

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 Nagarik (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 Badui 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 Badui 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 Zafarullah 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 Mokshed, Hazera Sultan of Workers' Party and representatives from different non-government organisations also spoke.



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

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 Matiur 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 Prodhon mentioned that he along with 12 other businessmen took three plots at Karwan Bazar area from Rajdhani Unnayan Katripaka (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.

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.

athome 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.

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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 is 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.

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.

Australia to help boost agri edn in Bangladesh

In recognition of Bangladesh's pressing development needs, Australia will increase its aid programme by 40 per cent in 2007-08.

This was stated by Bruce Davis, director general of Australian Government's aid agency AusAID at the signing ceremony of an agreement in Raiganj on Sunday, says a press release.

Davis was in Raiganj to observe Australian aid programmes and sign a Tk 336 million (A\$6 million) agreement with UNICEF for primary education.

"While Bangladesh has made remarkable progress, much work remains to be done. Our

expanded assistance will focus on critical unmet needs for basic education and maternal and child health," he added.

Signing on behalf of UNICEF, Representative Louis-Georges Arsenault said UNICEF is very pleased to receive this additional funding.

He said Australia's support will provide in-service training to 160,000 teachers, allow development of participatory plans for 3500 schools, and help bring thousands of disadvantaged children into the school system.

"Besides, Australia's funding

will expand our Meena TV programmes, which help raise nationwide awareness of education and other important issues relating to girls' development," he added.

In 2007-08, Australia's aid programme to Bangladesh is expected to reach A\$ 47.6 million which was A\$33.9 million in 2006-07.

The increase in Australia's aid for Bangladesh reflects the Australian Government's aim of doubling its global aid flows to around A\$4 billion annually by 2010.

Australia will support the government's Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-II) for three years under this agreement.

PEDP-II aims at ensuring quality primary education for all children in Bangladesh through increasing primary school access, participation and completion.

It was launched in September 2004 by the government and is a coordinated and integrated sub-sector-wide programme with technical and financial assistance from a consortium of 11 donors.

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.

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.



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 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 Mahabubul 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 Mosharraf Hossain.

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

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 Sharailpur 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 wife and father-in-law Joynal Abedin were returning after withdrawing Tk 4.45 lakh from the bank.