

Political parties urged to exercise true democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called on major political parties to exercise true democracy within the parties.

No major political parties exercise democracy. Democracy cannot be established through pressure or with mighty hands, they added.

Political party leaders said failure of the political parties is one of the reasons behind 1/11 scenario. At the same time, bureaucrats, professional bodies and businessmen are also responsible for it.

Titled 'Exercise of democracy inside political parties', the roundtable was organised by The Editors, an online-based newspaper and news service at the Cirdap auditorium.

Presided by Selim Omrao Khan,

the meeting was addressed by Awami League presidium member Abdur Razzak, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim.

Awami League (AL) leader Prof Abu Sayeed presented a concept paper.

Abdur Razzak said democratic exercise would not exist in the country if true democracy is not practised.

'Failure of the political parties is not the only reason behind 1/11 scenario, but bureaucrats, civil administration, businessmen and professional bodies are also responsible,' veteran AL leader said.

'True democracy is imperative to run the country, but exercise of democracy is not possible when it is imposed,' he added.

Hasanul Haque Inu stressed the need for practising democracy inside a political party. It is not a good sign when the military government tries to form political parties, he added.

Mujahidul Islam Selim said we do not want to return to pre-1/11 situation, but post-1/11 scenario is also not desirable to us.

CPB general secretary also said democracy would not be powerful unless political parties become powerful.

BNP Joint-Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Workers' Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Bimal Biswas, Jatiya Party presidium member GM Quader, Editor of the Amader Shomoy Naimul Islam Khan, noted lawyer Dr Shahdin Malik and Karmojibi Nari President Shirin Akhter also spoke.

Task force launches probe into corruption of haj agencies

UNB, Dhaka

A special taskforce of the National Coordination Committee launched a probe into suspected irregularities and corruption in haj agencies, as part of the ongoing countrywide purge.

The investigators yesterday collected relevant papers from the religious affairs ministry and started the investigation process.

An official announcement said that as per recommendation of the religious affairs ministry, the armed National Coordination Committee formed the task force on Tuesday under the auspices of its Dhaka City Committee-2 for conducting the investigation and recommending measures against the alleged corrupt practices by the haj agencies.

The task force will submit its report by June 30.

'The government has received complaints against a number of haj agencies about harassment of haj pilgrims during haj in the previous years,' said the official handout.

The hajis who performed haj in the previous years and made complaints against any haj agencies have been requested to contact officials at Room No.-20, Block No.-2, MP Hostel, Jatiya Sangsad, or call at 01711-248589, 01556-351923 or 01912-396090 between 9:00am and 5:00pm.

ROAD ACCIDENT Mob torches bus in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob set ablaze a passenger bus as it hit a rickshaw and dragged it around 20 yards along the road near the Indoor Stadium at Pallabi in the city yesterday, leaving two rickshaw passengers and the rickshawpuller injured.

The injured passengers were admitted to a local clinic while rickshawpuller Nazrul Islam was admitted to Suhrawardy Hospital with a broken leg and bruises on different parts of his body. The identities of the passengers could not be known.

However, the driver and the bus staffs managed to flee the scene.

Angered by the incident, local people vandalised the bus and set fire to it.

Fire fighters from Mirpur fire station rushed to the spot and put out the fire.

Int'l Museum Day Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Museum Day will be observed in the country on May 18 (Sunday) as elsewhere across the globe.

On the occasion, Bangladesh National Museum will organise rally, seminar, discussion and exhibition.

This year the theme of the International Museum Day is 'Museum in societal change and development.'

Death anniversary



Today is the 5th death anniversary of Prof Bimol Dutt, a freedom fighter and journalist, says a press release.

On the occasion, religious rituals will be held at his residence in the city and his village home in Pabna.

Nikunja Lal Shaha



Today is the 28th death anniversary of Nikunja Lal Shaha, father of former general secretary of Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad Biresh Chandra Shaha, says a press release.

On the occasion, religious rituals will be held at his residence for peace of his departed soul.

