

Nominate more women in elections

Speakers urge political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday called on the political parties to nominate more women in the upcoming election to increase women's participation in parliament.

Although women make up 50 percent of the total population, their participation in the policymaking is very poor, they said, adding that it is not possible to bring about qualitative changes in politics and strengthen democracy unless women are well represented in parliament.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) organised the dialogue entitled 'Women leadership and the upcoming national parliament election' at Jatiya Mahila Sangastha auditorium in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, Dr Nazma Chowdhury said women leadership is almost absent in all

the sectors.

"Vote is the main weapon of women and we have to use our votes to establish our rights. We have to encourage women to vote those political parties who nominate more women in the elections and also care about the development of women," she said.

She also suggested floating a non-political forum comprising women's organisations who work for the development of women.

Educationist Dr Dilara Chowdhury said, "We have to empower women to offset the negative impacts of globalisation as women are worst affected by them."

Women have played important roles in various fields, but they could not play any role in politics since they did not get any opportunities to do so, she said.

She suggested forming a forum of women, which will help women contest the elections as independent candidates.

ent candidates.

Women's rights activist Maleka Begum said the political parties do not have any women-friendly policies. However, they formulate such policies before the elections for political gains.

"We have to launch a campaign to dissuade women from voting those political parties which will not nominate women in the elections and will not take steps to establish women's right," she said.

She also said all progressive organisations and people should raise their voice against those who are opposing the National Women Development Policy.

Awami League leaders Col (ret) Faruque Khan and Dr Dipu Moni, Jatiya Party leader GM Quader, Executive Director of Democracy Watch Taleya Rehman, BNWLA President Fawzia Karim and Executive Director Advocate Salma Ali also spoke.

Raising voice against corruption 'our moral duty'

Says ACC chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

With a vow to curb corruption, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (ret) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury yesterday asked all to raise their voice against corruption, saying it is 'our moral duty'.

The ACC chief called for forming anti-graft committees at grassroots levels and stressed the need for building a massive social movement to contain corruption, which is hindering and plunging the country into economic disaster.

"ACC or any government cannot curb corruption. It is a social movement, which needs participation of all sections of people. Students and youths can play a vital role to lead the movement," said the ACC chief.

He told these while addressing a prize giving ceremony at Govt Kumudini College among the winners of an anti-corruption essay writing and debate competition.

ACC Director General Abu Taleb Miah, Principal of Govt Kumudini College Nazir Ahmed and Member Secretary of ACC, Tangail Khan Mohammad Khaled also spoke on the occasion.

Later, the ACC chief went to Govt Sa'adat College in Karatia and administered an oath to the students and teachers of the institution to stand against corruption.

He also distributed prizes among the winners of another essay writing and debate competition there.



Leaders of Awami League place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhamond in the city yesterday on the occasion of Mujibnagar Day.

Bangladesh committed to self-sufficiency in food

Says foreign adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said Bangladesh is committed to attaining self-sufficiency in food and reducing imports to the minimum.

He made the remarks to a group of 20 international volunteers of the Hunger Project who had a meeting with him at the Foreign Ministry yesterday.

The team was led by Ms Jill Lester, President of the Project who is from Australia. The members comprised volunteers from Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, the US, and Bangladesh.

Dr Badul Alam Majumdar briefed Iftekhar about the goals and purposes of the project, which was to ultimately address the issue of hunger through self-training, education, women empowerment and change of mindset.

The adviser lauded the goals and said the answer to the problem of food availability in today's world lay in producing enough domestically to meet demands, particularly given the soaring costs of food.

He said with the bumper 'boro' harvest that is expected, and the sufficiency in strategic stocks, there is unlikely to be a crisis in this country.

Lester praised the enthusiasm of the Bangladeshis and observed that the institution that the government was building would help sustainability of its current achievements.

286 smuggled pet birds seized in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Forest Department yesterday seized 286 birds of three species from a residence at Uttara in the city.

Forrest officials said though the birds are pet ones, they seized the birds as those were smuggled in.

The seized species -- Love Birds, Rose Ring Parakeet and Australian Parakeet -- were kept in 40 cages at a house of Kawsar Ahmed of Road-13 at Section-7 of Uttara.

Forrest officials said the birds were smuggled by Pakistani national Mohammad Nomanuddin. He had been carrying out the illegal business in collaboration with one Bazlur Rahman.

Nomanuddin, however, told the forest officials that he has legal papers and customs clearance of the birds.

Forest Department Assistant Conservator Hossain Mohammad Nishat, who led the drive, told The Daily Star that "Customs department has no authority to provide clearance without the permission from the forest department."

