

SOARING PRICES OF ESSENTIALS

Wage can't earn two moderate meals a day

Workers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The amount of wages for garment workers is so meagre that it becomes almost impossible for them to manage two moderate meals a day due to soaring prices of essentials, let alone taking care of health, grudges a garment worker.

"BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association) said workers can visit doctors at its medical centres, but do we have any time to go to centres? Our work pressure is so heavy that we cannot even have some time for rest," said Farzana, a garment worker with a decade's experience.

She was sharing her experience at a roundtable on 'Workers' health rights and security' jointly organised by Physicians for Social Responsibility and Environment Health Programme of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) in association with National Health Rights Movement at the National Press Club in the city.

"The wage is so meagre that there remains almost nothing to buy foods after paying house rent," she said.

"Sometimes we, workers, lose our temper for work pressure. There is not a small space for us in the factories where we can take rest for 10 minutes," Farzana said, adding that workers even do not

know that there are medical centres of BGMEA providing medicare to them.

Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akhter said doctors, who conducted surveys on health status of female garment workers, found 85 percent of them suffer from various reproductive problems.

They also face physical problems like headache, muscle pains, kidney troubles for not having adequate facilities to drink water and toilet facilities for female workers in the factories, she said.

Endorsing the views of Farzana, Trade Union Kendra General Secretary Dr Wazedul Islam Khan said despite the fact that good health of workers is very crucial for productivity, the factory owners do not want to understand it.

Female workers during the pre-and post-natal period pass time of uncertainty about their jobs and childcare, as most factories do not care much about maternity leave and day-care centres for children of the workers, he added.

Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies Assistant Executive Director Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed said security and health of workers depend on wages, working hour, food and rest, but the wages they get are very small compared to the high prices of commodities.

"Keeping good health is not

possible by this small wage," he said, adding that there are no hospitals in areas where new garment factories are being set up, while hospitals that are located near factories remain closed at night.

"Workers cannot spare time to visit doctors during daytime," the labour expert said, demanding setting up camps in new industrial areas and keeping hospitals in the areas open during nighttime so that workers can visit during their off-period.

Speaking as chief guest, Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said only ten medical centres in the sprawling industrial areas in and around the city is insignificant in number.

"We want that the workers will have their career planning, nutrition and security. It is not only the matter of compliance required by the buyers, but of our national interests," he said, demanding improvement of workplace environment in industries.

Stating that garment owners are trying their best and have succeeded to a considerable extent in maintaining compliance, BGMEA President Anwarul Alam Chowdhury Parvez said, "We have no choice without compliance."

BGMEA has programmes on hygiene, training courses for capacity building of the workers and 10 medical centres to provide

healthcare services, but the government has to take some initiatives in this regard, he said.

"Workers have problems for lack of public transports and gas pipelines in areas where new industries are growing. We asked the government to set up industrial zones, but nothing happened," he said.

Physicians for Social Responsibility President Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan, Dr Rashid-e-Mahbub, Dr AKM Saleh, Dr Nital Das, Dr Mostaque Hossain, Dr Iqbal Azim and Bapa leader Sharif Jamil also spoke.

'Enroll expats in voter list without delay'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Probashi Manob Kalyan Foundation (PMKF) at a press conference yesterday urged the government to enroll the expatriate Bangladeshis in the voters list without making any delay, saying that they play a significant role for the country.

The expatriates' welfare organisation also asked the government to provide special facilities to expatriates in the next fiscal budget encouraging them to invest in industries.

The press conference was organised by PMKF at the Dhaka Reporters Unity auditorium in the city. The organisation called on the government to take measures to stop unnecessary political activities by expatriates and conflicts that arise out of regional organisations abroad.

"To encourage expatriates Bangladeshis to return home, we also demand that the government reserves at least 10 seats for expatriate Bangladeshis in the national parliament," said PMKF Chairman Dr Mohammad Abdur Rahman.

