

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

'Meet special needs with positive attitude to make them self-reliant'

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed yesterday called for meeting the 'special requirements' of the persons with disabilities everywhere of the society, including family and professional life, with a positive attitude to make them self-reliant.

He also called upon the mass media and the civil society to come forward to create mass awareness against the negative attitude towards the persons with disabilities.

Fakhrudin made the call while addressing a discussion organised by Social Welfare Ministry, Social Service Department, National Disabled Development Foundation and National Disabled Forum at the Osmani Memorial auditorium in the city, marking the 16th International Disabled Day.

The theme of the Day is 'Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities'. The function was told that there are approximately 1.40 crore people in Bangladesh, about 10 percent of

the total population, who are disabled. However, there is no official census on it.

Law and Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain, Social Welfare Adviser Geete Ara Safiya Choudhury, Social Welfare Secretary AB Hye Howlader, president of National Disabled Development Foundation Prof Dr Mohammad Farasuddin, president of National

Disabled Forum Khandaker Zahurul Alam and ASM Mosharraf Hossain of ADD, a disabled welfare affairs organisation, also spoke at the meeting.

Men and women with disabilities and representatives of voluntary organisations working for welfare of the persons with disabilities, among others, attended the function.

The chief adviser called upon government and NGOs, voluntary organisations and each conscious and well-off person of the society to come up with meaningful programmes for providing proper education, training and working

environment to the persons with disabilities to improve their lifestyle.

Fakhrudin said the government is carrying out all possible efforts to involve the disabled population in the mainstream of development activities, as overall and balanced development of the country cannot be ensured without them.

"We're considering disability not only as human welfare issue rather considering it as a development issue. So in the 2007-08 fiscal year I've directed all the ministries besides Social Welfare Ministry to formulate separate action plans and implementation of those," he told the function.

He said separate allocation was made for the first time in the current national budget for the development of the persons with disabilities.

Fakhrudin said he has already given a directive to give priority to the physically challenged persons in the government's ongoing relief and rehabilitation operations in the cyclone-affected areas.

He said it is the constitutional

duty of the government to ensure equal rights and balanced development of all citizens of the country.

"The persons with disabilities are the citizens of this country and inseparable part of the society. So, it's our sacred responsibility to ensure their (disabled) equal rights, equal opportunities and the right to live with dignity."

Referring to world famous successful persons with disabilities who made invaluable contributions to the society and the world, the CA said if they get the opportunity they could prove their worth making valuable contributions.

The chief adviser said Bangladesh as a signatory to the 'UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' is committed to it and the council of advisers of the caretaker government on November 25 decided to ratify the convention.

He said the present government expanded the disabled affairs activities to other concerned ministries and organisations, not confining it only to Social Welfare Ministry.

CCC offices declared smoking-free

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Acting Mayor M Manjur Alam yesterday declared all CCC office, ward offices, markets and organisations related to CCC as smoking-free areas.

He also called for creating mass awareness in this regard.

The CCC acting mayor was addressing an advocacy meeting on smoking-free environment, organised jointly by CCC and World Health Organisation, as the chief guest at CCC KB Abdus Sattar auditorium.

The speakers at the meeting said the use and consumption of tobacco causes 12 lakh people fall victim to eight types of diseases every year.

WHO representative Taufiqul Arif presented the keynote paper in the meeting.

CCC standing committee on health Chairman Ward Commissioner Mohammad Hossain presided over the meeting while CCC Chief Executive Officer (acting) AKM Khairul Alam, Health Adviser Dr Syeda Nurjahan Bhuiyan and Chittagong District Civil Surgeon Dr Jalal Ahmed also spoke.

'Declare 6th Wage Board Award by Dec 10'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik-Sramik-Karmachari Olkya Parishad (SSKOP), a platform of journalists and workers of the newspaper industry, yesterday called on the government to declare the 6th Wage Board Award for them by December 10.

They also demanded a halt to the dismissal of employees at the daily Ittefaq, reinstatement of the dismissed employees and steps to resolve problems in The Bangladesh Observer.

The newspapermen placed the demands at a rally held at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

The SSKOP leaders also warned that the journalists and employees will stage a sit-in in front of The National Press Club at 11:00am on December 12 if the demands are not met by December 10. Similar programme will also be held across the country and a work abstention programme will be observed in all newspaper offices, news agencies and the electronic media from 10:00am to 2:00pm on the day.

