

# Dalits subjected to serious human rights violations

## Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rekha Ali Basko cannot forget the days when she was not allowed to drink water with the glass used commonly by others at her school as she was born in a Harijoni family.

"My classmates used to ask me to bring glass from my house because they considered me a member of a lower caste which is untouchable," said Rekha, a young lady from Narsingdi, at a seminar on Dalits organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at LGED auditorium in the city.

"Dalits are regarded as untouchables. They are deprived of opportunities for being integrated into the mainstream of the society," says a study.

Members of Harijoni, Robidas, Jolodas, Nomoshudra, Dhopa, Bormon, Bagdi, Kaiputra,

Kornidas, Malo, Maimol, Bahera, Rajbongshi and Rishi communities are known as Dalit.

There are around 46 lakh people of Dalit community in the country, according to the study titled 'Poverty profile of the Dalits in Bangladesh' which was presented by Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University at the seminar.

"As we are considered low caste, enumerators do not come to our houses to register us as voters. We are not even included when census is done," said Rekha now working with Chinshpur Deepshikha Women's Association.

Ratan, who hails from Tala in Satkhira, said, "I am now a teacher although my forefathers worked as cobblers. But still when students come to me for tuition, they are discouraged by others."

Elaborating the feeling of Ratan, Bangladesh Harijoni Oikya Parishad Secretary General Nirmal Chandra Das said members of Harijoni community are now caught in a dilemma because many of them are receiving education but they are not getting jobs as expected.

"They can neither return to their traditional occupations, nor getting mainstream jobs due to social discrimination," he said, adding that the governments pay no attention to them.

Dalit leaders said it is time to get united to stop all sorts of discrimination. Rabi Harijoni from Balubari of Dinajpur shared a success story of their united movement at the seminar.

"In 2003, a hotel refused to sell food to a boy of Harijoni community in Dinajpur when her mother was sick. On infor-

mation, we all the Harijoni took to the streets and strongly protested it. The hotel management was then compelled to allow us in the hotel," said Rabi.

"Here lies the strength," said eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain, adding that Bangladesh was born through a struggle against all sorts of social, economic and political discrimination and it must be upheld by any means.

Speaking as chief guest at the seminar, Dr Kamal said Dalits are subjected to serious human rights violations, but the good news is that these people are raising their voices to establish their rights.

He said the political parties should specifically declare the initiatives that they want to take to improve the lot of Dalits if they are voted to power.

Prof Mesbah in his study said the annual income of most of the Dalit communities ranges from Tk 14,000 to Tk 27,000 and major portion of their income is spent for food.

"Their housing, educational and health status is horribly poor," he said, adding that with skyrocketing prices of essentials, these people are getting poorer day by day.

"In a free and modern state, discrimination against the Dalits is never acceptable. We must try to remove the discriminations for an inclusive society," said MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam while presiding over the seminar.

Executive Director of Research Initiatives Bangladesh Meghna Guhathakurata, Dhaka University Anthropology Professor Dr HKS Arefin and Dalit Empowerment Foundation Executive Director Ashok Das also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a seminar on poverty profile of Dalits in Bangladesh at LGED auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Prof Mesbah Kamal and on his left are Shaheen Anam and Meghna Guhathakurata. Manusher Jonno Foundation organised the seminar.

## 'Include child rights issues in election manifestos'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference called on the country's major political parties yesterday to incorporate the child rights issues in their election manifestos for the next general elections.

They said this at the press conference organised by Shadhin, a consortium to establish child rights, in the city's Shakkhor auditorium to formally launch its operations.

Shadhin comprises five non-government development organisations that include Shakkhor Environment and Development Society, Oribashi Karmi Kalyan Forum (Okkaf), Children's Network Bangladesh (CNB), Bangladesh Eco-Social Trust (BEST) and Jibika.

Presenting a keynote paper, Shakkhor Chairperson and Convener of Shadhin Samsun Nahar Aziz Lina said the political parties did not ever take any steps for the welfare of children though they undertook political commitments several times.

The parties should pledge on establishing child rights once they come to power and should not forget the commitments they make in their manifestos after forming a new government, she added.

Shadhin chief said the consortium will work to ensure child rights through creating mass awareness in every sector and persuading the government and people regarding the issues.

## US deputy asst secy of defence arrives today

METRO DESK

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence (DASD) for South and Southeast Asia James Clad arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day visit, says a press release.

