

## Women MPs vow to ensure women's empowerment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women lawmakers yesterday vowed to work towards ensuring women's empowerment and to be vocal on women's rights issues in parliament.

At a reception ceremony organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation, the women MPs who are elected for the first time shared their experiences, struggle, electioneering and their priorities.

"I will work for the development of the country," Meher Afroz Chumki, a lawmaker from Gazipur-5 constituency, said, adding that she would also work to promote female education, raise awareness about women's rights and implement the Women Development Policy.

At the programme, women's rights activists placed a 13-point recommendation with a call for women lawmakers to help enact the Right to Information (RTI) Act and increase the number of reserved seats for women in parliament and introduce direct election to them.

"We want women MPs to focus on policy-making issues rather than dealing with issues concerning road construction and building of bridges and culverts," said President of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Ayesha Khanam.

Political empowerment of women is vital to establishing good governance, said Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation.

"We had demanded that the political parties nominate more women for the national elections. Accordingly, the political parties gave nominations to an increased number of women. As a result, more women candidates were elected to parliament this time," she said.

The recommendations also called on women MPs to help withdraw reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), enact laws to curb domestic violence and ensure equal rights of women.

The rights activists also urged women lawmakers to strengthen the role of women leaders at upazila and union parishad levels, create an environment in their political parties so that the local women leaders can play active role and form a caucus on women issue outside parliament.

An institutional system should be established in every constituency to hear the people regularly and to create accountability of the MPs and a women's rights commission should be formed, they added.

Rumana Mahmud, a lawmaker from Sirajganj-2, Mahub Ara Begum Gini from Gaibandha-2, Habibun Nahar from Bagerhat-3, Rebecca Momin from Netrakona-4, Segufta Yasmin from Munshiganj-2, Sara Begum Kobori from Narayanganj-4 and Nilufer Zafar Ullah attended the reception ceremony.

Women's rights activists Rasheda K Chowdhury, Farida Akhter and Salma Khan also spoke at the programme.



Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her residence at Jamuna in the city on Monday.



Women lawmakers pose for photograph at a reception at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. Manusher Jonno Foundation organised the reception.

## Include human trafficking issues in primary education

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday emphasised the importance of including human trafficking issues in the school curriculum at primary level.

The workshop jointly organised by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Campaign for Popular Education at the LGED Bhaban in the city with former adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury in the chair.

Home Secretary Md Abdul Karim was present on the occasion as the chief guest, while Babab Fatima, regional representative of IOM, and Badrul Alam Tarafdar, acting secretary of primary education were present as the special guests.

Presenting a keynote paper, BNWLA Executive Director advocate Salma Ali said poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, exploitative social

structures and a male-dominated society have contributed much to women and children trafficking.

The fate of a good number of the trafficked women and children ends up in brothels, forced labour in bidi and shrimp factories, domestic help, camel jockey and labour trafficking.

She also presented some government statistics from January to December in 2007 that indicated that 297 trafficking cases were disposed, 77 cases ended in conviction, 33 accused were sentenced to death, 97 sentenced to life, 503 arrested for traffic-related crimes, more than 646 trafficked survivors rescued by law enforcers, 627 trafficked survivors rehabilitated to their own parents and rest 19 rehabilitate with alternative livelihood options.

She suggested incorporating trafficking issues into

school curriculum, community policing, legal service delivery programme, anti-traffic monitoring cells, high-way policing and model police stations as some measures to prevent trafficking.

Former chairman of NTCB Prof Kofiluddin Ahmed said the topic of human trafficking should be presented through pictures, flip charts and in other attractive ways to make children aware.

The speakers said the topic

can be presented to children through stories, adding that many teachers do not even know the meaning of the term 'camel jockey'. So, these terms should be properly explained.

Saba of Catalyst said the topic can be introduced to the children through staging dramas played by them.

Acting director of Campaign for Popular Education Md Azizul Haque also spoke.

## 'Withdraw false cases against JNU students'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The students of Jagannath University formed a human chain on the campus yesterday to realise their eight-point demand, including withdrawal of false cases filed against them.

The authorities filed the false cases against over 500 general students after a clash ensued on the campus on January 27.

The students in their hundreds joined the programme covering their faces with black bands and demanded cancellation of article 27/4 of Jagannath University Ordinance which indicates that it would run on its own finance from 2012.

The human chain was formed under the banner of Students' Rights Protection Movement.

The students demanded resumption of their classes, freeing 12 residential halls and a playground from illegal occupation, ensuring quality education and establishing a complaint cell.

They also demanded removal of the Bangladesh Bank branch from the campus which pollutes air by burning old currency notes beside the campus.

"The university authorities proposed us to sit for a meeting within a few days to resolve the problems. But if they fail to assure us of withdrawing false cases against the students, we would go for a tougher movement soon," said Mahfuzur Rahman, joint convener of the movement.