The forest officials said they seized passport of the Pakistani national and the birds were kept under the custody of Kawsar.

He said a case will be filed with the court in this connection.

Fire damages 2 rooms at Danish diplomat's house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A fire broke out at the residence of the Councillor of Royal Danish Embassy damaging two rooms of the residence in the city's Gulshan area yesterday afternoon.

Fire service sources said the fire originated from an electrical short circuit at 2:40pm. The fire burnt an air-conditioner and partially damaged two rooms of the residence.

Two units of the fire service rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire.

No casualty, however, was reported.

Fateha-e-Yaz Dahum mahfil held

A mahfil on the occasion of Fateha-e-Yaz Dahum, the 868th death anniversary of Bara Pir Hazrat Abdul Qadar Zilani (RA), was held at Azampur Dayara Sharif Khankah in the city yesterday, says a press release.

Qurankhwani, Fateha Khwani, Zikir Asker and Milad Sharif were held on the occasion. Besides, a discussion was held on the life of the great spiritual leader. Gaddishin Pir Shaheb Alhaj Moulana Shah Sufi Syed Ahmadullah (Zubair) took part in the discussion.

Later, the Gaddishin Pir Shaheb led the munajat and prayed for the peace and progress of Bangladesh, for the greater unity among the Muslim ummah and for the freedom of oppressed Muslims in different parts of the world.

Bangladeshi shot dead in New Jersey

STAR REPORT

Assailants shot dead a Bangladeshi worker Abdur Rahman, 50, at his workplace at a gas station in New Jersey on late Tuesday, reported ANA yesterday.

The deceased, who went to the USA in 1990, used to work at Indian-owned two gas stations -- one at Westampton Township and the other at High Street in Burlington City near Philadelphia.

Rahman was living at risk for the last few weeks, because dacoits looted a few gas stations nearby in recent times.

He decided not to work at night shift. Tuesday was the last date for him to work at night shift, said Rahman's close friend Abdul Aziz.

Burlington County Prosecutor Robert Bernard said primary investigation reveals that dacoits killed him to loot the gas station.

National Flag Hoisting Day today

Today is the National Flag Hoisting Day.

On this day during the War of Liberation in 1971 the national flag was hoisted on a foreign land for the first time, says a press release.

The then deputy high commissioner of Pakistan in Calcutta M Hossain Ali along with 65 employees expressed allegiance to the Mujibnagar government and Hossain Ali hoisted the Bangladesh flag at the Calcutta chancery building.

M Hossain Ali Welfare Foundation has chalked out elaborate programmes to mark the day. The Foundation will hoist national flag at the foundation's temporary office at 6:00am.

Qurankhwani, milad mahfil and a discussion will also be held at 5:00pm.

The day will be observed at family level at Hossain Ali's village home in Par Bhangoora village under Bhangoora upazila in Pabna and in Ottawa, the capital of Canada.

The Foundation has urged the chief adviser and Ministry of Liberation War to observe the day at state level and demanded the government names a university hall or a road after Hossain's name.



Society for Parasitology executives

Prof Md Motahar Hussain Mondal, former vice-chancellor of Haji Mohammad Danesh University of Science and Technology, and Prof Md Mokbul Hossain of the Department of Parasitology of the Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) have been elected president and general secretary of Bangladesh Society for Parasitology, says a press release.

Other office-bearers are Vice Presidents Prof Nurjahan Begum and Prof Mirza Abul Hashim, Treasurer Dr Anisuzzaman, Joint Secretaries Dr Mohua Yasmeen, and Dr Thahsin Farzana, Members Prof Hamida Khanum, Dr Md Rashidul Haque, Prof Shireen Akhter, Prof AS Mahulul Bari, Prof Giasuddin Ahmad, Prof Motiur Rahman Howlader, Dr Emran Hossain Khan and Dr Khondakar Helal Uddin.

The executive body elected will hold the office for two years.

Obituary



Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 53, says a press release.

He left behind three wives, two sons and a host of relatives and admires to mourn his death.

NPP Chairman Sheikh Sawkat Hossain Nilu condoled his death.

Death anniversary

Today is the 4th death anniversary of Dr Golam Mahiuddin, former vice president of Bangladesh Uchichi Shilpi Gosthi, says a press release.

On the occasion, a speech competition on 'Preservation of National Resource of Bangladesh' was held yesterday at Uchichi office in the city.

A seminar will also be held at Institute of Engineers at 5:30pm today to mark the day.

His colleagues, friends and relatives are requested to attend the programme.

