

Violence hinders women's political participation, empowerment

Speakers tell experience sharing meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Violence against women in politics hinders their political participation and empowerment in South Asian countries, said speakers yesterday at a regional experience sharing programme.

At the programme titled 'Regional Experience Sharing Programme at National Level of the Status of Women in Politics,' they highlighted the state of women's political participation, misconceptions about violence against women in politics (VAWIP) and different forms of violence against them in politics in the region.

While presenting the keynote paper, South Asia Partnership (SAP) International Executive Director Dr Rohit Kumar Nepal said violence against women in politics takes place in the forms of murder and physical assault, rape and sexual exploitation, threat and coercion, character assassination, stigmatisation, kidnapping their children and social boycott for being involved in politics.

He suggested promoting South Asian Network of Women in Politics for combating issues of violence against women in politics, promoting social protection mechanism for reducing vulnerability of women politicians from the adverse effects of violence and establishing regional knowledge sharing platform to raise the voices of women in politics.

Exploration of alternative policies for addressing issues of violence against women in politics in South Asia is important while advocating, lobbying and campaigning at national level on the issues of gender-insensitive political culture and relevance of break-

ing the culture of silence should be stressed, he added.

However, a three-year project titled 'Violence against Women in Politics' (VAWIP) has been taken by the SAP International to overcome the barriers of women's participation in politics, he added.

South Asia Partnership (SAP) Bangladesh organised the programme at Brac Centre Inn where the speakers demanded 33 percent reserved seats for women in the parliament through direct election.

The speakers said the state of women's representation in the parliament is very meagre with only 2 percent, while it is 33 percent in Nepal, 21 percent in Pakistan and 8.3 percent in India.

DemocracyWatch Executive Director Taleya Rehman said, "In Bangladesh we have reserved seats for women in the parliament, but the tragedy is that they are only selected for those seats. That is why, the women cannot play effective role in decision making. They don't have power, cannot raise their voice and often they don't have knowledge about constituency."

If the demand for one-third reserved seats for women in the parliament would be met, 33 percent women's representation in political parties would be seen gradually, she said, adding that our political parties lack democratic practices.

Prof Zerina Rahman Khan of

Public Administration department at Dhaka University (DU) said violence against women in politics is the biggest hindrance for a bigger role of the women in politics as a whole.

The speakers also stressed the need for converting the National Women Development Policy into a law to sensitise the law enforcement agencies regarding women politicians and to announce election schedule within a short time to facilitate women's participation in politics.

Moderated by SAP Bangladesh Executive Director Syed Nurul Alam, the programme was also addressed by DU Prof Ishrat Shamim and representatives of different rights organisations.



DemocracyWatch Executive Director Taleya Rehman speaks at a programme on 'National Level Sharing of the Status of Women in Politics' at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. On her right is Syed Nurul Alam and on her left is Prof Zerina Rahman Khan.

Unite for security, development

Speakers urge minority people at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a national seminar yesterday urged the minority people living in remote areas to unite themselves for their socio-economic security and development.

The seminar was organised by Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (Dorp) with the support of Manusher Jonno at the IDB Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Dorp has been running a project titled 'Social harmony and rights' since 2004 following the sensational killings of 11 members of minority people at Banshkhali upazila in Chittagong on November 18, 2003.

The only survivor of that tragic incident, Bimal Shil, who is still residing in Chittagong with his family, was present at the seminar.

He raised question about the role of the administration and media for their failure to arrest and punish the criminals.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on May 13 submitted the remand prayer to interrogate the accused to get more information about Sabir's murder and the whereabouts of the other accused.

But the remand hearing was not held on three consecutive dates as Babar was not produced before the court due to his illness.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of CID Syed Momin Hossain had been given the responsibility to investigate the case filed by another ASP of CID Arman Ali with Ramma Police Station against Babar and three others on May 8.

The other accused are Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam, former director of East West Property Development Pvt Ltd Abu Sufian, and former BNP lawmaker Qazi Saleemul Huq Kamal.

Bashundhara Telecommunications Network Ltd Director Humayun Kabir Sabir was killed on July 5, 2006. His body was found outside a building in the city's Bashundhara residential area.