Covering their faces with black clothes, students of Jagannath University stage a demonstration on the campus yesterday demanding steps to retrieve the dormitories from the grabbers.

## PETITIONS BY POLITICIANS Hearing adjourned again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday again adjourned for one week the hearing on the bail petitions filed by some politicians who were earlier convicted in absentia in corruption cases.

Following a time prayer moved by Attorney General Mahububey Alam, the HC bench of Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Huq and Justice M o y e n u l I s l a m Chowdhury fixed February 17 as the date for hearing on the matters.

Mahububey Alam told the court that he needed time for taking preparations to make arguments on the petitions before this court.

Earlier on February 4, the court fixed February 10 for hearing the submissions from the attorney general on the matters, since he was abroad at that time.

On February 3, the HC bench concluded the hearing of the submissions made by the petitioners' counsels.

The politicians, including former Awami League lawmaker Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Jatiya Party (Manju) Chairman Anwar Hossain Manju, former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa and former finance minister M Saifur Rahman's son Shafiqur Rahman Babu, filed the petitions for bail.

## SC APPELLATE DIVISION Two posts of judges still lying vacant

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Two posts of judges at the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) still remain vacant although four months have elapsed after the Supreme Judicial Commission recommended the appointment of judges.

In the second week of last month, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed told the media that his ministry has forwarded the Commission's recommendation to the president through the Prime Minister's Office and that the president would appoint the judges very soon.

The minister also said that if the two judges are appointed, the trial of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Murder Case will be expedited.

Sources, however, said the judges would be appointed after the settlement of a pending case regarding the appointment of 10 High Court judges, which was not confirmed during the BNP-led four-party alliance government.

The SC will hear on February 18 the pending appeals filed by the last caretaker government that directed the government to reappoint 10 additional judges with seniority.

The law minister told The Daily Star recently that the file regarding the appointment of two Appellate Division judges is now at the office of the president and the new president may appoint them.

The two posts of judges in the Appellate Division are lying vacant since July 2 last year.

At its first meeting on October 16 last year, the Supreme Judicial Commission headed by Chief

Justice MM Ruhul Amin recommended four senior-most judges of the High Court Division for the appointment to two vacant posts.

They are Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman, Justice Md Abdul Quddus, Justice Md Abdul Aziz and Justice Bijan Kumar Das.

As Justice Abdul Quddus has already retired, the government last month sent the names of Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Justice Md Abdul Aziz to the president for their appointment, the sources said.

On November 12 last year, President Iajuddin Ahmed appointed seven new additional judges to the HC Division for two years as per recommendations of the Supreme Judicial Commission. One of them, however, declined to become HC judge on health grounds.

## FFs' certificates of 1997-01 to take effect

UNB, Dhaka

The government would accept the freedom fighters certificates issued under Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad during 1997-2001 with sign of then prime minister.

"The government has decided that all freedom fighters certificates with the signature of the then prime minister and issued under Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad from 1997 to 2001 will take effect from now on with other existing certificates," said a PID handout yesterday.

## Biharis demand proper rehabilitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Urdu speaking people, popularly known as Biharis, living in various camps in Dhaka staged a demonstration at Muktagong in the city yesterday demanding their proper rehabilitation.

They formed a human chain during the demonstration in support of their demand.

Several hundred people from various camps in Dhaka, including Mohammadpur Geneva camp, town hall camp and Mirpur Section 11 camp, joined the programme organised by Urdu-Speaking People's Youth Rehabilitation Movement (USPYRM).

Later, USPYRM representatives submitted a memorandum containing six-point demand to the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her Tejaaga office.

USPYRM in its memorandum urged the government not to evict them before their proper rehabilitation. It also demanded of the government to continue benefits and utility services for the Bihari community until their rehabilitation and a formal announcement in this regard.

It called on the government to set up schools for Bihari children, special employment quota for at least one person from each Bihari family and renovation of dilapidated buildings in Wapda Bihari colony at Mirpur Section 11.

It also urged the United Nations, donor countries and international organisations to help Bangladesh government rehabilitate the Urdu-speaking community.

It demanded that the Biharis should be rehabilitated in the area where they are now living. Moving somewhere else would disconnect them from the traditional profession they are engaged in.

## BCS EXAMS Hunger strike continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The candidates who came out successful in the 1st phase result of the 27th BCS examinations but were later dropped from the 2nd phase result have continued their hunger strike unto death at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city.

In a statement yesterday, they demanded reinstatement to their respective cadres immediately.

The candidates said the PSC chairman made the fake result sheet in the 2nd phase through forgery which excluded them.

On the 2nd day of their strike, some of them fell sick but vowed to continue the programme to fulfil their legal demands.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia presides over the party standing committee meeting at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday.

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