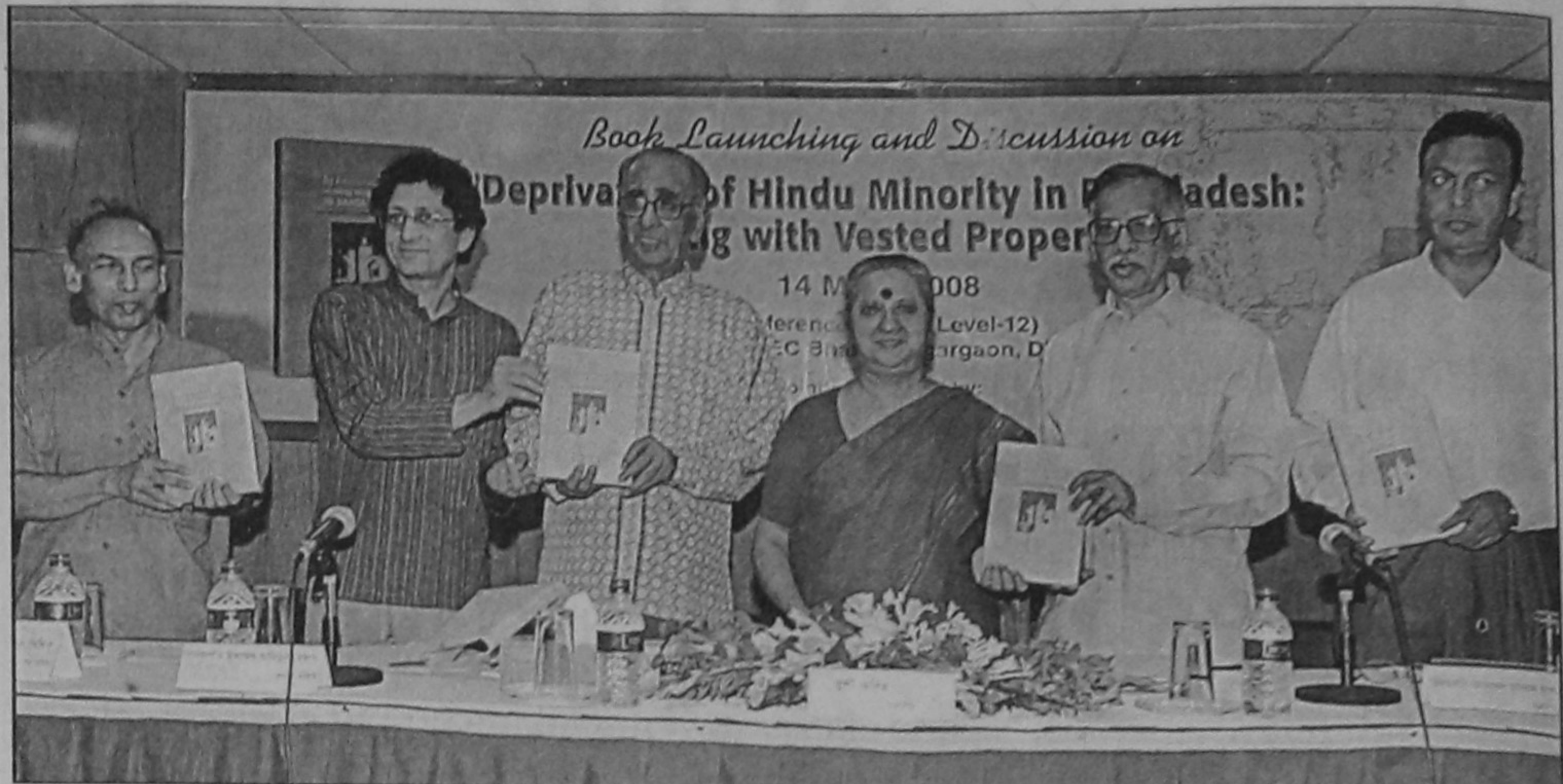
Afaz Uddin Ahmed



Today is the fifth death anniversary of Afaz Uddin Ahmed, an eminent social worker of Narsingdi, says a press release.

Afaz Uddin passed away on this day of 2003 due to a cardiac arrest. He left behind his wife, six daughters and two sons.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at his village home at Hasnabad in Narsingdi after zohr prayers tomorrow. Relatives and admirers have been requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



Guests hold copies of a book titled 'Deprivation of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh: Living with Vested Property' by Prof Abul Barakat and his research team at its launching ceremony at LGED auditorium in the city yesterday. From left are ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda, Prof Abul Barakat, former chief adviser Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir, Justice Golam Rabbani and Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-ur-Rashid.

Hindus lost 26 lakh acres of land from 1965 to 2006

Says study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Hindu community have lost 26 lakh acres of land from 1965 to 2006, while an estimated one crore Hindus were forced to leave the country from 1964 to 2001 because of communal conflicts and deprivation caused by the Enemy (Vested) Property Act, according to a study.

