

## Lives better off with awareness about rights

AMENA KHATUN

Shova Das is now a different woman than she used to be.

"Five years ago, I did not dare to talk to strangers. My husband used to torture me even on the plea of trifling mistakes. But now he accepts my opinions and acts accordingly," said a confident Shova, a resident of Kaulatia in Joydevpur, Gazipur.

All these changes became possible for her due to Reflect Circle, a project run by ActionAid Bangladesh, which is playing an important role in improving the living standards of marginalised people in many areas of the country only through providing training and raising awareness about their rights.

Shova said she also can earn Tk 2000 a month using her needlework skills she learned in a programme under the project.

Not only Shova, but also Jamirun, Chandana and other women of the village now can read and write. They are also aware of negative impacts of

child marriage and dowry system.

Around 80 percent of the total 1800 people in the village are now aware of their rights and perform their duties sincerely. Being motivated by the Reflect Circle, they solve their problems in a more organised way.

Like every year, the villagers observed the Reflect Asia Day on April 24 at Kaulatia village. This year, the slogan of the day was "Prioritising adult literacy to accelerate development".

Talking to The Daily Star, some women members of the Reflect Circle, said the women now send their children to school and try to solve their problems on their own or in consultation with the local leaders.

With the help of ActionAid, the Population Services and Training Centre (PSTC) has been working with the poor and marginalised people to ensure their empowerment and improve the quality of their lives and livelihoods through Reflect Circle at

Kaulatia and Salna villages in Joydevpur since 2007.

ActionAid Bangladesh through its partner organisations has been running some 66 Reflect Circles across the country to promote literacy.

The circle inculcates a feeling of both right and responsibility in villagers.

"We have learnt from the circle how to protect our rights," said Chandana Banu of North Salna village.

She said that she has equal responsibility to maintain her family and that she would never marry off her daughter at the early age.

Majeda Akter, a 20-year-old girl, said, "The circle gave us courage to unitedly protest against any injustices."

"I learned about family law and the right to property," said Jamirun Begum.

Abdul Malek, a headmaster of a primary school, said, "The circle enables poor people to plan their development activities based on local reality."

Milon Bikash Paul, executive director of PSTC, said, "In the Reflect Circle, the poor and

marginalised people share their joys and sorrows and hopes and inspirations as well as solve their various problems on their own."

"The Reflection Approach focuses on literacy, counting and life-oriented education, including occupational health, immunisation programme and needlework," he added.

About Reflection Approach, Zakir Hossain Sarker, deputy manager of Reflect Development Unit (RDU) of ActionAid Bangladesh, said, "It is participatory process for collective analysis and empowerment through literacy."

The main objective of the programme is to ensure education for all as 58 percent of adult population are still illiterate although the official figure is 36 percent," he said.

To ensure education for all, a Millennium Development Goal, the government should address the issue of adult illiteracy immediately, he observed.

"We cannot accept extrajudicial killings in a democratic society. It is not possible to control law and order in the name of crossfire," he said at a programme of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) at its own complex in the city.

"We must eliminate the culture of impunity from the society and establish a practice where everybody respects laws," he said, referring to the BGMEA leaders as saying that a group of criminals involved in garment scrap trading (jutu trading) were threatening factory owners.

The minister said the present government, which came to power to build a digital Bangladesh, would surely

implement the pledges it

made during the elections. "We are faced with many challenges - power shortage, Pilkhana carnage and economic recession -- that gave the problems a new dimension. We have to implement our manifestos despite all these challenges," said Ashraful, also joint general secretary of Awami League.

Explaining what 'Digital Bangladesh' that Awami League pledged, he said it is not only a matter of information technology, it means new ways of thinking, transparency, openness and fairness.

"We will be modern, educated and technology savvy," he said.



PHOTO: PID

Quarter-Master General (QMG) Lieutenant General Jahangir Alam Chowdhury on behalf of the Armed Forces Pay Committee hands over a report to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office in the city yesterday.

Draft report on Armed Forces' salary submitted to PM

UNB, Dhaka

A draft report on Armed Forces' salary and allowances was submitted to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

Quarter-Master General (QMG) Lieutenant General Jahangir Alam Chowdhury on behalf of the Armed Forces Pay Committee handed over the updated pay report to the prime minister at the Prime Minister's Office in the morning.

Prime Minister's advisers Dr Moshiur Rahman, Maj Gen (Retd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique, Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of the Armed Forces Lieutenant General Md Abdul Mubeen, Finance Secretary Dr Mohammad Tareque, Defence Secretary Kamru Hasen, PM's Office Secretary Molah Waheeduzzaman, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Director General (DG) of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGF) Maj Gen Akbar and MIST Commandant Maj Gen Abdul Wadud were present.

1597 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police in separate raids arrested 1,597 people on various charges from different parts across the country in 24 hours as of 6:00am yesterday.

Twenty-nine firearms, 12 bombs, two cocktails and 103 bullets were also recovered during the nationwide drive, said a release of Police Headquarters.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekratul Haider Chowdhury, vice-president of Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP-Hashani), passed away at his residence on April 19 at the age of 55, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, one son, one daughter and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

He was laid to rest at his family graveyard.

NAP-Hashani President Sheikh Anwarul Haq and Secretary General Abdus Salam Master expressed shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to his bereaved family members.

Firoz Afghani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Firoz Afghani, a film comedian and brother of Nur-UN-Nahar Merry, chairperson of Jago Nari Foundation, passed away due to cancer at a hospital in Texas, USA on Sunday at the age of 52, says a press release.

