

66 percent women get married before 18

Says survey

ALPHA ARZU

Although the country's legal age of marriage for women is 18, some 66 percent of women, who are now aged between 20 and 24, got married before the age of 18, said a recent Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS).

The survey, however, showed that over the past two decades, the percentage of women marrying before the legal age is declining gradually.

Among the women and men who are now aged between 20 and 49, 78 percent women were married before the age of 18 and 88 percent women married before the age of 20, while only five percent men were married before the age of 18 and 15 percent before the age of 20.

Of the men who are now aged between 25 and 54, only 17 percent married at or before their 20th birthday, and a little more than half married at or before the age of 25.

It is really frustrating that the parents or guardians are not aware enough about the legal age of marriage. If this trend continues, the popula-

tion will increase rapidly

because those women have more fertility years as well as the risk of unwanted child that caused mal-nutrient and underweight babies and also caused for mother's anemic diseases," said MA Qayum, director general of the Directorate of Family Planning, while talking to The Daily Star recently.

The survey also stated that men marry more than nine years later than women.

The median age at first marriage among men is 24.5 years compared to 15.3 years of women indicating a large age difference between husbands and wives.

Urban women aged between 25 and 49 tend to marry one year later than their rural counterparts.

The median age of marriage at the divisional level shows greater variation.

The median age of 16.4 years at first marriage for women who are now at the age group of 25-49 is the highest in Sylhet and 14.7 years is the lowest for those in Rajshahi and Khulna.

Women in Chittagong enter into marriage about one

year later than women in Rajshahi and Khulna.

Level of education has a positive association with the median age at marriage.

For example, women who have completed secondary or higher education, marry two years later than those with no education.

Similarly, the median age at marriage increases with household wealth. Women from the highest wealth quintile marry two years later than those from the lowest wealth quintile.

The average median age at first birth is about 18 years except for women who are now aged 20-24 years indicating a slight increase in the age at first birth in recent years.

When contacted, former adviser to the caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal told this correspondent that the government should take steps to raise awareness about the legal age of marriage in remote areas where early marriage occurs frequently.

"There is no alternative to birth registration to prevent early marriage as in that case the Kazi or guardians will not be able to show false age for marriage," said Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association.

As observed for women,

men with lower level of education enter into marriage earlier than other men.

Men who have completed secondary or higher education marry four years later than those with no education and three years later than those with primary education.

Similarly, men from the highest wealth quintile marry later than those from the other quintiles.

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PHOTO: NEWS WORLD
Foreign Minister Dipu Moni attends an Iftar-cum-dinner party hosted by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the envoys of Muslim countries at the US State Department yesterday.

SENATOR LUGAR MEETS DIPU MONI

Help Bangladesh become middle-income country

Foreign minister urges US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior US Senator and Ranking Member of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Richard Lugar has expressed satisfaction over restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and assured necessary assistance to democratically elected government.

The assurance came during a meeting between Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Lugar, a Republican Congressman from Indiana yesterday.

When the world economy is going through instability due to the recession, Bangladesh continues to achieve five percent growth, Senator Lugar said.

The foreign minister thanked the US Congress for its contribution to restoration of democracy in Bangladesh and hoped that the US Congress would continue its support and help Bangladesh become a middle-income country by

2021, said a government handout.

Dipu Moni thanked Senator Lugar for formulating Tropical Forest Conservation Act (TFCIA).

Bangladesh and the US signed an agreement in 2000 under the Act, which Lugar formulated along with the then Senator Joseph Biden (presently vice president) in 1998.

The agreement aimed at reducing the amount of foreign loan alongside preserving tropical forest and making the best use of inadequate fund for international forest conservation through 'debt for nature'.

Dipu Moni called for waiving the loan under Tropical Forest Conservation Act and sought Senator Lugar's assistance in this regard.

She informed Senator Lugar about the steps taken by Bangladesh to face the challenges of climate change and requested him to provide additional funds for re

excavation of river, construction of cyclone shelter centres, construction and repair of dikes, construction of dams and afforestation at the sea-coast.

Senator Lugar expressed his interest in the proposals and said he has huge interest in tree plantation.

Bangladesh Ambassador in the USA Akramul Kader, Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Ali Sarker and Deputy Chief of Bangladesh Mission Sheikh Mohammad Belal were present.

Dipu Moni later attended an Iftar-cum-dinner party hosted by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for the envoys of Muslim countries at the US State Department.

The foreign minister is now on a visit to the USA on an invitation from Hillary Clinton. She will hold a meeting with Biden today.

CPB RALLY BLAST
CID detains
BNP leader
Arifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After over seven years of the blast on Communist Party of Bangladesh's (CPB) rally, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) arrested BNP leader Arifur Rahman from his Malibagh residence in connection with the case on Tuesday.