The price of the land and other movable properties lost by 12 lakh Hindu families has been estimated at Tk 350412 crore, said the study sponsored by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and Nijera Kori.

The study report was published in the form of a book titled 'Deprivation of Hindu Minority in Bangladesh: Living with Vested Property', which was launched at LGED auditorium in the city yesterday.

Prof Abul Barakat, lead author of the book, said the government has vested only seven lakh acres of land, of which two lakh acres have been leased out and five lakh acres remain under the control of the grabbers.

Terming the identification of so small amount of vested land a failure of the administration, Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman, former chief adviser to a caretaker government, said the administration of the country is 'impossibly inefficient.'

'There is a direct link between right to property and democracy,' he said, adding that all should work to help establish the rights of those who lost their properties.

In the study, Prof Barakat said, 'Only five lakh people who were in power grabbed the land. This problem needs an immediate solution.'

People involved with BNP politics grabbed 1749500 acres, those involved with Awami League grabbed 361400 acres, people involved with Jamaat-e-Islami grabbed 226200 acres and those engaged with Jatiya Party looted 182000 acres of vested land, said the study.

Besides, 1820 acres of land was grabbed by people linked with Muslim League and 10400 acres of land by people involved with other political parties, it added.

The study recommended establishing a vested property bank to maintain all statistics of such property and handing over the land to distressed and landless Hindus living in the country.

Justice Golam Rabbani blamed the administration for having strong link with influential people in grabbing the enemy properties.

'There will be no change without the change in attitude of the bureaucracy,' he said emphasising on strong parliament and peoples' democracy.

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique of Dhaka University said general people are facing different problems, but the Hindus are subjected to more exploitation and deprivation because of the discriminatory laws.

He urged all to work together to remove all disparities for a true democratic society.

Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-ur-Rashid, Supreme Court Advocate Subrata Chowdhury and ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda also spoke at the programme chaired by Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir.

President, CA shocked at loss of lives in China

UNB, Dhaka

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday expressed deep shock at the loss of lives and property in a devastating earthquake in China.

In his message, Iajuddin Ahmed conveyed his deepest and sincere sympathies to his counterpart Chinese President Hu Jintao and the bereaved families of the earthquake victims.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, in his message, expressed his deepest condolence to Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and through him to the people affected by the earthquake.

'I'm confident that the government and the people of China will overcome the aftermath of the tragedy with courage and fortitude,' he said.

Obituary

Md Golam Hossain, former assistant registrar of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), passed away due to a massive heart attack at his village home under Trishal upazila in Mymensingh on Tuesday at the age of 64, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, five sons, eight daughters, relatives, and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

BAU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Musharraf Hossain Mian, registrar, teachers, officers, and employees consoled the death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul. They also expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

He was buried at his village home at Trishal.

Monoranjan Barua

Monoranjan Barua, chairman of Bangladesh Minorities Board, passed away due to heart attack at Dhaka Metropolitan Hospital on Tuesday at the age of 73, says a press release.

He left behind his two sons, five daughters, grandchildren and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

The prayer for eternal peace of his departed soul will be held at his village at Potia in Chittagong tomorrow.

Three more bodies found

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point where MV Chandpur capsized on Monday afternoon after being hit by a nor wester.

The locals and rescue workers recovered 42 bodies on Monday and Tuesday.

Distressed relatives of the missing ones believe that more bodies might still be trapped in the hull of the launch, which was carrying extra goods and over 100 passengers, though it had the capacity to carry only 50.

Renu Miah, husband of missing Aleya Khatun of Kalapara village of Ghagra union in Mitamoin and Sobir Miah, father of missing Shohel, 7, of Bahemagar village of Bajitpur were among the bereaved found to be waiting on the riverbank with hopes of finding the bodies of their dear ones.

However, talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Nikli Kazi Saiful Islam claimed that the capacity of the launch was 55 and it was carrying

65 passengers.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner of Kishoreganj Sultan Ahmed said that the rescue operation was called off only after the divers confirmed that there was no body inside the submerged vessel within their reach.

Deputy Director Abdus Salam of fire brigade, however, said their divers could not reach many parts of the launch.

'Due to poor logistic support, the divers failed to remove the huge bundles of goods and clothes inside the sunken launch to find bodies that might be trapped under them,' he added.

About salvaging of the launch, he said it was the duty of BIWTA.

