

Call to ensure rights of forest dwellers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should ensure the rights of forest dwellers to the natural resources and the ownership of the forest in order to preserve forest, speakers at a regional conference said yesterday.

Conservation of nature is a cultural practice and it is not possible to preserve forest by forcibly curbing the rights of forest dwellers, they said.

The forest dwellers never destroy forest as it is livelihood and part of culture and heritage to them, they added.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) organised the conference on 'Protecting Forest Rights and Promoting Village Forest' at the BRAC Inn auditorium of the city.

Community leaders and development workers from India, Nepal, Bhutan and Pakistan took part in the conference.

Around 120 people from all forest areas of the country also attended the programme.

Referring to the legal developments that have taken place in Nepal and India, the speakers emphasised the need to define and protect 'forest rights' and give the forest department the role to monitor and provide technical assistance for forest management.

They also called for framing rules to facilitate 'village forest management' that requires the powers of the government on reserve forests to be handed over to nearby communities.

Dismissing the notion of social afforestation as a model to regenerate natural forest, the participants said that mere 'tree plantation' cannot deliver ecological services that natural forests can.

They called for protecting the natural forests for the benefit of the forest dwell-

ers and not to treat forest for commercial or market purposes.

At the concluding session, BELA handed over two draft laws on 'Village Forest Rules' and 'Forest Right Act and Rule' to State Minister for Environment and Forest Hasan Mahmud, urging him to take necessary actions to establish the rights of forest dwellers to the forest.

Hasan Mahmud said the government is facing difficulties to protect and preserve the forest.

He also emphasised the need to involve the forest people to ensure sustainable forest management.

Souparna Lahiri presented a keynote paper on the implementation of the forest act in India.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan of BELA and Sanjeev Dron, secretary general of Adivasi Forum, chaired different sessions of the conference.



Chiefs of three services call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Armed Forces Division at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday on the occasion of Armed Forces Day. (Story on Page 1)

Sufia Kamal played pioneering role in women's progress

Speakers tell memorial meet

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial meeting yesterday said late poet Sufia Kamal played a significant role in helping achieve a remarkable progress by women in society.

They called on women to follow the ideologies of the poet for establishing equal rights of women in the society.

Speakers said the life of poet Sufia Kamal was multi-dimensional and she played her role as the conscience of the nation during any critical period in the country.

Samajik Protirodh Committee organised the meeting at Biam auditorium in the city marking the 10th death anniversary of Sufia Kamal, the founding president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

Sammilita Samajik Andolon President Ajoy Roy said, "Sufia Kamal was a responsible intellectual. Her responsibility was to the society as well as its people."

Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra

Sultana Kamal said, "To follow the ideologies of poet Sufia Kamal, we will have to move forward until peace of every person is ensured."

"Sufia Kamal had led us forwards by holding our hands during any crisis in the country," said Sultana, also a daughter of the poet.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, executive director of CAMPE, said: "To pay respect to a person like Sufia Kamal, we will have to find out the spaces where communalism is being spread out."

Ranjan Karmakar, executive director of Steps Towards Development, demanded the government declare a specific time frame for implementing policy for the development of women.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam called on all to reflect the powerful characteristics of Sufia Kamal in their lives to fight injustice in the society.

Samajik Protirodh Committee placed a 16-point proposal, including protest against the violence against women, ensuring their constitutional rights and steps against communal forces, anti-liberation forces and rise of militancy.



Shamim, Pathik re-elected DRU president, secy

UNB, Dhaka

Shamim Ahmad, chief of correspondents of UNB, and Pathik Saha, chief reporter of Bhorer Dak, were re-elected president and general secretary of Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) yesterday.

Shamim secured the highest 508 votes while his rival Parvez Khan polled 201.

Pathik bagged 428 votes while his rival Hakikat Jahan Haki got 283.

Other office-bearers are: Vice-president: Ajmal Haque Helal (371), Joint Secretary: Galman Shafi (460), Finance Secretary: Ashrafur Islam (405), Organising Secretary: Mashiur Rahman Khan (466), Publicity Secretary: ABM Ziaul Kabir Sumon (268), Training & Research

Secretary: Motahar Hossain (387), Sports and Cultural: AKM Kamruzzaman Hiru (unopposed), Cultural Secretary: Mehdi Azad Masum (287) and Office Secretary: Kazi Habib (344).

The executive committee members are Arif Sohel (354), Md Shafiqul Islam (350), Patrick D'Costa (339), Md Monir Hossain (327), Ashish Kumar Dey (326), Kamruzzaman Kajal (295), Osman Gani Babul (281), Mir Mustafizur Rahman (252), Showkat Ali Khan (201) and SM Mizanur Rahman (94).

