

No anti-Quran section in Nat'l Women Dev Policy

Islamic scholars tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no anti-Quran section in the Women Development Policy, but a vested political quarter is conspiring to snatch the rights of women in the name of religion, said the Islamic scholars at a roundtable yesterday.

They said the Holy Quran states equal rights for men and women and Islam does not create any discrimination between them.

The roundtable titled 'Women Development Policy from Islamic point of view' was organised by Sammilta Islami Jote at the National Press Club in the city on Tuesday.

In a keynote paper, Jote President Hafez Maulana Ziaul Hasan said though it is stated in the

Muslim law of inheritance that a sister will get half of her brother, but there is no restriction in the Quran in giving a sister equal share.

He said those who are opposing the rights of women in the name of Islam are not following Islam.

"What provisions of the Holy Quran were followed when the militant fundamentalists staged violence in and around Baitul Mukarram National Mosque on April 10 and 11," he asked.

Presiding over the discussion, Hafez Allama Ruhul Amin Madani said Islam ensures women's rights but some aulems (Islamic scholar) want to snatch them.

"Earlier this quarter used to say that women leadership is unlawful and those who obey their leader-

ship are infidels (*Kafir*). But, now they are refraining from such speeches. They are using religion for their own purposes," he said.

Maulana Mahiullah Mujaddedi, spiritual leader (Pir) of Shantipur Darbar Sharif, said Islam teaches equality.

"Almighty Allah never created discrimination, then who we are to create discrimination between men and women," he asked.

Mohammad Sadek, a former official of the Islamic Foundation, said activities of some Islamic parties have turned Islam into a religion of terror.

Ayesha Khanam, president of Mahila Parishad, said Bangladesh would fall behind by 100 years if the recommendations of the review

committee are implemented

Moinuddin Khan Badal, president of the executive committee of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Women leader Rokeya Kabir and Barrister Tania Amir also spoke.

Teachers and students of different Qawami Madrasas were present at the discussion.

Army chief to visit Bhabadah today

UNB, Jessore

Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed is coming here today to visit Bhabadah Beel, once a bane for the farmers for waterlogging and now a boon for them at army initiative.

The army chief is expected to reach Bhabadah College at noon to meet the army officials and then visit the Bhabadah sluice gate that changed the fate of the villagers.

After inaugurating the reaping of Boro paddy harvest at Monohorpur, Gen Moeen will exchange views with the affected farmers of the waterlogged area on the Technical College premises.

He will also observe the success of the army personnel in extracting stagnant water as well as the affected area.

"We are expecting that waterlogging problem in the Bhabadah area might be solved permanently with intervention by the army chief," enthusiastic people here said ahead of Moeen's tour.

Farmers at their own initiative made their crop lands suitable for Boro cultivation removing stagnant waters this year, as army troops played an important role in removing embankments from rivers and canals.

CASE AGAINST HASINA Hearing on govt appeal resumes

UNB, Dhaka

After a five-week adjournment, the hearing on a government appeal against the High Court judgment on detained former prime minister Sheikh Hasina in an extortion case filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury resumed yesterday at the Supreme Court.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, a counsel for Hasina, submitted his arguments that remained inconclusive.

However, the hearing resumes today. On February 6, the High Court, upon a writ petition filed by Awami League President Hasina, had declared illegal the government sanction placing the case against her for trial under the EPR and quashed the entire trial proceedings.

On February 26, the Appellate Division upon an application granted the government leave-to-appeal against the HC rulings, and fixed March 16 for hearing.

It also stayed the operation of the HC judgment and stalled the trial of the extortion case against Hasina under the EPR until the appeal is resolved.

On March 18, the apex court adjourned the hearing for five weeks after arguments by the government side.

Day labourer feared buried alive in mudslide

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day labourer was feared buried alive in a mudslide while digging a well at Koylghat of Kamrangirchar in the capital yesterday.

Police said about 20 day labourers began digging the well in the morning and dug about 40 feet by the evening. The mudslide occurred suddenly while five of the labourers were working there.

Four of them managed to climb up while Abdul Mannan got trapped.

On information, fire fighters rushed to the spot and started rescue operation. But they failed to rescue Mannan and left the place at about 9:00pm.

