

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

Kaulaita 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 Reflections 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 a 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.



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.

Extrajudicial killings can't be tolerated: Minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam yesterday said extrajudicial killings can in no way be tolerated in a democratic society.

"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.

BGMEA distributed scholarships to the meritorious students of readymade garment factory workers and certificates to the best

employees.

Speaking as the chief guest, Ashrafur said following the killings in 1975, a culture of impunity has developed in the country where criminals started thinking that they could go above laws.

"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 (jhut 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, Pikhana carnage and economic recession -- that gave the problems a new dimension. We have to implement our manifestos despite all these challenges," said Ashrafur, 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.

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 Moshir 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 Kamrul Hasan, PM's Office Secretary Mollah Waheeduzzaman, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Director General (DG) of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) 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 countrywide drive, said a release of Police Headquarters.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekrumul Haidar Chowdhury, vice-president of Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP-Bhashani), 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-Bhashani 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 Samik 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-ajanaza was held at the Hazratibagh Leather Technology ground and second at the JSD central office in the city yesterday.

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

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 Atiqullah Khan Masud's wife Shamima A Khan and two sons Mishaal Atiqullah and Zishal Atiqullah 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 Atiqullah, 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 appeals 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 Hapless Damsel', 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.

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.

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 but it is totally unacceptable that the BNP secretary general and some lawyers have taken a move to file a leave-to-appeal petition.

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 Sharifuddin 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 Nirjatan 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. Anju 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 (Ecneec) yesterday approved four development projects involving about Tk 788 crore, including Tk 425 crore project aid.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the Ecneec chairperson, presided over the meeting in the NEC conference room and approved the projects.

The projects are: "Fresh air and sustainable environment project" of Environment Department, Dhaka City Corporation and Dhaka Transport Coordination Board under Environment and Forest Ministry and "Baburhat-Matlab-Pennai road development project (2nd Phase)", "Niyamatpur-Tahirpur and Darnapasha-Madyanagar road construction

(Niyamatpur-Tahirpur portion in 1st Phase) amendment project" and "Extension project of Chittagong (Oxygen crossing)-Hathazari portion along with divider on Chittagong-Rangamati national highway" under Roads and Railways Department.

Planning Minister Air Vice-Marshal (Retd) AK Khandaker, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Labour and Employment Minister Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen, Commerce Minister Faruk Khan, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain, Shipping Minister Dr Afsarul Amin, PM's Advisers Dr Moshir

Rahman, Dr Modasser Ali, Dr Alauddin Ahmed and Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi and State Minister for Environment and Forest Adv Mostafizur Rahman were present at the meeting.

The Cabinet Secretary, the Principal Secretary to the PM, members of the Planning Commission, secretaries and high officials of the ministries concerned were also present.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 8th death anniversary of litterateur Bedouin Samad, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence at Khalispur in Khulna. Dr Lutfar Rahman Academy and Sudhijan Shahittya Shanga jointly will organise a discussion at Shangkity Bikash Kendra auditorium at Paribagh in the city at 5:00pm.

Qulkhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Mahfuza Khatun, former assistant headmistress of Little Angels' Kindergarten School and wife of former Public Service Commission member Ekrumul Haq, will be held tomorrow, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at her residence at 9/2 Sir Syed Road at Mohammadpur in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow.

She passed away on Sunday at her residence.

One pushed to death from rooftop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed at West Rampura in the city yesterday as a number of criminals threw him from the rooftop of a four-storey building.

Following the incident, police arrested a criminal who admitted to the killing.

The deceased was identified as Abdul Motaleb Hossain Hawlader, son of late Altaf Hossain Hawlader, of 77/H West Rampura.

The arrestee was identified as Kailla Imran, 37, of West Hazipara at Khilgaon.

Quoting the victim's family, Sub-Inspector Mohammad Kalam of Khilgaon Police Station said at around 1:30am, three criminals entered Motaleb's house on the ground floor of the building and took him to the rooftop at gunpoint, while another criminal kept the victim's wife confined in the ground floor.

