

CADET POLLEN'S DEATH

Family cries for justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The family of cadet Sharmila Shaharin Pollen, allegedly murdered at Mymensingh Girls Cadet College in 2005, has again demanded justice.

At a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday, victim's father Ft Sgt (ret'd) MA Basharat Patowary said it has been around four years that his family is yet to get the justice regarding the death of their daughter.

He said they are now considering approaching the Amnesty International for justice.

The family members of the deceased had blamed the then adjunct of the cadet college for her killing.

They claimed that Pollen had

complained several times about the adjunct taunting her on many occasions.

They also said it was impossible for Pollen having 5 feet 6 inches height to commit suicide from the shower-pipe of the bathroom.

"Her first autopsy was done in Mymensingh without our consent. She had a mark from the blow on her shoulder that the autopsy report overlooked," said Patowary.

The report of the second autopsy, done about a month later, said the 'reason of her death is unknown'.

"We requested for the report of CID investigation but they refused to give. The military headquarters and the cadet college authorities also promised to conduct separate investigations but we never heard anything about them," he added.

The family also alleged foul play by the cadet college authorities for hiding important facts, giving various versions of the incident at different occasions and staging a suicide drama.

Pollen, a resident student of the college, was preparing for HSC Examination in 2005.

She received GPA-5 in SSC Examination in 2003.

According to her parents Pollen was talented, confident and happy.



Former adviser to a caretaker government advocate Sultana Kamal admires a photograph after inaugurating the 2nd part of Chobi Mela V, an international festival of photography, at Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday.

SURVEY ON MATERNAL HEALTHCARE

Lack of awareness puts lives of mothers, babies at risk

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of awareness about antenatal, delivery and postnatal care is the predominant factor that puts the lives of mothers and babies at risk, according to a recent survey.

It also identified early marriage, teenage pregnancy and early child bearing as the major causes of increased vulnerability for women and newborns.

The survey on maternal and neonatal health was conducted among more than 13,000 women in Narail, Jamalpur, Thakurgaon and Moulvibazar districts in 2008 under the joint government-UN initiatives 'Accelerating progress towards maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity'.

The survey said for about 62 percent of women, antenatal care or delivery service at the healthcare facility 'was not seen as necessary or beneficial'. For one in four women, the issue was the lack of money. About 10 percent of respondents felt that they would receive better delivery care at home compared to health facility.

Among the respondents, the average age of marriage was 16 years old and 72 percent of them became mother for the first time before the age of 20. The figure was 79 percent in Jamalpur district.

The findings of the survey were disclosed at a dissemination session yesterday organised jointly by the health ministry and UNFPA, Unicef and WHO at ICB Bhaban in the city.

The survey also highlighted that women are not the key decision makers in matters relating to the delivery and postnatal care. Only 14 percent of women seeking treatment for complications reported making the decision themselves. For 78 percent, the

decision to seek treatment was taken by their husband. Although women were generally satisfied about the quality of services they received at health facilities, 15 percent of women reported that they had to wait for more than 45 minutes to receive treatment for complications, the survey said.

The survey report recommended improving access to skilled birth attendance, creating awareness on the importance of safe delivery by skilled service provider, encouraging women to use health services through an increased support from family and community and providing information about family planning and optimal birth spacing.

Director general of Health Services Prof Shah Monir Hossain was present at the dissemination session as the chief guest while Director of Primary Health Care Dr ABM Jahangir Alam chaired the session.

Urs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An international Urs (religious conference) of Hazrat Shah Sufi Khaja Baba Faridpur will be held on February 14, 15, 16 and 17 at Bishwa Zaker Manzil in Faridpur, says a press release.

The organisers hoped devotees from about 85 countries would attend the Urs. Akheri Munazat of the Urs will be held on February 17.

'Ensure birth registration of every child free of cost'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists at a press conference yesterday demanded the government ensure birth registration for every child in the country free of cost to safeguard their rights.

The leaders of Bangladesh Shishu Odhikar Forum, Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh and Habitat Council Bangladesh said the duration of free birth registration is over, but still a huge number of children is yet to go through the process.

They said this at the press conference at National Press Club in the city.

Excluding Dhaka City

Corporation (DCC) and Barisal division, 81.77 percent of the total population completed their birth registration while only 46 percent have received the birth certificate since September last year.

"The situation of birth registration in DCC area is worst as only 3.8 percent of the city people have registered their births," said Odhikar Chairperson Wahida Banu.

If the government wants people to go through the birth registration process of their children paying money, a large number of children would remain out of the programme, she added.

