

Implement uniform family code to establish women's rights

Mahila Parishad urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's rights activists yesterday called for the implementation of uniform family code, proposed by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP), to establish the rights of women, irrespective of religion, caste and creed.

Women are gradually finding their place in the socio-economic spheres which has brought a lot of hopes for them, but at the same time, they are deprived of their due rights in the decision-making process, the women leaders said.

They said this at the inaugural session of a two-day internal annual planning and evaluation meeting of BMP at Biam auditorium in the city.

Speaking as the chief guest, Norwegian Ambassador Ingeborg Stofring conveyed her country's condolence at the massacre of army officers during the BDR mutiny on February 25-26.

"Norway assures the government and the people of Bangladesh of our steadfast support and expresses solidarity during this difficult time in the country's history," she added.

About the progress of women, the envoy said Bangladesh has made some considerable progress in the socio-economic field.

"Women in Bangladesh are increasingly participating in various economic activities. When it comes to full employment, garment industry has opened opportunities for thousands of women to engage themselves in paid jobs," she added.

BMP President Ayesha Khanam said more women were elected to the present parliament because of the success of the women's rights movement, which has been continuing for the last three decades.

She urged the women lawmakers to keep away from corruption. They have a lot of responsibilities towards the women's rights movement, she added.

She also reiterated the demand for the trial of war criminals, execution of the verdict of Bangabandhu murder case and punishment to those involved in the killing of army officers at BDR headquarters after a proper investigation.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, called for forming a rapid

action team comprising women organisations, media, lawyers, doctors and corporate houses, which will reach anywhere in the country soon after any acts of violence against women and will provide them with necessary supports, including legal aid.

The number of women lawmakers in this parliament is higher than in previous parliaments, but it would be only symbolic if they do not take proper steps in the house to ensure women's rights, he said.

Mahfuz Anam also called on women leaders to help women lawmakers become aware of analyses of rights issues by providing them with necessary information.

He urged the women lawmakers -- elected directly or indirectly -- to ensure the participation of their male counterparts through making them aware of women's rights.

He also suggested publishing an annual report on rights issues which have been discussed in parliament.

BMP General Secretary Maleka Banu and Rekha Chowdhury also spoke at the programme.

Prices of LPG, furnace oil re-fixed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission yesterday re-fixed the prices of LPG cylinder and furnace oil for the end-users following the proposal of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, says a press release.

The price of every LPG cylinder (12.5 kg) has been reduced to Tk 850 from Tk 1,000 at the consumers' end, while the retail price of furnace oil has been reduced to Tk 26 from Tk 30 per litre.

The new price tag will be effective from March 15 until further notice.

Political parties shocked at Bashundhara City blaze

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different political parties yesterday expressed deep shock at the devastating fire at Bashundhara City.

Expressing grave concern over the incident, Leader of the Opposition and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia demanded proper investigation into the incident and asked the government to provide the businessmen who suffered huge losses due to the fire with financial assistance.

She prayed for the salvation of the departed soul of the fireman killed in the incident and wished early recovery of the injured.

She said that the damage would have been minimal if the fire could be extinguished in the beginning.

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain and Acting General Secretary Subrata Chowdhury in a statement also expressed deep shock at the loss of life and valuables in the fire.

Khalequzzaman, convener of Bangladeshher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), urged the government to ensure that the high-rise buildings are well equipped with a sound fire-extinguishing system.

Final round of Chemistry Olympiad held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The final round of Bangladesh Chemistry Olympiad was held at Mukarram Hussain Biggan Bhaban of Dhaka University yesterday.

A total of 31 participants from across the country took part in the event organised by Bangladesh Chemical Society.

The participants were selected from the division level test throughout the country on November 15 where a total of 650 students took part.

Bangladesh Chemical Society President Md Muhimur Rahman told The Daily Star that they have plans to take part in the International Chemistry Olympiad by the year 2012.

"India is participating in the next chemistry olympiad, which is an encouragement for us, as we have talented youths to represent the country in international stage," he added.

Tanbir replies to show cause notice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Standing Committee Member of Bangladesh Nationalist Party Chowdhury Tanbir Ahmed Siddiky yesterday replied to the show cause notice served by BNP on charge of violating party discipline.

The standing committee is scheduled to sit today to discuss the next course of action regarding the issue.

"His (Tanbir) reply has already been sent to the chairperson and the party will take necessary action after discussion," party's Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan told The Daily Star last night.

The committee issued the notice on Tuesday asking Tanbir to explain within 72 hours why disciplinary action should not be taken against him as his son made derogatory remarks about the chairperson and senior party leaders in his presence.

At a press conference on Monday, Irad Ahmed Siddiky, a mayoral aspirant for Dhaka City Corporation, alleged that Khaleda demanded Tk five crore from him in exchange for the party backing in the upcoming mayoral election.