Opening separate desks at National Board of Revenue, Board of Investment, Privatisation Commission and the Secretariat for quick services to expatriates and giving them the status of commercially or nationally important persons will encourage them to send more money, he said.

PMKF Vice Chairman Dr Jamal Uddin Khalifa and Executive Director Prof Ruhul Amin also took part in the press conference.

RASHEDA'S DEATH Probe demanded

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a condolence meeting yesterday demanded proper investigation into the death of Awami League leader Rasheda Mohiuddin.

Rasheda, also a former student of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ) of Dhaka University (DU), died at a city hospital on Thursday.

MCJ Department organised the meeting at RC Majumdar auditorium. Dean of the Faculty of Social Science Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Prof Shakhawat Ali Khan, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique spoke at the meeting.

Unite to face crisis in media

Speakers urge journalists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Print and electronic media are currently facing severe crisis due to price hike of newsprint, decrease in income from advertisement, and people's reluctance to buy newspaper following increased cost of livelihood, said the speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They urged the journalists for forging unity saying that unity is the only way to get rid of the crisis in media.

The seminar titled 'Contemporary Media Environment in Bangladesh' was organised by Massline Media Centre to observe the World Press Freedom Day at the IDB Bhaban in the city.

Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, head of news at ATN Bangla, moderated the seminar.

Dr Shakhawat Ali Khan, former professor of mass communication and journalism department at Dhaka University, said "Media is facing a famine situation and without unity among the journalists there is no way to get the media out of the

crisis." "The present situation in media is very complex. There is more invisible control over the media than the visible control. Without the unity there is no other way for the journalists to bring themselves out of this situation," he added.

National Press Club President Shaikat Mahmood presented the keynote paper at the seminar. "Advertisements in newspaper have decreased, people are reluctant to buy newspaper as the cost of livelihood increased abnormally, journalists are facing cases, many owners of the media-house are in jail, and newspapers and TV channels are closing down," he said.

"This is the situation of media and unity among the journalists is the only way to get out of it," he added. Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, editor of the Manabzamin, said, "Media saved the country from famine, but the media itself is now facing famine following increased rate of newsprint, imprisonment of the owners of media-house, shutting down of media, decrease in advertise-

ment and control over the media." "If the present situation continues, another 10 media-houses will be closed down within this year," he added.

He said, "A month ago a journalist reported on the misdeeds of Comilla district Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, and for that he lost his job as a special agency phoned his office to terminate him, and within 24 hours he lost his job. This is the situation of journalism in the country."

BSS Chief Editor Jagul Ahmed, Chowdhury and Bhorer Kagaj Editor Shyamol Dutta also spoke at the seminar.

Ershad demands UZ election before nat'l polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said those days are not far away when his party will regain power.

The JP chairman, who recently became active in politics after resigning from the party helm, also supported election commission's (EC) initiative to redraw the boundaries of electoral constituencies.

He was speaking at a discussion organised by Jatiya Sromik Party, the meeting was addressed by JP Senior President Member Raushan Ershad, Presidium Member Anisul Islam Mahmud, Sunil Gupta and Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader.

The JP chairman observed that there is no food scarcity in the country and no one is starving at present. The former military ruler observed that proposed dialogue with the government would not be successful without participation of all party.

He also demanded holding of the upazila polls prior to the national election. Expressing hope to regain power, Ershad said, there is no alternative to JP-led government.

President by MA Sattar, acting president of Jatiya Sromik Party, the meeting was addressed by JP Senior President Member Raushan Ershad, Presidium Member Anisul Islam Mahmud, Sunil Gupta and Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader.

SCBA ELECTION Result of secretary post challenged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued a show cause notice upon nine defendants, including newly elected secretary, in connection with the results of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) election.

The court did not give any stay order on function of the SCBA newly elected secretary after defeated candidate Barrister Abdullah Al Mamun filed a civil suit against the handover of charge and its function.