SSKOP leaders Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Ruhul Amin Gazi, Motiur Rahman Talukder, Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, Altaf Mahmud, Md Khairul Islam, Abul Hashem, Omar Faruk, Sardar Farid and Azizul Haque Banna spoke at the rally presided over by SSKOP Co-convenor Mozammel Haque.

Egypt detains 13 Brotherhood members

AFP, Cairo

Egypt yesterday detained 13 members of the Muslim Brotherhood, a security source said, in a continued clampdown which the group says is aimed at preventing members from running in municipal elections.

"Security forces have arrested 13 members of the group including teachers, accountants and students while they were holding a meeting in the (southern Egyptian) city of Sohag," the source said.



Awami League Acting President Zillur Rahman briefs journalists near sub-jail after appearing before a court in the city as lawyer for detained AL President Sheikh Hasina yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

BETTER BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Govt firm to implement RRC recommendations

UNB, Dhaka

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday reaffirmed the government's commitment to implement as many as possible the recommendations made by the Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRC) to ensure a better business environment in the country.

"The chief adviser has also repeatedly affirmed his commitment in this regard," he told a discussion on "Business Regulation Reform: Lessons from Two Top Reformers" at a city hotel in the morning.

Recognising his own scepticism about the implementation, the adviser made the assurance amid widespread apprehension by the participants in the discussion.

RRC Chairman Akbar Ali Khan also expressed doubt about how many of the recommendations will be implemented even though the chief adviser verbally assured him of implementing as many as possible.

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Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI) organised the discussion with its president Farooq Sobhan in the chair. Businessmen, legal experts and members of the RRC and civil society were present.

Managing Partner of SENSE Consulting of Croatia Vrandan Antoljak and Chairman of the Working Committee on Regulatory Reforms in Kenya Ben Musau shared the experiences of regulatory reforms in Croatia and Kenya.

The finance adviser explained his scepticism about implementation of the recommendations as a simple reason since many recommendations in the past were not implemented.

However, he reaffirmed the government's commitment to implement the recommendations by the newly formed RRC.

The adviser stressed the need for communicating the reform proposals with the stakeholders--government, businesses, media

and civil society--to achieve the desired objectives of the RRC.

He said private sector usually has to incur the compliance cost of any reforms and they should not take advantage of any loopholes in absence of a strong monitoring system.

He also underlined the importance of continuation of reforms in line with the global changes. "Reforms cannot be one-shot exercise," he added.

The adviser said there is a mindset problem, not only in the RRC but also in the private sector. "We'll have to address it, but I don't know how to address it," he added.

Akbar Ali Khan said the RRC will start with the new regulations and then look into the old ones in the reform process. "We'll take some diagnostic studies."

He told the news agency that the RRC members would meet the chief adviser at 11:00am today to submit their first reform proposal.



Language movement veteran Abdul Matin addresses a gathering of freedom fighters at the Institute of Engineers' auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are Maj Gen (Retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim Bir Pratik and Mili Rahman and on his right are MGP President Ishtiaq Aziz Ulfat and Lt Col (Retd) Kazi Nuruzzaman.

Form special tribunal to try war criminals

Freedom fighters urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of freedom fighters at a gathering yesterday urged the government to form special tribunal to try the war criminals.

The freedom fighters are the living witnesses of war crimes committed during the liberation war in 1971, they added.

The convention of freedom fighters was organised by Muktiyoddha Gono Parishad (MGP), an organisation of war veterans, at the Institute of Engineers' auditorium in the city.

Presided over by MGP President Ishtiaq Aziz Ulfat, the meeting was addressed by language movement veteran Abdul Matin, Lt Col (Retd) Kazi Nuruzzaman, Sector Commander and political analyst Maj Gen (Retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim Bir Pratik, MGP Adviser Ataus Samad, Mili Rahman, wife of Shaheed Matiur Rahman Birshreshtha, Prof Saad Uddin and Col (Retd) HMA Gaffar.

Nuruzzaman said in order to try the war criminals, all pro-liberation forces will have to be united and come to power in the next elections.

Mili Rahman said it is the high time to bring the war criminals to justice.

Saad Uddin said the then newspapers are enough to prove the misdeeds and heinous activities of the war criminals.

Abdul Matin said the whole nation is united for the trial of the war criminals.

Muhammad Ibrahim said there is no compromise with the war criminals.

Freedom fighter Jamaluddin said what the war criminals did during the liberation war is unpardonable.

Schoolboy missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Abdul Awal Pintu, a student of class six at Noakhali Zila School, has been missing since November 24. Pintu, son of Nurul Islam Master of Sharifpur village in Begumganj, is a resident student of the school dormitory.

