

Take effective steps to stop violence against women

Speakers urge govts at int'l seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an international seminar yesterday called for taking effective steps to stop repression and violence against women.

The seminar titled 'Stop violence against women' was organised by La Via Campesina of Southeast Asian region, an international platform for preserving rights of women farmers, at the auditorium of Monishing-Farhad Memorial Trust in the city. Kishani Shava, women wing of Bangladesh Krishak Federation, is an associated member of organisation.

Representatives of women

farmers from nine Southeast countries including Bangladesh, India, the Philippines, Nepal, and Japan took part in the seminar.

The speakers vowed to continue struggle for building a world of equal rights and justice, where the basic rights of women will be ensured and violence against women will be stopped.

They claimed that around 20 percent of discriminated and victimised women belong to rich families while 80 percent belong to poor families.

"Discrimination and violence varies from class to class, workers to business-women, young women to

adult women and rural areas to urban areas," they added.

The speakers said the withdrawal of women from the farmlands is continuing to engage them in sexual entertainment industries or corporate businesses.

They took the decision to put pressure on the governments of their respective countries to take effective measures to stop women trafficking terming it a social and gender violence.

The participants said apart from social, political and cultural discriminations, the women are the victims of violence generated by capitalist mode of production, global food crisis, climate

change and agribusinesses.

These forms of violence also resulted in hunger, famine, poverty, commercialisation of agricultural lands, displacement of people, contamination of water, dramatic loss of biodiversity and destruction of forests, they added.

Khurshida Akhtar, convener of Kishani Shava, chaired the seminar which was also addressed by Irma Yanny of Indonesia, Akhlesha Khadse of India, Yoon Geum Soo of the Republic of Korea, Shanta Manavi of Nepal, Edna Velard of the Philippines, Sachiko Noda of Japan, and Nitaya of Thailand.

Janmastami celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hindu devotees celebrated Janmastami, a religious festival marking the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna, across the country yesterday amid festivity and religious fervour.

According to the Hindu belief, Lord Krishna, the incarnation of god, descended to this world some 5,500 years ago with a vow to establish love, truth and justice.

Religious organisations arranged programmes, including prayer session, puja, discussion, Padabali Kirtan, Geeta Jaggyam (special prayers), devotional songs, drama and cultural functions, at temples across the country.

In the capital, thousands of men, women and children joined the traditional Janmastami procession brought out from the Dhakeshwari Temple. Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka inaugurated the procession around 6:00pm, which paraded through different streets before ending at Bahadur Shah Park.

The law enforcement agencies also beefed up security measures at the festival venues and temples. Members of intelligent agencies, plainclothes and uniformed policemen were deployed and metal detectors were also used as part of the security measures.

Inaugurating the rally, Mayor Khoka said the people of all faiths in the country have equal rights to celebrate their religious festivals.

Local lawmaker Mostafa Jalal Mahiuddin, Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta and Prof Nim Chandra Bhomik also spoke.

About 100 trucks carrying devotees joined the procession, Nirmal Chatterjee, joint secretary of the Mahanagar Sarbojaneen Puja Committee, told The Daily Star.

Some devotees dressed themselves as Lord Krishna, his father Basudev, mother Deboki, brother Balam and maternal uncle Kangsha.

The committee will hold a discussion on the Dhakeshwari temple premises today, where Law Minister Shafige Ahmed will be present as the chief guest.



PHOTO: STAR

Hindu devotees dressed as Lord Krishna, his father and God Shiva join a colourful Janmastami procession in the city yesterday. Mahanagar Sarbojaneen Puja Committee organised the procession as part of the Janmastami festival.

CNG filling station strike postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Owners of CNG filling stations have postponed their strike, which was scheduled to begin on August 17, for one month following the assurance from the government that it will address their demands.

The assurance came at a meeting between a delegation of the owners' association and Adviser to the prime minister Tawfik-e-Elahi Chowdhury and State Minister for Energy and Power Enamul Haque on Wednesday. They discussed the owners' six-point demand, including reduction in the price of CNG and feed gas.

"We have got the assurance to meet three demands -- cancelling the minimum billing system, installing electronic volume conductor

(EVC) and cancelling cash security-deposit system -- in one month," said Zakir Hossain Nayan, general secretary of Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and Conversion Workshop Owners' Association.

The government would also consider three other demands, he added.

"We will go for strike again after Eid-ul Fitr if our demands go unheeded," he said. The association had been threatening to close down the refuelling stations from August 17 to realise their six-point demand.

Other demands include reducing BERC licence fee to Tk 5,000 from Tk 1 lakh and exempting the CNG stations from obtaining NOC of the Environment Department.

TOWHIDUL MURDER One remanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A court here yesterday granted a three-day remand for one accused in the case filed in connection with the killing of flourmill manager Towhidul Alam and mugging of Tk 10 lakh on Tuesday.

Another accused Mohammad Alamgir, 40, driver of the CNG-run auto-rickshaw used in the mugging, was giving confessional statement under section 164 before the same court as of filing the report at 7:00pm.

Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbubur Rahman granted the remand for the accused Asad Ali Bittu, 30, of the city's Kazir Dewri area following a petition by the police who sought five-day remand, source said.

Meanwhile police on Wednesday night arrested Babul, 35, who allegedly took part in the Tuesday's killing.

With this, three alleged muggers were arrested since Tuesday.