Barrister Mamun, who was declared defeated after recounting votes in the election, filed the suit seeking a stay order on the takeover and function of the newly elected Secretary Nurul Islam Sujan.

After the hearing, Judge Iftekhar Ahmed of the Ninth Assist Judge's Court, without passing any stay order, issued a show cause notice upon nine defendants, including newly elected secretary.

They are asked to explain within three days from the day of receipt of the notice why a temporary injunction would not be imposed upon them.

In the suit, other defendants are convenor of the election sub-committee Advocate Nizamul Haq Nasim, members advocates AKM Abdul Hakim, Purabi Rani Sharma, Zead Al Malum, Motahar Hossain Sajju, Ashraful Kamal and Sheikh Akhterul Islam, and former secretary Abu Mohammad Amin Uddin and newly elected assistant secretaries Fahima Nasrin and KM Zahid Sarwar (Kajol).

In his plaint, Barrister Mamun mentioned that he had contested as one of secretary candidates in the SCBA election held on April 29 and 30. After counting all the votes, the election commissioner declared him elected showing that he scored two votes more than Sujan.

The news was broadcast by different electronic media the same day and published in different national dailies the following day. But the defendants, violating the provisions and rules of SCBA, recounted the votes and declared the defeated candidate Sujan elected showing that he (Sujan) scored six votes more than Mamun, the plaintiff added.

Gono Forum protests attack on religious minorities

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Gono Forum yesterday protested the attack on religious minority people at Gachbari village under Uzirpur upazila in Barisal, says a press release.

In a joint statement, Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain and Acting General Secretary Advocate Subrato Chowdhury demanded exemplary punishment to the alleged terrorists.

The statement said a group of 20 to 22 armed terrorists led by Tamim and Kamal attacked on the villagers suddenly and wounded men-women and looted valuables.

A case was filed in this connection with Uzirpur Police Station on April 21.

WEATHER TODAY

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 36.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Khulna and Mongla and lowest 21.2 degrees Celsius at Satkhira.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:29pm today and rises at 5:21am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening)

OUTLAW ATTACK ON COPS

Four listed PBCP men remanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Four listed outlaws belonging to Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) were remanded yesterday after they had revealed important information about the attack on police at Taherpur on Friday.

They are Raihanul Haq Komol, Sontosh Mohanta, Abdur Rahim and Jalal.

They were shown arrested in the case filed by Nasir Uddin, in-charge of Taherpur police outpost, over the attack that left one police dead and five arms looted.

Police produced them before the court of a senior judicial magistrate in Rajshahi in the afternoon seeking 10 days remand, but the court granted only four days.

Rajshahi DIG Mokhlesur Rahman said the four outlaws revealed the names of some top guns who are believed to mastermind the attack.

"We hope we will be able to find out the perpetrators soon," he added. The DIG said Taherpur incident might be the act of the attackers on police at Chowbaria under Naogaon in 2006 that left four policemen dead and four arms looted.

Six other people held on suspicion, were also sent to court. They are Idris, Zakaria, Ismail, Belal, Rafikul and Mominul.

When asked about 15 others held on Friday night, Officer-in-Charge of Bagmara Police Station Fayzul Islam said they were released after interrogation.

He informed that Rab held four more people and handed them over to police.

Cab drivers continue protest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several hundred drivers of CNG-run taxicabs yesterday staged a sit-in in front of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) in the city protesting an increase of rate of daily money deposit by the owners.

In protest against the violation of government rules in different ways by the taxicab owners, the drivers had been observing work abstention since May 1.

According to the government rules, the taxicab owners have to ply their vehicles by salaried drivers, but none of the owners has salaried ones.

Therefore, all the drivers had been driving by hiring taxicabs from the owners on a daily basis since 1998 at Tk 720 per day.

But after the recent CNG price hike, the taxicab owners increased the deposition rate up to Tk 920.