State recognition to journalist Alam urged

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at a function in the city yesterday called for giving state recognition to eminent photojournalist late Mohammad Alam for his outstanding performance and professionalism.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak was the chief guest at the function on 'Mohammad Alam Smriti Padak- 2009' at Jatiya Press Club (IPC) organised by Photojournalist Multipurpose Cooperative Society Limited.

Mohammad Alam was a talented photojournalist and freedom fighter. He passed away in 2008 while he was Chief Photographer of the daily Ittefaq.

Nanak distributed medals among 10 photojournalists who participated in a competition titled 'Destroyed environment, endangered human being' held at the IPC earlier.

The daily Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar, the daily Jugantar Executive Editor Saiful Alam and industrialist Abul Bashar, spoke at the function with Photojournalist Society President Abu Taher Khokan in the chair.

Terming Alam a talented photojournalist, Nanak said he (Alam) was an affectionate person to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as well as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The state minister assured proper recognition to the late photojournalist.



PHOTO: STAR

A severe traffic congestion was created in Katabon market area. The scenario was common in different areas in the city as primary final examinations began yesterday.

Ctg south BNP divided over today's council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The council of Chittagong South district unit of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) is being held here separately today amid groupings and differences.

Some influential joint conveners of the unit declared to avoid the council scheduled to be held at Banskhal, blaming the unit Convener Jafrul Islam Chowdhury for selecting the venue and announced that they would hold the council at a separate venue in the city.

They, however, could not confirm the venue till filing of this report at 5:00pm.

BNP lawmaker from Banskhal Jafrul said the council would be held in time at Banskhal in presence of most of the unit leaders.

BNP central committee Joint Secretary General Gayeshwar Chandra Roy is scheduled to inaugurate the council at Banskhal.

Degree College around 11:00am while former minister Dr Moin Khan is scheduled to attend the council as the chief guest, sources said.

On the other hand, another faction led by some joint conveners of the unit committee declared to avoid the council, blaming Jafrul for selecting the venue in his own area to serve his own interests.

Leaders of anti-Jafrul faction at a press conference on Friday evening declared to hold the council today separately in the port city.

Former BNP lawmakers Gazi Md Shahjahan Jewel of Patiya, Sarwar Jamal Nizam of Anwara and joint conveners Ahmad Khalil Khan, Mijanul Hoque Chowdhury and Iftekar Chowdhury Mohsin were present.

Refuting the allegation, Jafrul told The Daily Star that the council was postponed on November 19 because of the declaration of the verdict in Bangabandhu Murder Case.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Plan to form separate probe cell in police force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to establish a separate investigation cell in police force for swift investigation in cases concerning violence against women.

While addressing a seminar on 'Responsibility of the state in preventing violence against women: Ten years experience', State Minister for Law Md Quamrul Islam yesterday said the cell will comprise police officers designated exclusively for investigation.

There are also plans for speedy disposal of the cases currently under trial as well as to modernise medical services for women victims, he added.

Blaming the previous government for targeted violence against the women of the minority community, he said the number of violence against women during the period between 2001 and 2006 was very high.

The seminar was organised by Naripakkha to mark the International Day of Protest Against Violence Against Women at IDB auditorium.

Speakers at the seminar said according to the police headquarters record, there were 115,493 incidents of violence against women during the years from 2001 to 2008.

In 2007 and 2008, some 7,321 cases of violence against women were lodged in the police stations, the highest 2,678 were related to

dowry, the second highest number about 1,707 was related to rape while 1,377 was kidnapping of women.

The speakers called for an amendment to Women and Children Repression Act and Police Ordinance to prevent violence against women.

Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Akhter Hossain Bhuiyan, director of hospital and clinic of DGHS, Tamanna Khan, chairperson, Rita Das Roy, convener of Naripakkha, also spoke.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Human Rights Foundation (BHRF) organised a discussion at the National Press Club to mark the International Day of Protest Against Violence Against Women.

Presenting a keynote paper, Advocate Elena Khan, chief executive of BHRF, said there is an urgent need for a separate law to prevent psychological persecution of women.

Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury, High Court Division of the Supreme Court, said there is a vacuum in the legal arena regarding issues related to psychological torture of women in the country. The issue should be brought under a special law.

Advocate AMFS Islam, member of BHRF trustee board, Fatema Begum, DIG, Special Branch, Nazmul Haque, DIG, CID, and Advocate Asaduzzaman of Supreme Court also spoke.



PHOTO: STAR

Winners of Mohammad Alam Memorial Award 2009 pose with State Minister for LGRD Jahangir Kabir Nanak and other guests at the prize giving ceremony at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. Photojournalist Bahumukhi Samabaya Samity Limited organised the news photography contest.

Harmony in laws necessary to repatriate trafficking victims

Rights activists say at consultation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists at a national consultation yesterday said harmony in the laws related to trafficking and rescuing the victims in the Saarc countries is a must to repatriate the victims as well as to protect their rights.