He further said that the killing occurred as a sequel to a scuffle between the criminals and Motaleb along with his brother-in-law Mizan on Monday evening over selling offish by the latter.

In the primary grilling, Imran informed the police that he along with the two killed Motaleb to take revenge on him as he helped Mizan during the scuffle, the SI said, adding that the deceased was in a jobless state after returning from Dubai few months ago.

HC directs govt to allow Sigma Huda to go abroad for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to allow human rights activist Sigma Huda, also wife of former communications minister Nazmul Huda, to go abroad for treatment and then return back to the country.

After hearing a writ petition filed by Sigma, an HC bench comprising Tariq-ul-Hakim and Justice M Azizul Haque passed the order.

Following a report published in a newspaper in March this year, Sigma feared that law enforcers might impose restriction on her, leaving the country. She recently filed the writ petition with the HC for the government permission to go abroad for treatment.

Sigma Huda, who is accused in five cases on different charges, including bribery and extortion, got released from jail on bail in July last year.

Barrister Nazmul Huda appeared for the petitioner.

Muggers target expats as victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Sohel Bhai, accept my salaam. Hope you are well. Have sent you a letter. Your passport and ticket are in my possession. Contact me if you need them... Didar Bhai," reads a letter sent by a gang of muggers to Sohel, who hails from Ujirpur in Barisal.

Sohel, who is an expatriate living in Dubai, returned home two months ago and was taking preparation to go back to his workplace. But a gang of muggers took away his passport and air ticket at gunpoint when he was crossing the Notre Dame College area after having his ticket confirmed at an airlines office at Motijheel in Dhaka on March 31.

The registered letter was sent to Sohel's village home from a fake address in Mirpur. The gang also gave a cellphone number in the letter.

When Sohel called at the phone number, the muggers demanded Tk 40,000 in exchange for his passport and air ticket.

"After I came to Dhaka two days ago, the muggers asked me to come to Naya Paltan today (Tuesday). Accordingly, when I reached near the BNP office in the afternoon, a member of the gang came over to me and asked me to follow him," Sohel said.

Some time later, the mugger returned the passport and the ticket to Sohel and asked for the money.

But Sohel grabbed the mugger and raised an alarm, prompting passers-by to come to the rescue of Sohel and caught hold of the mugger and beat him up.

Later, the mugger who identified himself as Ahsanul Huq Babu of Gabtoli was handed over to the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-3).

Babu told this correspondent that he was not a mugger, but the gang hired him to receive the money from Sohel. He also said that he would get Tk 2,000 for this job.

Rab-3 Commanding Officer Lt Col Mamun Mahmud Firoj Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "There are several gangs in the city who target the expatriates and others who are trying to go abroad."

The gangs collect information from airlines offices and the recruiting agencies, he added.

4 DU halls get new provosts

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities have appointed new provosts at four dormitories of the university.

Prof Ali Akkas of Department of Management Studies has been appointed provost of Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall while Prof ABM Faruq of pharmaceutical technology got appointment at Muktiyoddha Ziaur Rahman Hall.

Prof Nazma Shaheen of Institute of Food and Nutrition and Prof Gulshan-Ara-Latif of geology got appointment at Shamsunnahar Hall and Fajilatunnesa Mujib Hall respectively, says a press release.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Shujan organises a roundtable on present status of local government. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) organises a seminar on 'Digital Bangladesh: Vision 2021' marking its 61st founding anniversary. Venue: IEB seminar room. Time: 5:15pm.

Discussion

Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh (IDEB) organises a discussion on global recession and workers' security. Venue: IDEB building. Time: 5:30pm.

Award giving ceremony

The award giving ceremony of Berger Award Programme for the Students of Architecture of Buet will be held. Venue: Buet auditorium. Time: 6:45pm. Berger Paints (BD) Limited organises the programme.

Lecture

Prof/Salahuddin Ahmed will deliver a lecture on 'Prospect of peace in South Asia'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 5:30pm. UNAB organises the programme.

Anannya award

The award giving ceremony of Anannya Award to top ten women in 2008 will be held. Venue: Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.