rights and other facilities mainly for lack of political empowerment, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said patriarchal attitude and lack of political commitment are keeping women behind though they have advanced much in education, health and economic activities during the last couple of years.

The roundtable titled 'Women's Political Empowerment' was organised jointly by Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujon) and Girl Child Advocacy Forum at the National Press Club in the city.

While moderating the programme, Dr Maleka Begum said women empowerment is not an issue of women only, rather it includes the total situation of the country.

Party, politics and globalisation are womanising the women, she added.

In his keynote paper, Dr Badiul Alam Majumder said political empowerment of women is important for two reasons.

"Firstly, it will ensure women's equal opportunity and secondly it will reduce poverty," he said.

Stressing the need for women's significant representation in parliament Dr Badiul proposed a rotational system where one-third seats

would be reserved for women and they must be elected directly by people's vote.

He said only women should be qualified for contesting the reserve seats and they will also get opportunity to contest the general seats outside the reserved ones.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) said lack of security hinders women empowerment.

"Social change is necessary for women's empowerment," he added.

Prof Ahmad said if the participation of women could be ensured in local government, it would speed up their empowerment.

Dr Hamida Hossain stressed the need for participation of women in

every institution.

Women should be empowered from grassroots level where there should be women vice-chairman in every union, said Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury.

Some speakers said political parties must be forced by promulgating ordinances for ensuring significant representation of women in political parties.

Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque, GM Qader of Jatiya Party, Prof Latifa Akand, Columnist Syed Abul Moksud, Hazera Sultana of Workers' Party and representatives from different non-government organisations also spoke.

EXTORTION CASE

Karwan Bazar trader sues

ex-works secy, two others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

One of the businessmen of Karwan Bazar filed an extortion case against former housing and public works secretary and two others with a Dhaka court yesterday.

The accused are former housing and public works secretary Kamrul Islam Siddiqui, former executive engineer Matiuir Rahman Mollah and former assistant secretary of the housing and public works ministry Khizir Ahmed.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mojibul Haq directed Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Tejgaon Police Station to take legal action against the accused after an investigation into the matter.

In his complaint, Abdus Shukur Prodhan mentioned that he along with 12 other businessmen took three plots at Karwan Bazar area from Rajdhani Unnayan Katipakha (Rajuk) and have been running their business peacefully.

An unknown man, identifying himself as a messenger of the aforesaid accused had earlier asked the complainant and others to give Tk 50 lakh as extortion, otherwise they will have to vacate the plots.

But the complainant and others did not pay heed to them, as there was a status quo of the High Court over the plots. But the accused had evicted them from the plots violating the court order at about 9:30am on June 28, 2001, the complainant said.

Hasina visits Tungipara today

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will visit her ancestral home at Tungipara in Gopalganj district today.

She will offer munajat at the grave of her father Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina will return to the capital tomorrow.



PHOTO: STAR

While the country observes 'World Day Against Child Labour' today, this 12-year-old boy continues to do a risky job as a helper of an auto-tempo. This picture was taken in Gulistan yesterday.

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR TODAY

'Incorporate child labour issue into nat'l agri policy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The issue of child labour should be incorporated into the national agriculture policy to effectively combat it as 56 percent of the child labour are in the agriculture sector, said child rights activists yesterday.

The issue has come to the forefront as the nation observes today and the theme of the day is 'Harvest the Future: Agriculture Without Child Labour.'

Leaders of non-government organisations working to protect child rights urged the caretaker government to finalise the national child labour policy immediately and form a special task force to take stern action against hazardous child

labour.

"Thousands of boys and girls aged 5-14 work as child labourers on farms and plantations across the country. They are often exposed to hazards and risks as they mix, handle and apply toxic pesticides, use dangerous cutting tools, work in extreme temperatures and operate powerful farm vehicles and heavy machinery," said AR Chowdhury Ripon, executive director of Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) at a press conference in the city.

He also said that the caretaker government should take measures to enact special laws on child labour.

SM Morshed, vice-chairperson

of OSHE, said the total number of child labour in the country is 3.18 million and 56 percent of them are working in agriculture sector.

"We should give priority to the agriculture sector and take some measures to curb the child labour because the highest number of child labour are working in this sector," he said.

In another press conference, leaders of Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BSAF) said attempts by government and non-government organisations to curb child labour have failed due to poverty and social ignorance.

They also said that political commitment and the formulation of a national child labour policy are

essential to eliminate hazardous child labour.

"According to a survey conducted by International Labour Organisation (ILO), Bangladeshi children are working in 438 types of jobs," said Wahida Banu, chairperson of BSAF.

She also said it is time to give attention to rural child labour because the rural children cannot attend school for their involvement in farm work.

AS Mahmud, project co-ordinator of BSAF, stressed the need to raise awareness and provide vocational training and informal education for working children and microcredit for the parents.

Provide subsidy directly to farmers

Speakers say at workshop

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a workshop here yesterday underscored the need for providing subsidy directly to farmers, using power tillers and threshing machines, for enhancing agriculture production in the country.