Mannan's fellow workers with the help of local people were trying to rescue him as of 11:45pm yesterday.

Local people decided to dig the well as water could not be lifted through tube-wells due to a drop in underground water level.

Navy chief visits activities of naval contingent

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam yesterday visited Patharghata of Barguna and Bhola districts to observe ongoing activities of the naval contingent deployed there.

During the visit, the navy chief expressed his satisfaction over the active role of the naval personnel for helping the cyclone victims and to take up the project "Operation Nabojatra" besides their professional duties at sea.

He monitored the development activities of naval contingent at Bhola in co-ordination with the local administration.

Earlier, navy chief handed over voter ID cards at Barguna and inaugurated voter list and national ID card registration project at Patharghata.

Commodore Commanding Chittagong, Commodore Commanding Khulna, senior officers of Naval Headquarters and local elites were present on the occasion.

Dr Mahanambrata commemoration lecture April 26

Dr Mahanambrata Foundation for Peace and Solidarity at Dhaka University will organise Dr Mahanambrata commemoration lecture at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) auditorium on April 26 (Saturday), says a press release.

Eminent citizens and intellectuals will be accorded reception at the programme, while scholarships will be distributed among the meritorious students.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Prof A F Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Sree Sree Ramkrishna Principal Swami Akharananda Moharaj, Canada Toronto University Prof Emeritus Joseph T O'Connell and Shuhasin Das will be accorded reception.

The foundation will also hold a cultural function.

Apollo Hospitals celebrates founding anniversary

Apollo Hospitals Dhaka (AHD) celebrated the 2nd daylong 'centres of excellence' programme commemorating the 3rd anniversary of the hospital at the hospital auditorium recently, says a press release.

Emergency to be lifted before polls

Hopes UK envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Outgoing British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury yesterday said they would hope that the state of emergency would be lifted ahead of the elections.

"In Bangladesh, people want freedom during election period as people take election as a festival. So, we hope that this situation will be created through withdrawal of the state of emergency ahead of the elections," the Bangladesh-origin British diplomat told reporters after making a farewell call on Education and Commerce Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman at the commerce ministry.

Replying to a query, he said if the state of emergency is not lifted ahead of the elections, emergency should be relaxed to the maximum extent for holding a free, fair and credible election.

"But all have to consider normal law and order situation, and for that we said about relaxation of the emergency in maximum level. We hope that it would be lifted," Anwar said, adding that a proper atmosphere should be created for giving people the chance to do election campaign.

Commenting on doubt in public mind about holding of the election at the scheduled time, the high commissioner said since he is an "optimist" he hopes that the election will be held as per the electoral roadmap.

"If people have any doubt about the election in time... Their past experience is responsible for that. But, we are not observing any doubt about the holding of election according to the scheduled time," he said.

Anwar said the government would have to take initiatives to ease

all doubts from public mind. "Declaration of election schedule can remove people's doubt over holding elections."

He said people believe that the election would be held in December or earlier, but the declaration of election schedule could make people confident about it.

"The caretaker government gave assurance several times of holding the election before the end of 2008 and we have no doubt about it."

Asked about government's pre-dialogue talks with political parties, the outgoing envoy said he is not the right person to make any comment on the issue. But he hoped that it would be successful.

"We want fruitful dialogue and through it political parties would come to a commitment and will move forward," Anwar added.

DRAFT RTI ORDN Journos' opinions conveyed to govt

UNB, Dhaka

A paper, containing the opinions of journalists on the draft Right to Information Ordinance, was handed over to Information Secretary Jamil Osman yesterday.

Zahiduzzaman Faruk handed over the paper to Jamil Osman on behalf of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), National Press Club and South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA).

Public opinions on the draft ordinance have been gathered through website, e-mail and newspapers.

'Re-fix minimum wage'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Srani Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP) yesterday demanded re-fixing the minimum wage for the workers considering the interests of both the workers and the owners.

The SKOP demanded this at a seminar on 'Announcement and implementation of minimum national wage consistent with the current prices of essentials is inevitable' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

The speakers at the seminar also demanded a rationing system and distributing rice, pulses and oil at a lower price under Open Market Sale for the workers.

They added that in the present scenario it is hard for the workers to run their families with this minimum wage so the national minimum wage must be re-fixed.

