

# Lack of awareness slows down progress in birth registration

## Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The progress of birth registration is very slow in the country although birth registration certificate is very important in resisting early marriage, trafficking and child labour, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said only seven to 10 percent of the total population has been registered highlighting the on-going birth registration activities and its challenges.

The roundtable titled 'Birth registration in Bangladesh: Problems and responsibilities' was organised jointly by the Prothom Alo, Plan Bangladesh and the Unicef at a city hotel on the eve of the Universal Birth Registration

Daytomorrow.

The government is going to observe the day in a befitting manner to boost the programme that targets to cover 80 percent birth registration by December 2008.

The speakers said birth registration would help in formulating policy at regional and national level, conducting survey, controlling crime and bringing back the irregular migrants from abroad.

But the progress of birth registration is very slow in the country due to lack of manpower and awareness among the people, they added.

Publicity for birth registration is not enough to make people aware of it, said Chief Health Officer of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC)

Colonel Dr Mohammad Shawkat Ali, adding it would be tough to complete the work on time.

He said taskforce has been formed at central, zonal and ward level to boost the work and training of the trainers has also been completed.

Dr Shawkat said currently ten officers of DCC have been issuing birth certificates.

The registration is going on directly through schoolteachers and health and family welfare workers, he added.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, country director of Hunger Project, said the information that could be derived from birth registration will be helpful in preparing the voter list.

Terming the birth registration

form as unfriendly Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Shakhawat Hossain said it should be simplified.

There are around 50 lakh members of Ansars and Village Defence Parties (VDPs) who can assist in filling the birth registration forms, he said, adding that Upazila Health Complexes could be involved in this process.

He said the government hospitals should be authorised to issue birth certificate.

Speaking as chief guest LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Anwarul Iqbal Chowdhury said care should be taken so that the registration form is available in the web site.

He said a drive in the schools in this regard could be launched in January when the students generally get admission there.

Meanwhile, the religious leaders could be involved with this programme, he added.

Executive Director of Steps Towards Development Ranjan Karmakar said the on-going birth registration process should be acceptable to all to advance the programme.

"The rate of birth registration is insignificant as we could not prove it as essential for all," said Director General of Primary Education Asaduzzaman, adding that the process should be easier and concise.

The speakers said the positive sides of birth registration should be adequately publicised through electronic and print media.

A central database structure is also needed in this regard, they added.

Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, Azizur Rahman of Unicef, LGRD Secretary Safarraj, Fatema Yusuf of Centre for Policy Dialogue and Maj Gen Shafikul Islam were also present at the roundtable moderated by Joint Editor of the Prothom Alo Abdul Quaiyum.



PHOTO: STAR

Liberal Democratic Party President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury speaks at a discussion on political reforms at KC Memorial Clinic at Baridhara in the city yesterday.

## DU LIBRARY

# Automation programme yet to start functioning

KAMRUL HASAN KHAN

Much-talked-about Library Automation Programme at Dhaka University (DU) is yet to begin its operation, though the project was inaugurated more than eight years ago.

The Tk 1.11 crore project, aimed at computerising the library data systems and book exchange, was initiated in January 1998 with a fund from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). After over five years of the initiative, Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz inaugurated the programme on March 16 of last year without completion of the project.

Library authorities have blamed the teachers, students and researchers for non-cooperation in making the borrower's ID card, which is the first element to make the project successful.

"We have issued 10 notices so far to every department, institution and other concerns informing them of the project and how to make borrowers ID cards. But we have not received satisfactory responses from them," said Khandaker Fazlur Rahman, acting DU librarian (administration), who is also the member-secretary of the project's executive committee, while talking to The Daily Star.

"To date, only 1000 have got their ID cards. Of them, 800 are teachers," he added.

The automation of the library

input system would help about 32000 students, over 1500 teachers and around 1000 researches to have access to any books in a few seconds, which under the manual cataloguing system, takes up to two hours in the largest library of the country, said sources connected to the automation project.

Under the project, the users would need digitised borrower's identity card to find books at the library.

After inserting the ID card into a computerised device, the users

would be able to see the catalogue on the screen at the library counter.

But most of the students are still in the dark about the project, said a source, adding that they do not know the benefit of the system.

While talking to this correspondent, a number of students said they saw notices on boards but did not show interest to avoid hassles.

Some officials of the library said departments and institutes should encourage their students to get the ID cards.

The authorities also could not complete other preparations for the project such as transplanting barcode level of books containing an accession number and data entry for the main server.

To date, barcode levels have been transplanted to only 130000 books out of total 600000 books at two libraries, said Syeda Farida Parvin, acting librarian (planning and development).

She said data entry of books written in Bangla is not possible with the existing software.

VC Prof Faiz expressed his surprise that students and many teachers are not showing interest in getting the ID cards despite repeated notices from the library authorities.