The 12-year-old boy has a wheatish complexion and the fore part of his left thumb is slightly bent.

A General Diary (GD) has been lodged with Sudharam Police Station in Noakhali on November 25. Anybody knowing the whereabouts of the boy has been requested to call at 01813712437, 01713600479 or 01710086649, or inform the police station nearby.

Sidr-affected farmer faces another ordeal

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

A farmer from Barguna, who lost everything to Cyclone Sidr, now faces another ordeal as he finds it difficult to manage money for the treatment of his wife and a daughter who were severely injured during the cyclone that struck the southern coastal areas on November 15.

Panu Mia finally had to take loans from a loan shark at a high interest rate to save his wife Peyara Begum, 35, and daughter Sonia Akhter, 13, but the amount was too little and has already been exhausted. Now he does not know who he can turn to in this time of trouble.

Peyara and Sonia were injured when a tree fell on them outside their house in Barguna when they were moving to a safer place just after the cyclone struck the coastal area.

Peyara with severe head injuries is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) while Sonia with a broken hand at the Orthopaedic Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in Dhaka.

The two were alone in their home at village Dalbhanga in Barguna on the night of the cyclone as other members of the family went to a relative's house in nearby upazila on a family programme.

Hearing a violent rush of water, Peyara opened the door of their tin-roofed house and saw a huge wall of water approaching the house.

"Without any second thought, I grabbed a hand of my daughter and ran out of the house," she said, lying on the hospital bed.

Soon a huge surge of water washed them away, but Peyara did



Peyara Begum

not let go of her daughter's hand. After being floated for some time, they could manage to reach a road, around one and a half kilometres away from their house.

"As we were trying to find a safe shelter desperately, a tree fell on us and both of us got faint," she said. A man rescued them the next morning.

They were rushed to Barguna Sadar Hospital. Two days later, they were brought to DMCH as per doctors' advice. Six days later, Sonia was shifted to Orthopaedic Hospital.

"When I brought my wife and the daughter to Dhaka, relatives and villagers provided me with around Tk 10,000 which was exhausted in two days," said Panu, who has only six bighas of land.

"Later, I took Tk 9,000 in loans from my relatives, which was also exhausted within three days."

"Finding no other options, my son brought some gold ornaments from his in-laws' house and took a loan of Tk 10,500 with three percent interest a month from a local jeweller by mortgaging the gold ornaments," Panu said.

"That amount has almost been exhausted and I don't know who I can turn to for help," he added.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of light rain or drizzle at one or two places over Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 29.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 15.0 degrees Celsius at Sayedpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm today and rises at 6:27am 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	26.7	19.1	81	77
Chittagong	25.5	19.0	78	81
Rajshahi	26.2	15.2	88	79
Khulna	27.0	17.2	94	81
Barisal	27.5	17.3	90	80
Sylhet	26.4	16.9	78	82
Cox's Bazar	29.4	19.0	73	70

India to hold Indian Ocean military summit

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday announced a first-ever summit of navies from 33 nations to bolster regional maritime security along the world's busiest sea lane in the Indian Ocean.

Indian naval commanders outlined details of the summit, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, to be held in February in New Delhi.

"In today's environment, we need to have maritime dominance and partnerships," Naval chief Suresh Mehta said. "We see ourselves as a great stabiliser of energy movement through this region and so we have to act."

The countries invited to the India summit had to border the Indian Ocean or have territories there. Nations expected to attend include South Africa, Australia, Bangladesh and Thailand.

More than 100,000 commercial vessels transit through the Indian Ocean each year -- 60 percent of them via a narrow strip of sea between Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra -- many carrying oil supplies to the fast-growing region.

Shafiul Azam's anniversary of death today



Today is the 16th death anniversary of SM Shafiul Azam, the doyen of civil service of Pakistan and Bangladesh

and former chief secretary of the then East Pakistan, says a press release.

He was also a secretary to the central government of Pakistan, cabinet secretary and minister for jute, commerce and industry, energy and mineral resources.

To mark the day, SM Shafiul Azam Memorial Committee will hold elaborate programmes recalling his contribution to various fields.

Special programmes will also be held at Dr SM Muhammadul Haque Government Primary School and Shazadi Latifa Khatun Farkania Madrasa at his village home in Chittagong. Special prayers will also be offered for the salvation of his departed soul and alms will be distributed to the destitute.

Advocate Md Azizur Rahman

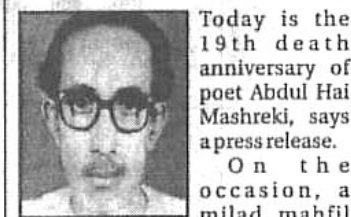
Today is the 16th death anniversary of Advocate Md Azizur Rahman MNA, one of the organisers of the liberation war and a renowned politician, says a press release.

