

Share ideas to foster peace, dev in South Asian region

Sociologists call at SASS confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

South Asian sociologists yesterday called for better cooperation among themselves to conduct researches and share ideas on the social changes shaping the world and contribute to the processes of fostering development and peace in the region.

They said it is mainly economy that is dominating the world, but the social aspects hidden in the economic problems are often ignored and as a result expected outcomes are not found in the society.

The sociologists were speaking at the inaugural session of a two-day South Asian Sociology Conference organised by The South Asian Sociological Society (SASS) in association with Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) at Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

Speaking as chief guest, Commerce and Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said, "Many changes are taking place in the globalised world, but social aspects are not critically analysed."

Referring to the empowerment of women in Bangladesh, he said micro-credit system has brought about significant changes among the women in rural Bangladesh, but it is not only for the loans they received, but also for the methods used for giving such loans.

"Women's mobility here has increased much," he said, adding that Bangladesh has moved forward in terms of its progress towards achieving the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals).

There are progresses in terms of



Commerce and Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman speaks at the inaugural session of a two-day South Asian Sociology Conference at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. On his right are Prof Nazrul Islam, Prof Partha Nath Mukherjee and Prof Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury.

gender parity in primary school enrolment, said the adviser, adding that it is now a matter to see whether their analytical thinking capacity has increased or not.

Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said there are many problems like labour unrest and non-productive uses of remittances which are usually considered only from economic perspectives, but these should also be looked into from sociological perspective as well.

Speaking as keynote speaker, Indian Sociological Society's former president Prof Partha Nath Mukherjee said in the present day world, where various cultures and

social norms are getting mixed, people will have to learn accommodating different cultures.

Pakistan Sociological Association President Prof Fateh Mohammad Burfat said the South Asian countries with their historical bondage face almost similar problems of population, environment and other issues and therefore there is much scope to work together for regional peace and tolerance.

Stating that the ways of dealing problems in the present world have no human face, Indian Sociological Society President Prof Uttama Rao Bholte said changes that are taking

place in the globe must have emphasis on humanity.

People with disabilities and ethnic minorities must be given priorities, he said, adding the sociologists should play their due role in these sectors.

SASS Convener Prof Nazrul Islam expected that the regional association which is holding its first conference would work on problems and issues related to the whole of South Asia.

Organising Secretary of the conference Dr SM Shamsul Alam also spoke at the inaugural session chaired by IUB Vice-chancellor Prof Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury.

Confce on women, biodiversity begins in Tangail today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day South Asian conference on 'Women and Biodiversity' begins in Tangail today.

Over 200 women from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are participating in the conference.

The participants will mainly focus on technology and ideology and how these affect women's lives.

The conference will be inaugurated at Hridaipur Bidyaghar at Delduar upazila in the district at 4:00pm today. Following the inauguration, a rally will be brought out.

"We have organised the South Asian conference as a part of International Women's Day. The main idea is to facilitate the coming together of women activists and organisations and feminist movements in the South Asian region with an intent to deepen the understanding," said Farida Akhter, one of the Bangladeshi organisers at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

She also said that the main objectives of the conference are to create awareness and deepen the understanding on these issues across women groups, attempt bridging the women's movement and farmer groups and harness energies towards building resistance to the threats to life and biodiversity.

Shalini Bhutani, Deblina Gupta, Rukmini Rao and Sukla Dev Mitra of India, Rekha Tulachan of Nepal, Tum Hpong of Myanmar, Nazma Sadeque of Pakistan and Sivagowry Manickasabapathy of Sri Lanka were also present at the press conference.

Nawab Estate Assoc executives

BSS, Dhaka

Begum Waheeda Wasiuddin and Syed Nadeem Rahman were elected president and general secretary of Dhaka Nawab Estate Proprietors Association for a period of four years on Wednesday, says a press release yesterday.