BFUJ, DUJ to observe Nat'l Mourning Day

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) will observe the National Mourning Day and the 34th martyrdom anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15 through various programmes.

On the day, wreaths will be placed at the portrait of Bangabandhu at Dhanmondi at 9:00am and a discussion will be held at DUJ office at the Jatiya Press Club at 12:00 noon.

DUJ General Secretary Omar Faruk has requested all journalists to assemble in front of New Model Degree College at Dhanmondi at 8:00am on August 15 to make the programme a success.

Our staff correspondent adds: A joint prayer session for people of all faiths will be held at the conference lounge of the National Press Club on Saturday on the occasion of the National Mourning Day.

A group of journalists organised the prayer session.

Recitation from the holy books of different religions -- Islam, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist -- will be held at the prayer session seeking divine blessings for the salvation of the soul of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Beach clean-up campaign held

METRO DESK

International Coastal Clean-up 2009, a daylong beach clean-up campaign sponsored by AB Bank, was held at Cox's Bazar beach yesterday, says a press release.

The objective of the campaign is to create awareness among people regarding pollution and the problems created in the beach and shorelines due to dumping of garbage and hazardous objects.

The Ocean Conservancy, USA, runs the voluntary campaign and Kewkradong Bangladesh is representing here.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College who achieved GPA-5 in the SSC examinations this year pose for photo with Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and other guests at a reception ceremony on the college premises in the city yesterday.

Drive to recover rivers after Aug 15

Says shipping minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The high-profile committee formed to recover rivers from grabbers will begin its work in full swing after August 15, said Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan at a discussion meeting yesterday.

The discussion on the importance of establishing marine police station to save river routes from the river robbers was held at the National Press Club in the city.

"Recovery of the rivers will begin in full swing after August 15," said Shahjahan, chief of the 27-member committee formed by the government to recover the rivers.

The committee comprising 10 ministers, secretaries and river experts will start its work to recover rivers from the hand

of encroachers and supervise the dredging of the rivers as well.

"All the rivers surrounding Dhaka have already been encroached," said Shahjahan as chief guest at the discussion.

"We also want to dredge our rivers," he said, adding that dredging would help strengthen river transport system in the country.

The discussion was organised jointly by Bangladesh Cargo Trawler Sramik Union and Bangladesh Bulkhead Boat Owners Association with a call for creating marine police and marine police station.

About the demand, the minister said, "I will request the home minister to take necessary steps in this regard."

"If we can carry the farm products through boats, prices of essentials will definitely come down," he added.

Rivers must be freed from the clutches of influential grabbers to make them navigable, said Shukur Mahmud, vice president of Jatiya Sramik League.

The speakers also called for formulating sand lifting policy, increasing river navigability, and registering all ships moving on river routes.

Abdur Rashid, president of Bangladesh engine-run boat owners association, presided over the discussion which was also attended by former director general of Marine transport directorate Captain AKM Shafig Ullah.

President hosts Janmastami reception

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday hosted a reception for the members of the Hindu community at Bangabhaban on the occasion of Janmastami, the birthday of Lord Krishna.

Water Resources Minister Ramesh Chandra Sen and State Minister for Religious Affairs Advocate Shahjahan Mia were present on the occasion.

Zillur welcomed the guests and exchanged greetings with them.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty and Nepalese Ambassador Pradeep Khatri were also present.

Besides, Hindu religious personalities including Principal of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission Swami Aksarananda Moharaj, leaders of the community including Maj Gen (ret'd) C R Dutta, judges, academics, freedom fighters, journalists, lawyers, doctors, businessmen, artists, high civil and military officials attended the reception.

'Standing Orders on Disaster to become law'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Standing Orders on Disaster would be turned into a law specifying the duties and responsibilities of the ministries and government agencies during disasters, Minister for Food and Disaster Management Abdur Razzaque said yesterday.

A bill in this regard would be placed at the next parliament session, he added.

The minister said this at a seminar on 'The role of local government in disaster preparedness and mitigation' organised by Rupantar at the LGED auditorium in the city under the project 'Improving Local Level Governance (ILLG)' supported by USAID.

Razzaque said the government is initiating a paradigm shift in addressing natural disasters. The earlier practice of post-disaster response and recovery method is being shifted towards the method of early preparedness for risk reduction.

He also said the Union Parishad and Upazila Parishad representatives are at the forefront of disaster management at the field level. They must play an effective role together with the local administration to tackle natural disasters more efficiently, he added.

Speakers at the seminar underscored the need for strengthening the local gov-

ernment to ensure effective and sustainable disaster risk reduction.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, former adviser to the caretaker government, said, the local government bodies must be provided with necessary powers so that they can perform their responsibilities.

US Ambassador James F Moriarty said a strong local government plays a key role in ensuring effective disaster relief efforts. While the central government has a comprehensive disaster mitigation programme, local government works directly with their communities to ensure better preparedness, mitigation and management of disaster-relief.

He said the US government has provided \$80 million to help 30 million Sids-affected people rebuild income opportunities, strengthen local government, generate economic recovery, and construct cyclone shelters in the disaster-prone areas.

The US government committed to provide another \$3.8 million to help Bangladesh recover from cyclone Aila, he said, adding that one of the top priorities of President Obama's administration is to address the issues of global climate change.

Mir Shawkat Ali Badsha MP, Nazrul Islam MP and Swapna Guha, chief executive of Rupantar, also spoke.

USAID Mission Director Denise Rollins was also present.

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