

Uphold rights of female migrant workers abroad

Rights activists urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Development experts and rights activists at a roundtable yesterday demanded of the government to strengthen its national laws and make full use of international treaties to uphold the rights of Bangladeshi female migrant workers abroad.

They said the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (Cedaw) should be effectively used to check all sorts of abuses against female workers that they face in foreign countries, especially in some Middle East countries.

The roundtable on 'Women's rights to safe migration: Cedaw perspective' was organised by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (Unifem) at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Though migrant workers contribute significantly to the national economy, women migrants in most

cases are denied the protection of the labour laws in the receiving countries making them vulnerable to exploitation and violence, said Ferdous Ara Begum, a gender specialist.

In her keynote presentation, she said as less skilled workers they have fewer job options, get low pay and don't enjoy benefits like housing, health insurance and protection during pregnancy.

Ferdous Ara said Cedaw, which protects all women against sex and gender based discrimination, is an international human rights treaty that can be effectively used to address the concerns of female migrants at the places of origin, transit and destination.

Maleka Begum, a women's rights activist, said more and more women are now moving to cities and foreign countries to change their fates, but at the same time various social restrictions are being imposed on them.

"This is highly discriminatory," she said, asking why a woman will need approval of her guardian for going abroad for jobs.

Maleka said women both at home and abroad are subjected to violation of rights because of the society's typical mindset about women, which must be changed and made gender-sensitive.

"In the cases of female migration, women are more vulnerable because of their lack of awareness. The state must take initiatives to make them fully aware of the challenges so that they can take correct decisions," she said.

Executive Director of Steps Towards Development Ranjan Karmakar said they are working to prepare an alternative report to be placed to the Cedaw Committee next year where they will incorporate elaborately the concerns of women migrant workers.

Reena Roy of Manusher Jonno said the government should moni-

tor the employment contracts before the workers leave for abroad so that they can get all facilities in receiving countries.

She urged the government to activate district employment offices to enhance the skills of potential migrants.

Director of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training Nurul Islam said there is actually no much bar on the movement of female migrant workers now, but the government should be more careful about those who are to migrate as domestic aids.

Salahuddin Akbar, deputy secretary of expatriates' welfare ministry, Shahjadi Anjuman Ara, deputy secretary of women and children affairs ministry, Unifem National Programme Manager Naheed M Ahmed, Adilur Rahman Khan, Kaniz Siddiqui and WARBE Development Foundation Chairman Syed Saiful Haque also spoke.



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed inspects a guard of honour at the Inaugural ceremony of the Police Week-2008 at the Rajarbagh Police Lines parade ground in the city yesterday.

Huge gap between expectations from 1/11 and achievements
Says BNP leader Mahbubur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (ret) Mahbubur Rahman yesterday said there is a huge gap between expectations from 1/11 and achievements.

"We want to see that the people's expectations are fulfilled this year," he said and called for implementation of the electoral roadmap announced by the government.

"We want to see the implementation of electoral roadmap, as the country and politics should be run by politicians," the BNP leader said at a press conference organised by 'Quest for New Leadership'.

Asked about resignation of four advisers, he declined to make any comment but hoped that the president and the chief adviser will take necessary steps in this regard.

Mahbubur Rahman, a former lawmaker, also criticised the National Curriculum and Textbook Board for undermining the status of late President Ziaur Rahman in the school textbooks.

He urged the government to correct factual errors regarding the life and works of Zia made in the textbooks for schoolchildren.

He also demanded an investigation into such irregularities and punishment to those responsible.

People will not accept such mistakes, he said, adding that everybody knows Zia had taken the initiatives to form Saarc.

BNP leaders Tasneem Rana and Ehsanul Kabir were also present at the press conference held at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity Auditorium.

Illegal VoIP equipment seized in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in a raid in the port city yesterday seized illegal VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) equipment from Patenga sea beach area.

But none was arrested in this connection.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Rab-7 was waiting near Patenga embankment area from the morning to net the gang involved in the illegal VoIP business.

However, sensing Rab presence, the miscreants fled the scene leaving two large sacks that contained the equipment.

