

Change attitude towards women to ensure gender equality

Speakers tell regional confce

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a conference yesterday called for changing men's attitude towards women and proactive actions by the governments to establish a society where men and women will enjoy equal rights.

They said status of women in terms of education, employment and politics has improved over the decades, but there is still a long way to go, as they are subjected to harassment and repression, especially in the developing countries.

The observation came at the inaugural session of a two-day South Asian Conference on 'Women's rights: South Asian perspectives' at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city.

The conference has been organised by Soroptimist International Club of Dhaka in association with the BRAC Bank.

Speaking as chief guest, Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said women in Bangladesh have made tremendous progress over the years.

"The most important development took place in their personality," he said, adding that women are entering with confidence every sphere of social, economic, educational and political arena.

But still inequality remains between men and women and that is the challenge, Dr Hossain said, adding, both men and women should face the challenge and ensure equity.

"The gain will not be effective if men's attitude towards women is not changed," he said.

Referring to Olympics in Beijing where a large number of women players are taking part from various countries of Europe, America and East Asia, the adviser said women's participation from India and Bangladesh is very negligible.

He said women should also improve their physical health for healthy nation.

In her keynote paper, Prof Dilara Chowdhury of Jahangirnagar University said women in South Asian countries are subjected to various forms of deprivation, violence and discrimination due to social norms and legal flaws.

"Women's rights is human

rights and it must be respected," she said, adding that despite the fact that heads of the governments were women in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, their efforts towards development of women are not very satisfactory.

Women and Children Affairs Secretary Rokeya Sultana said the government in Bangladesh has taken a number of steps to empower women.

Soroptimist International of Great Britain President Marguerite Woodstock-Riley and Soroptimist International Club of Dhaka President Dr Arifa Rahman also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

Participants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh attended the programme.



A three-day photography exhibition on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman began at Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday. The Shilpakala Academy organised the exhibition on the occasion of the National Mourning Day.

Full autonomy for union parishad suggested

BSS, Dhaka

An independent study has suggested complete autonomy for union parishad (UP), the lowest tier of local government, by making the local government system independent from the central government.

The report of the study titled 'Functioning of local government (UP): Legal and practical constraints' was presented at a function organised by Policy Advocacy Forum (PAF) at Cirdap auditorium in the city on Thursday.

The report recommended formation of a separate commis-

sion for monitoring of the local government bodies. The representatives of the local bodies would remain accountable to the commission for their activities.

For enhancing the abilities of UPs, the study said the organogram of the local body should be changed. To assist the secretary, there should be an assistant secretary, a tax assessor and an accountant. All of them must be computer-literate.

Administrative tangles should be removed from the decision-making process and the activities of the UPs be kept free from politics

and the influences of political parties, the study recommended.

Besides making recommendations, the study identified a number of problems faced by the UPs. It said interference by the government and political parties has become a regular phenomenon, which is hampering the overall activities of the UPs.

On the other hand, the UPs have become a means for a particular class to attain their vested interests, there reported.

Prof Mohammad Mohabbat Khan of the department of Public Administration at Dhaka

University presented the study report which was followed by an open discussion.

Former lawmaker Shahiduzzaman, columnist Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury, South Asia Partnership-Bangladesh Executive Director Syed Nurul Alam, Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum President Mahbubur Rahman Tulu and General Secretary Atharul Islam Bulbul took part in the discussion with DLGP-RTI chief of party Dr William J Althaus in the chair.

Taleya Rehman moderated the function on behalf of the PAF.

2 girls rescued, 2 traffickers held

CU CORRESPONDENT

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued two girls and arrested two traffickers from Chandgaon area in the port city yesterday.

The rescued girls are identified as Chhabhi Begum, 17, and Rabeya Begum, 17, and the arrestees are Md Lal Mian, 43, and Nurjahan Begum, 35.

Receiving information that two girls have been kept confined to a house at Chandgaon Residential Area for trafficking, a Rab team raided the house at around 12:30am.

They rescued Chhabhi and Rabeya and arrested the traffickers along with six passports.



Zebunnessa Rahman, 2nd from left, and Rawshan Ara Rahman, 3rd from left, were accorded a reception at the inaugural ceremony of a conference at the Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. On their left is Kamala Prasad and on their right are Marguerite Woodstock-Riley, Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman, Dr Arifa Rahman and Rokeya Sultana.

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WHERE LEADERS ARE CREATED

HC RULE ON GOVT Why extortion case against Sheikh Selim not illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) on Thursday issued a rule on the government to explain within two weeks why the continuation of the extortion case filed by Azam J Chowdhury against detained Awami League president member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim should not be declared illegal.

An HC bench of Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mashuke Hosain Ahmed passed the order upon a writ petition filed by Sheikh Selim.

Azam J Chowdhury filed the case against Selim on June 13, 2007 with Gulshan Police Station. The case later involved AL president and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana.

Selim recently filed the writ petition with the HC challenging the legality of the initiation and continuation of the extortion case.

The HC concluded the hearing of the petition on Wednesday and passed the order on Thursday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two young Bangladeshi talents -- Mohammad Abirul Islam and Bushra Mahbub -- will take part in the prestigious International Olympiad in Informatics 2008, the Olympic games of computing, to be held in Egypt from August 17 to 23.

They are scheduled to leave for Cairo this morning to join the competition.

Abirul, who sat for HSC exams this year, and Bushra, a second year student of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, have been selected for the competition as they won the Bangladesh Informatics Olympiad 2008.

A reception was accorded to them at The Daily Star office yesterday where renowned scientists of the country wished them good luck and success in the international competition introduced in 1989.

Briefing on the events and Bangladesh's position, Dr M Kaykobad highlighted the difficulties the youngsters are facing in preparing themselves for such a sophisticated competition.

"Our younger generation will go a long way if they are encouraged and receive support," he said, adding that Bangladesh is taking part only in two such international competitions, although there are many other such events taking place across the globe.

Prof M Shamsur Ali advised the participants not to lose heart in the event of failure in the competition.

Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

said many youths could not take part in such competitions due to financial constraints.

He called on both the government and private organisations to come forward to help the talents.

Prof Naiyem Chowdhury said the young talents are lagging behind for not getting enough support. He advised them to keep on practising to achieve their goals.

Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam was also present at the reception ceremony.

Bangladesh first joined the competition as an observer in 2004 but failed to send its participants the following year due to visa problems. It sent three talents to the competition in 2006 and one in 2007.

Abirul and Bushra qualified for the international event by winning Bangladesh Informatics Olympiad 2008 jointly organised by Bangladesh Informatics Olympiad Committee (BIOC) and Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS).

The Daily Star is the media partner of Bangladesh Informatics Olympiad.

Associate Prof Dr Humayun Kabir of Buet and Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, who works in a software company, will accompany Abirul and Bushra as the team leader and deputy team leader respectively.

Winners of the International Olympiad are recognised as the best young computer scientists of the world.



Mohammad Abirul Islam, left, and Bushra Mahbub will represent Bangladesh in the International Olympiad in Informatics to be held in Egypt from August 17 to 23.



Awami League leaders place wreaths at the graves of the family members of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Banani Graveyard in the city yesterday on the occasion of National Mourning Day.

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