"Library authorities will face problem if they do not cooperate. I'll discuss the issue in meeting with deans' committee and provosts' committee to find a way out of the problem," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Anwarul Iqbal Chowdhury speaks at a roundtable at a city hotel yesterday. On his left is LGRD Secretary Safarraj and on his right are Brig Gen (Retd) Shakhawat Hossain and Maj Gen Shafikul Islam.

## Rough ride for India's female presidential candidate

AFP, New Delhi

A 72-year-old woman aiming to become India's first female head of state is facing a tough battle in the race for the presidency, with her family under attack over a range of criminal charges.

Opposition groups led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have taken aim at Pratibha Patil, the candidate put forward by the Congress-led government to replace Abdul Kalam, who has said he will not seek re-election.

Patil, who was governor of Rajasthan state before entering the presidential fray, will face off with Vice President Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who is contesting the July 19 polls as an independent, with tacit opposition backing.

Political candidates in India -- and their families -- are expected to have impeccable reputations.

But Patil got a huge dose of bad press after a court in her home state of Maharashtra said last week that it would hear a case linking her husband D R Shekhawat to the suicide of a school teacher seven years ago.

Then, one of her brothers was connected to a murder in the same state. And the opposition charged that a bank she headed went under when her relatives defaulted on their loans.

Patil has brushed off the allegations, and has the backing of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh -- who described the charges as "mudslinging."

But the media have hit out at her surprise nomination, and analysts say her candidacy could be compromised.

"It's the first time a presidential candidate has faced such serious charges," said Kalim Bahadur, head of Central Asian Studies at India's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

TN Ninan, editor of the Business Standard, wrote: "For five long years, she will be a national embarrassment in a way that no president has so far been."

"And if the courts move against her close relatives in ongoing cases, her position will become untenable."

India's president plays a non-partisan role in what is largely a ceremonial post but can exercise crucial influence in government formation at state and federal levels, making the selection a hotly fought contest.

Presidents are elected through a secret ballot by an electoral college made up of local and federal lawmakers, and the BJP-led opposition hopes to take away Patil's votes by lashing out at her credentials.

# Extra-judicial killings fall by 27.1pc in last 6 months

## Says Odhikar report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of extra-judicial killings has fallen by 27.1 percent during the first six months of the current year in comparison to the number of the corresponding period of previous year, says a press release of a human rights organisation.

Odhikar said a total of 121 people were killed reportedly by the law enforcement agencies since January 1, 2007 while this number was 166 during the same period of 2006.

However, at least one people is falling victim to extra-judicial killing in every 36 hours, the report added.

Of the dead, 78 people were killed in incidents of 'crossfire' while 23 were tortured to death.

Odhikar called upon the caretaker government to set up an

independent judicial probe into the deaths and punishment to persons responsible for the killings.

In another press release, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) said a total of 69 people were killed in 'en-counter or crossfire' with Rapid Action Battalion in the last six months across the country.

A total of 298 women were raped during the same period and 40 of them were killed after rape. Four of the victims committed suicide, the press release added.

Some 159 women also fell victim to dowry, and 90 were killed for being unable to pay dowry.

Besides, 53 women fell victim to acid attack during the period, said the press release prepared on the basis of newspaper stories.

## Obituary



M u h a m a d Musharof Uddin Bhuiya, former president of Bangladesh Publishers' and Book Sellers' Association and founder of Chalanika Boighar, passed away due to stroke at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in the city on June 30 at the age of 72, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, four sons and one daughter to mourn his death.

All have been requested to pray for salvation of his departed soul.

## Abdur Rezzak Khan Milon



Abdur Rezzak Khan Milon, former joint secretary of Bangladesh Book Publishers and Sellers' Association, passed away due to liver cirrhosis at a city hospital on June 28 at the age of 55, says a press release.

He left his wife, two sons and host of relatives to mourn the death. He was laid to rest on the darga mosque premises in Sylhet.

## Death anniversary



Today is the sixth death anniversary of Dr Shibtosh Roy, an arsenic expert, says a press release.

Dr Shibtosh who worked at Dhaka Community Hospital was killed in a road accident at Taraganj in Rangpur.

On the occasion, Dhaka Community Hospital will organise elaborate programmes including doa, discussion and essay competition like previous years marking the day.

## Lions Foundation new chairman



Ln MA Matin has been elected chairman of Bangladesh Lions Foundation (BLF) for the year 2007-08 at its 31st annual general meeting recently, says a press release.

He is the immediate past district governor of Dist-315B3 and assistant managing director of Uttara Bank Ltd.



PHOTO: AL

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina offers munajat at the qulkhwani of Asia Khatun, sister of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, at her Banani residence in the city yesterday.