The seized equipment include three CPUs, three monitors, two instant power suppliers (IPS), 124 telephone sets of different brands and 18 chargers.

'Govt has to take initiatives for trial of war criminals'

Irene Khan says AI to support process of trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amnesty International (AI) Secretary General Irene Khan yesterday said the government has to take initiatives to bring the war criminals to justice.

She also urged the government to set up a 'Fact Finding Commission', which will take necessary steps to prosecute the war criminals.

The government should also take advice from the United Nations on legal steps in this regard, she said at a view exchange meeting at the office of 'Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK)' in the city.

"As a Bangladeshi citizen, I demand the trial of war criminals and the Amnesty International would support the process of trial,"

said Irene Khan.

"The trial of war criminals is not the question of individuals, it is the question of state responsibility," she said, adding that the government has the responsibility to try the war criminals.

Replying to a question, the AI chief said the government should seek advice from the legal adviser to the UN secretary general on the process of trial.

"The government can reduce the punishment of an accused, but it cannot forgive their crime," she said, adding that no governments in the world has the right to forgive war criminals.

"We demand trial of war criminals, not revenge," said the chief of the global human rights watchdog.

It is true that the trial could not

be held in the last 36 years, but it is better late than never, she said.

The people are now more conscious and the demand for the trial are drawing attention of the international community, she added.

Citing examples of the trials of Charles Taylor, General Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milosevic, the AI chief said that a 'Truth Commission' and a 'Fact Finding Commission' have to be formed to gather evidence of war crimes and that a 'national tribunal' would arrange the trial.

"The trial has to be free and fair," she added.

Irene Khan advised the organisations concerned to communicate with the international community who are working on the trail of war criminals.

Woman found dead at city slum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young woman was found dead at a slum in the city's Shahidnagar area in Lalbagh yesterday.

The police recovered the body of victim, aged about 20, at noon and sent it to Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

The police, however, could not find out what was the reason behind the killing of the woman, who could not be identified immediately.

Hospital sources said injury marks were found in the neck and face of the woman.

Hearing aids for impaired children

Kerstin Heitkamp from Germany donated some hearing aids to Hicare Society for distribution amongst the hearing impaired children of Hicare Schools of Bangladesh, says a press release.

Heitkamp, a business executive, has handed over 75 hearing aids with batteries and accessories to the Hicare Society Chairman Manzoor-ul Karim at Hicare Society office at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