The purpose of Clad's visit is to discuss a range of bilateral and multilateral security issues as well as future opportunities for cooperation between US and Bangladesh armed forces.

Clad will meet with senior officers from the Bangladesh military as well as other security forces.

She demanded the government introduce a complete national child policy for ensuring their every right. The children should be provided with the opportunities for their mental, physical and cultural development.

Okkaf Chairman Syed Mahub Elahi, Bon ami Foundation Chairperson Kumkum Akhter, BEST Executive Director Md Masud Rana and Debashis Biswas of CNB took part in the programme.

## BDR hands over border guard to BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Panchagarh BDR handed over the border guard to BSF members yesterday after he was detained in a drunken stupor on Sunday midnight while he along with eight to 10 members were entering Bangladesh territory through Tetulia frontier.

BDR officials of 25 Panchagarh Battalion said the detained BSF member RP Singh was treated at Rangpur Medical College Hospital as the mob beat him up.

Col Dr T Proshad and Dr Hemang Shetyar BSF officials from Kishanganj camp of India received him at Majhipara zero line under Indo-Bangladesh border where R Chandra Mohan, DIG of Kishanganj

sector, and Commanding Officer of 25 Battalion Sheikh Farid were present.

While talking to newsmen, Farid said Panchagarh border remained calm after the flag meeting at Majhipara border of Tetulia on Monday.

Besides, the bodies of the villagers were buried last night at Maynaguri village. BDR officials pay out the expenditure of the buried cost.

Sources said the drunken BSF members from Nayabari camp of India entered Maynaguri village on Sunday midnight.

The indiscriminate firing of BSF men claimed the lives of at least three people and wounded one. They also ransacked several border houses.



## Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 31.3 degree Celsius was recorded at Teknaf and the lowest of 12.0 degrees at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:11pm and rises at 6:17am 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	28.6	17.2	60	55
Chittagong	29.0	18.0	67	61
Rajshahi	28.8	14.0	79	79
Khulna	28.6	18.0	67	78
Barisal	29.4	16.2	78	86
Sylhet	29.3	16.2	72	71
Cox's Bazar	30.8	21.0	70	66

## Bar Council polls tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election to Bangladesh Bar Council will be held tomorrow.

Sammita Ainjibi Samannoy Parishad (SASP), a forum of pro-Awami League lawyers, and Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Oikya Parishad (JAOP), a body of BNP-led four party alliance lawyers, are the main rivals among the seven panels contesting in the election.

Polling will be held from 10:00am to 5:00pm on the premises of the Supreme Court Bar Association and all civil courts in districts including Bajitpur, Ishwarganj, Durgapur, Bhanga, Chikandi, Patia, Satkania, Fatikchhari, Sandwip, Hatia, Nabinagar and Paikgachha Police Stations.

A total of 52 lawyers are vying for 14 posts.

Around 29,121 lawyers registered with the Bar Council are expected to cast votes to elect the council members.

While talking to The Daily Star, SASP leader Barrister Shafique Ahmed said if his panel wins the election they will demand of the government to amend the rules of the enrollment committee of the Bar Council so that the elected representatives can conduct the committee.

Besides, he will try to increase the benevolent fund and provide housing facilities to lawyers.

JAOP leader Advocate ABM Nurul Islam said if his panel wins the polls, he will make arrangements so that money from the benevolent can be given to lawyers during their lifetime in three installments and the amount will be increased to Tk 25 lakh.

## Donation for cancer hospital

BSS, Dhaka

A total Tk 16.1 lakh was received as donation in October for construction of Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH).

The donors are Nasreen Rahman, Tk 10 lakh, Roksana Rahman, Tk 5 lakh, Rawshan Akther Habib and late Prof Sadequ Alam jointly, Tk 50 thousand, Dr M Enamul Huq, Tk 25 thousand, M Ikil Mondal, Tk 10 thousand, MA Mannan, Tk 9 thousand, Alamgir Sikdar Loton, Tk 5 thousand, and Engr Aminur Rahman, Tk 2 thousand.



PHOTO: STAR

Fiver advisers of the caretaker government -- Hossain Zillur Rahman, Anwarul Iqbal, AF Hassan Arif, Maj Gen (retd) Ghulam Quader and Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury -- held a meeting with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan party office yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

## Election can't be deferred even for a day: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League leadership yesterday said parliamentary elections cannot be deferred for a single day from December 18.