CNG-run bus, minibus owners asked to display fare chart

UNB, Dhaka

The government has asked the CNG-run bus and minibus owners and operators to display the BRTA-approved fare chart at the ticket counters across the city.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) has fixed the fare of the bus and minibus and already provided the list to the transport owners and operators.

Stern action will be taken against the bus companies, operators and transport owners if the list is not found at specified places and the passengers are charged additional fare, said an official handout yesterday.

"An alleged criminal Amin Chairman is still there and taking preparation for the upcoming upazila parishad election," said Bimal.

He lamented that police fails to trace out the criminals and the journalists do not pursue the incident which is really pathetic.

Rana Das Gupta, a senior advocate and leader of Hindu Boudhha Christian Oikya Parishad, said the number of minority people is decreasing gradually in the country.

Chairman of peace and conflict studies department at Dhaka University Prof Dalem Chandra Barman said if the society does not come forward to save the minority, constitution will fail to achieve the objective.

Brother De Suja, a human rights activist, called for observing the Banshkhali killing day at the national level.

Three papers were presented at

the seminar by Mohammad Osman Gani, coordinator of Social Harmony and Rights Project, Khandaker Ibrahim Khaled, columnist and economist, and Shaol Khan, researcher.

Former adviser to a caretaker government and Chairman of the Citizen's Watch Group M Haizuddin said lack of religious education leads to violence against humanity.

Awami League Chief Whip Abdus Shahid said no one with any religious values can kill another people.

Speaking as chief guest, Special Assistant for ICT ministry Manik Lal Samaddar said the present government is aware of such incidents and will resist them at any cost.

Moderated by Dorp Secretary General AHM Noman the seminar was also addressed by Advocate Rahmat Ali of Awami League, Editor of the New Nation Mostafa Kamal Majumdar, and media activist Rafiqul Islam Sarker.

13m euro EC grant to help Sidr victims

UNB, Dhaka

The European Commission (EC) will provide a grant of 13 million euros to Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (Brac) in support of sustainable recovery and rehabilitation of agriculture-based and non-agriculture-based livelihood in cyclone Sidr-affected coastal areas.

The delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh signed a grant agreement with BRAC to this effect yesterday, said an EC press release.

Brac Executive Director Mahabub Hossain and Dr Stefan Frowein, Ambassador of the delegation of the

European Commission signed the contract.

This action will help to link the relief phase, for which EC already provided 20.425 million euro with the longer term reconstruction and development of the affected areas.

This new EC support under the instrument for stability will provide much needed interventions to boost rehabilitation of agriculture-based and non-agriculture-based livelihoods in severely cyclone Sidr-affected coastal areas.

The delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh signed a grant agreement with BRAC to this effect yesterday, said an EC press release.

Brac Executive Director Mahabub Hossain and Dr Stefan Frowein, Ambassador of the delegation of the

longer term EC development support for disaster risk reduction and food security.

A joint Damage Loss and Needs Assessment, financed through the instrument for Stability, estimated the total amount of damage and losses caused by the cyclone at over 1.1 billion euro, equivalent to 2.8 percent of Bangladesh's GDP. More than two-thirds of this was physical damage and one-third economic loss.

Ambassador Frowein stated, "This additional support from the European Commission underlines the solidarity which the European Union has expressed with the government and the people of Bangladesh in the wake of this terrible natural disaster."

The action is designed to build upon previous and ongoing ECHO emergency intervention and link with ongoing DICECHO disaster preparedness activities and the



Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission Dr Stefan Frowein, second from left, and Executive Director of Brac Dr Mahabub Hossain shake hands at a ceremony in the city yesterday after signing a deal worth 13 million euros to support the sustainable recovery and rehabilitation of agro-based and non-agro-based livelihoods in Sidr-affected coastal areas.

Brunei seeks Bangladeshi workers for construction sector

UNB, Dhaka

Brunei has sought skilled, semi-skilled and low-skilled workers from Bangladesh for its construction sector.

