

Include women's rights issues in election manifestos

Female voters urge political parties

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Conscious women voters in the district have called on the political parties to clearly mention their stand on women's rights issues in the electoral manifestos for the upcoming general elections scheduled for December 18.

This time the women will exercise their franchise to elect lawmakers in all eight parliamentary constituencies here, as they are dominating the newly prepared voter lists with photographs in all 12 upazilas.

Despite their frustration of not getting substantial women contenders from political parties in the constituencies, they vowed to elect the right candidates in the election

to ensure women empowerment. Besides, the voters also want assurance of controlling the price hike of essentials, continuity of local development and resolution of the long-running woman issues by their votes.

According to the Election Commission, a total of 22,32,751 voters were enlisted in the voter lists in the district. Of the voters, a total of 10,61,632 are males, while 11,71,119 are females.

Although the women voters are substantial here, only two woman candidates have so far been found to contest the polls and they both are from Tangail-8 (Sakhipur and Basail upazilas) constituency.

Former deputy speaker

Humayun Khan Panny's daughter Sonia Khan Panny is seeking a BNP-led four-party ticket, while Kahinor Begum Khan, vice-president of Dhaka city unit of Mahila Awami League, likes to contest the polls on AL ticket in the constituency.

Talking to The Daily Star, Chand Jesmin, a teacher of Dhaka Imperial College and is a voter of Tangail-5 (Sadar) constituency, said she would come to her constituency during the election in order to cast her vote to an honest and progressive candidate.

"Before casting my vote, I will check the declarations of the political parties in their electoral manifestos about the woman issues," she added.

Social worker Rubina Akter, a voter of Tangail-4 (Kalihati) constituency, told The Daily Star that she is looking for a competent candidate to cast her vote to ensure women empowerment in the area.

"The political parties will have to promise in their manifestos to work on woman issues, including women repression, women education, health and nutrition as well as their employment," she added.

With election drawing nearer, mentionable activities of the woman organisations or non-government organisations (NGOs) are not seen in the district so far to make the voters conscious of their voting powers to elect right leaders.



Iranian Ambassador in Dhaka Hassan Farazandeh pays a courtesy call on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Primary textbooks to reach students before January

BSS, Dhaka

Primary school textbooks will reach to the hands of all students before January next as till November 11, the books have already been reached to more than half of the districts.

This was revealed on Thursday at a review meeting of Primary and Mass Education Ministry at its conference room, an official hand-out said.

Primary and Mass Education Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury chaired the meeting where the progress of ministry's implementing projects of 2008-09 fiscal year were reviewed.

During the meeting, it was also revealed that till October, Tk 345.40 crore was spent out of allocated Tk 2,366.35 crore for eight projects which is 14.58 percent of the total allocation.

Adviser Rasheda directed the concerned officials to speed up current pace of the projects' work to accomplish within the stipulated time considering the upcoming national and upazila elections.

Primary and Mass Education Secretary Badrul Alam Tarafdar and high officials of the ministry and concerned departments were also present.

Workshop on AIDS held at IUB

METRO DESK

A workshop on 'Confronting AIDS Challenges of the 21st Century: The Student Community' was held on the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) campus in the city on Thursday, says a press release.

The IUB and Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) jointly organised the workshop attended by students, members of the faculty and guests from various organisations.

Pro Vice Chancellor of IUB Prof Omar Rahman, Lutfur Rahman Chowdhury, chief executive, Trust for Social Development, Osman Muneed, CEO, Standard Chartered Bank, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of The Bangladesh Observer, Ahmad Farooque, executive director, Cheshta, and Prof Nazrul Islam, director, School of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, IUB, spoke at the workshop.

The speakers called on the students to know more about HIV/AIDS for their own safety as well as for the nation.

Dr Hashrat Ara, medical adviser, Asia, Marie Stopes Clinic Society, Prof Dr Nashid Kamal of IUB and KM Zainul Abedin, past district governor, Rotary International Bangladesh, presented three papers in the three sessions of the workshop.