The observation was made during Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's meetings with Russian Ambassador Gennady Trotsenko and a delegation of US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) led by Tioulang Saumura and SAM Gejdenson at Sudha Sadan in the city.

Following the meetings, Hasina's special assistant Dr Hassan Mahmud told reporters that Awami League wants election on December 18 to switch over to democracy and the scheduled date for the elections cannot be pushed back for a day.

He said people are anxiously waiting for the election and they cannot wait for ensuring a party's victory.

The Russian Ambassador said they like to see smooth holding of the elections and political stability in Bangladesh.

He, however, refused to comment on BNP-led alliance's stance or polls under state of emergency saying it is an internal matter of Bangladesh.

## Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre

METRO DESK

Bangladesh-Korea Technical Training Centre was inaugurated at Mirpur in the city on Monday, says a press release.

Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Republic of Korea Ambassador Suk Bum Park jointly inaugurated the centre.

The centre was remodeled and equipped by the Korean government with a grant of US\$4 million.

The aim of the project is to develop human resources in Bangladesh through a comprehensive package of support programmes.

It also aims to reduce the high level of youth unemployment and alleviate poverty in Bangladesh by providing training to acquire the skills for getting jobs in both the domestic and international labor market.

## Save a war-maimed freedom fighter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karuna Begum, a war-maimed freedom fighter, has been fighting for life at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) for last three months.

Some medical tests have indicated that she might be suffering from cancer in the stomach.

On November 11, a medical board referred her to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), but she could not go there due to financial constraints.

Her husband Golam Mostofa Manik, a retired high school headmaster, is also a freedom fighter.

The family is run by the honorarium that Mostofa and Karuna get from the government. The amount is only Tk 5,900 per month.

Mostofa told The Daily Star that they have five children who are studying at different institutions.



They have no other sources of income and they have already incurred a debt of over Tk 40,000.

The family is therefore unable to bear the cost of treatment for Karuna, and appealed to well-off people for financial assistance.

Contributions can be sent to Account No 12300346841, Sonali Bank, Dhaka University Branch.

People can also contact over cell phone 017264330.

## Anti-liberation forces damage Baul statues

Says Hakkani Mahila Parishad

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the defeated forces in the liberation war have recently vandalised the precious Baul sculptures to wipe out thousand years' traditional culture, history and heritage of the nation.

The Bangalee nation has a golden history of 3,000 years of rich cultural heritage. People have been practising art and cultural freely years after years, they added.

The speakers said this at the discussion on 'Sculpture is the tradition of Bangalee nation' organised by Hakkani Mahila Unnayan Parishad in association with weekly Bartaman Sanglap at the National Press Club in the city.

Noted personalities of the society, including academicians, Islamic thinkers, sociologists and journalists, took part in the programme.

Termining sculptures an art to convey the ideology of great personalities of the nation, they urged the countrymen and progressive forces to resist all ill-motivated attempts by the anti-liberation forces against the country.

The forces are now attempting to destroy the art and culture and wipe out the unique identity of the nation,

they added. The speakers stressed the need for enlisting the golden history, art and culture of the country in the curricula at different levels of education, saying that it would let students know the real history and tradition.

DU Prof Ajoy Roy, Prof Sadeka Halim, Assistant Prof Kaberi Gayen, former deputy director of the National Museum Shamsuzzaman Khan, Executive Editor of daily Janakantha Borhan Ahmed and noted singer Farida Parvin spoke at the programme.

## Shahadat made envoy to Qatar

UNB, Dhaka

M Shahadat Hossain, currently serving as the high commissioner of Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, has been appointed the ambassador to Qatar.

Shahadat, who joined Bangladesh Civil Service Foreign Affairs Cadre in 1986, held many important posts in the foreign ministry and foreign missions of Bangladesh abroad, said a foreign ministry's press release.

## CONTEMPT CASE HC exempts Prothom Alo editor, publisher from appearing in court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday exempted the Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman, Publisher Mahfuz Anam and reporter Mizanur Rahman Khan from appearing in person before the court in connection with a contempt case.

Upon a time prayer moved by their counsel Dr Kamal Hossain, the HC bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui also gave them four weeks' time for replying to a rule earlier issued by this court.

On November 11, the HC bench, following a contempt petition filed by a Supreme Court lawyer, issued the rule on them to explain within two weeks why contempt proceedings should not be drawn against them for publishing a report on the number of orders passed by an HC bench.

The journalists appeared before the HC bench yesterday.

The court said that it will fix a date for hearing on the rule after the winter vacation in December.