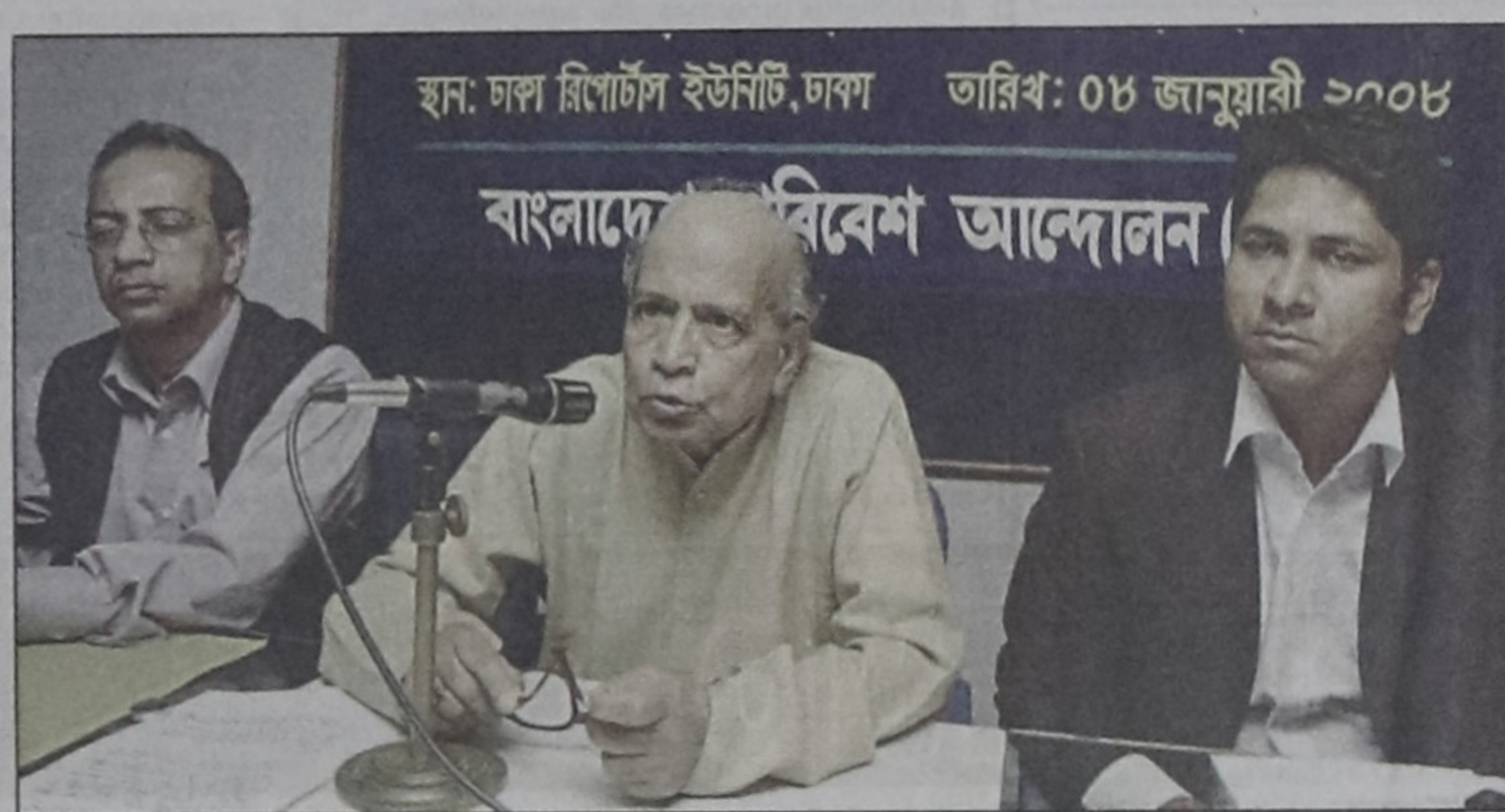
BMD receives latest radar

BSS, Dhaka

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) has received latest Doppler radars and seismic monitoring equipment to bolster its capabilities to track cyclones, storms and earthquakes, officials said here yesterday.

It also installed earthquake monitoring equipment and three geophysical observatories at Dhaka, Rangpur, Sylhet and replaced vintage equipment at the country's lone observatory at Chittagong, BMD sources said.

The first radar was installed at Cox's Bazar, which went into operation in April, helping to track the cyclone Sidr on November 15. Works are going on to set up another radar at Khepupara, which will be likely to be operational from March. Another radar will be operational at Maulvibazar Samarendra Karmaker, director of BMD told BSS.



Prof Muzafer Ahmad speaks at a press conference demanding steps to protect Osmani Udyan from land grabbers. Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon organised the event at Dhaka Reporters' Unity Auditorium yesterday.

DU REOPENS AMID DEMONSTRATION
Teachers, students demand release of colleagues

DU CORRESPONDENT

A good number of teachers and students of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday wore black ribbons demanding immediate release of the detained teachers and students of the university.

As the DU reopened after Eid and winter vacations, progressive teachers, mainly belonging to pro-Awami League Blue Panel and left-leaning Pink Panel, resumed their postponed demonstration.

Many Blue Panel and Pink Panel teachers were seen wearing black ribbons, while many others who are not involved in teachers' politics did not participate.

As the teachers are virtually divided into two groups over the actions to get the detainees free, most of the pro-BNP-Jamaat teachers did not wear the black ribbons.

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) postponed the protest programme on December 9 following government's assurance that they would be released within two weeks that ended on December 23.

At a meeting of Duta on December 28, the teachers were

virtually divided over the course of actions to get the detainees free.

White Panel teachers did not agree to resume the postponed programmes, while the Blue Panel teachers set a new timeframe for their release until January 7.

Blue Panel teacher Prof Muhammad Samad said, "They saw positive responses from many teachers. Along with them many senior teachers also expressed solidarity with the Blue Panel teachers wearing black ribbons."