The other office bearers are: Khawja Niaz Moinuddin, K Zaki Ashanullah and KM Harris -- vice-presidents; Amer Bahaduri -- joint secretary and Farhana Ibrahim -- treasurer.

KM Azad, K Mohammad Ali and Toni Mehmood were elected executive committee members of the association.

The committee was empowered to conduct the affairs of the estate in consultation with the Bangladesh Bhumi Sangskar Board and the Court of Wards.



Farida Akhter, one of the Bangladeshi organisers of South Asian conference on 'Women and Biodiversity', speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her right is Tum Hpong of Myanmar and on her left is Sivagowry Manickasabapathy of Sri Lanka.

'Women most vulnerable to climate change'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women, the primary caregiver in family, are the most vulnerable group to climate change, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They also laid emphasis on gender-sensitive adaptation of climate change and disaster management.

The speakers said the poorer the women are, the higher are their vulnerability and sufferings.

They called for women's empowerment as well as gender sensitive awareness programme to cope with the situation.

The seminar titled 'Climate change, gender and special vulnerable groups in Bangladesh' was organised jointly by the Centre for Global Change (CGC), UNDP Department for International Development (DFID), Climate Change Cell of environment department, and Bastob, an NGO, at the auditorium of archaeology department.

In her keynote speech, Sharmin Neelormi, associate professor of Jahangirnagar University, said gender analysis promotes an understanding that men and women are differently affected by climate-driven hazards.

Sharmin said during a natural catastrophe, woman has to maintain personal hygiene, ensure supply of safe drinking water, cook for the family, take the burden of post-processing all agriculture produce, maintain a courtyard garden and many other things simultaneously.

"The male members of the family can go outside for work but the women have to stay inside the house and face everything," she added.

Speaking as chief guest, Adviser for Women and Children Affairs Rasheda K Chowdhury said people are adapting with the changed climate situation and coping with the

natural disasters.

"So we need to raise our voice for compensation and not fund for adaptation," she added.

Rasheda also demanded environmental justice from the developed countries responsible for global warming.

She said a little intervention by the government may mean a lot to marginal poor women.

Danish Ambassador Einer H

Jensen was present there as special guest.

He assured his country's continued support for the people of Bangladesh to reduce their vulnerability to climate change.

Chaired by Meherunisa Ahmed of Bastob, the programme was also addressed by CGC Executive Director Ahsan Uddin Ahmed and Bastob Executive Director Ruhi Das.

114 ex-BAC staffs get postings in ACC

UNB, Dhaka

Some 114, out of 263 former employees, of the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC), recently absorbed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), have got their postings.

"The process of posting the 114 employees completed today (Monday)," ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal, also the Commission's spokesperson, told UNB yesterday evening.

He said nine deputy directors, 19 assistant directors and 25 deputy assistant directors were given postings yesterday. Earlier, on March 6, 61 others got their postings, he added.

Earlier, the ACC had decided to reinstate 114 employees after interviewing all the 263 employees left out by the Justice Sultan Hossain Khan-led Commission.

Among them, there are nine deputy directors, 19 assistant directors, 25 inspectors, 22 assistant inspectors, 3 assistant deputy

inspectors, two head assistants, two stenographers, one upper division assistant, four assistants, two office assistants, two office assistants-cum-typists, two typists, two security guards, one driver and 18 constables.

The Commission started interviewing them on February 7 following the withdrawal of cases filed by the aggrieved employees.

The Commission hopes that the inclusion of these officials will enhance the working capability of the anti-graft body.

After its inception on November 21, 2004 dissolving the BAC, the then Commission led by Justice Sultan Hossain Khan screened out 263 BAC officials.

Later, the aggrieved officials filed writ petitions with the High Court challenging the decision.

Recently, there has been a settlement between the Commission and the left-out officials and on the basis of which the cases have been withdrawn. A committee, headed by the ACC chairman, was also formed to interview them.