The Prothom Alo carried the report headlined 'Orders in 298 cases passed in 315 minutes' on November 9.

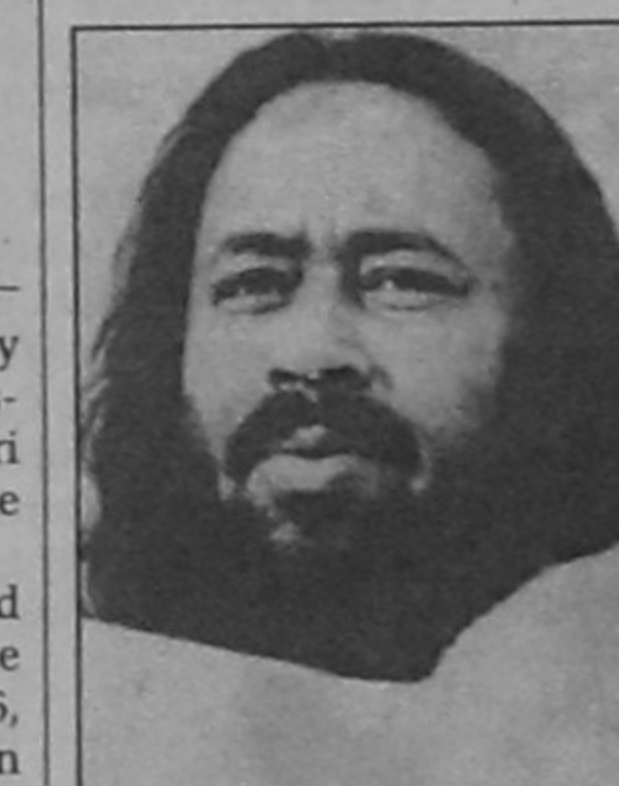
## Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Abul Khair, accounts officer of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), passed away at Birdem Hospital in the city on November 15, says a press release.

He left behind a host of relatives, friends and well-wishers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Jatakindi village at Senbagh in Noakhali.



## Major Jilil's death anniversary today

METRO DESK

Today is the 19th death anniversary of Major (retd) MA Jilil, commander of the Sector 9 during the War of Liberation, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his grave at Mirpur Freedom Fighters' Graveyard at 9:00am.

Major Jilil Parishad and local freedom fighters will also hold a milad mahfil and discussion at his village home at Ujirpur in Barisal.

## ATM Wali Ashraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 14th death anniversary of ATM Wali Ashraf, one of the organisers of the Liberation War in London, a journalist and former member of the parliament, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his village in Brahmanbaria.

Relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programme and pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

## EU to send 150 poll observers

FROM PAGE 1

Waldner wrote to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed about the commission's decision on November 17.

The mission's core team of 10 election experts has already arrived in the country on November 7 to co-ordinate the assessment of the entire election process.

The core team will be joined by 46 long-term observers (LTOs). They will be deployed in two stages to assess the candidate nomination process, the campaign period and pre-election preparations around the country.

The EOM will remain in the country for up to three weeks after the Election Day to observe the post-election period.

Some 88 short-term observers will arrive by mid-December to observe voting, counting and the tabulation of results.

"The Commission, from the very beginning, was com-

mitted to re-activate the EOM once acceptable conditions for the conduct of democratic elections were in place," the announcement quoted Ferrero-Waldner as saying in her letter.

"The European institutions and the Member States have attached great importance to, and have supported, the political and legal reforms in Bangladesh since January 2007 that aimed at setting the right conditions for credible and democratic elections in December 2008.

"Notwithstanding the difficulties that still exist, I now believe that the conditions exist which allow the EU EOM to be redeployed. I encourage both the Caretaker Government and the political parties to make all efforts to ensure this election reflects the will of the Bangladeshi people who always expressed their commitment to democratic government," she said.

Stefan Frowein, head of the

European Commission Delegation to Bangladesh, said the decision to re-deploy the full EOM constitutes a recognition of the impressive progress made by the government, Election Commission and other authorities to create conditions conducive to a free, fair and credible election.

"The EC has sent a signal of its confidence in the preparations for the parliamentary elections and its absolute commitment to scrutinising this critical event in the democratic history of Bangladesh," he said, according to the announcement.

"It is now incumbent upon all political stakeholders to discharge their democratic duties in a manner which is mindful of the stability and prosperity of this country," he added.

The EU has made available some €3.2 million from the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), for the mission.