Humayun Kabir, president of Cab Express Sangram Parishad, told The Daily Star, "As we drive the taxicab on a daily basis against the deposition of a fixed amount, the price hike of CNG does not affect the owners. But the owners have increased the deposition rate illogically."

"If the amount is hiked, it will be impossible for us to continue," he said.

"We had also informed the BRTA authorities about the matter but the officials did not cooperate," he alleged.

As the drivers had been protesting the increase of the deposition rate, several hundred taxicabs were seen parked at different depots at Matuail, Gabtali, Mohakhali and different other places in the city yesterday.

Former BNP lawmaker GM Siraj, also the chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association, told The Daily Star, "It is true that I have no salaried drivers, rather they run my cabs on condition of commission on the basis of mileage."

Replying to a question, he said, "As the CNG price has been hiked, we have to collect extra charge."

BRTA Director (Engineer) Humayun Rashid Khalifa said "Both the taxicab owners and the drivers have been violating the BRTA rules by charging extra fare and taking deposition money from the drivers instead of paying salary."

He said the drivers submitted a written complaint to the BRTA chairman against the cab owners and the BRTA will take actions soon.

Meanwhile, the BRTA mobile court yesterday seized 15 CNG-run vehicles, including 10 buses, for charging extra fare and filed 109 cases.

MJF signs MoU

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed yesterday between Department of Social Services (DSS) and Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) for ensuring effective, quality and sustainable services of the existing safe homes in Khulna and Rajshahi divisions, says a press release.

Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam and Director General of Department of Social Services Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organisations at Social Welfare Bhaban.

The three-year project will be implemented by MJF and its eight partner NGOs under the supervision of Department of Social Services.

The expected outcomes from the project are - inmates of the safe homes will be motivated to act as normal human being and will feel confident, inmates will participate in income generating activities, victims and witnesses will enjoy harassment free environment, victim's ability to cope with adverse situation will be enhanced and networking and social reintegration will be developed.

DIALOGUE

CA to clarify govt stance by May 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An adviser of the caretaker government yesterday hinted a progress of the much-talked-about dialogue between the government and political parties in a couple of days.

LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal, without specifying any date, affirmed that the chief adviser (CA) will address the nation by May 8.

The address is expected to clarify the government stance on the dialogue, lifting of emergency and the general elections.

Asked whether representatives from the army will be present at the formal dialogue, Iqbal, talking to journalists at the Secretariat, expressed ignorance about it, saying he read about it in newspapers.

His cabinet colleague Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said,

"I cannot give anything in details now. You'll be informed duly when any decision is reached."

Awami League presidium member Suranjit Sengupta and BNP chairperson's adviser Brig (Retd) ASM Hannan Shah said army representatives should be present during the formal dialogue.

Zillur, who along with four other advisers including Anwarul Iqbal, was involved on April 7-28 pre-dialogue talks with political parties, business community and civil society, was also talking to reporters at the Secretariat.

"The preparation for the dialogue is on. We hope we'll be able to enter the next stage soon."

Asked about date of the formal dialogue, Zillur said the CA's press secretary has already spoken about the matter.



US Ambassador James F Moriarty calls on Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed at the latter's office in the city yesterday.

Architectural edn should focus on global warming

Says UIA President Gaëtan Siew

NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

Architectural education will have to focus on the need for mobility of architects and the university courses on global warming.

The architects are also required to address issues like natural disasters and rising energy prices while undertaking rebuilding and sustainable development.

This was stated by architect Gaëtan Siew, president of the International Union of Architects (UIA), while talking to The Daily Star exclusively in the capital yesterday.

The Mauritius-born and France-based leader of over 1.5 million architects in 113 countries is here to invite Nobel Laureate Dr Md Yunus

as Speaker at the UIA General Assembly to be held at Turin in Italy next month.

If all goes well, the Bangladesh 'banker to the poor' will be the first non-architect to be the Speaker at a UIA Assembly, said Gaëtan Siew.