Born at Mohammadpur village in Thakurgaon in 1920, Advocate Rahman joined Krishak Samik Praja Party of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque when he was a student of class eight.

As a student leader at Islamia College in Kolkata, he worked with Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

He was also a president of Dinajpur district Awami League.

Poet Abdul Hai Mashreki



Today is the 19th death anniversary of poet Abdul Hai Mashreki, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Dattapara village in Ishwardganj, Mymensingh.

Abdul Hai Mashreki was a popular poet during the forties.

Bangladesh Betar and BTV will air special programmes on the poet.

Shaheed Abdullah Baki



The 36th death anniversary of Shaheed Abdullah Baki Bir Pratik will be observed today, says a press release.

He died in an encounter with the Pakistani forces in the War of Liberation. He was the commander of 'Baki Unit' in Dhaka.

A doa and milad mahfil will be held at his father's residence at Baki Bhaban after Asr prayers.

ASM Solaiman



Today is the 10th death anniversary of ASM Solaiman, former president of Krishak Samik Party and a leader of seven-party Oikya Jote, says a press release.

He was also a minister and an associate of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Haque.

Quarankhwan, milad mahfil and distribution of food among the orphans will be held at his residence at Pallabi on Friday.

CYCLONE-AFFECTED WOMEN, CHILDREN BNWLA concerned over their vulnerability to trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) yesterday expressed concern over the vulnerability of cyclone-affected women and children saying that they run the high risk of becoming victims of trafficking.

"Hundreds of thousands of people, especially the women and children, lost everything and were misplaced due to devastating cyclone. BNWLA is very concerned about them because they are the first targets of victimisation," said BNWLA Executive Director Advocate Salma Ali.

She was addressing a regional workshop on 'Steps towards greater protection of trafficked survivors' organised by BNWLA in cooperation with International Organisation for Migration, Save the Children Sweden-Denmark and USAID at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital.

Vulnerability of women and children and possibilities of their trafficking increase on a large scale in the post-disaster period, said Salma urging the authorities concerned to closely monitor the issue as well as their post-traumatic stress disorder in cyclone affected areas.

Speaking as chief guest Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said in extreme and endemic poverty individuals often fall victims of trafficking, which is a painful tragedy and puts humanity to shame.

"Although the world managed to

abolish slavery more than 150 years ago, its remnants are still visible in the form of human trafficking," he said, adding that it undermines one's right to life, liberty and security.

Once trafficked, either in transit or in the destination country, victims face extreme vulnerability compounded by a sense of guilt, shame and alienation, while they often become nobody's child and suffer in authorities' oblivion and negligence due to bureaucratic complexities, he added.

The foreign adviser said empowerment of women through education and skill development could be an effective antidote against such exploitation by traffickers.

"We need to ensure that women can find suitable jobs in the society and earn a decent living," he said.

Besides inter-governmental and regional cooperation, the adviser urged the NGOs and civil society organisations in the source, transit and destination countries to strengthen their networks to rehabilitate the victims of human trafficking.

He noted that there is a Saarc Convention on combating trafficking and a task force has been formed to implement it.

"But we need to take more concrete measures to eliminate the scourge of trafficking and its adverse effects on our societies," he opined.

At the workshop, experts from Bangladesh, India and Nepal painted a gloomy picture of trafficking worldwide, saying it is a business

of billions of dollars and there are powerful syndicates across the world, but the legal systems at domestic, regional and global levels are not very strong to punish the criminals.

They suggested stringent punishment, collaboration at government and non-government levels to take care of the trafficked victims and expedite their repatriation process.

Presiding over the inaugural session, Justice Samarash Banerjee, honorary chairman of Child Protection Cell in West Bengal of India, said it is not only poverty, but also demands for cheap labour and prostitution that make women and children vulnerable to trafficking.

He said recently a new type of tourism called 'sex tourism' has been introduced and India is becoming a destination country for such tourism.

The employment agencies in the name of giving jobs are also putting many women into trafficking situation, he noted.

Josodhara Bagchi, chairman of Women Commission of West Bengal, said trafficking survivors in the shelter centres live like stateless persons and therefore they should be taken care of as they would have been received in their families.

Former Supreme Court Justice Laxman Prasad Aryal of Nepal and Golam Rasul, special superintendent of City Special Branch of Police, also spoke on the occasion.