

INT'L DAY OF THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE CELEBRATED

## Safeguard indigenous people's right to mother tongue, culture

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a call to safeguarding indigenous people's right to their mother tongue, culture and land and ensuring constitutional recognition, different indigenous people's forum and other social and cultural organisations yesterday celebrated the International Day of the World's Indigenous People through various programmes in the capital.

Leaders of indigenous people alleged that their languages are still neglected, culture denigrated, land grabbed, wisdom and traditional knowledge overlooked, and sustainable ways of developing natural resources dismissed.

They also said there are 45 ethnic groups in the country which are now facing the threat of extinction because 10 years have already passed but the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Treaty is yet to

be implemented, and the indigenous day is to be celebrated officially.

Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum organised a daylong programme to celebrate the day.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the programme, Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma, president of Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum, said their rights to mother tongue, culture, land and natural resources and demand for constitutional recognition would not be fulfilled till a democratic, non-communal and progressive government comes to power.

"Indigenous people's rights and demands will be evaluated with honour if ethnic people can enter into the policy making panels of the country and for this purpose a pro-people, democratic and non-communal government is needed," said Larma, also the president of

Parbatya Chattagram Janasanghati Samity.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, a renowned economist, inaugurated the programme at the Institution of Engineers where several thousand indigenous people from different ethnic groups across the country were present to uphold this year's theme of the day 'Indigenous People's Right to Mother Tongue and Culture'.

Rehman Sobhan said Bangladesh's independence was the culmination of the historic language movement in 1952 and the government should give proper honour to ethnic languages, cultures and traditions.

"It is our historical duty to recognise ethnic people's language. We became independent through our language movement. So for keeping the honour of our language movement we should recognise

ethnic languages and cultures," he said.

JSD leader Hasanul Haq Inu, Workers' Party leader Rashed Khan Menon and Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University also spoke on the occasion.

In the evening session, renowned Jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said it is the duty of a nation to establish the rights of its ethnic people.

"Country's development will not be possible ignoring its indigenous people. We should implement the CHT Peace Treaty as early as possible. Otherwise, we will be hated globally for violating the accord," he said while addressing as chief guest.

Sanjeeb Drong moderated the programme where Indigenous leaders Raja Devasish Roy, former legislator Advocate Promode Mankin, European Commission Representative Francoise Collet, Royal Danish Embassy Representative Nathalia Feinberg, Major General (Retd) Amin Ahmed Chowdhury, UNDP Representative Prosanjit Chakma and Prof Sadeka Halim also spoke.

Attired in ethnic costumes, people of Chakma, Marma, Garo, Khasia, Tripura and Santal communities rendered songs and performed dances as part of the daylong programme.

To mark the day, Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre (BDPC) also organised a discussion meeting at its central office where the speakers called upon all to come forward to establish the rights of indigenous people.

Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) with the help of Royal Danish Embassy and Manusher Jonno organised a discussion meeting at its office in the city where the discussants laid emphasis on preserving indigenous culture for the greater interest of diversity.

Coalition of Local NGO's Bangladesh (CLNB) organised another discussion at the National Press Club where participants demanded incorporation of ethnic people into mainstream development.



A student cleans up a street at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday as part of a campaign titled 'Stand up. Clean up' organised by the Centre of Global Issues for Youth.

## Students join street clean-up campaign

A three-day street cleaning campaign titled 'Stand up. Clean up' began at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday, says a press release.

The campaign, organised by the Centre of Global Issues for Youth (CGIY), brought together students from different schools to clean up the streets of Dhanmondi.

Divided into four teams, the students wearing yellow T-shirts with an environmental message painted on the back cleaned all the streets from Road No. 27 to Road No. 6A and dumped the trash into a city corporation dustbin.

Speaking before launching the campaign at 6:00am in front of Dhanmondi ETC, Secretary General of CGIY Farzeen Ferdous Alam reminded the participants that by taking part in the campaign, they are taking a vow to protect their community.

He also said that the campaign will soon spread to other areas of Dhaka.

The campaign will continue on Friday and Saturday at 6:00am in front of the Dhanmondi ETC. Students interested in taking part in the Saturday's campaign or future campaigns are requested to register by sending their names to [cgiybd@gmail.com](mailto:cgiybd@gmail.com).

## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS OF GARMENT WORKERS 'Step up health and safety measures in factories'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday stressed the need to strengthen health and safety measures in the garment factories to protect the reproductive health rights of workers.

They also called for improving the relationship between the factory owners and workers.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and UNFPA jointly organised the policy dialogue on 'Reproductive Rights, Health and Gender Situation of Garment Workers' at a city hotel under a project titled 'Promotion of Reproductive Health, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Garment Sector'.

Delivering the welcome speech, BGMEA President Anwar-ul-Alam Chowdhury said about 24 lakh workers are working in different factories under the BGMEA and 85 percent of them are women.

He suggested forming a working team comprising owners and workers to improve the garment sector.

Prof Mahmuda Islam, president of Women for Women, said the gender gap has narrowed in some cases and lots of women have now control over income and decision-making due to the empowerment of women. But at the same time, the gender gap has widened in several sectors such as health, and the women's health status is still in critical shape, she added.

Prof Ishrat Shamim, president of the Centre for Women and Children Studies, presented the keynote paper highlighting reproductive health status and the condition of garment workers and the factories and placed some recommendations, including providing health education to the workers.

The speakers urged the authorities to create women-friendly environment in the factories so that pregnant women workers could get support from her fellow colleagues.

Representatives from trade unions and rights organisations said the allocation for workers'

welfare in the national budget has remained unutilised for the last several years. This amount should be used through the BGMEA to protect the health rights of workers.

More women doctors should also be appointed in the factories, they added.

Assistant Representative of UNFPA Nurul Ameen, Project Director Sharfuddin Ahmed Sharif and President of Karmojibi Nari Shirin Akhter also spoke.

## Hand grenade recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police recovered a hand grenade from a mango orchard in Teligati area at Khanjahan Ali upazila in Khulna on Wednesday night.

The mango orchard belongs to one Sheikh Omar Ali, a spice trader.

Assistant Police Commissioner (North Zone) Nesaruddin said that the powerful grenade was recovered after the owner of the mango orchard informed them about the explosive.



Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka offers prayers after unveiling a plaque marking the renaming of Dhanmondi Road No. 10/A after artist Hamidur Rahman yesterday.

## BC English teaching programmes start Aug 28

The British Council Teaching Centre will organise English language programmes beginning from August 28, says a press release.

Interested people need to get registered between August 21 and August 27.

British Council students will be offered membership to the BC Library at Fuller Road and Supported Open Learning Centre (SOLC), both equipped with cutting-edge software and materials to improve all round English language skills.