But on Tuesday, Tanbir termed his son's comments unfortunate and shocking.

Key changes in top command of army

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Some key changes have been brought to the top command of Bangladesh Army, according to highly placed sources.

They said the government has decided to appoint Commandant of the Military Command & Staff College Maj Gen Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan the GOC of the Nine Infantry Division of Savar area command.

Bhuiyan will replace incumbent GOC Maj Gen Md Asab Uddin who was appointed the Commandant of Military Command & Staff College.

Meanwhile, the government has also sent two generals into forced retirement.

The two generals are Commandant of the National Defence College Lt Gen Md Aminul Karim and Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International Strategic Studies (BISS) Maj Gen Fatemi Ahmed Rumi.

Lt Gen Aminul Karim was the military secretary to the president during the 1/11 and later promoted to Lieutenant General and Maj Gen Rumi was the director general of Special Security Force (SSF) during the previous BNP-led four-party alliance.

The reasons behind the forced retirement could not be known, but the sources said the decision was taken as per the service rule of the Armed Forces.

Earlier, the government brought several changes to the Brigadier General positions.

Sources said Military Secretary to the President (MSP) Maj Gen Ruhul Amin was made the chairman of Bangladesh Tea Board while Brig Gen Ehtesham was appointed MSP.

Brig Gen Miazi has been made new military secretary to the prime minister. He replaced Brig Gen Amin Tareq, who was made the chief instructor of the Staff College.

Bangladeshi killed in Saudi road accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