CPB token hunger strike April 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday declared to stage a token hunger strike next Sunday (April 20) demanding introduction of rationing and mass distribution system, procurement of rice directly from farmers and just rights of agriculture labourers, says a press release.

The announcement came at a press briefing at the CPB office after police dispersed a human chain that the leftist party formed at Muktagong in the city.

CPB said the token hunger strike will start at 11:00am and will continue up to afternoon.

Leftist leaders said the government created a bad example by dispersing the peaceful human chain of CPB, though it did not hamper the meeting and rallies of the communal and anti-farmer forces.

CPB acting President Shahidullah Chowdhury, central committee Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince and leaders -- Ahsan Habib Labu, Abdul Kader, Abdul Jabbar, Sadeque Rahman Shamim, Joly Talukder, Kulsum Begum, Rehana Mollick, Jamshed Anwar, Ruhul Amin and Mohiuddin Ahmed -- were present at the human chain.

Rice supply

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people had to wait for five to six hours to collect rice... now they can get rice within an hour," the commander said. He said the rush started to lessen from April 13; it was tremendous between April 1 and April 12.

He said, "The rush was huge as people panicked fearing they would not get rice in future and the prices would go higher... now the panic is gone."

Col Hoque said, "650 to 660 tonnes of rice is sold daily at 75 BDR outlets and even though the rush has eased the sale of rice did not come down."

He said 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh people are benefiting from the BDR shops everyday.

Col Hoque said 10 BDR personnel were terminated from service on specific charges of irregularities at the BDR outlets in the last one year.

BDR would suggest the government to build a safety net in urban areas to keep a stable rice market in future.

"If the agriculture ministry, food ministry and the commerce ministry make an integrated effort in land management and ensure timely supply of agriculture inputs to the farmers, the country would achieve self-sufficiency in food and the international market prices would not affect us that way," he said.

Asked if BDR would run these outlets for good, Col Hoque said the BDR's primary job is maintaining security at the borders. But, they are running the outlets since the government asked them to tackle the situation.

He said, "We will think about opening fair price shops if the government made such requests," adding that such systems should be in place to face bad times.

Meanwhile, Director General of the Directorate of Food Pias Costa yesterday told The Daily Star that the OMS dealers from Saturday will be able to sell rice to 300 people a day three days a week instead of the 204 people which they are now allowed to sell to.

He said from Saturday the 687 OMS dealers across the country will be given 1,500kg of rice a day three days a week instead of 1,020kg.

However, he said OMS programme with the increased amount of rice started yesterday in other divisional headquarters.

Meanwhile, rice prices increased by Tk 10-15 per maund (37.32kg) in wholesale markets yesterday.

Following the government's decision to buy boro rice at Tk 28 a kg, the prices of rice in rural markets as well as the wholesale markets in the capital has increased.

RIGHT TO INFO ORDINANCE

'Media representation a must to make it effective'

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for the participation of journalists and media personalities in formulating the Right to Information Ordinance, says a press release.

They also called for the representation of journalists in the proposed information commission for proper implementation of the act.

The discussion titled 'Draft Right to Information Ordinance 2008' was organised jointly by South Asian Free Media Association (Safma), National Press Club and Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) at the Brac Centre with Safma President and Editor of The News Today Reaz Uddin Ahmed in the chair.

While briefing on the draft ordinance, President of the National Press Club Swakat Mahmud said the journalists have constituted a three-member committee that would compile the recommendations of journalist leaders made at different forums and submit their final recommendations to the government.

They will also submit an alternate proposal on Right to Information Act now being formulated by journalist leaders with the suggestions of eminent lawyers so that the act could effectively ensure people's right to information.

Appreciating the initiative to formulate a draft on right to information ordinance and opening the

avenue for making a review, Editor of the Ittefaq Rahat Khan said the provision of constituting the Search Committee for selecting the members of the Information Commission is very vital and there must have representation of the media in the committee.

Editor of The Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said people would not get the actual benefit of the right to information law if it is formulated and implemented without the representation of the journalists community and the media, who are the main stakeholder of the law and through whom people will have the access to information.

Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury said the act should be formulated in a way so that people and media are benefited from it.

BFUJ Presidents Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and Mozammel Haque, Secretaries General Ruhul Amin Gazi and Jalil Bhuiyan, Safma Secretary General Zahiduzzaman Faroque, General Secretary of the Press Club Kamal Uddin Sabui, Presidents of Dhaka Union of Journalists Shah Alamgir and Azizul Haque Banna, General Secretary Omar Faroque, former BFUJ secretary general MA Aziz, journalists Nurul Huda, Nasimun Ara Haque Minu and Bilkis Banu also spoke.