Pakistani High Commissioner in Dhaka Alamgir Babar calls on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Citi micro-business award giving ceremony Nov 20

METRO DESK

The name of the winners of the Citi Microentrepreneurship Awards 2008 will be announced on November 20 at the grand finale of the event, says a press release.

The award will be given in four categories - Best Innovative Micro Business of the Year, Best Woman Microentrepreneur of the Year, Best Microentrepreneur of the Year and Best Microfinance Institution (MFI) of the Year.

Finance Adviser AB Mirza Md Azizul Islam will attend the programme as the chief guest and distribute the awards among the winners.

The main objective of this award is to salute the unsung heroes from the toiling masses of the country those who have literally graduated from microcredit to a microentrepreneur and largely contributing to the economic growth of Bangladesh.

This award is managed by Citibank, NA Bangladesh and Shakti Foundation for Disadvantaged Women.

from nominating the businessmen for upcoming election.

The signatories to the statement include Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Rangalal Sen, Prof Anisuzzaman, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Ajoy Roy, Prof Hayat Mahmud, Dr Hamida Hossain, Syed Abul Maksud, Ayesha Khanam, Emdad Hossain, Dr Syed Anwar Hossain, Rokeya Kabir, Ziauddin Tareq Ali, Tobarak Hossain, Samsuzzaman Khan, Razia Samad, Khushi Kabir, Mejbah Uddin Ahmed, Mili Rahman, Kamal Lohani, Prof Shawkat Ara Hossain, SMS Sabur, Syed Jahangir, Saleh Ahmed and Ajoy Roy.

Sidora needs help to face post-Sidr situation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Her name is Sidora.

She was so named as she was born when the severe cyclonic storm Sidr hit Mongla upazila of Bagerhat district on the night of November 15 of last year.

The third child of Tapan Folia and Shukhi Folia, Sidora will be one year old today.

Sidora was born when the Cyclone Sidr ravaged the small cottage of Tapan at Kanainagar which is only 60 kilometre away from the Bay of Bengal and adjacent to the Sundarbans.

"We lost our small cottage, clothes and all other belongings when Sidr attacked Mongla upazila with all its fury, said Shukhi who gave birth to Sidora.

Later, she was shifted to St Mary's Primary School at Kanainagar where hundreds of men, women and children took shelter to save their lives from the onslaught of Sidr.

"Sidora, weighing only five kilograms, has been suffering from malnutrition as I cannot provide her with breast milk due to my poor health, Shukhi said with a heavy heart.

"We did not get relief to meet our need in the most difficult time of our life as Sidr had almost finished us," she added.

"Now for her healthy growth my sweet daughter needs sufficient food which I cannot provide due to extreme poverty," said Tapan who is a carpenter by profession.

"The money I earn is very small to cope with the skyrocketing price of essentials," he added.

"As a result my eldest daughter Ratna, 10, and only son Magan, 8, also remain half-fed very often," said Tapan with a sigh of grief.

Boost agri output to ensure food security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture and Water Resources Adviser CS Karim yesterday said agriculture production would have to be increased in order to ensure food security in the country.

"If the cultivators are provided with agro-based knowledge and technologies, they would succeed in increasing their production," he added.

The adviser was speaking as the chief guest at a function on the occasion of 10th anniversary of Dhaka Reporters' Unity Bahumukhi Samabay Samity Ltd at DRU auditorium in the city.

He said the problems and their solutions in the agriculture should be highlighted in the media so that the cultivators can get knowledge and information about those, adding that there are a good number of events of success in the agriculture sector.

"We have to achieve success in agriculture by avoiding the problems in this sector," he said, adding that cooperative movements can help the farmers achieve success.

Presided over by President of the Samity Ashraf Ali, the meeting was addressed by Water Resources Secretary ATM Fazul Karim and DRU President Alamgir Hossain.

One crushed to death under wheels of truck

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sports official of Munshiganj district was crushed to death under the wheels of a speeding truck at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city last night.

The victim was identified as ANM Hamidul Islam, 48.