He said the search for local solutions rather than imposing imported ones is one of the reasons why the UIA has decided to invite Dr Yunus to address over 12000 architects expected to assemble in the capital city of Turin Province.

Corroborating the query whether architects and architecture have failed mankind in improving the quality of human settlements, Gaëtan Siew cited the action of governments and international financing institutions, including the role of the World Bank, and the fact that architects are involved in the last part of the building process as the primary reasons.

The UIA has been working with implementing agencies like UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) to formulate policies and increase awareness about global warming and energy crisis, said the visiting architect.

He said to meet the needs of urbanisation and poverty, the UIA has also been working through its member countries to derive standards, disseminate information and acquire knowledge.



Gaëtan Siew

'Dhaka committed to Iraq's sovereignty'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Iraqi chargé d'affaires Mohammad Sabri Rashid presented his credentials to Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday.

The new chargé d'affaires will be running the mission from the Pan Pacific Sonargon Hotel in the city where he is currently staying.

A full-fledged embassy will go into operation with the arrival of an ambassador soon.

The foreign adviser said Bangladesh remained committed

to Iraq's reconstruction and support for Iraq's territorial integrity and sovereignty.

"We are pleased that Iraq now has an embassy in Dhaka. Strengthening bonds with Muslim countries is a cornerstone of our foreign policy. I see this, therefore, as a very positive development," said Iftekhar in a foreign ministry press release.

Sabri said he hopes to take Bangladesh-Iraq relations to "the tradition of the past when the two countries and peoples enjoyed excellent cooperation in commerce, economy and trade."

Quality management in health sector stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day workshop on 'Quality management in health' ended at Brac Centre at Mohakhali in the city yesterday.

James P Grant School of Public Health, Brac University with the support of the University of Heidelberg, Germany organised the workshop while GTZ Bangladesh was the sponsor.

Representatives from Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH), ICDDR,B, Pathfinder International, Engender Health, Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP), Marie Stopes Clinic Society and few other international organisations were present at the workshop.

Dr Shahaduzzaman, coordinator, MPH programme, opened the floor by presenting the aim and vision of the workshop.

Prof Mushtaque Chowdhury, dean of the James P Grant School of

Public Health, introduced the school and called for quality management in the health sector as an integral part of service delivery.

SI Olivier from GTZ focused on the rationale of quality management in health in respect to affordability and equity.

Sylvia Sax from University of Heidelberg, Germany underscored the need for improving quality in healthcare while Barbara Donaldson shared international experiences on how to set standards to improve quality.

SAJM Musa of DGHS summarised some of the outstanding successes as well as the challenges the country is facing presently like the differences in health conditions and healthcare consumption between different groups of population.

Director of DMCH Brig General Dr Md Abus Shabid Khan spoke on the significant health inequities in management.

He added that private and public partnership has the potential to improve the management and reduce social inequalities.

DIARRHOEAL DISEASES

Number of patients on rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of the patients undergoing treatment for diarrhoeal diseases shows sharp rise this week.

