

TWO RECEIVE BEGUM ROKEYA PADAK 2008

Strict application of law a must to check women repression: CA

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said strict application of law is equally essential as change of mindset, values and morality is necessary to check repression on women.

The head of the caretaker government made the remark at a function organised by the Women and Children Affairs Ministry at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium for distributing Begum Rokeya Padak 2008 marking Begum Rokeya Day 2008.

was scheduled to be observed on December 9. It was shifted to December 11 as the holy Eid-ul-Azha coincided with the day.

This year Dr Sultana Sarwat Ara Zaman and Nasrin Parvin Huq (posthumous) were awarded the Begum Rokeya Padak, a national award, for their contributions to women education and women development.

Dr Sultana Sarwat Ara Zaman received the award personally from the chief adviser, while late Nasrin Parvin Huq's award was received by her little daughter.

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury presided over the function. Secretary of the Ministry Rokeya Sultana also spoke on the occasion.

Advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, members of various women and children's organisations, and government officials were present.

Fakhruddin in his speech said the relentless efforts of Begum Rokeya are behind the positive achievements the women in Bangladesh now enjoy.

He said at present, women

are much advanced in trade and commerce, medical and engineering, science, civil and military administration - in every sphere of development - as well as in state politics.

But it is a matter of great sorrow, the chief adviser said, when women still become victims of dowry and eve-teasing, while mothers, sisters, housewives, domestic helps and girl students become victims of repression at homes, offices and educational institutions.

"We want to see the end of it," he told the function. Fakhruddin urged the social scientists, media, civic society and the lawyers to come forward to help check repression on women.

He mentioned Begum Rokeya's efforts and her extraordinary qualities that had awakened the backward women community of the 19th Century and showed them the path of emancipation.

Begum Rokeya still remained the torchbearer for women and her words are equally relevant in the 21st Century, he said.

The chief adviser called upon to all including private institutions, women organisations, civic society and conscientious sections of people to work together along side the government to ensure women education and empowerment as well as their security and self-reliance.

Later, a cultural programme based on the life and works of Begum Rokeya was staged at the function. The CA witnessed the event.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, left, looks affectionately at the child of a party activist while exchanging Eid greetings with the people of all walks of life at the party's Dhanmondi office in the city. BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia, right, exchanges Eid greetings with the people of all walks of life at the Ladies Club in the city on Eid day.



Recipients of Begum Rokeya Padak 2008 pose for photograph with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, third from right, at the award distribution ceremony at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday. Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury, second from left, was present.

Formulate separate policy to protect forests

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists at a roundtable called on the government to formulate a separate policy to protect forests, saying that the forests are being destroyed in the name of development.

They also said that forests in Jafflong, Lawachhara, Naharpunji and Madhab Kunda where a huge number of indigenous people have been living, are now under threat of destruction from illegal logging.

Advisee Paribesh Rakkha Andolon of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) organised the roundtable in the city on Monday.

The speakers said the

existence of indigenous people is under threat due to various activities such as survey for gas exploration at Lawachhara in Kamalganj, Moulvibazar, and destruction of forest in Jafflong for lifting of stones.

The development activities should be environment-friendly, but a number of organisations are destroying forests and evicting indigenous people in the name of development, they added.

The environmentalists also placed a number of demands, including stopping damaging environment in the name of industry, protecting the rights of

indigenous people, banning logging at Khasiapunji and hilly forests and cancelling proposed Mourichhra ecopark.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad presided over the roundtable while coordinator of Adibashi Paribesh Rokkha Andolon Sharif Jamil presented a keynote paper.

Father Simos, Sanjib Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adibasi Forum, Father Joseph Gomez, AZM Samsul Huda, consultant of FAO, Joyoti F Gomez and Dr Md Abdul Matin also spoke at the roundtable.

Cultural accord with China

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and China yesterday signed a cultural exchange agreement between the two countries covering the period from 2009 to 2012.

Secretary of the Ministry of Culture M Sharful Alam and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Zheng Qingdian signed the document at a function at the cultural ministry.

Adviser for Primary and Mass Education, Women, Children and Cultural Affairs Rasheda K Chowdhury welcomed the signing of a cultural agreement with China recalling the century-old cultural ties between the two countries.

Rasheda said China is a close friend of Bangladesh and hoped the cultural ties would see further consolidation with signing of the agreement.

Call to reject war criminals in polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Peshajibi Samannay Parishad, a forum of professionals, yesterday called on all not to vote for anti-liberation forces and war criminals in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Rather, the political parties or alliance who are respectful to democracy and committed to implementing the spirit of Liberation War should be voted in, the Parishad leaders said in a statement.