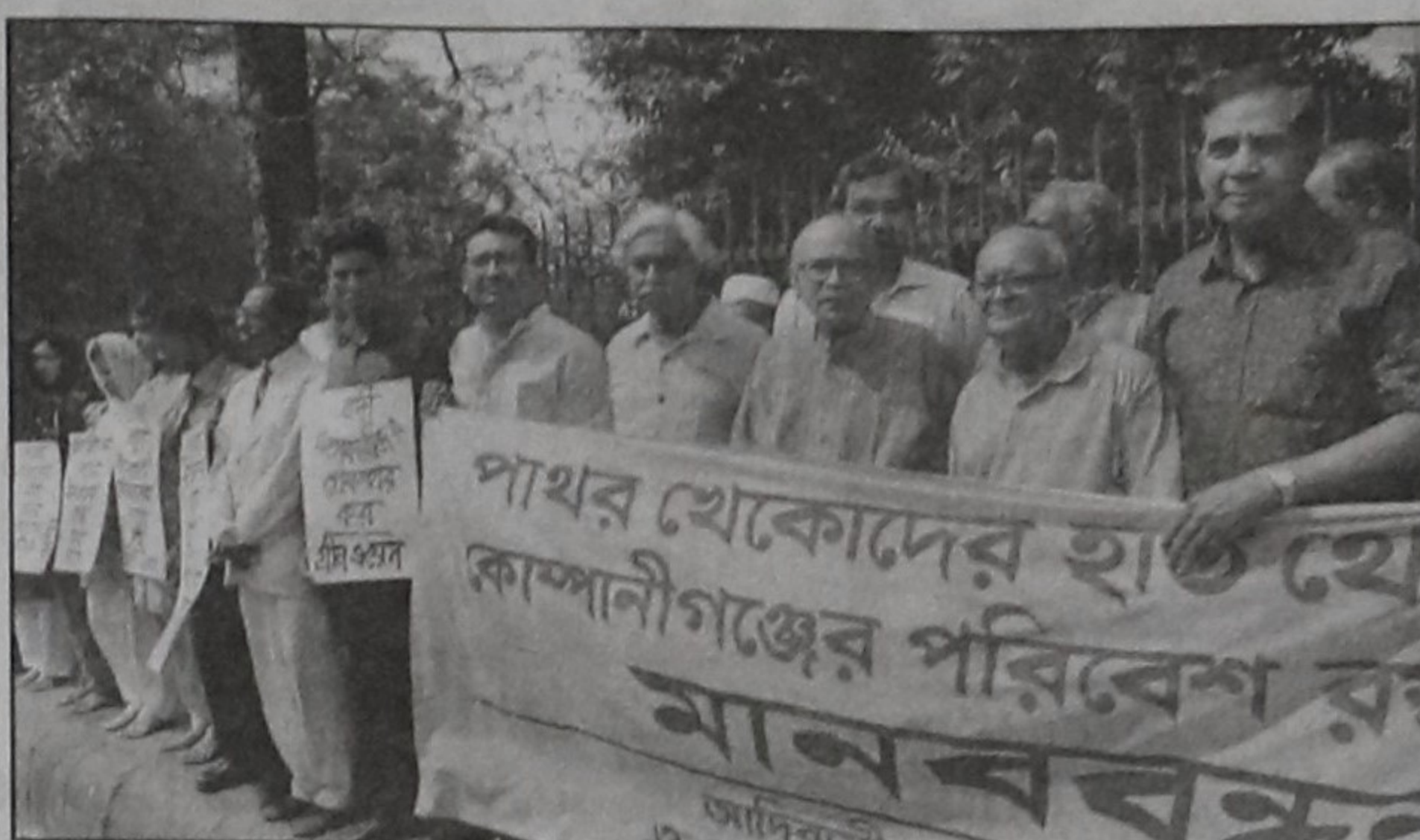


Namir Ar Rahman Manik, 50, an expatriate Bangladeshi businessman living in Saudi Arabia, was killed in a road accident at Tabuk city on March 9, says a press release.

He left behind his parents, brother and sister, wife, one son and five daughters to mourn his death.

He created employment opportunities for many Bangladeshi youths in Saudi Arabia.

His family members sought cooperation of Saudi Embassy in Dhaka and Bangladesh Embassy in Saudi Arabia to bring back his body in Bangladesh for burial.



Adhivi Paribesh Rakkha Andolon and Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon jointly form a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday with a call to protect the environment of Jaflong and Companyganj from stone collectors.

Protect environment of Jaflong, Companyganj

Bapa urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Green environment leaders at a human chain yesterday demanded steps to implement the decisions by the department of environment immediately to protect environment of Jaflong and Companyganj from unscrupulous stone extractors.

They alleged that stone traders are using hundreds of excavators in the areas to collect stones swiftly from the river beds, while the local administration remains indifferent even knowing the trad-

ers are violating the existing laws.

The leaders placed the demand at a rally organised by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) in collaboration with Adhivi Paribesh Rakkha Andolon at Shabagh intersection in the city.

The DoE at a meeting on February 1 took five decisions on preserving the two important spots, but no sign of implementation of the decisions is in sight yet, they said.

Presiding over the rally, Bapa President Prof

Muzaffer Ahmad said rapid stone extraction by detonating machines and excavators is hampering natural beauty and ecological balance and destroying the threatened habitats of indigenous communities and their traditional occupation, hills, forests and overall activities.

Bapa vice presidents ASM Shahjahan and Sayed ANM Wahed, General Secretary Abdul Matin and Member Secretary of Shushashoner Janney Nagorik Dr Badiul Alam Majumder also spoke.

Govt mulls new funding formula to boost power sector

UNB, Dhaka

The global economic meltdown has put the power ministry in serious concern about the expected investment inflow into the country's deficient power sector as possible investors tend to shy away, official sources said.

With a move to overcome the funding crunch, the government is now advancing with a new financing formula under which donor agencies would initially finance the planned projects which would then be transferred to private sector.

But it is not clear whether the new funding mechanism should click, sources added.

The Awami League-led grand-alliance government laid out a plan in its election manifesto that one of its main thrusts would be on improvement of the country's power sector which remains fragile mainly through reported haggling over work orders for long in the past.

The ruling coalition promised to increase the power generation to 7,000 megawatts (MW) within the next five years from the existing production level of 3,500 MW to meet an ever-growing demand.

Experts said it would require at least \$2.75 to \$3.25 billion only in generation segment to enhance the electricity production.

Similarly, another \$3 billion will be needed for transmission and distribution purposes to

improve the overall power supply situation.

"The total fund requirement will be nearly \$6 to \$7 billion to improve the whole sector," said a former chairman of Power Development Board.

The government's plan was to mobilise most of the requisite funds from the affluent private sector. But the recent economic meltdown has put it into great dilemmas over the funding by private-sector investors.

A recent experience from the handing of the 450-MW Bibiyana power project has caused the power division officials to get worried and seriously think about the project funding.

Prime Minister's Adviser Dr Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, who is looking after the power and energy sector, said the government is not so worried but moving with an advanced idea.

"We're thinking about an alternative way to resolve the fund crisis."

In the wake of the global economic meltdown, he said the government is advancing with a new idea of financing the power-generation projects, adding that it would initially launch power projects with the funds from the international donor agencies like Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank for an interim period.

Dr Elahi claimed that though this is an innovative funding formula, the donor agencies responded positively to the new mode of project funding.

Call to ensure food security

BSS, Dhaka

Dr Kazi M Badruddoza yesterday called upon the scientists to work together to ensure food security and eliminate poverty.

He made this call while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the two-day workshop of Bangladesh Academy of Sciences (BAS) at the auditorium of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC) in the city as the chief guest.

He said the agriculture scientists should carry out more research works for innova-

tion of new varieties of high yielding rice for boosting the production in the country.

A total of 150 scientists are taking part in the two-day workshop organised by BAS.

President of BAS Dr M Shamsheer Ali in his presidential speech called upon the young scientists to come forward in strengthening the research works.