Former deputy speaker Abdul Hamid, who hails from a village at Mitamoin, expressed his grievance at the calling off of the rescue operation, saying that it was inhuman and an injustice to the dead and relatives of the victims.

Talking to The Daily Star over

telephone, he said that there might be many bodies stuck under goods inside the sunken launch.

Director (Conservancy and Pilotage) of BIWTA Emdadul Hoq also claimed that rescue operation was suspended on the basis of the information of the divers engaged in the operation.

'But it was not possible to salvage the launch with the poor logistic support available,' he said adding that the rescue ship Rustom could not reach the spot due to the height constraint posed by the Bhairab bridge.

He said that some bodies might sink deep into the water, which is natural. These bodies could not be recovered as divers usually continue their rescue operation within about quarter kilometres centring the spot, the BIWTA director added.

Jahangir Hossain of Nikli Police Station said that a team of police with boats was searching in and around the spot.

Ex-state minister Omar, Mockbul's son jailed

FROM PAGE 1

Judge Kamaluzzaman of the Special Court-9, set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, delivered the judgment.

The Shahjahan couple was tried in absentia as they are both on the run since filing of the case. The court ordered that the verdict would take effect from the day of their arrest or surrender before the court.

Shahjahan was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth beyond known sources of income and another three years for concealing information in his wealth statement.

He would have to serve 13 years in jail, as the verdict would take effect consecutively.

ACC Assistant Director Sheikh Mesbahuddin filed the case on September 27 last year against Shahjahan on charges of concealing about Tk 2.64 crore in wealth statement and amassing about Tk 46.19 lakh illegally.

His wife and son have been made co-accused in the case filed with Gulshan Police Station for abetting him in accumulating ill-gotten wealth.

The case was filed under section 26 (2), 27 (1) of the ACC Act 2004, section 109 of Bangladesh Penal Code and 15 (Gha) (5) of the Emergency Power Rules, 2007.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Aftab Uddin, who is also investigation officer of the case, pressed

charges against Shahjahan, his wife and son showing 28 people as prosecution witnesses on February 20.

A Dhaka court issued arrest warrants against the Shahjahan family on February 24.

CASE AGAINST ATIQUALLAH The special court dealing with the graft case against Janakantha editor Atiqullah also sentenced ATM Kamruzzaman Khan, authorised officer of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), to seven years on the same charge and asking Atiqullah in getting a fake Rajuk approval for the building.

Judge Amar Kumar Roy of the Special Court-2 delivered the judgment in the fifth case of its kind against Atiqullah Khan Masud.

Atiqullah has now been sentenced to 48 years jail term in total by separate courts.

Earlier, he was sentenced to 34 years' imprisonment, seven years in each of the three cases filed against him for forging a design approval from Rajuk, and 13 years imprisonment for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income and concealing information in his wealth statement.

The two were also fined Tk 9.37 crore, in default of which they have to suffer six months more in jail. The convicted will have to pay the fine jointly.

ATM Kamruzzaman Khan was tried in absentia as he has been

absconding since the case has been filed.

Mahmud Hasan, deputy assistant director of the Anti-Corruption Committee (ACC), filed the case with Motijheel PS against Atiqullah for faking a Rajuk approval for a building design.

According to the case statement, Atiqullah Khan applied to Rajuk on April 19 in 1999 for construction of a 15-storied building on DIT road in Malibagh. Following the application, Kamruzzaman prepared a building design and a fake approval from Rajuk and handed over the design to Atiqullah.

Later, Atiqullah collected Tk 1.22, 44,000 from 17 persons to construct the building showing the fake Rajuk approval.

Joint forces arrested Atiqullah Masud from the Janakantha building in capital's Eskaton area on March 7 last year.

CASE AGAINST MASUDUR The special court, designed to adjudicate graft charges, also fined Masudur Tk 10 lakh in default of which he would have to serve another year in jail. His wife Salma was fined Tk 1 lakh in default of which she will have to spend six more months in jail.

Judge Sirajul Islam of Special Judge's Court-7 also ordered confiscation of Masudur's property worth Tk 6.21, 82, 285 amassed through illegal means.

Earlier, another court sen-

tenced Mokbul Hossain to 13 years imprisonment for amassing wealth by illegal means and concealing information from ACC. Mokbul's wife was sentenced to three years imprisonment for abetting her husband.

Masud and his wife were tried in absentia as they have been absconding since the case was filed against them. The court ordered that the verdict would take effect from the day of their arrest or surrender before the court.