CID produced him -- also the councillor of ward-53 of Dhaka City Corporation -- before a court yesterday and sought a 10-day remand.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of CID Police Abdul Kahar Akand said the arrest was made following the information extracted from the other accused in the case.

Earlier, the CID detained Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) leader Arif Hasan Sumon in connection with the blasts at Paltan Maidan on January 20 in 2001 that killed seven people and injured several others.

Besides, former Huji chief Maulana Sheikh Abdul Salam was also arrested in this connection and now he is on bail.

Arifur's wife Selina Islam told The Daily Star, 'A team of 12 persons, identifying them as CID personnel, picked up my husband.'

Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ferdous Ara Begum, a mother of two young daughters, has been suffering from kidney disease, says a press release.

The 30-year-old housewife is now under going treatment at Dharmamandi Kidney Hospital in the city as her both kidneys have damaged.

According to doctors, Ferdous Ara needs immediate transplant of his both kidneys to save her life which will cost a huge amount of money.

But it is not possible to arrange such a big amount for her husband who is an employee of forest department.

So

Ferdous Ara has appealed to well-off people including the prime minister for financial assistance to save her life.

Contributions can be sent to Ferdous Ara Begum, Savings Account No 2857, Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd, Pallabi Branch, Mirpur, Dhaka.

Interested persons can also contact at 01712697379.



PHOTO: STAR

Paribesh Bachao Andolon forms a human chain at Shahbagh in the city yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to those responsible for food adulteration.

**TRIPLE MURDER CASE
4 BNP leaders get bail**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad interim bail for six months to four accused in Karwan Bazar triple murder case.

The four accused are Lutfur Rahman, also known as L Rahman, president of Ward No. 39 BNP, Nabi Solaiman, former religious affairs secretary of Jubo Dal, and Abu Sayeed and Nurul Islam, two ward level leaders of BNP.

The KCC Mayor urged all to take advantage of internet to vote for Sundarbans to clinch its place among the seven new wonders of the

Website to promote Sundarbans launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sundarban Supporters' Committee (SSC) launched a website to promote the Sundarbans yesterday.

KCC Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque inaugurated the website www.votesundarban.net at the Shahid Altaf Auditorium at Khulna City Corporation.

The KCC Mayor urged all to take advantage of internet to vote for Sundarbans to clinch its place among the seven new wonders of the

world.

Convenor of SSC Liakat Ali presided over the programme while lawmaker Nazrul Islam Manju, Vice Chancellor of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology Prof Md Nawsher Ali, Panel Mayor No 1 of KCC Azmol Ahmed Tapan, Editor of The Daily Tribune Begum Ferdousi Ali and Chief Executive of NGO Rupantar Swapna Guha also spoke.

SSC Member-Secretary Rafiqul Islam Khokon moderated the programme.

Delwar airs concern at PM's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday expressed concern at the prime minister's remarks that incidents like BDR mutiny might take place again.

He also asked the prime minister to inform the nation of the conspiracy to foil democracy in detail, which the prime minister mentioned in her speech in parliament on Tuesday.

"Inform the people of the conspiracy and save them," he said while addressing a protest rally organised by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal in front of the party's central office at Naya Paltan in the city. JCD President Sultan Salauddin Tuku presided over the rally.

Urging the prime minister to refrain from signing any 'secret deal' with any countries, Delwar said his party is ready to cooperate with the government in protecting independence and sovereignty of the country.

Protesting the vandalism of the name plaque of Ziaur Rahman road in the city, he said the BNP was in power for three times but did not change the name of Bangabandhu Avenue.

"This is nothing but autocratic attitude of the government towards the opposition," he said.

On Tuesday, the prime minister in her speech in parliament alerted the countrymen to the ongoing conspiracy of 'special quarter' and 'undemocratic forces' who are still plotting to wipe out democracy and grab power.

Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershower accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at a few places over all the six divisions with moderately heavy falls at places in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:02pm today and rises at 6:46am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 36.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessor and lowest 24.0 degrees Celsius at Feni.

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	33.8	24.5	81	90
Chittagong	31.3	24.8	84	85
Rajshahi	35.0	26.0	83	93
Khulna	34.5	27.2	--	82
Barisal	34.0	26.0	80	92
Sylhet	31.9	25.1	85	78
Cox's Bazar	32.0	26.0	97	80

procession and staged a sit-in in front of the office of the deputy commissioner.

They also submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner and sought his intervention.

Failing to get any positive response from him, they returned to the BSCIC area and put up a barricade on the highway at 2:30pm.

Several hundred passenger

lorry drivers and passengers

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