The speakers also stressed the need for converting the National Women Development Policy into a law to sensitise the law enforcement agencies regarding women politicians and to announce election schedule within a short time to facilitate women's participation in politics.

Outgoing High Commissioner of Brunei Dato Seri Laila Jasa Haji Abdul Rahman Bin Abdul Hamid said this when he paid a farewell call on Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the ministry yesterday.

During the discussion, the foreign adviser thanked the high commissioner for his contribution to the development of Bangladesh-Brunei relationship, which he termed 'strong and growing'.

The high commissioner also informed the foreign adviser that Brunei was planning to build an industrial park for which workers would be needed.

Iftekhar Chowdhury told him that Bangladesh would always be ready to assist brotherly Muslim country "in every way it can."

Youth beaten to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth was beaten to death by a mob at Kholamora Model Town under Keraniganj Police Station yesterday for harassing girls in the area.

He was identified as Mohammad Amam Hasan, 25.

Local people said girls had long been the victims of Hasan's eve teasing. At times he even realised ransom after abducting girls.

On Friday Hasan demanded Tk 5000 as ransom after abducting a girl, who came to visit his relatives from Comilla, and one of her kin.

A group of villagers went to talk to him regarding this yesterday morning but Hasan and his accomplices swooped on the villagers with sharp weapons and stabbed Nabi Hossain, 22, and Mohammad Zahid, 20.

Being infuriated, local people gave them a good beating.

Seriously injured Hasan was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead but his accomplices managed to escape.

Family members of Hasan, however, claimed that some people took Hasan out and killed him over an earlier feud.

Keraniganj police said the criminals had been abducting and harassing girls for long.

Mahmood made envoy to Germany

BSS, Dhaka

The government has decided to appoint additional foreign secretary MAK Mahmood as ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany.

He also held different positions in Bangladesh missions abroad and the foreign ministry, an official announcement said yesterday.

Mahmood obtained his MSS in political science from Dhaka University.

Final decision on re-demarcation of constituencies next month

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) will finalise its decision on re-demarcation of constituencies by the first week of next month, Election Commissioner M Sakhawat Hossain yesterday said.

He said the EC would not take more than seven days after ending the ongoing hearing on objections to the draft delimitation plan.

The commission will wrap up its countrywide hearing in Rajshahi today.