They also urged the political parties not to nominate war criminals and anti-liberation elements.

In a statement, the Parishad leaders said that during the Liberation War, the war crimi-

nals collaborated with the Pakistani occupation forces and committed killings, looting and arson. They also killed teachers, artists and other intellectuals, the leaders said, adding that they must be voted out.

The signatories to the statement include Parishad Convenor Barrister Shafique Ahmed and Member Secretary Dr Kamrul Hasan Khan, journalist Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Dr AFM Ruhul Haque, Prof Dr Rashid-e-Mahbub, Prof Abul Barakat, Prof AKM Saidul Haque Chowdhury, Advocate Khandakar Abdul Mannan and engineer Prof M Nazrul Islam.

No country can claim to be role model in HR

Says French envoy

UNB, Dhaka

French Ambassador to Bangladesh Charley Causeret, on Wednesday said no country can claim to be a role model in the area of Human Rights as none can claim to perfectly uphold Human Rights.

He made the remarks at a function at French Embassy to mark the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights.

"The developed countries seemingly have a more theoretical approach while developing states, confronted with everyday hardship, have adopted a more pragmatic one. These two groups of countries have much to learn from each other," he said.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury, Additional Foreign Secretary MAK Mahmood, and Dr Meghna Guha Thakurta spoke on the occasion.

The French ambassador believed that developed countries have much to learn from developing countries.

Citing two examples, he said in Mali, every year the president and all the members of the government stand in front of the media and anyone dealing with the protection of human rights to answer to their questions, even the most embarrassing ones.

The ambassador said would political leaders of developed countries be ready to submit to such a practice.

Mentioning the micro-credit programme in Bangladesh, he said this system once appropriately implemented has brought economic empowerment to millions of women, not only in this country, but also in many developed ones.

In his remarks Additional Foreign Secretary Mahmood said at the global level, success in protecting and promoting human rights has been mixed.

"While we can claim certain degree of clarity at the conceptual level - civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, adherence to a universally recognised standard has still remained far from satisfactory in most part of the world."

Mahmood said people are still exposed to multifarious violation of fundamental rights caused by factors political to economic, from cultural to institutional.

Establishment of the International Human Rights Commission, enactment of the Right to Information Act, and separation of the subordinate judiciary from the executive are some of the reform initiatives that one can hope would strengthen the governance structures for protection of people's economic, political and socio-cultural rights.

Switzerland to issue Schengen visas

METRO DESK

Switzerland will start issuing Schengen visas valid for maximal three months, as the Swiss-EU Schengen cooperation becomes operational today.

The Swiss-Schengen visa will not only allow travelling in Switzerland but also in the whole Schengen area, says a press release.

Conversely, Bangladeshi passport holders with a valid Schengen visa issued by other Schengen states will also be able to enter Switzerland without an additional Swiss visa.

This is the result of the bilateral Schengen agreement signed in October 2004 between Switzerland and the European Union. This new development will facilitate travel in Europe for Bangladeshi passport holders.

The Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh will adopt Schengen procedures while issuing visas.

11 killed in city incidents during Eid holidays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 11 people were killed in separate incidents during Eid holidays in and around the city.

Ataur Rahman, 55, accounts officer of Green Road branch of Sonali Bank, was found in an unconscious state near Mirpur Police Staff College in the early hours of Monday.

He was rushed to Al-Helal Heart Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

His relatives said Ataur, who lived in Mirpur Section-1, went missing in the evening of Monday after he went to hire a CNG-run auto-rickshaw.

Unknown criminals had killed him in a pre-planned way.

Dhaka Medical College morgue sources said Ataur was strangled.

A housewife Alpana Begum, 20, was found dead in her husband's house at Ganok Tuli in Hazaribagh at around 10:00pm on Tuesday.

Her brother Rony Mollah

alleged that the members of her husband's family strangled Alpana.

Hazaribagh police said they have arrested Alpana's mother-in-law in this connection.

A 12-year-old boy Arif Hossain, who was a factory worker, was found dead at an under-construction building at Water Works Road in Lalbagh in the early hours of Tuesday.

His body was wrapped in a sack.

Lalbagh police suspect that Arif, who hailed from Chatkhil of Noakhali, might have been killed in a different place and his body was left away there.

A schoolgirl Habiba Akter alias Rupa, 18, daughter of a grocer at Tejaon Railway Colony, was found in an unconscious condition in their house at about 10:30pm on Wednesday.