They also demanded permanent dearness allowance for the workers and a system to re-fix the allowance every two years.

President of Bangladesh Economic Association Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman, Executive Director of Centre for Policy Dialogue Dr Mostafizur Rahman and President of Bangladesh Federal Journalists' Union Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul spoke at the seminar presided over by SKOP leader Abdul Kader Howlader.



Heat wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Mild to moderate heat wave that is sweeping over Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Bogra and northern part of Chittagong division may continue, Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country during the period.

Highest temperature 40.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Ishwardi and lowest 20.9 degrees Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:24pm today and rises at 5:29am 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	36.9	26.8	71	45
Chittagong	32.0	26.4	93	77
Rajshahi	38.5	25.6	77	55
Khulna	37.2	25.7	79	50
Barisal	36.0	25.5	79	65
Sylhet	36.1	25.1	60	60
Cox's Bazar	34.5	25.0	71	71



Founder of Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) Valerie Taylor speaks at a discussion on partnership development at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday.

Extend hands of cooperation to CRP Valerie Taylor urges the affluent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) Coordinator Valerie Taylor, an angel for the paralysed, yesterday called on all affluent section of the society to extend their hands of cooperation so that CRP can go a long way with its noble duties.

"We relied very much on foreign supports to run the centres, but now we feel many people are increasingly prosperous and their businesses are flourishing. We now look forward to people in

Bangladesh to ask can you help us?" she appealed to the affluent class of the society.

CRP has reached a point over its last three decades of growth where the organisation now faces some difficult financial challenges.

"Changes in the policies of donors and shifting priorities along with frequent environmental calamities including the 2004 tsunami and the recent cyclone 'Sidr' cause funds to be diverted to other more urgent needs," Valerie told a discussion on 'partnership development' at Brac Centre Inn

auditorium in the city.

"This results in the amount of aid shrinking and, therefore, leaner times for NGOs like CRP," she added.

She said on the hopeful and positive side, however, the rising levels of prosperity in Bangladesh have resulted in new levels of awareness and the new trend of corporate social responsibility.

The aim of the discussion on partnership development is how we may develop partnership corporate social responsibilities, she added.

FRCP-Canada President Carolyn Scott said, "Around 84 percent of patients treated at CRP's Savar hospital cannot pay anything at all or eventually repay only a fraction of the costs."

Seeking assistance from the affluent people, she said, "Everything you give will be used to the maximum benefits of those who need help the most, those who cannot move their arms or legs, or some who cannot speak. Now it's your turn to speak."

"Let us hear your pledges of support. Let us hear your strategies to keep CRP alive and thriving," she added.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the Daily Star will promote the public recognition of CRP for its excellent works.

Faruque, an official of SK+F also gave his aid pledge to provide the costs of special education needs unit of CRP.

Minor boy dies in rooftop fall

A minor boy died falling from roof of a five-storied building in Mymensingh on April 16, says a press release.

He was identified as Syed Arafat Zaman, a student of class five of Mymensingh Cantonment Public School.

He went to the roof at noon returning from school. He was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where he died due to brain haemorrhage.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Durmut in Jamalpur on April 17.

FOUR MONTHS INTO NEW ACADEMIC YEAR Most of high schools yet to get guidelines about SQ method

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four months into the new academic year, around 10 lakh class IX students have yet to have studies on the go as authorities have neither printed textbooks nor trained up most teachers as per the announced Structured Question (SQ) method.

Most of the high schools also have not got guidelines on how to set questions for examinations, evaluate the answer sheets and impart lessons in classes.

Once introduced, the present class IX students would be the first batch to sit for the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations 2010 under SQ method.

The method is appreciated by academicians, teachers, guardians and students, but they all slate the government's failure to take necessary preparations.

The education ministry is now confused over introducing the method due to lack of preparations and strong protests from teachers, students and guardians.

"The final decision of introducing the SQ method from this year in class IX or later or in class VI in phases will come after holding

talks with academicians, guardians and teachers," said Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman.

Meanwhile, the education ministry has formed a seven-member review committee and asked it to submit recommendations by today. The government will take a decision following the recommendations, said sources.

"The new method is good but the government is taking too much time to introduce it," said renowned academicians Prof Jafar Iqbal, who is also a member of the review committee.