HIV/AIDS issue should be related to trafficking as many of the victims of trafficking suffer from the infection, they added.

Titled 'Global and regional commitments of Bangladesh on human trafficking', the consultation was organised by

ATSEC Bangladesh in the city's Brac Centre.

The speakers stressed the need for rearranging the definition of trafficking and the age of children so that the child victims could be sent back easily.

Prior to the Saarc convention, they recommended reforming the national laws on internal and cross-border trafficking for victim-witness protection, speedy trial to decriminalise the trafficking survivors, ensuring confidentiality and access to prompt and quality recovery.

The government needs to register strong protest against the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report as it arbitrarily ranks the nations without proving adequate space to the nations to validities information and provide responses, they added.

Advocate Suranjit Sengupta MP was present at the concluding session as the chief guest.

AKM Masud Ali, executive director of INCIDIN Bangladesh, and Salma Ali, chairperson of ATSEC Bangladesh, presented two keynote papers.

Body found dead in city drain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered a body of an unidentified youth from a drain in front of Sony Cinema Hall at Mirpur in the city yesterday.

On information, police reached the spot and found the body left lying in the drain at 8:00am.

They recovered the body

aged around 25 and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Morgue for autopsy.

Dhaka Medical College Morgue sources said the youth was strangled.

Police said the youth might have been killed somewhere else and later dumped there. The body bore injury marks at its neck, police added.



Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during late night till morning, Met Office said.

Night temperature may fall slightly over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:11pm today and rises at 7:19am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 30.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 11.4 degrees Celsius at Dinajpur.

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	27.0	18.4	42	39
Chittagong	27.5	19.7	67	51
Rajshahi	26.2	11.5	64	65
Khulna	27.5	16.5	64	62
Barisal	28.1	17.5	61	83
Sylhet	28.8	16.6	68	67
Cox's Bazar	30.0	21.4	58	61

DHAKA TODAY

Digital summit

The inaugural ceremony of Digital Bangladesh Summit 2009 will be held. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Time: 11:00am.

Lecture

Dr Tapan Raychaudhuri, former professor of Oxford University, will deliver Barister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed Memorial Lecture 2009. Venue: National Museum auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Discussion

Nagorik Sanghati and Bangladesh Development and Environment Forum jointly organise a discussion on role of TCB in managing market. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Dialogue

Neeli Gobeshona Kendro organises a dialogue on Bangladesh's maritime boundary concerns, regional tensions and the Myanmar factor. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Closing ceremony

The closing ceremony of BCSIC World 2009 will be held. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Time: 7:15pm.

Roundtable

Save the Environment Movement and WBB Trust jointly organise a roundtable on expected development in railway sector and recent initiative. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Produce quality programmes

Speakers urge TV channels

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called on the policymakers of different television channels to produce more quality, constructive and educative programmes for betterment of the country and its people.

"The country's TV channels do not produce sufficient quality programmes. We, the viewers, demand more quality, constructive and educative programmes. As viewers are the heart of the TV channels, the policymakers should put top-most priority on the viewer's demand," they said.

The speakers said this while addressing the seminar styled 'TV programmes: Viewers' expectations and reactions' organised by Media Citizens' Forum at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Presenting a keynote paper, Arifika Rozi, executive member of the forum, said as consumers, the viewers have the right to choose products and as sellers, the TV channel authorities should have the responsibilities to preserve the rights of consumers. But the viewers cannot preserve their rights as the media consumers.

About excessive advertisements in all the private TV stations, she said, "It seems that we, the viewers, sit before TV sets to enjoy advertisements, rather than enjoying other programmes like news or talk shows. The viewers feel bored with those all."

Chairing the seminar, Muhammad Jahangir, convener of the committee, said, "The major purposes of the TV channels are to provide message, education as well as entertainment. But the TV channels of our country are chasing only for commercialisation and profit."

He also raised questions about the quality of management system of private TV channels.

Prof MR Khan, child specialist, called on the channel authorities to produce programmes for the welfare of street children so that they can learn something from the programmes.

Saiful Bari, chief adviser of ATN Bangla, admitted that the private TV channels are excessively chasing for commercialisation and suggested the viewers to wage constructive movement to resist this.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Ibrahim Kabir (Afzal), son of late Abdul Majid Member, a resident of Lalmatia in the city, passed away on Thursday at the age of 52, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons, five brothers and five sisters and a host of relations to mourn his death.

Death anniversary

Today is the 12th death anniversary of Ashfia Nigar Reema, daughter of Principal Hamida Ali and Mohammad Ali, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at Apt-1/1501 at Eastern Rokeya Tower at 98 Bara Maghbazar (opposite to Maghbazar Kazi office) in the city after Azar prayers.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the doa mahfil and pray for salvation of her departed soul.