She was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where the doctors declared her dead.

Mohammad Hossain,

father of Rupa, filed a case with Tejaon Police Station accusing three people Awalad Hossain, Sohail and Shiplu of killing his daughter.

Salauddin, 20, of South Goran, was stabbed to death by his neighbours as he refused to give electricity connection on the Eid day.

Abdul Khaleq, 70, of Darus-Salam was beaten to death allegedly by local criminals Hares Sheikh and Mamun at Gabtoli dam area on Eid day evening.

Garments employee Alal Hossain, 15, was found dead near a video games shop at Boxnagar of Shah Ali area on the same day.

Besides, Piku, 30, of Fatulla was stabbed to death on the Eid day morning, Raju, 18, of Shyampur was strangled on Wednesday evening, Iqbal Hossain, 15, of Sutrapur was

poisoned to death on Monday while an unidentified youth aged about 30 was shot dead by unknown criminals near Jhilmil Project on Monday.



Dhakabasi, an organisation of residents of Dhaka city, takes out a colourful procession from the Shishu Academy on Wednesday on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha.

Formulate policy to ensure migrant workers' rights

Speakers urge govt

BSS, Dhaka

Human rights activists and trade union leaders at a seminar in the city on Wednesday suggested the government to formulate a migration policy in line with the UN and ILO conventions to ensure rights of the workers abroad.

Bangladesh's migrant workers face manifold problems due to inadequate training required by receiving countries and as a result, they cannot go abroad in a strong point of bargaining, they said.

Welfare Association for the Rights of Bangladesh Emigrants (WARBE) Development Foundation, a community-based organisation working for the migrant workers' rights, organised the seminar on "Protection of migrants' human rights: Need for ratification of UN and ILO conventions" marking the International Human Rights Day-2008 at Jatiya Press Club in the city.

WARBE Development Foundation Chairman Syed Saiful Haque presented the keynote paper at the seminar. Country's migrant workers spend huge money due to lack of adequate policy, said Prof Dr

CR Abrar, Coordinator of Refugee and Migratory Movement Research Unit (RMMU).

He came down heavily on the sluggish pace in the steps of the previous governments to implement the UN Charter-1990 on protection of the rights of migrant workers and their family members.

Dr Abrar proposed setting up of an information databank for the returnee workers so that they can invest their money safely in their country.

Kamal Uddin, former diplomat said the country's migration situation has become very critical during the last three years due to unscrupulous dealings with the intending workers.

"We want to see labour-friendly counselors in missions abroad to make labour units consolidated," he said.

He said lack of budgetary allocation and networking within the trade union units and sending and receiving countries are the main obstacles to ensuring welfare of the migrant workers.

"Although Bangladesh's migrant workers are contributing a lot to the economy of the concerned countries, but are

being deprived of the equal rights as per ILO conventions, said Dr Wajed-ul Islam Khan, secretary general of Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC).

He laid emphasis on increasing network between sending and receiving countries to help diminish agonies of migrant workers.

Dilruba Anguri, president of Home Net Bangladesh, stressed on arranging home-based trainings for the migrant workers on different trades after their

Change in administration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, director general (DG) of the Department of Social Services, has been appointed as additional secretary to Local Government Division (LGD).

Meanwhile, Hedayetullah Al Mamun, additional secretary to the Ministry of Establishment, was appointed as DG of the Department of Social Services, said an official handout yesterday.

Turkish envoy calls on Hasina

BSS, Dhaka

Turkish Ambassador to Bangladesh Sakir Torunlar called on Awami League President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence in the city yesterday.

Talking to newsmen following his meeting with Hasina, the Turkish envoy said that he conveyed Eid greetings to the AL chief.

Sakir Torunlar said Bangladesh and Turkey have a long historic relation and expressed hope that the existing bilateral relations, including trade and commerce, would further be strengthened in the coming days.

Dhaka-Istanbul air link is expected to begin next year, the envoy said.

While briefing on behalf of the AL leader, former Ambassador Muhammad Zamir told journalists that the Turkish ambassador paid a courtesy call on the AL president to exchange Eid greetings. They discussed issues of mutual interest between the two countries.

Former ambassador M Ziauddin, Sheikh Hasina's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Assistant Private Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap were present.



Secretary of the Ministry of Culture M Sharful Alam, left, and Chinese Ambassador Zheng Qingdian, right, sign a cultural agreement at a function at the cultural ministry yesterday while Adviser for Cultural Affairs Rasheda K Chowdhury, centre, looks on.