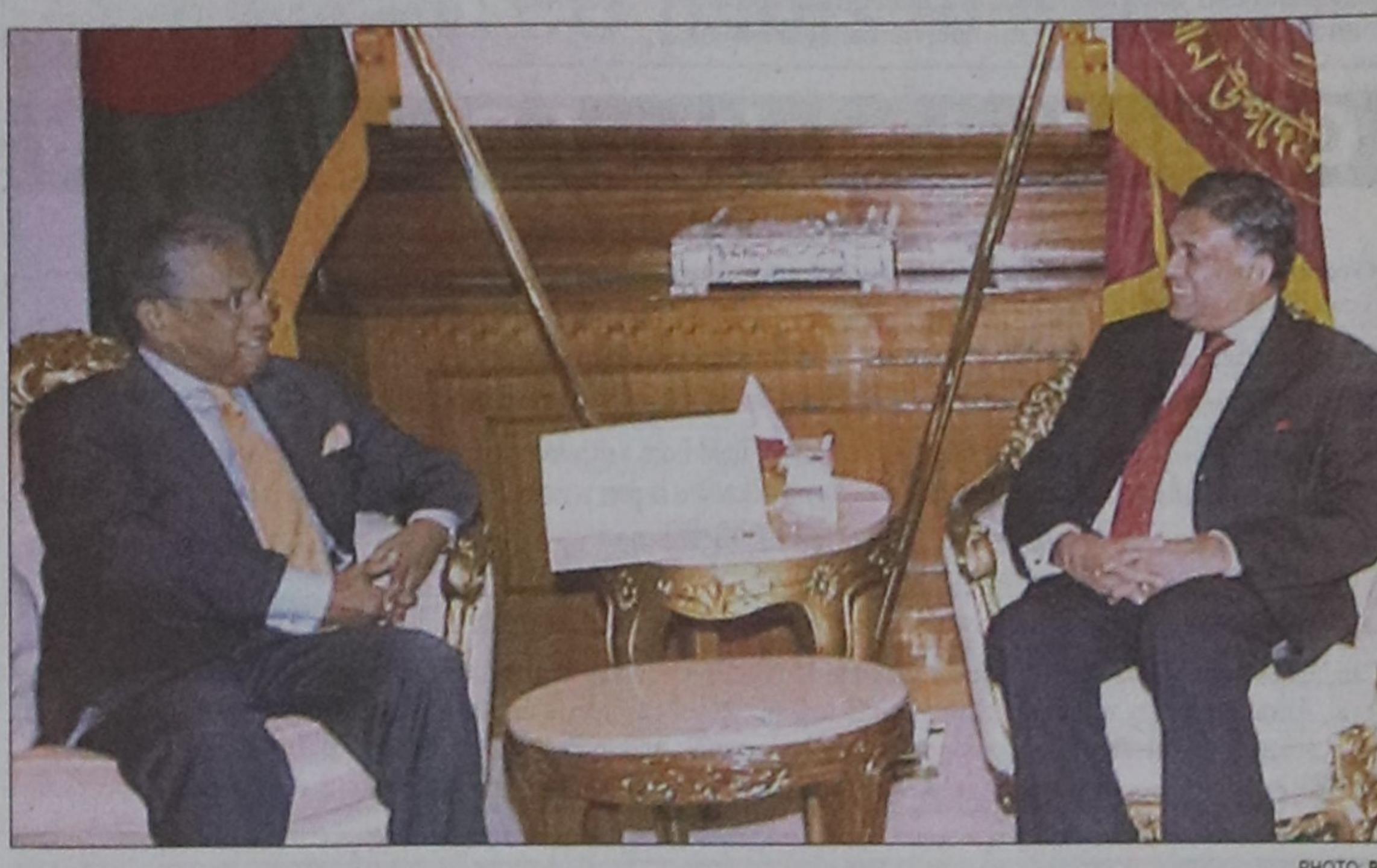
The delimitation will be finalised by the first week of July taking the people's objections into account, Sakhawat told reporters at his office.

He said, "Many of the petitioners (against the draft delimitation) are former lawmakers or political activists, and their objections were mostly personal."

He said there was confusion among people over the re-demarcation as many thought that their localities might not be under the authority of the existing administrative units after the implementation of the plan.

The existing administrative setup would actually remain the same even if boundaries of the parliamentary seats are redrawn, Sakhawat said.

About reforms to the electoral laws, he said people have already been aware of some of the major changes, thanks to the role of the media.



Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at the latter's office in the city yesterday.

Ensure rights of indigenous people, recover lands

Speakers tell meeting on Santal revolution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday said the next elected government should give constitutional recognition to the indigenous people as well as state recognition to the tribal freedom fighters.

The government that came to power after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975 started repressing indigenous people, the AL leader said.

Gono Forum presidium member Pankaj Bhattacharya said, "The next elected government should make apology to the indigenous people for the repression on them."

If the CHT Peace Treaty is not fully implemented, peace and stability cannot be established in the hilly areas, he added.

He also said indigenous people should be given constitutional recognition. Many of the tribal freedom fighters did not get any recognition. They must be given the state recognition.

Language movement veteran U Shwe, a member of indigenous community, said, "I just want to see the constitutional recognition to the indigenous people before my death and the next elected government should do it."

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) President Manjurul Ahsan Khan said the indigenous people should be given their due rights - the constitutional recognition. It is the ruling class that always represses the indigenous people," he added.

President over by BMRIP President Prof HKS Arefin, the meeting was addressed by Chairman of In-Depth News, Bangladesh Barrister Zakir Ahmed and Sankriti Samannay Kendra Joint Convenor Azam Faruque.



Bangladesh Movement for Rights of Indigenous People (BMRIP) organised a discussion at the Bimai auditorium in the city yesterday to mark the 153rd anniversary of Santal Revolution. From right are Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Pankaj Bhattacharya and Amir Hossain Amu.

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