

WAR OF LIBERATION

Recognise role of women to give history a new dimension

Academics, freedom fighters tell publication ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The history of the liberation war will remain incomplete if the contribution of women to independence is not fully recognised, academics and freedom fighters said at a publication ceremony yesterday.

Their accounts should be documented to give the history of the war a new dimension, as women's role was no less important than men's, they said.

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Muktijuddho 1971: Nari, Prottokkhorshori O Angshogrohonkarir Bibaran' (three parts) and its English edition titled 'History from Below 1971: Accounts of Participants and Eyewitnesses' was held at Begum Sufia Kamal auditorium of the National Museum in the city.

Shamsunnahar, a social activist, unveiled the cover of the book at the ceremony.

The Centre for Research on Liberation War of Bangladesh published the books sponsored by Citibank NA and supported by The Daily Star. Dr Sukumar Biswas com-

piled and edited the books.

"The liberation war was actually a war of the people and men and women took part in it directly or indirectly, but the contribution of women was not portrayed properly," said Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, chairman of the Trust for Research on Liberation War of Bangladesh.

The professor, who presided over the discussion, said the books, which contain the accounts of experiences of 113 women during the liberation war, would help write the true history of the war.

Novelist and researcher Selina Hossain said women were everywhere – at home, in camps and battlefield – during the war in 1971, but war literature only reflected the contribution of men.

The new generation, however, is now capable of protesting the distortion of history, she said, adding that Tahmima Anam, who wrote a novel on the liberation war in English, is only one example.

Appreciating the English edition of the book, she said this would stop the misinterpretation of the war that it was

merely a civil war and internal conflict.

Selina, who also wrote novels based on the liberation war, said the newly published books contain a lot of new elements of the history. They analysed the situation of the confined and occupied Dhaka during the war, she noted.

"The (political) leaders should never say that women have lost their 'jijai' (chastity) during the liberation war, because tortures like rape and so on were war crimes. Rather, they fought to snatch victory," Selina said.

Eminent rights activist Dr Hamida Hossain said it was a fight for women to cope in the families and communities during the war and that was part of their fight. War does not mean only fighting with arms, she noted.

"If we can revive memories through oral history, we can also learn the values of humanity during the war," she noted, urging all to make more publicity of such books both at home and abroad so that misconception about the war could be eliminated.

Speaking on the occasion, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, expressed grati-

tude to Sukumar Biswas for the book.

It was a reflection of narrowness of men that the contribution of women to the liberation war has not been portrayed properly, he said, adding that the attitude of men towards women should be changed.

"Our challenge is to stop distortion and destruction of the liberation war history," he said, urging all to uphold the spirit of the war and transmit it from generation to generation. "Forgetting the war means our failure," he added.

The Citibank NA Acting Chief Executive Khandker Rashed Maksud pledged to contribute to upholding the core spirit of the nation and said it is necessary to take steps so that the new generation could also learn more about the war.

Assistant Editor of the daily Prothom Alo Mashiul Alam said the history of the country will turn into myths after one hundred years if the governments continue to distort and use the history of the liberation war for their partisan interests.

Researcher and social worker Meghna Guhathakurata said war means occupation and silence, the experience of which can effectively painted only by the women who found it challenging to maintain normalcy in families and communities during the war.

Moyeedul Hasan, member director, Trust for Research on Liberation War, and writer Zobaida Nasreen also spoke at the discussion moderated by prof Qazi Madina.



Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka unveils the plaques marking the renaming of two city roads as Kazi Motahar Hossain Sarak at Segunbagicha, left, and Comrade Moni Singh Sarak at Paltan, right, yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Increase monthly allowance for persons with disabilities

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday urged the government to increase the number of disabled people receiving monthly allowances and the amount of the allowance in the budget for the fiscal year 2007-2008.

They also demanded prioritisation of education for the persons with disability and special employment opportunity for them.

The view exchange meeting titled 'National budget 2007-2008: Expectations and achievements of disabled people' organised by National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) was held at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city.

Speaking at the programme, NFOWD President Khandaker Jahurul Alam said that in the proposed budget the government has

decided to distribute Tk 220 per month to two lakh disabled persons of the country.

"We propose to increase the amount to Tk 300 per person and to increase the number of disabled persons to 3 lakh who would come under the government's safety net", he said adding "this would cost Tk 47.2 crore more from the national exchequer".

Regarding their employment, he said nothing was specifically mentioned in the proposed budget.

For the persons with disability, Bangladesh has an action plan and all the ministries should be properly incorporated in mainstreaming the disabled people.

He also said all kinds of instruments used by disabled people and the raw materials used for making these instruments should be exempted from tariffs.

Regarding their health, he said that in the proposed budget nothing

specific was mentioned. He also suggested setting up orthopaedic department in every district level hospital and appointing a physio-therapist in every upazila level hospital.

On housing and rehabilitation of disabled people, he said that in distributing khas land, they should get priority.