# Constitutional recognition of indigenous people demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion here yesterday demanded constitutional recognition of the indigenous people and establishment of their rights to land.

Adivashi Unnayan Sangstha (AUS) held the discussion at Rajshahi Zila Parishad auditorium to mark the 152nd anniversary of Santal Hool (revolution).

Earlier, the day began with a colourful rally that paraded different streets in Rajshahi city.

Eminent litterateur Prof Hasan Azizul Haq placed a wreath at a memorial of the Santal heroes along with hundreds of indigenous people in the morning.

They also observed a minute's silence and prayed for salvation of their departed soul.

AUS Executive Director Bhagabat Tudu read out a written statement and spoke on the Santal Hool at the discussion.

Prof Hassan Azizul Haq attended the discussion as the chief guest while indigenous leader Gabriel Hasda presided.

The speakers called upon all to generate a new revolution to establish their fundamental rights in the society.

They also urged the government to observe the day at national level and to ensure the rights of indigenous people to their land and language.

The speakers at the discussion also discussed the role of indigenous people in the War of Liberation.

Prof Chowdhury Julfikar Matin, indigenous leaders Everest Hembrom, Luich Murmu and Benjamin Hasda also spoke on the occasion.

Following the discussion, indigenous women performed a song in memory of Sidhu and Kanu, two brothers who spearheaded the Santal Hool.

A play titled Bhumi Kanya, based on the Tebhaga Movement and life and activities of Ila Mitra and directed by Prof Moloy Kumar Bhowmik, was also staged at Padma Mancha in Rajshahi.

## FALSE STATEMENT OF PROPERTY ACC files case against ex-Jamaat MP Shahjahan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) here yesterday filed a case against Shahjahan Chowdhury, former Jamaat-e-Islami MP from Satkania, on charge of submitting a false statement of property.

ACC Deputy Director Md Abul Kalam Azad filed the case with Bandar Police Station at around 7:00pm.

In his complaint, Azad alleged that the Jamaat leader, in a statement submitted to the ACC on February 20 this year, mentioned that he possessed property worth Tk 2.41 Lakh.

In the statement, Shahjahan also said that he imported a Land Rover Range Rover V-8 under the duty-free quota, but the agency concerned 'World Motors' did not hand it over to him due to his failure to pay in full the import value of the car that amounted to Tk 50 lakh.

Shahjahan also stated that his younger brother Shah Alam, an expatriate in America, had lent him Tk 20 lakh, but he could not manage the rest of the money.

But during an investigation, the ACC found that Shahjahan released the vehicle by paying Tk 50 lakh through opening an L/C with Mohakhali branch of Arab Bangladesh (AB) Bank in August 2006 and was using the vehicle for about one year.

## Call to announce 6th Wage Board Award soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (Skop) yesterday urged the caretaker government to announce the 6th Wage Board Award without further delay.

The Skop, a combined platform for journalists and employees in the newspaper industry, made the call at a meeting, with its co-convenor Mozammel Haque in the chair, says a press release.

The Skop leaders also hailed the caretaker government for withdrawing the full tariff on newsprint.

Skop leaders Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Fazle Imam, Ruhul Amin Gazi, Matiar Rahman Talukder, Abdul Jalil Bhuyian, Abul Hashem, Khairul Islam, Altaf Mahmud, Azizul Islam Panna, Omar Ferook and Sarder Farid Ahmad attended the meeting.

## RU pro-Jamaat teachers, staff ransack room of Islamic History deptt chairman

RU CORRESPONDENT

A group of pro-Jamaat teachers and staff of Islamic History and Culture department of Rajshahi University yesterday ransacked the room of the department chairman over its possession.

Campus sources said Professor Kazi Mustafizur Rahman took office as the department chair following the retirement of Dr Mukhlesur Rahman recently.

He also took possession of the room that belonged to Dr Mukhlesur after discussing it with other teachers of the department and put up his nameplate on the door of room no 212 at Shahidullah Arts Building on Saturday. Traditionally a senior teacher gets the possession of the room.

Hearing the news, Prof Yakub Ali, a pro-Jamaat teacher of the department, along with other junior teachers and staff ransacked the furniture of the room and replaced the nameplate with his own, a teacher of the department told newsmen.

Following the incident, heated words were exchanged between Prof Mustafizur Rahman and Prof Yakub Ali on the matter, sources said.

When contacted, Prof Mustafizur Rahman said 'I have already informed the vice-chancellor and other high officials about the matter.'

On the contrary, Prof Yakub Ali refused the allegation and said, 'I do not know who ransacked Prof Mustafizur's room and who put up my nameplate.'

A number of teachers of the department alleged that some pro-Jamaat teachers always tried to establish their supremacy in the department.

They also demanded exemplary punishment to the persons responsible.