On the other hand, MA Kaosar, a history department teacher, said he did not join the programme, as it was not a unanimous decision of Duta.

In a separate move, a group of students under the banner of 'Students against repression' also pursued the ribbon-wearing programme to get the detainees free.

At noon they took out a silent procession that marched different roads on the campus.

Many students, not belonging to any student organisation, were seen wearing the ribbons with enthusiasm.

The teachers will stand in silence

in front of the Arts Building from 11:00am to 12:00 noon today.

Prof Samad said many senior teachers would join the programme.

The 'students against repression' will observe one-hour class abstention programme at the same time, a press release said.

Meanwhile, White Panel teachers at a press conference in the evening reiterated their stand against the programmes pursued by the Blue Panel teachers.

They said they would not go for any such actions that would make the campus unstable and delay the release of the teachers and students.

They however strongly demanded the release of the detained teachers through legal process.

"We believe the process of freeing the teachers and students are moving fast and we are hopeful about their release soon," they said, adding that they want to wait until the legal process ends.

A White Panel teacher and acting general secretary of Duta Mamun Ahmed expressed his hope that the detainees will be proved innocent in the court, as they did not commit any crime.



Amnesty International (AI) Secretary General Irene Khan speaks at a view exchange meeting at the office of 'Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK)' in the city yesterday. On her left is human rights activist Sultana Kamal and on her right is human rights activist Hameeda Hossain.

Critical care medicine course at Birdem

The Department of Critical Care Medicine at Birdem Hospital, Dhaka has introduced postgraduate course (MD) in critical care medicine for the first time in Bangladesh, says a press release.

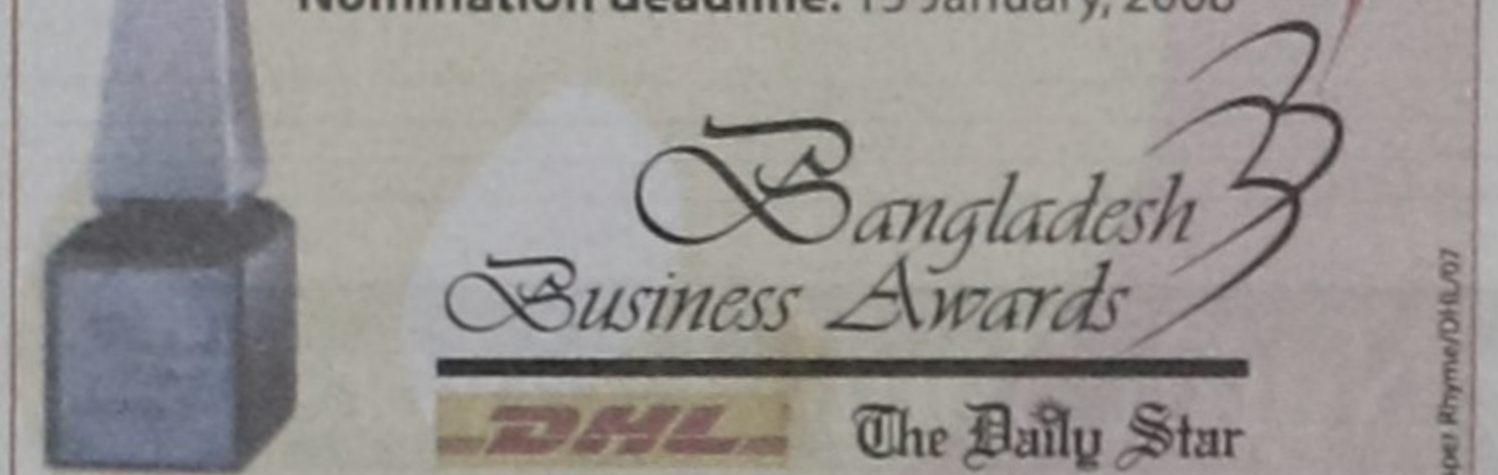
Doctors obtaining this degree shall be able to run the intensive care units of any hospital as a primary care specialist.

Currently there are 50 intensive care units in the country and these are suffering from acute shortage of trained physicians.

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