Death penalty awarded JMB member dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A member of militant organisation Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), who was sentenced to death by a court, died on Sunday while he was undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

Identified as Nasirullah, 22, son of Abdul Latif of Jhenidah district, was admitted to the DMCH by the Dhaka Central Jail authority on March 4 as he had been suffering from jaundice.

A senior special judge's court of Jhenidah sentenced him to death on February 28, 2006 in an explosive case.

The case was pending in the High Court, jail authorities said.

Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddique said after the autopsy, his body was handed over to his relatives.

SCF National convention on March 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sector Commanders' Forum (SCF), a platform of sector commanders of the liberation war, will organise a national convention on March 15 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital as part of its move for trying the war criminals.

Only selected guests and representatives would be allowed to attend the convention, said a press release yesterday signed by co-ordinator of the organisation Maj Gen (retd) M Masudur Rahman.

The SCF leaders expressed their concern over distribution of invitation letters by a group of unidentified people in the name of SCF.

"The SCF has not authorised any person to distribute invitation letter of the convention. Only those invited directly by the SCF will get the chance to participate in the convention," they said.

Release of BCL leader Roton demanded

A CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), the student wing of Awami League, on Sunday demanded release of BCL Central Committee General Secretary Mahfujul Haider Roton.

BCL leaders and activists brought out a silent procession from Madhur Canteen that paraded on Dhaka University (DU) campus and ended at Aparajeyo Bangla.

Later, BCL leaders met DU Vice Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz and urged him to take necessary steps for Roton's release.

BCL Sources said Prof Faiz assured them that he will discuss the matter with the government.

1120 bottles phensidyl seized in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized 1120 bottles of phensidyl and arrested two drug-peddlers from Chhalimpur under Sitakunda Upazila in Chittagong early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Mohammad Mostafa alias Chhagal Mostafa, 30, son of one Mokhlisur Rahman and Shah Alam, 33, son of late Ali Akbar of Comilla district.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab set up a check post near SLDL Housing Society of Chhalimpur and seized 1120 bottles of phensidyl searching a microbus and arrested Mostafa and Akbar.

The detainees confessed that they have been peddling drugs in Chittagong metropolitan area since long, Rab sources said.

BNCU invites applications for fellowship

Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco (BNCU) invites applications for China Great Wall Fellowships 2008, says a press release.

Applicants must have a masters degree for advanced studies and at least BSc degree for agriculture related subject.

Interested persons may collect forms and submit the filled forms to Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco (BNCU), Banbeis Bhaban (3rd floor), 1 Asian Highway, Palassy-Nikhat, Dhaka by March 20.



Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal addresses a seminar at the Bangladesh Economic Association auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right is economist Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad and on her left is AHM Nouman.

Women still deprived of equal rights

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women are still deprived of equal rights in many fields and the vested quarters sometimes try to use religion as a tool to oppress them, Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the caretaker government, said yesterday.

If such tendency to suppress women in the name of religion continues, women should come forward to protest it, she said at a seminar titled 'Women in South Asia: Bangladesh Perspective in particular'.

Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP), Bangladesh

Unnayan Parishad (BUP) and Imagine a New South Asia (INSA) jointly organised the seminar supported by Manusher Jonno Foundation.

The speakers called on all to change attitude towards women. The people should change their patriarchal mindset, which is largely responsible for oppression of women in society, they said.

Presenting a keynote paper, Prof Zaheda Ahmad said one-third of women in the world live in South Asia and two-thirds of adult women in the region are illiterate.

Women's active participation in the country's economy is 62 per

cent, the highest in South Asia, she said.

However, they are not given the opportunities to take decisions independently, although the constitution protects their freedom and equal rights, she said.

AHM Nouman, secretary general of DORP, also presented a paper on the socio-economic situation of women in the country.

Economist Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad gave a special lecture at the seminar attended by representatives from Naripakkho, Dharitri Foundation, ActionAid Bangladesh and Community Healthcare Dhaka.