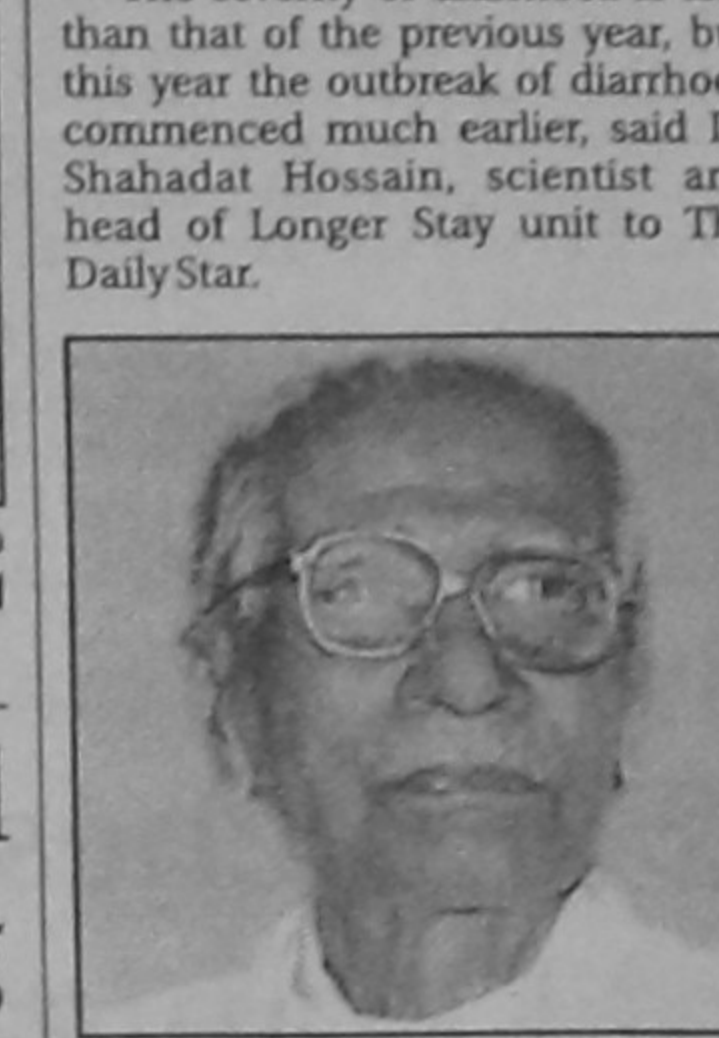
Around 1319 people sought treatment at different hospitals across the country from Saturday morning to yesterday morning, according to the control room of Directorate General of Health Services.

International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), the lone specialised hospital for diarrhoeal diseases in the country, experienced 650 patients yesterday, which was 699 on Saturday and 656 on Friday.

Since the last few weeks the number of patients with diarrhoea has been increasing. Currently the average number of patients receiving treatment every day at the ICDDR,B is 650 to 700. It was 500 to 600 three weeks ago, experts at ICDDR,B said.

Most of the patients are from Mirpur, Kafur and Badda areas, they said adding that the number of child and adult patients are almost same.

The severity of diarrhoea is less than that of the previous year, but this year the outbreak of diarrhoea commenced much earlier, said Dr Shahadat Hossain, scientist and head of Longer Stay unit to The Daily Star.



Syed Ashraf passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Ashraf Hossain, a Language Movement veteran and an organiser of the Liberation War in Patakhali, passed away at Eastern Hospital in the city on Saturday night at the age of 78.

He left behind his wife, only son and thousands of friends and admirers to mourn his death.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises after Zohr prayers yesterday. Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar attended the namaz-e-janaza.

Earlier, Awami League leaders Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon and National Professor Nurul Islam paid their last respect to Ashraf at the Central Shaheed Minar.

His body will be kept on the local Shaheed Minar premises in Patakhali today from 10:00am to 11:00am to let local people show their last respect to their leader, family sources said.

He will be buried with state honour in his family graveyard at Dhulia village in Bauphal after namaz-e-janazas at the Eidgah and at Bauphal High School playground today.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddique in separate statements condoled the death of Ashraf, a leader of National Awami Party (NAF).

NAP President Prof Muzaffar Ahmed, Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, acting CPB president Shahidullah Chowdhury, Left Democratic Front, Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Bangladesh Krishak League and Bangladesh Shanti Parishad also condoled his death.

Husne Ara Khatun



Md Khalilur Rahman, passed away at Apollo Hospitals in the city on Saturday at the age of 76, says a press release.

She left behind her two daughters, six grandchildren and a host of admirers to mourn her death.

Her quikhwan will be held at her Banani residence after Maghrib prayers today.