Terming the present government friendly to the issues of disabled people, he expressed hope that the caretaker government would take proper steps for mainstreaming their issues.

Khandaker Jahurul Alam chaired the programme while its Acting Secretary General M Khalilur Rahman, Director Dr Nafisur Rahman and Mahbub Kabir of ActionAid Bangladesh also spoke.

'Allocate funds for safe night shelters for street children'

INCIDIN Bangladesh, a national research-based private development agency, has called on the caretaker government to allocate adequate funds in the budget to establish safe night shelters for street children, says a press release.

The agency handed over a proposal in this regard to the office of finance and planning adviser yesterday.

The proposal was placed by AKM Mustaque Ali, an executive director of INCIDIN Bangladesh.

In the proposal, the agency has called on the government to set aside an allocation in the budget of 2007-08 for establishing safe night shelters in Dhaka and all other major cities.

It has categorically mentioned that if the government is willing to utilise the infrastructure already available at rail stations, bus and river terminals, bazars and the establishments which are left unutilised during night time (such as schools) or the khas properties, the budgetary allocation will not require any huge investment in the construction of infrastructure.

The allocation will be required to purchase minor logistics such as beds and cabinet, employment of a basic pool of social workers and setting up of a monitoring structure, it added.

INCIDIN Bangladesh has already formed a national alliance involving the representatives of government officials, children's organisations, NGOs and government agencies working on the issues concerning street children and development partners.

It also offered to extend all sorts of cooperation to any government initiatives in this regard.



PHOTO: STAR

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Muktijuddho 1971: Nari, Prottokkhorshori O Angshogrohonkarir Bibaran' (three parts) and its English edition titled 'History from Below 1971: Accounts of Participants and Eyewitnesses' was held in the city yesterday. From left are Khandker Rashed Maksud, Shamsunnahar Rahman, Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, Dr Hamida Hossain and Meghna Guhathakurata.

Hawlder joins as president's press secretary

UNB, Dhaka

Newly appointed President's Press Secretary Abdul Awal Hawlder joined his office at Bangabhaban yesterday.

Before joining the present post, Hawlder was the joint secretary at the planning ministry.

'Aquaculture activities can improve livelihoods of indigenous people'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fisheries and aquaculture activities can greatly help improve the livelihoods of indigenous people and ensure their food security, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

The ethnic communities are mostly underprivileged and are often neglected in mainstream development and poverty alleviation programmes, they said and called for ensuring their access to development

tools and technologies so that they can use the resources for productive purposes.

World Fish centre (Bangladesh and South Asia Office), Bangladesh Fisheries Research Forum (BFRF) and Caritas jointly organised the inception workshop on 'Fisheries and aquaculture enterprise development project for the Adivasi community in the northern and northwestern region of Bangladesh' in the city.

The European Commission is

funding the three-year project.

Speaking as the chief guest, Syed Ataur Rahman, secretary to the ministry of fisheries and livestock, said catching fish from wetlands has been part of the culture of ethnic communities in the country.

Since opportunities to gather food are diminishing, new approaches must be woven into the traditional and culture of Adivasi lifestyle to ensure food security, he added.

Stefan Frowein, ambassador and

head of the delegation of European Commission, said, "Though Bangladesh has made commendable progress in food production and in reducing food insecurity, a large number of people are still considered as ultra poor as they consume less than 1800 calories per day."

"Because of the socio-economic complexity and the prevailing levels of extreme poverty, ethnic communities have often been considered a group associated with a considerable risk in development cooperation," he observed.

For tribal communities, specific tailor-made development approaches are needed to overcome poverty, he added.

The present fisheries and aquaculture enterprise development project particularly targets ethnic communities with the aim to promote widespread adoption of appropriate aquaculture and fisheries management practices in order to improve both income as well as household food security, Frowein said.

Alan Brooks, regional portfolio director, World Fish Centre, Dr M Abdul Wahab, president of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Forum, Dr Anwara Bugum Shelly, director, Fisheries Programme, Caritas, Dr Binoy Kumar Barman, coordinator, World Fish centre, and Nazrul Islam, director general, Department of Fisheries, also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

NFOWD President Khandaker Jahurul Alam speaks at a view exchange meeting at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is M Khalilur Rahman and on his left is Mahbub Kabir.

Rezaunnabi RCC acting mayor

RU CORRESPONDENT

Ward Commissioner of ward no. 9 Rezaunnabi Dudu was made Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) acting mayor on Tuesday evening.

Rezaunnabi was made acting mayor after RCC Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu had been arrested and sent to jail on 30-day detention on Monday. He took office on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Norway Sand City met the acting mayor at RCC conference room yesterday.

The acting mayor apprised the delegation about Rajshahi metropolitan and city corporation and its activities while the delegation gave information about their activities in Bangladesh.

They also expressed satisfaction over the environment of Rajshahi, people's behavior and RCC activities.

Earlier, the team helped set up a cancer hospital and a research centre in Rajshahi.