Safma Bangladesh chapter President Reazuddin Ahmed speaks at a discussion titled 'Draft Right to Information Ordinance 2008' at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. On his right is Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and on his left are Mozammel Haque and Swakat Mahmud.



UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Comilla and Noakhali in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country, Met Office said, predicting slight rise in day temperature over the country.

Mild heat wave (36 to 38 degrees Celsius) may sweep over Rajshahi division and the regions of Jessore, Kushtia, Dhaka and Faridpur.

Highest temperature 36.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rangamati and lowest 23.2 degrees Celsius at Sayerdpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:21pm today and rises at 5:34am 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	35.1	26.6	69	60
Chittagong	31.5	24.6	80	72
Rajshahi	36.5	26.0	80	66
Khulna	35.4	26.7	76	70
Barisal	34.7	26.5	79	73
Sylhet	29.8	25.0	100	69
Cox's Bazar	34.0	25.2	62	73

Desolate families mourn their loss

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son Siam is probably too young to understand the extent of this loss.

Monir's mother Lili Begum has taken to her bed since Wednesday. Talking to the Daily Star, she asked about the future of Monir's son saying, "Who will bring up Siam now?"

"I just want my son back," she kept wailing.

Ambia Khatun, 50, wife of another ill-fated cloth trader Solaiman of the same village, cried helplessly as she told The Daily Star how her husband Solaiman left home at midnight for the bus ride to Karoti hut (bazar) with a packet of cloth that day.

"How could I know this was the last time I would see him?" Ambia cried, "how could I know?"

"Where am I to go now with my two daughters and one son? Who will look after us?" she kept asking.

Almost every other household in Rampur has a similar story to tell.

Cloth trader Jang Bahadur, 55, has been drifting in and out of consciousness since out of shock since the tragedy killed his eldest son Faruque Hossain, 24.

"All my dreams are shattered," he wailed as he talked about how

to the IDH was asked to go for surgery as he had developed gangrene due to arsenicosis. But it took three months for the patient to undergo surgery as no private clinics wanted to admit the patient.

When contacted, Professor of Virology at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Mohammad Nazrul Islam said the government should launch an anti-stigma programme concerning HIV/AIDS at health care centres. And it should start from the centres near voluntary counselling and testing centres as the diagnosis process begins there (testing centres).

Unless there are treatment support facilities near the counselling and testing centres, HIV/AIDS patients would be left in a more vulnerable position.

There are around 1,200 reported HIV/AIDS cases in the country and about 7,500, unreported cases, official sources said.

The Commission on AIDS in Asia in a report said, nearly five million people are living with HIV in Asia with 440,000 people dying each year. An additional eight million people will be infected by 2020.

The death toll can be kept to less than 300,000 in 2020, saving the lives of more than 200,000 people each year.

Governments must establish and maintain systems that provide continuous and sustainable access to antiretroviral therapy for all who need it, by ensuring affordability, availability, accessibility and adherence, the commission said.

AIDS begins with HIV infection. People infected with HIV may have no symptoms for 10 years or longer, but they can still transmit the infection to others during this symptom-free period. But, if the infection is not detected and treated, the immune system gradually weakens, and AIDS develops.

All the dead were buried side by side at Rampur graveyard.

"Rail authorities have reassured us that the families of the victims would receive compensation after an administrative investigation," Aslam said.

In the meantime, Tangail Deputy Commissioner (DC) Akhter Ali Sarkar visited the families of Dulal Miah and Solaiman at Rampur village yesterday.

He gave Tk 15,000 to Solaiman's wife Ambia Khatun and Tk 10,000 to Dulal's wife Janu Begum.

The DC assured the family members of the other deceased that they would all receive financial help from the authorities.

his son had completed all paperwork to go to Cyprus for higher studies.

"My Faruque passed HSC from the Maj Gen Mahmud Hasan College in Tangail town last year, he was so bright," Jang Bahadur wailed as neighbours and relatives tried to console him.

Jang is inconsolable as are the families of Sajat Ali, Fazlul Haque, Shohidul, Dudul Miah, Riazul Islam, Ahad Hossain, Alauddin and Golam Hossain of the same village. Most of them have lost their main breadwinner and in addition to the grief of losing a dear one, they now face the prospect of an uncertain future.

This is the first time that a single accident has touched Rampur so deeply.

Lal Mahmud, an uncle of cloth trader Alraf who also died in the accident, told The Daily Star that the real tragedy was the fact that the accident had pushed the families of the dead men into very uncertain futures.

Some of the traders who died in the accident were also handloom owners and their small factories are now left without anyone to run them. The poor factory workers are