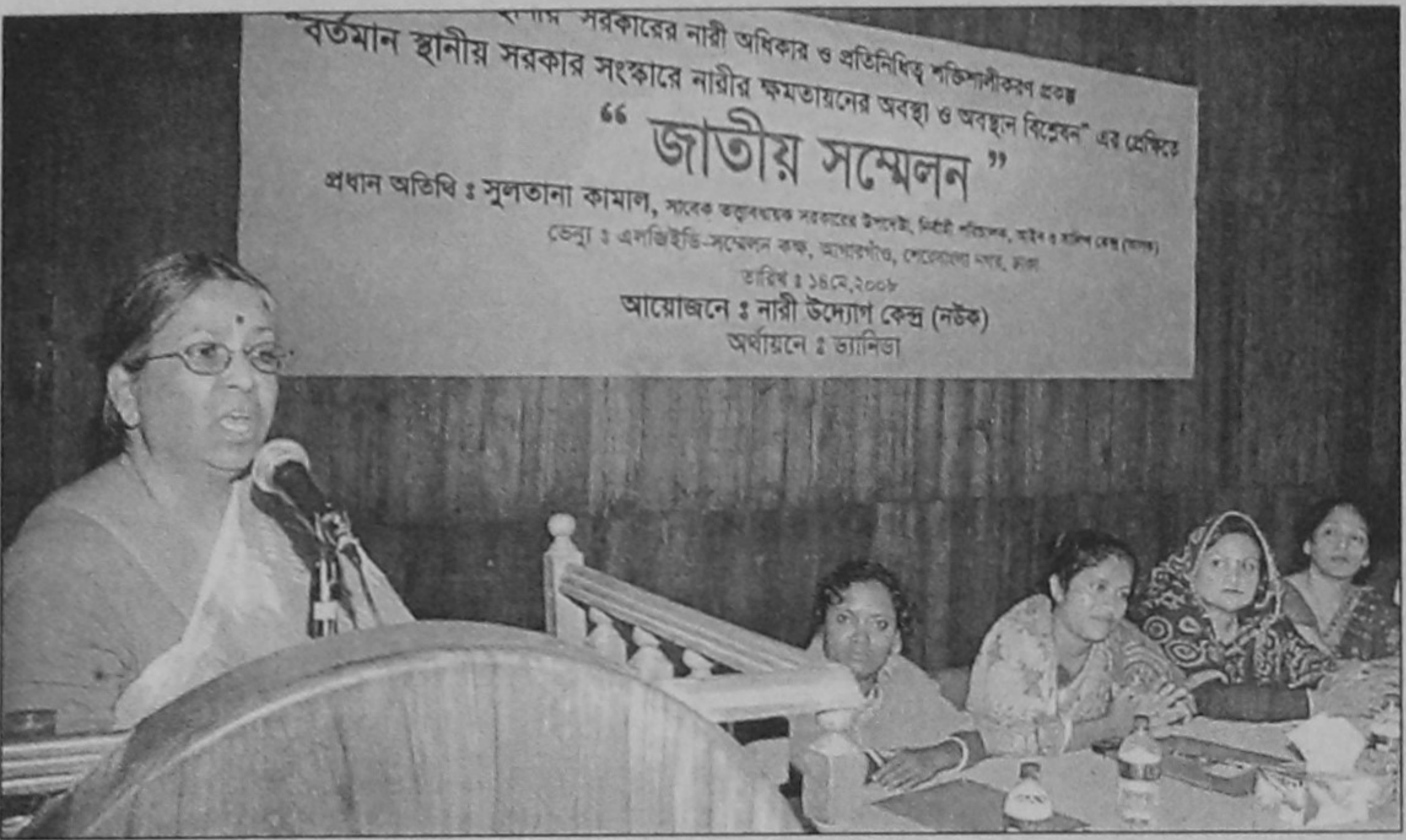
Masudur was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth illegally and another three years for concealing information in his wealth statement submitted to the ACC.

Masudur will have to serve 13 years' in jail, as the verdicts will be effective consecutively.

ACC assistant director Jahangir Alam filed the case against Masudur Rahman with Ramna thana on November 30 last year accusing him of accumulating Tk 5.86 crore beyond his known sources of income and concealing information about wealth worth Tk 67 lakh in his wealth statement.

His wife Salma was indicted in the case for abetting her husband.

Jahangir Alam, also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet in the case on April 10 this year, showing 23 people as prosecution witnesses. A Dhaka court, later also issued arrest warrant against the couple.