MIG-29 SCAM Hearing on Hasina's application tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

The hearing of an application for stay on the operation of the High Court verdict that revived the Mig-29 purchase-scam case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and others will be held at the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court tomorrow.

Chamber Judge of the apex court Justice MA Matin, following an application moved by the counsel for Hasina, passed the order yesterday.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed, a top counsel for Hasina, told journalists that the application was moved as they preferred leave to appeal against the High Court judgment.

On September 6 last year, the High Court, upon a government petition, discharged Hasina's petition for quashing the charge of shady deals on purchase of the fighter jets from Russia, vacating its order of stay given in 2003 on the trial court proceedings in the case.

The HC discharged the quashing petitions on grounds that the alleged offences were disclosed in the FIR and the charge sheet.

Hasina, who has been detained in a makeshift jail since July 16 last year in an extortion case, is facing a pleth-

ora of corruption charges.

The now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) had filed the case in December 2001 against Hasina, former army chief Gen (Retd) Mustafizur Rahman, former air chief Air Marshal Jamal Uddin Ahmed, former Defence Secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain, Air Commodore (Retd) Mirza Akhtar Maroof, Defence Joint Secretary (Retd) Mohammad Hossain Serniabat and businessman Noor Ali.

While Hasina was prime minister (1996-2001), eight Russian-made fighter planes of the brand were procured for the Bangladesh Air Force.

Immediate after the BNP-led four-party alliance came to power, the BAC filed the case. According to FIR, the government incurred a loss of Tk 700 crore on account of the warplane purchase.

The longstanding case remained dormant following a High Court order upon petitions filed by the accused for quashing the case.

The army-backed caretaker government that has waged war on corruption allegedly committed during the political regimes revived the case, as a purge is now on stream.

Sirajul re-appointed Law Commission member

UNB, Dhaka

Retired Judge Md Sirajul Islam was re-appointed member of the Law Commission for one year, said a handout Monday.

JCD cadres beat student at DU

A CORRESPONDENT

A group of activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of BNP, severely beat up a third year student of finance department of Dhaka University (DU) on Sunday night.

Sultan Mahmud Chomon, a resident of room no 1015 of Jahurul Haque hall, was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious head and hand injuries.

Campus sources said JCD activists of Jahurul Hall Prince of Library Science department, Bappu of Philosophy, Zakir of Persian, Shahin of Political Science, Joy of Institute of Education and Research (IER) and Rashed beat Chomon at his room at about 11:45pm.

Sources said JCD activists told Chomon to let another student stay in his room, which he refused. Being enraged, JCD cadres attacked Chomon although he is a legal resident of that room.



Food Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali speaks at a seminar on 'Food Security in Bangladesh' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right are Nazmul Hasan, M Anisuzzaman and Tofail Ahmed. Economic Reporters' Forum organised the seminar.

Tk 102cr Japanese help for Sidr damage reconstruction

UNB, Dhaka

The Japanese government has approved the utilisation of Japan Debt Relief Grant Assistance Counterpart Fund amounting Tk 102 crore (approximately US\$ 15 million) for reconstruction of houses damaged by cyclone Sidr in the coastal belt of Bangladesh.

A reconstruction proposal in this regard was submitted by the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management to the Embassy of Japan through the Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance.

The objective of the project is reconstruction of houses for one lakh people in 8 districts -- Barguna, Bagerhat, Patuakhali, Pirojpur, Barisal, Bhola, Jhalokathi and Satkhira--which were worst affected by the cyclone.

This support will help the cyclone-affected people returning to normal life and reduce vulnerability to future severe natural dis-

aster, says a press release.

Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue sincerely hopes that the Japanese assistance will contribute to improve the quality of life of people in Sidr-affected area.

The Japanese Counterpart Fund is generated from the Debt Relief Grant Aid (DRGA) and KR Food Aid. Japan government provides DRGA for eligible debtor countries in return for repayment of their ODA debts.