

# 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 ongoing 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

Day tomorrow.

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) Shahkawat 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 ACM Badruddoza Chowdhury speaks at a discussion on political reforms at KC Memorial Clinic at Baridhara in the city yesterday.



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) Shahkawat 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 person is falling victim to extra-judicial killing in every 36 hours, the report added.

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 'encounter 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.

## Light to moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Khulna Barisal and Chittagong divisions, at many places over Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi division in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions, Met Office said in a forecast.

Day temperature may rise slightly over northern part and remain nearly unchanged elsewhere over the country.

Highest temperature 34.3 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 23.5 degree Celsius at Feni.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:50pm today and rises at 5:15am 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	31.6	25.3	97	76
Chittagong	30.4	25.2	75	89
Rajshahi	34.3	26.4	89	92
Khulna	31.2	27.1	92	95
Barisal	28.8	26.5	98	92
Sylhet	32.0	26.4	91	73
Cox's Bazar	28.7	24.0	92	97

## Obituary



Muhammed Musharof Uddin Bhuiya, former president of Bangladesh Publishers' and Book Sellers' Association and founder of Chalantika Boiagh, 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.

Chalantika Boiagh, 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

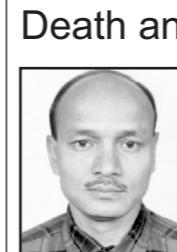


Abdur Rezzak Khan Milon, former joint secretary of Bangladesh Book Publishers' and Sellers' Association, passed away due to liver cirrhosis at a city hospital on June 28 at the age of 55, says a press release.

He left his wife, two sons and host of relatives to mourn the death.

He was laid to rest on the dargah premises in Sylhet.

## Death anniversary



Today is the sixth death anniversary of Dr Shibtosh Roy, an arsenic expert, says a press release. Dr Shibtosh Roy, 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 dargah, discussion and essay competition like previous years marking the day.

## Lions Foundation new chairman



Md. Matin Hasan 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 qukhwani 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.

Advashi 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 Jafirul 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 Bhumti Kanya, based on the Tebhaga Movement and life and activities of Ila Mitra and directed by Prof Moloy Kumar Bhownik, 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 Satkhira, on charge of submitting a false statement of property.

ACC Deputy Director Md Abdul 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.

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