Former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal speaks at the national conference on the status of women's empowerment in current local government reforms at LGED conference room in the city yesterday. Nari Udyog Kendra organised the conference.

Research in universities slips

FROM PAGE 16

'Quality of higher education can't be improved without advanced research and publication of its results. But we've found that the number of qualified research is not satisfactory at the universities,' said UGC Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam.

He went on to say that poor allocation in national budget is another major obstacle to conducting good research.

'Huge amount of money is required for conducting high-quality and innovative research but our national budget is limited,' he added.

The UGC chief suggested that teachers collect sponsor for their innovative research since it is difficult for developing countries like Bangladesh to increase the budget allocation.

Annually, only around Tk 45-50 lakh is usually allocated for research, say UGC sources, adding that Tk 45.59 lakh was given in 2005-06 to this end.

Besides poor allocation for research, a university teacher has to wait for long to get funds from both government and non-government organisations. The teachers, especially young researchers, feel discouraged to continue their work due to this delay, observe the academics.

'After submitting a research proposal, minimum one year or one and a half years is needed to get the fund from UGC because the proposal is evaluated by several

expert committees in different phases.

'Even a few years ago it took minimum two to three years for getting the fund approved,' said UGC Member Prof AHM Zehadul Karim who is also in-charge of research field.

He added that they would arrange a training programme for the teachers on making research proposals because funds -- both government and non-government -- are allocated on the basis of their proposal.

To encourage researchers, UGC is set to give 12 awards every year for fundamental and outstanding research in six fields -- arts, humanities, law and education; social sciences; physical and biological sciences; agricultural science; engineering and technology; and medical science.

However, UGC awarded only seven researchers in 2005, three in 2004, six in 2003 and five in 2002. Moreover, it could not award anyone for research in medical science, as quality research publication was not found.

'It's very disappointing that we did not get good research in medical science. The country's medical science will not improve without conducting good research in this field,' said UGC Member Prof AHM Zehadul Karim.

'A good research identifies the causes of a problem and presents solutions to it in the society which will help the nation reach millennium development goals,' he

added.

The UGC is now trying to get a Tk 500 crore World Bank fund titled 'Competitive Innovative Fund' which will create new aspiration for researchers.

'Now we are trying to get the World Bank fund. I think it will help researchers conduct research in different fields,' UGC chairman Prof Nazrul Islam said.

He also said the teachers should do research in the field of food, power, environment, climate changes, poverty eradication, education, medical science, information development, women empowerment and analysis of political system.

Buet Vice-Chancellor Prof AMM Safiullah suggested introducing e-Lab linkage programme with world-renowned universities to promote quality research.

'Buet has benefited from institutional linkage and academic exchange programmes with foreign universities. This is not only useful for keeping abreast of latest developments and innovation in engineering science but also for staff development, collaborative research and development of research facilities,' he told The Daily Star.

'Bangladeshi researchers will be benefited by using the latest laboratory equipment of different foreign universities through e-Lab linkage programme. The government should take initiative to introduce it as soon as possible.'

DHAKA TODAY ELT workshop Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) organises a workshop on English language teaching. Venue: British Council auditorium. Time: 4:30pm. Seminar Mosquito and Vector Management Association of Bangladesh organises a seminar on vector management. Venue: NIPSON auditorium. Time: 10:00am. Reception Cadet College Club Limited will accord a reception to the former faculties of cadet colleges on the occasion of golden jubilee of cadet college education in Bangladesh. Venue: CCCL premises, Gulshan. Time: 7:00pm. View exchange meeting Youth Social Forum-Bangladesh organises a view exchange meeting on National Women Development Policy 2008 and current debate. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am. Seminar Bangladesh Policy Forum organises a seminar on anti-corruption drive and its achievement. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

WEATHER TODAY Thundershowers likely UNB, Dhaka Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Khulna divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today. Mild heat wave, which is sweeping over Dhaka and Khulna divisions and the regions of Rajshahi and Ishwardi, may continue, Met Office said. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period. Highest temperature 36.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Khulna, Jessore and Satkhira and lowest 22.4 degrees at Rajshahi. The sun sets in the capital at 6:34pm today and rises at 5:15am 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 35.0 25.8 69 63 Chittagong 31.7 24.6 77 73 Rajshahi 36.0 22.4 72 77 Khulna 36.7 24.5 70 60 Barisal 33.4 26.2 77 80 Sylhet 35.3 25.0 69 63 Cox's Bazar 35.0 25.2 78 74