Hamid was coming towards Farm Gate by a motorbike from his Lalmatia residence when the truck hit the two-wheeler and ran over him at about 9:30pm, witnesses said. He died on the spot.

Tejgaon police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

His wife and son have now been residing in London, the police said.

'Hold JS elections to safeguard nation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 25 renowned intellectuals yesterday urged the caretaker government and Election Commission (EC) to hold the December 18 parliamentary election to safeguard the nation from foreign conspiracy and constitutional crisis.

In a statement issued to mass media they said the democratic forces will have to be united for resisting the politics of black money holders, muscle powers, war criminals and militants.

The intellectuals also called upon the political parties to refrain



Fazle Abed to be awarded Asiatic Society Fellowship today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac Chairman Fazle Hasan Abed will be awarded Asiatic Society Fellowship at a function in the city today, says a press release.

The fellowship will be awarded in recognition of his significant contribution to different fields, including poverty reduction, education expansion and women's empowerment.

The function will be held at the auditorium of the National Museum in Shahbagh at 3:30pm, the release added.

ELECTION COVERAGE EC frames code of conduct for media

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission is going to hand the print and electronic media a code of conduct to abide by while covering the parliamentary and upazila elections so that a sense of accountability and propriety is maintained.

The commission has already received a draft copy of the code of conduct for the mass media on election coverage from the Unesco and it would finalise the media rules within a week after necessary vetting.

Unesco country representative Malama Meleisea on Tuesday handed over the draft code of conduct to Chief Election Commissioner Dr ATM Shamsul Huda at Biam auditorium in the city.

Election Commissioners M Sohel Hussain and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain were present on the occasion.

In his speech, the CEC urged the mass media not to publish election results before those are announced by the Election Commission to avert confusion.

"Problems and confusions may arise if the election results are announced by the media before the Commission's announcement."

He said the code of conduct for the mass media would be made in consultation with political parties, civil society members and media personnel for covering the next parliamentary and local-body elections - now set for December 18 and 28 respectively.

The UN agency's draft code of conduct says the mass media shall disseminate all information and news in connection with the election process in a balanced and fair manner, without being biased.

It says the media should publish or broadcast issues of campaigns, excerpts from campaigns and candidates' speeches, important information about symbols, banners or other campaign materials of the parties and party manifestos. "In all cases, balance in news must be maintained."

Balance should be maintained in the coverage of candidates and political parties. No candidate and political party should be given substantially more coverage than others. Journalists would not project one candidate or political party to the exclusion of others.

The dos and don'ts further have it that journalists reporting for the mass media shall maintain clear distinctions between their news reports and those of the editorial and post-editorial comments.

Views expressed by candidates or political parties should be reported in a fair and unbiased manner, and as meticulously as possible in their own words, in which were originally spoken or expressed.

One of the responsibilities of the journalists in election-related reporting is to write and publish or broadcast news stories in objective manner. If any candidate, political party or alliance supporting the candidate makes an allegation against another candidate, party or alliance, the journalists must seek comments from both sides to have a complete picture.

Published or broadcast news and other items relating to elections must not reflect the journalists' political beliefs or ideological positions; neither should such matter become evident in the presentation of their analyses.

Should the mass media want to publish or broadcast result of election of a constituency before it is announced officially, they must mention it clearly whether the result is an official or unofficial one.

All relevant matters in the electoral process reflecting the concern of the public, as far as possible, should be included in the news.

The mass media should attempt to inform the largest number of citizens possible, including those who may have traditionally been marginalised or excluded.

All of the mass media, including state-run, private sector and community ones, should ensure that candidates or political parties have equal and unbiased access to comparable airtime and space.

"This does not however mean each party must get exactly same airtime or space, but candidates and parties should be given considerably same amount of time and space."

State-run audiovisual (broadcast) media should provide free opportunity and equitable access to candidates and representatives of political parties or alliance to participate in radio or TV debates, talk shows and discussions to express their opinions on issues relating to their election agenda, campaigns and policies.