For optimum use of the subsidy being provided to the agriculture sectors, the speakers suggested devising comprehensive modalities with strict monitoring mechanism and issuance of entitlement cards to the beneficiaries.

The daylong national workshop titled 'Strengthening agriculture, mechanisation: Policies and implementation strategies' was organised by Agriculture Engineering Department in the conference room of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) at Farmgate in the city.

Agriculture Secretary Mohammad Abdul Aziz spoke at the inaugural session as the chief guest with BARC Executive Chairman Mohammad Nurul Alam in the chair.

Vice Chancellor of Jessore Science and Technology University Prof Rafiqul Islam Sarker presented the keynote paper while Prof ATM Ziauddin of Bangladesh Agriculture University, Director General of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) Mohammad Harun-Rashid and General Secretary of Agriculture Machinery Manufacturers' Association Mohammad Jahangir Hossain also discussed.

Mohammad Abdul Aziz underscored the need for establishing a national centre on agriculture machinery for development, testing and evaluation to serve the needs of the public and private sectors.

He also disagreed with the notion that developed agro-mechanisation might affect the country's labour intense and said it would rather reduce production cost and increase employment in the non-farm sector.

Prof Rafiqul Islam Sarker gave a set of policy recommendations, including providing technical support and tax relief to imported raw materials of agriculture machinery to reduce dependence on foreign machines and fuels, to create employment and to help growth of economy.

He said every year a large number of power tillers and small diesel engines are being imported mainly from China. A feasibility study should be undertaken soon to see the benefits of establishing at least two joint venture industries for production of power tillers and small diesel engines

at home, he said.

Prof Sarker called for formulating a comprehensive agriculture mechanisation policy and establishing a high level advisory committee on agricultural mechanisation issues and policies.

Adequate funds should be provided to capable institutions for research, development and extension works and an agriculture machinery database must be prepared to facilitate the research work, he recommended.

Later, four papers on different issues of agriculture mechanisation were presented at the technical session.

More than 60 high officials of different departments of Ministry of Agriculture, experts of agriculture research institutions, universities and representatives of NGOs and private enterprises attended the workshop.



PHOTO: STAR

Trees near the mathematics department on the Dhaka University campus are being felled to make room for a new building.

PROF TAHER MURDER

Charge framing deferred again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

Public safety tribunal and special sessions judge court of Rajshahi district yesterday deferred again the charge framing in the Prof S Taher Ahmed murder case until June 13.

Meanwhile, the key suspect and Rajshahi University (RU) Shibir President Mahbubul Alam Salehi submitted a prayer to the court seeking acquittal from the murder charge.

Framing of charges in the case was scheduled to be held yesterday. But the date was shifted following a time petition of Saiful Islam Shelly, lawyer of another suspect Dr Mia Mohammad Mohiuddin.

Earlier on June 11, the court deferred framing of charges despite schedule.

The court will hear on Salehi's prayer on the next charge framing date.

Prof Taher, a teacher of RU geology and mining department was killed on February 1, 2006 and his body was recovered from a sewer behind him residence on RU campus.

One arrested in NCC Bank robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police have arrested a criminal allegedly involved in a sensational robbery in the city in which the son of an army officer was killed on May 24.

Sirajul Islam was arrested from Gosairhat in Shariatpur and placed on a five-day remand on June 5.

Police also seized one of the two motorbikes used in the robbery from Radio Colony in Savar following his confessional statement.

Sirajul also disclosed the names of five other members of the gang, said Abdul Jalil, joint commissioner of Detective and Crime Intelligence Department, during a press briefing in his office yesterday.

He said, of the five Sirajul identified two as members of their gang from the video footage of the closed-circuit television camera of NCC Bank at Satmasjid Road in Dhanmondi.

"We have identified the snatchers including their ring leader and we hope to capture them soon," added Abdul Jalil.

AHM Arefin Alam Rusho, a fresh BBA graduate from North South University and son of Lt Col AHM Shafikul Alam and Lt Col Dr Ambory Begum, was shot dead while he along with his would-be wife and father-in-law Joyanal Abedin were returning after withdrawing Tk 4.45 lakh from the bank.

PROPOSED BUDGET

2 committees to consider public opinions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Finance has formed two committees to consider public opinions over the proposed budget for 2007-08 fiscal year.

Besides, the finance ministry yesterday also approved allocation of Tk 90 crore to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) to import four major essential items.

The two committees headed by an additional secretary of finance ministry and economic adviser of finance ministry will separately consider the views regarding tax issues and non-tax issues.

A total of 10 sub-committees have also been formed which will evaluate the public opinions.

Finance ministry sources said they received 300 recommendations through e-mails till yesterday and people will get the chance to send their opinions till June 15.

The sub-committees will examine sector-wise recommendations and then the two core committees will forward all recommendations to the finance adviser.

"The proposed budget will be revised following the recommendations of the committees", said Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam at the secretariat yesterday.