



Former adviser to a caretaker government Sultana Kamal speaks at a seminar at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On her left are Ayesha Khanam, Shaheen Anam, Angela Gomez and Shahnaz Huda.

4 books of FF Dr Jahangir launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The launching ceremony of four books authored by freedom fighter Dr SM Jahangir Alam was held at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium yesterday.

Dr Mahiuddin Khan Alamgir MP unveiled the cover of the books.

Secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs Md Shorful Alam, Director General of Bangla Academy Dr Syed Mohammad Shahed, Director of National Book Centre Mahmudur Rahman and publisher of Swaraj Prakashoni Rabiul Hossain Kachi were also present on the occasion.

Dr Alamgir said that the war criminals should be brought to justice.

"Many issues faded away during the course of time. We must learn from these historical events. These books will help us in the learning process," he said.

Md Shorful Alam said, "There is a common impression about government employees that their life revolves around files. With his work SM Jahangir Alam has proved it otherwise."

An officer of BCS tax cadre, Dr Jahangir is also the senior vice president of Bangladesh Muktijoddha Sangsad, Central Command Council.

The newly published books deal with issues like war crimes, lists of war criminals, importance of economics in state policies and politicisation by the alliance government.

Marriage registration for Hindu women stressed

Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a seminar yesterday underscored the need for introducing marriage registration for Hindu women and establishing their right to divorce to save them from the sufferings of polygamy and denial of marriage on the husbands' part.

Manusher Jonno Foundation and Bachte Shekha jointly organised the seminar moderated by Shaheen Anam, executive director, Manusher Jonno Foundation.

Women at the grassroots level in Narail, Gazipur and Jessore shared how they have been deprived of their rights at the seminar at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

In her paper on Hindu Marriage Act, Shahnaz Huda, professor, Department of Law, Dhaka University, said that according to the Shastra marriage is a sacrament or religious duty and it continues even after death.

She said that the community continues to follow Anglo-Hindu laws and there was no legislative development after 1947 regarding Hindu Family Laws in Bangladesh while India introduced major reforms in 1950s.

In the absence of marriage registration the women are devoid of the right to prove the marriage or divorce the husband.

"A Hindu man can abandon his wife and remarry several times but his wives cannot divorce him and so cannot remarry," she said.

"In the absence of a document some-

times it is difficult to prove the marriage. In this case if the husband disowns the wife she cannot demand alimony," said Huda.

The speakers said that there are cases when the husband flatly denied the marriage and got married again. They said there is no alternative to being united to solve the matter.

"In the Dhakeshwari Temple the priest keeps a document of the marriage he conducts. This practice is done for the women. Then why can't we introduce marriage registration?" Binoy Kusholi, a rights activist, posed a question.

She said that there is a lack of women representation among the community leaders.

"We will have to change this mentality that husband's place is the only place for women because due to this mentality women are staying with their husbands even if they are deprived of their rights," said former adviser Sultana Kamal, also the executive director of Ain O Salish Kendra.

They also discussed the rights of a Hindu woman on her father's properties.

The speakers said that Hindu women are denied property laws because they have a fear that Muslim men will marry them to grab their properties.

Manik Bhattacharya, a priest from Narail, Angela Gomez, executive director, Bachte Shekha, and Ayesha Khanam, president, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, were also present.



Governance Advocacy Forum forms a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding true empowerment of the local government.

Social stigma among IDUs hinders harm reduction services

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an advocacy workshop yesterday said social stigma, discrimination and harassment among injecting drug users (IDUs) pose major challenges hindering the essential harm reduction services for them.

Essential harm reduction services for IDUs project have also been facing challenges due to violence against target communities and lack of support from the narcotics law, they added.

They said this at the workshop at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city with DGHS Director General Dr Shah Munir Hossain in the chair.

Director General of the Directorate of Narcotics Control Humayun Kabir was present at the programme as the chief guest.

The speakers said at the same time, huge demand for drug, treatment and rehabilitation and economic, social and political dislocation also pose challenges in implementing the project.

The project is aimed at reducing the spread of HIV among IDUs to promote safer behaviour like safe injecting and safer sex practices following harm reduction strategy.

But due to social and domestic violence, IDUs are becoming isolated and creat-

ing social problems, said the speakers, adding that administrative harassment leads them to be dropped out from the existing services.

Sharing needles and syringes increases among the IDUs as they cannot buy needles, syringes and condoms that further lead to increase infection of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other sexually transmitted infections, they added.

The workshop was organised by Padakkhep Consortium in association

with AIDS/STD Programme and Save the Children USA.

Presenting a keynote paper, Shamim Rabbani, team leader of Padakkhep Consortium, GFATM-907 said an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 IDUs are there in the country and 70 percent of them have been harassed physically at least once in their life, while 60 percent were taken to jail.

The speakers reasoned unfavourable narcotics law, lack of awareness among people, frequent changes of

police people who have been sensitised and lack of initiative of civil society, donors, implementing agencies and the media regarding the issue behind the harassment.

AIG of Police Mohammad Mahfuzul Haque, Joint Secretary of the ministry of youth and sports Gazi Mizanur Rahman, joint secretary of the ministry of law affairs Nasrin Begum and Director of HIV/AIDS Programme Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed also spoke.



Poet Asad Chowdhury presents a crest to Father Marino Rigon, an Italian priest, freedom fighter and litterateur, at a reception ceremony at the Liberation War Museum auditorium in the city yesterday. The Citizens' Committee for Reception to Father Rigon accorded the reception to him. (Story on Page 2)

NU, JNU get new VCs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed Prof Kazi Shaidullah and Dr Mesbah Uddin Ahmed as vice chancellors of National University (NU) and Jagannath University (JNU) respectively, education ministry sources said.

Prof Shaidullah, a teacher of history department and former dean of arts faculty of Dhaka University, succeeded Prof M Mofakharul Islam who resigned as the VC on February 10.

Prof Dr Mesbah, a teacher of physics department of Dhaka University, succeeded Abu Hossain Siddique as VC of JNU.

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