He left behind his mother, two sons, brothers, sisters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Jago Nari Foundation expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Abul Khair Sazzad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abul Khair Sazzad, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Sramik Jote and vice-president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, passed away due to heart attack at Shikder Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 58, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, son, daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at the Hazaribagh Leather Technology ground and second at the ISD central office in the city yesterday.

He will be buried at his village home in Noakhali after third namaz-e-janaza.

JSD acting president Prof Mohammad Shafiq and General Secretary Abdul Malek Ratan in a statement expressed deep shock at the death.

Alhaj Babru Mian

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Alhaj Babru Mian, father of AHM Mostafa Kamal MP, director of Abahani Limited and chairman of the cricket committee, passed away due to old-age complications at his village home in Comilla at the age of 116 on Monday, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons, one daughter, grandchildren and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Abahani Limited and all officials of Cricket Committee expressed deep shock at his death and conveyed sympathy to the bereaved family members.

Janakantha editor's wife, 2 sons get bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted bail to Janakantha Editor Md Atiquallah Khan Masud's wife Shamima A Khan and two sons Mishal Atiquallah and Zishal Atiquallah in two separate tax evasion cases filed by National Board of Revenue (NBR).

After hearing two separate bail petitions filed by the accused, an HC bench Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Marzi-ul Huq granted them bail in the cases till disposal of the leave to appeal petitions filed by the NBR with the Supreme Court (SC).

The NBR authorities filed the cases against Atiquallah, his wife and two sons with a court in Dhaka on January 6 last year.

Following separate petitions filed by the accused, the HC on March 16 last year quashed all proceedings of the cases.

NBR filed leave to appeal petitions with the Supreme Court (SC) against the HC verdicts.

The chamber judge of the SC stayed the HC verdicts and also the trial proceedings of the cases upon the leave to appeal of NBR.

Advocate Obaidul Hasan Shahin appeared for the petitioners.

DU employee missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Sohel, a cleaner at the Dhaka University transport office, has been missing since April 25, says a DU press release.

Sohel left the office at the end of the office hour on the day by his taxicab. He was driving the cab to his home but did not return home. The yellow cab was found abandoned on the road near Shyamoli Cinema two or three days later.

A general diary (GD) was filed with Shahbagh Police Station.

Anybody knowing his whereabouts is requested to call his father at cellphone number 01727389906 or contact the transport office at the administrative building on the DU campus.

Betar wins ABU Jury Prize

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Betar won the ABU (Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union) Special Jury Prize 2008 for the documentary headlined 'The Sandcastle: A Tale of a Happless Damself', says a press release.

The award was announced at the 45th general meeting of the ABU in Bali, Indonesia.

Plights of an adolescent girl after her rescue from hands of traffickers were depicted in the documentary.

Nitai Kumar Bhattacharya, deputy regional director, Dhaka, Bangladesh Betar, was the producer of the programme.

Don't create obstacles to restoration of '72 constitution: CPB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday urged the BNP secretary general and others concerned not to create any obstacles to the restoration of the constitution of 1972 by filing leave-to-appeal petition against the High Court (HC) judgement

declaring the fifth amendment to the constitution illegal.

In a joint statement, CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said the HC verdict has created a great opportunity to restore the spirit of the Liberation War.

Filing an appeal against this verdict would be tantamount to making a stand against the spirit of the Liberation War, they added.

CHILD TRAFFICKING Indian national acquitted of charge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday acquitted an Indian national, who was earlier sentenced to death in a child trafficking case by the trial court.

Upon an appeal filed by Anjali Devi alias Manju Devi, division bench of the HC comprising Justice Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader and Justice Md Emdadul Haque Azad, also directed the government to immediately release her (Anjali) from jail and take proper steps to send her back to her family in India.

On June 15, 2005, Judge of the Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Daman Tribunal of Pabna, Amir-un-Nesa sentenced Anjali Devi to death in a child trafficking case filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000.

Anjali's lawyer Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan yesterday told The Daily Star that Md Salim of Pabna filed the case against Anjali with Pabna police station on charge of

trafficking his (Samil) four-year-old son Habib on March 17, 2002. Anjali now aged 31 has been in jail since her arrest, he said.

He also said the police recovered Habib from Anjali near a brickfield in the district and arrested her on charge of trafficking and abducting the child on March 17, 2002.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), a human rights organisation, provided legal assistance to detained Anjali and appointed Advocate Khurshid to appear for her before the court.

She filed an appeal with the HC against the lower court verdict.

After holding hearing for two days on the appeal, the HC delivered the verdict.

Advocate Khurshid said the HC acquitted his client, since the allegation against her of abduction of the child was not proved.

Deputy Attorney General Farhad Ahmed stood for the government.

4 dev projects worth Tk 788cr approved

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecenec) yesterday approved four development projects involving about Tk 788 crore, including Tk 425 crore project aid.

They also said the then BNP-led four-party alliance government made a stand against the spirit of Liberation War and democracy by taking an initiative to cancel the HC verdict during their tenure.

As the present government has decided not to file any appeal against the verdict, an opportunity has been created to restore the constitution, they said, adding that it is totally unacceptable that the BNP secretary general and some lawyers have taken a move to file a leave-to-appeal petition.

The leaders said the spirit of the Liberation War has been undermined by the fifth amendment and at the same time it leaves a permanent scar on the democratic system as it gave legality to the military rule on the other.

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