

# Ensure access to legal and social support services

Speakers tell meeting on HR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday stressed the need to raise awareness about human rights and to ensure access for all to legal aid and social support services so that everyone can enjoy their human rights.

Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) organised the meeting of stakeholders under its 'Estab-

lishment of Good Governance through Implementing Human Rights' project at Biam auditorium.

The speakers highlighted various obstacles to establishing human rights in the country.

According to the law, medical examination of the rape victim must be performed within 24 hours, but it is not always possible to do

so, they said.

"The forensic department does not remain open round the clock. Moreover, it remains closed on Fridays and Saturdays, which is an obstacle to emergency medical test of the rape victim. As a result, it becomes difficult to collect evidence, diluting the legal proceedings," said Alena Khan, executive director of BSEHR.

She demanded steps to keep the forensic department open round the clock.

Captain Abul Hasan, assistant director of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Khulna, said the addresses of domestic helps should be documented properly to curb human trafficking.

He also called on the mass media to highlight this issue.

Other speakers said the human rights issue should be included in the school curriculum to raise awareness.

Justice Mohammad Tafazzal Islam, Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly, Nurul Islam Khan, President of the National Press Club Shawkat Mahmud and Rina Roy of Manusher Jonno Foundation also spoke.

Manusher Jonno Foundation has been assisting the 'Establishment of Good Governance through Implementing Human Rights' project since 2004. The project period has been extended up to 2011 with a view to curbing domestic violence, acid violence, human trafficking and repression on women and children.



Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelly speaks at a meeting at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Nurul Islam Khan and on his left are Justice Mohammad Tafazzal Islam, Advocate Alena Khan, Habibunnahar and Shawkat Mahmud.

## Try war criminals thru special tribunal

Demands Projonmo '71

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Projonmo '71, a platform of children of the martyrs in the liberation war, demanded steps to start the process of trying war criminals through a special trial tribunal, says a press release.

President and vice president of the organisation in a statement hailed the newly elected government for its positive attitude towards trying the criminals.

"We urge the government to take all possible steps to reveal the real features of Jamaat's purposive politics and concurrently hope the government will utilise the

golden chance to establish good governance and justice in education, religion, foreign affairs, industries, commerce and every sector," it added.

The leaders called for identifying and publishing the list of war criminals, observance of Martyred Intellectuals Day with due respect as well as honouring the martyrs and leaders of union, district and upazila levels who played a vital role during the war.

They hoped that the government will play an active role in protecting Rayer Bazar killing field, preserving all killing fields across the country, establishing a museum for martyrs, conducting research

programmes on the war and rehabilitating the families of the freedom fighters.

Meanwhile, leaders of Bangladesh Awami Sangskritik Forum (ASAF) at a meeting also demanded the government raise the issue of the trial of the war criminals and to ban the Jamaat politics at the first session of the 9th parliament beginning today.

ASAF President Sheikh Uzzal, Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret'd) Farook Khan, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Hasan Mahmud, Adviser to Prime Minister Dr Alauddin Chowdhury and BTV Director General Kazi Abu Zafar Siddique also spoke.

## Call to re-fix minimum wage of RMG workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour leaders yesterday demanded the government re-fix the minimum wage of garment workers considering the price hike of essentials.

National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) leaders said this at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday.

They placed a 19-point demand, including trade unionism in the export processing zones (EPZs) and other garment factories, rationing system for workers, equal wages for women and uninterrupted supply of electricity and gas for factories.

The leaders said the minimum wage fixed at Tk 1662 per month in 2006 is still maintained, adding that it is necessary to re-fix the salary in line with the present price situation.

NGWF General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin read out a written speech at the press conference where its President Shahida Sarkar, vice presidents Nurun Nahar and Md Faruk Khan and Joint Secretary Nahar also took part.

## UZ elections credible

Say polls observers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of election observers yesterday said the January 22 Upazila election was credible but expressed concern about low turnout of voters and violence in some places during the voting.

Election was held peacefully in two-thirds areas while irregularities and violence marked the election in the remaining areas, they said at a press conference.

The Election Working Group (EWG), a coalition of 32 civil society organisations, organised the press conference at the National Press Club in the city. A total of 10,700 observers of EWG visited 5,122 centres in 204 Upazilas during the election.

Presenting a report, Acting Country Director of ADD Mozammel Haque said the status of Upazila election was 'very good' in 65 percent of their observation area. The status 'very good' implies slight occurrence of irregularity.

The election status in 30 percent of area was 'good', in 3.6 percent of area was 'average good', in 0.35 percent of area was 'poor' and one percent of area was 'very poor', Mozammel said.

Major findings of the observation are low turnout of voters and violation of electoral code of conduct, said Executive Director of IED Numan Ahmed Khan.