The leaders said birth registration is the first step to ensure

rights of the children and a permanent and official record of their existence.

It will be helpful to prevent early marriage, child labour as well as to ensure justice. At the same time, it will ensure their immunisation, getting bank loan, driving licence, passport, health service, marriage registration, filing case, selling property and to settle their property, they added.

Coordinating Council for Human Rights President AHM Nouman, Director advocate Shamsuddin, Odhikar Director Kafil Uddin, Habitat Council Vice Chairman MA Majid and Secretary General Mahbubul Haque also spoke.



Sharmila Shaharin Pollen

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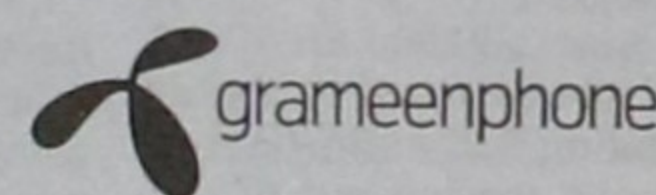
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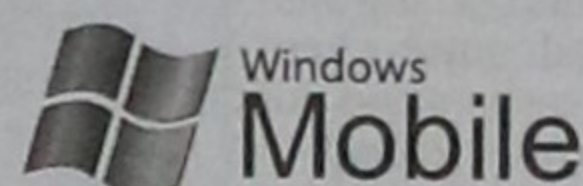
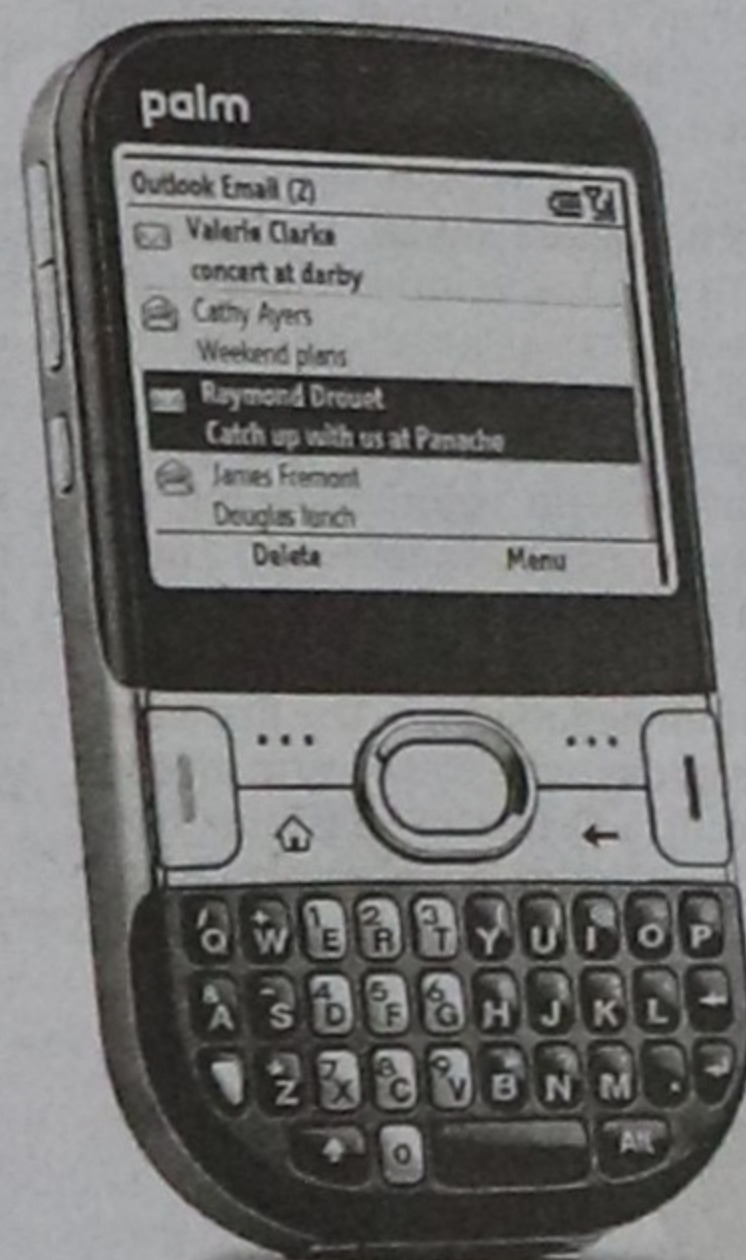
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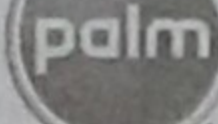
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