Students across the country are now in the dark as they don't know yet whether their first term exams set to start from April 30 would be held under SQ system.

Teachers say it is impossible to hold the first term examinations under the SQ method now as they don't know how to prepare such questions.

"We are not arranging classes under new method because our teachers are receiving training. The government should have completed the training programme by last year," said Prof Rafiq Afroz, principal of Ispahani Girls' School and College.

A section of top officials of the education ministry, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education popularly known as Shiksha Bhaban and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) are trying to implement the method this year.

Sources in the ministry allege in that case the officials would get an opportunity to grab a big share of the Tk 793-crore fund.

Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Bangladesh government have jointly funded Tk 793 crore for introducing the method under Secondary Education Sector Development (SESD) project.

But only several crore taka has been spent for a two-day training programme for only 10 percent or 88,000 teachers. Besides, no money has been spent yet for printing new textbooks.

Students, guardians and teachers are now waiting for the recommendations of the review committee comprised of Education Joint Secretary Nazrul Islam Khan, Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed, Prof Jafar Iqbal, Prof Maniruzzaman Miah, Dr M Ibrahim, Manzur Ahmed Khondaker and Shakawat Ali.

Suggestions from parties to be placed at council of advisers

Govt to discuss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers will be presented a report containing suggestions made during informal talks with political parties.

"We're getting good suggestions during the pre-dialogue meetings. After finishing the informal meetings, we will submit a complete resolution in the form of a report before the chief adviser and the council of advisers," Hossain Zillur Rahman, the commerce and education adviser, told reporters yesterday.

The pre-dialogue talks are going on with a few more political parties yet to attend, the adviser said adding that the exact timeframe for the commencement of the proposed formal dialogues cannot be confirmed yet since the preparatory work still needs to be completed.

Zillur made the comments while talking to reporters at housing and public works ministry following a dialogue preparatory meeting with Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Quader and LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal.

Asked whether the advisers involved in the pre-dialogue talks with political parties encountered any impediment during the talks, Zillur replied in the negative.

Responding to a query about the possibility of talks with members of civil society as well, the adviser, without elaborating, said they would hold discussions with all the stakeholders.

Yesterday's pre-scheduled informal talks with the BNP faction loyal to Khaleda Zia could not be held due to an unscheduled meeting of the council of advisers, Zillur said.

3 injured in fresh BCL factional clash

DU CORRESPONDENT

At least three activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) were injured yesterday in a clash between its two factions on the Dhaka University (DU) campus.

Sources said the activists of a BCL faction led by its International Affairs Secretary Sohel Rana Tipu swooped on the activists of another BCL faction while they were drafting a press release about a protest programme in front of the Institute of Fine Arts.

Mafizul Islam Dali, Aminur Rahman Jewel and Abdur Rahman Jibon were injured in the attack. They are activists of the BCL faction that expressed resentment over not getting the posts they expected in the BCL central committee.

Seriously injured Dali was rushed to the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital and later shifted to Samorita Hospital while Jewel and Jibon received medical treatment at the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

A crude bomb went off and a shot was fired during the clash, sources added.

Earlier, a protest programme was held at the Institute of Fine Arts demanding punishment of those who assaulted BCL activists Sima on the university campus on Sunday.

At least eight people including three BCL activists were injured in the clash between two factions of BCL.

US envoy meets foreign secy

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador James Moriarty yesterday made a courtesy call on Foreign Secretary Tuhid Hossain and discussed a broad range of bilateral issues between Dhaka and Washington.

After the nearly 40-minute meeting, the US Ambassador told reporters that he had a very nice discussion with the foreign secretary on entire range of bilateral issues, but would not go into details about the subjects discussed.

Later, the foreign secretary told reporters that they discussed issues including Bangladesh's GSP facilities in US market and Dhaka's desire to have access to MCA (Millennium Challenge Account) of the US president.

Tuhid also sought Washington's support to Bangladesh's candidate Ambassador Dr Toufique Ali for the post of director general of the World Intellectual Property Organisation based in Geneva.

Death anniversary

Today is the 2nd death anniversary of Shamsur Joha, former chairman of Khandakaye Sarajia, says a press release.

His family members requested all to pray for salvation of the departed soul.