Executive director of Web Foundation Mohsin Ali also spoke.



President Iajuddin Ahmed administers oath of office to six newly appointed state ministers at a simple ceremony at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

## 2 extortionists caught with Tk 5 lakh in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Two extortionists were caught red handed with money worth Tk 5 lakh in Narayanganj yesterday.

Detective Branch police arrested Selim and Naimul Islam Milon while they were receiving the money from the owner of a sweater factory at noon.

They also arrested a driver and seized a private car used for extortion.

Sources said the extortionists on Monday demanded Tk 5 lakh from Al Hasib Zaman, owner of Koyo Sweater Factory at Murapara area of Rupganj.

They also threatened to charge grenade if the money is not paid.

Zaman filed a general diary with Rupganj Police Station in this connection.

He said the extortionists were former workers of his factory.

## Help govt ensure good governance

Lawmakers urge journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some lawmakers elected from greater Dhaka yesterday urged journalists to extend their cooperation to government for establishing good governance in the country.

They said journalists can help government run the country correctly by identifying its faults through their objective reporting.

The lawmakers-elect were addressing a function organised by Dhaka Press Club at the Institution of Engineers' Bangladesh (IEB) auditorium to felicitate them.

Lawmakers-elect Abdul Mannan Khan, Sanjida Khanom, AKM Rahmatullah, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, Elias Uddin Mollah and Benazir Ahmed of Dhaka, and Nazrul Islam Babu and Nasim Osman from Narayanganj attended the function with Abul Kalam, president of Dhaka Press Club, in the chair.

Almost all of them expressed their frustration over the small gathering of people at the auditorium

which was almost vacant during the function.

Sanjida Khanom said she could not think that the function, which was arranged to accord reception to parliament members elected by lakhs of people, would be attended by such a small number of people.

Elias Uddin Mollah said if he were informed earlier he could have ensured a good gathering of people for the function.

Nasim Osman said the programme could have been organised more gorgeously, but the journalists could not do that.

Benazir Ahmed said he was unaware that a press club can accord reception to parliament members of a particular area.

Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haq Mostafa Shahid, who was invited as chief guest, did not attend the function while special guest Abdul Mannan Khan left the spot without delivering any speech.

## Palestine Solidarity Day today

DU CORRESPONDENT

The Palestine-Iraq Solidarity Council will observe 'Palestine Solidarity Day' today to protest the Israeli air strikes on innocent civilians in Gaza.

The day will be observed with a call to declare Israel a 'terrorist state' and Zionists 'war criminals', lift economic blockade of Gaza and create a sovereign Palestine state immediately.

As part of the countrywide protest programme, a rally will be held at Muktangan in Dhaka at 4:00pm, says a press release.

Convener of the Solidarity Council Prof KAM Saduddin will preside over the rally. National leaders, intellectuals and representatives of professional groups will take part in the rally to express solidarity with the Palestinians.

The Council also called on all organisations to stage protests, hold rallies and form human chains across the country at the same time today.



Dhakabashi organised Elite Ranga Mehedi Wedding Festival at National Museum auditorium in the city yesterday to celebrate 400 years of Dhaka.

## Call to cancel circular for new nurses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Unemployed Diploma Nurses Association yesterday demanded immediate cancellation of the circular for recruiting new nurses in the national dailies.

They also demanded recruitment of nurses according to the existing rules of the department of social services by January 31. The rules include recruitment of nurses as per their batch, merit and seniority.

They placed the demand at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

The leaders declared to stage a token hunger strike today at the Central Shaheed Minar to press home their demand.

They also decided to fast unto death strike from tomorrow if their demand is not met.

## Repeal Vested Property Act

Minorities urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Minority Sangram Parishad (BMSP) yesterday urged the government to take immediate steps to repeal the Vested Property Act which has been causing sufferings to people of minority community for the last four decades.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity, they also demanded 75 seats of the Jatiya Sangsad reserved for the minorities to build a non-communal country.

In a keynote paper, BMSP General Secretary Advocate Ashok Kumar Ghosh said though renamed in 1974, the law still retains its ability to deprive a citizen of his/her property simply by declaring that person as an enemy of the state.

He also called upon the government to repeal the Vested Property Return Act 2001 to help return the land property to their owners.

An 11-point demand was also placed at the press conference that included introduction of 20 percent quota for the minorities, foundation for Hindu, Christians and Buddhists, implementation of CHT Peace Treaty, and declaring Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity as state religions like Islam.

BMSP President Prof Ashoktaru, Executive President Dr Shailendra Nath Chanda, Dr Pintu Misra, Sree Mintu Goshwami, Horendra Nath Majumder, SK Badal and Arun Das were present on the occasion.

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