The Unesco media guidelines say journalists should no way give coverage of any election speeches, excerpts or any other materials having potential to provoke any political or social, ethnic or communal violence.

"Language in news reports, editorials and post-editorial analyses which suggest or express sentiments that may create discrimination on any ground, including gender, religion, political, linguistic or ethnic orientations and social origin of voters or candidates, shall be avoided at all time."

In publishing or broadcasting any news item, no special treatment shall be accorded to a particular candidate, political party or an alliance, which is supporting the candidate.

Journalists should not hide, suppress or prevent any pertinent information and news relating to election from being disseminated.

The mass media shall not publish or broadcast any electoral information and news in such a way that may confuse the public.

"A journalist shall not accept any incentive from a candidate or political party; and neither shall he or she make any promise to a candidate or political party about the content of a news report."

Journalists shall regard plagiarism, malicious misrepresentation, libel or unfounded accusation as grave professional offence."

State-run mass media should refrain from carrying paid political advertisements.

About the opinion polls and election projections, the guidelines reminded that opinion polls have a significant bearing upon voting patterns as well as on the overall electoral process.

If the mass media intend to report on the result and findings of an opinion poll, the code of conduct suggests, they must do so accurately and fairly. They should include all readily available information that would assist the public in understanding the significance of the poll or the projection.

About the duty to make corrections, it says the mass media should take measures to correct any disseminated information found to be inaccurate. "If any error or misrepresentation has been identified in already published or broadcast materials, journalist/media house concerned shall give high priority to carrying out the corrections immediately."

On maintenance of records, the code of conduct preaches that the editors should do the needful to retain information in connection with the election that they have published or broadcast until 45 days after such dissemination.

"Producers in broadcast media should maintain full records of all news bulletins, and recordings of all other programmes related to the election, including party election broadcast (if any) for the use of reference in case of any complaint or dispute," says the UN agency-drafted media code.

GF makes primary list of 70 candidates

METRO DESK

Gono Forum Parliamentary Board has prepared a primary list of 70 aspirant candidates for the upcoming election, says a press release.

The list was prepared at a meeting of the parliamentary board with Pankaj Bhattacharya in the chair.

The party will publish the final list of the candidates on November 18 after selecting the rest candidates by November 16.



Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 37th death anniversary of Dr Azhar and Dr Humayun, the first victims of the Al-Badr during the liberation war, says a press release.

Both of them used to give treatment to the injured freedom fighters in secret.

Qurankhwani will be held and wreaths will be placed at their graves at Azimpur Old Graveyard in the city after Asr prayers today.

Qulkhwani

BSS, Dhaka

Qulkhwani of Prof Abdul Quadir, head of the Department of Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) of Dhaka Medical College, will be held at his residence (House-86, Road-8, Dhanmondi) in the city after Asr prayers today.

Dr Quadir passed away due to heart attack at a city hospital on Wednesday at the age of 52.

WEATHER TODAY

Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain is likely at one or two places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Weather may remain dry elsewhere over the country during the period, Met office said, adding that night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 31.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Kutubdia and the lowest of 15.0 degrees at Rajshahi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:12pm today and rises at 6:15am tomorrow.

The 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	28.3	19.0	60	63
Chittagong	29.7	19.5	92	74
Rajshahi	27.4	15.0	83	79
Khulna	28.0	19.4	88	78
Barisal	28.8	18.4	87	88
Sylhet	28.8	17.8	72	70
Cox's Bazar	31.0	20.0	70	79



Prof Mandal made BAU VC

METRO DESK

Prof MA Sattar Mandal has been appointed the vice chancellor of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) in Mymensingh for the next four years, says a press release.

Prior to his appointment, he was the department head, dean of the Faculty of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology and member of Bangladesh Planning Commission.

He is also the president of the Bangladesh Agricultural Economists' Association and former senior vice-president of the Bangladesh Economic Association.

Prof Mandal did his PhD from University of London and pursued post-doctoral studies at University of Oxford.