Dr Shah Md Hasan-uz-Zaman, Secretary of BAS Prof Nayeem Chowdhury and Director of BARC MA Majed also spoke on the occasion.

1200 students join language competition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka divisional round of HSBC-Prathom Alo Language Competition-2009 was held at Dhaka Residential Model College in the city yesterday.

HSBC sponsored the nationwide language competition to promote the use of Bangla amongst students.

Around 1200 students from different educational institutions in Dhaka and four other adjacent districts took part in the event.

A good number of language experts were also present.

The best performers will take part in the final round of the competition.

Dhaka Residential Model College Principal Kamruzzaman Khan inaugurated the language competition hoisting the national flag while writer Mustafa Nurul Islam hoisted the flag of the language competition.

Writers Imdadul Haq Milon, Vismadeb Chowdhury, Bishwajit Ghosh, Syed Azizul Huq, Sajjad Sharif, Anisul Haque and Sourav Sikder were present and encouraged the students to learn the language.

The programme, which first started in 2005, had more than 5,500 participants from across the country this year.

Bangladeshi killed in BSF firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Indian Border Security Guard (BSF) gunned down a Bangladeshi in the early hours of yesterday at Paliampur border in Moheshpur, Jhenidah.

The victim Jahurul Islam, 32, was son of Aziz Baksh of Samanta Jibon Nagar village.

Locals and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said Jahurul went to work in his field at Raipur frontier areas early yesterday. The patrolling BSF forces of Narayanpur camp suddenly opened fire at him. Jahurul died on the spot. BSF afterward dragged the body into the Indian territory.

Contacted, Subedar Emdad Hossain of Jadabpur camp said they were trying to contact the BSF for a flag meeting to return the body.

HC order to maintain status quo on CMCCI activities

BSS, Chittagong

A High Court division bench has directed the persons concerned to maintain status quo on the activities of the newly proposed Chittagong Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CMCCI).

Following a writ petition of President of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) MA Latif MP, the bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Qamrul Islam Siddiqui on Wednesday also asked the Registrar of the Joint Stock Company to suspend the registration process of CMCCI for six weeks from the date of judgement, a CCCI press release said.

A number of leading entrepreneurs and businessmen of the port city recently formed the new organisation, CMCCI, alleging that CCCI, as the only and oldest trade body of the city, failed to protect the interest of the business community.

CHOPPER CRASH Condition of Major Saif improving

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The condition of injured Major Saif, co-pilot of the army helicopter that crashed in Tangail on March 9, has been improving, family sources said.

Major Saif, still in a coma, is undergoing treatment at Mt. Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore.

Major Saif survived the chopper crash, but two other senior army officers were killed in the accident. He was taken to Singapore on the day by an ambulance.

Surgeons of the hospital performed two surgeries in his leg and hand. Doctors will observe him for seven more days.

Meanwhile, the family of Major Saif is going to apply to the government for financial assistance for his treatment. About 35,000 dollars have already been spent on his treatment.

The government also assured them of providing financial support for his treatment, sources said. The Bangladesh mission in Singapore wrote to Mt. Elizabeth Hospital authorities about it.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

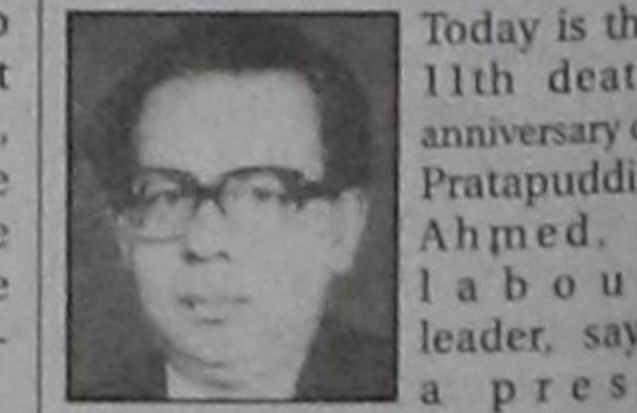
Yunus Ali, a social worker and Awami League leader, passed away due to old-age complications at his village home at Batta Shalpa under Phulpur upazila in Mymensingh yesterday at the age of 105.

He left behind five sons, a daughter, and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 11th death anniversary of Pratapuddin Ahmed, a labour leader, says a press release.

On the occasion, a discussion will be held and wreath will be placed at his grave.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:07pm today and rises at 6:07am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.2 degree Celsius was recorded at Rangamati and the lowest of 13.8 degrees at Rajshahi.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	33.0	18.5	31	24
Chittagong	34.0	20.0	61	29
Rajshahi	31.8	13.8	55	34
Khulna	32.7	17.2	59	41
Barisal	33.2	17.0	66	41
Sylhet	34.5	17.0	40	38
Cox's Bazar	34.6	20.8	63	45