

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT-2009 Draft bill in next JS session

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury yesterday said the draft bill of Domestic Violence (prevention and protection) Act-2009 would be placed in the next parliamentary session.

"We are scrutinising the provisions of the draft copies of the law and hope to complete all procedures before Eid-ul-Azha for placing the bill in the next parliamentary session," she said.

Shirin made the remarks while talking to reporters after a view exchange meeting on the draft copy of the law made by Multi-sectoral Programme (2nd phase) under the ministry of women and children affairs at Biam auditorium in the city.

She asserted that the act would be introduced specially for civil protection through

charging fine or light punishment for committing domestic violence rather awarding severe punishment.

Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), termed the act a preventive measure to reduce domestic violence.

Barrister Sara Hossain called on the government to take an effective step to implement the act strictly to reduce domestic violence.

Women and Children Affairs Secretary Rokeya Sultana presided over the meeting where Jobeda Khatun MP, Mahfuza Mandal MP, Tahura Ali MP, Farida Akhter MP, Rubi Rahman MP and Rasheda Begum Hira MP, Mamta Begum, chairman of Jatiya Mahila Sangstha, and Rekha Saha of Ain-o-Shalish Kendra also spoke.



Members of Bangladesh Unemployed Diploma Nurses Association continue their fast unto death for the third day at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday demanding batch, merit and seniority-wise recruitment.

## 4 rivers around city declared ecologically critical area

BSS, Dhaka

The government has declared four rivers surrounding Dhaka city as Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) as part of the plan to protect the rivers from encroachment as well as conservation of the biodiversity of the ancient water courses.

In September 2009, the four rivers -- Buriganga, Sitalakhya, Turag and Balu -- have been declared by the Department of Environment as ECAs, said State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud here yesterday.

Addressing the inaugural session of a national consultation workshop on "2010 Biodiversity Target National Assessment" at LGED auditorium, Dr Hasan urged all to make their efforts to protect the country's vast wealth of genetic resources for the sake of everyone live today and for our children and grandchildren and generation to be born.

He said, Bangladesh is a biodiversity rich country and its economy, culture and lifestyle is greatly dependent on various

biodiversity resources. So, the government has always been attaching importance on the involvement of mass-people in the development of environment and biodiversity.

Chief Conservator of Forests Abdul Motaleb, Deputy Country Director of UNDP Robert Juhkam and project director of the biodiversity assessment programme Soliaman Haider spoke, among others, on the occasion while Director General of Department of Environment (DoE) Jafar Ahmed Khan was in the chair.

Referring to a IUCN Red List, he said, the list revealed that 38 percent of all the species examined are currently under threat of extinction and if the loss rate continues, an area of 1.3 billion hectares will completely lose its original levels of biodiversity by 2050.

"Bangladesh is not an exception to the global extinction of biodiversity," he said adding over fishing, deforestation, forest fragmentation and degradation, pollution and above all climate change are main drivers of biodiversity loss.

Some alien species are also invading our ecosystem, out-competing native species of food and other resources and often perturbing ecosystem balance and functioning", he said adding their spread has been greatly facilitated by greater levels of trade, transportation, travel, tourism that are part of globalisation.

The minister said, the present government is committed towards conserving the country's environment to adapt to projected as well as presently experienced impacts of climate change both at national and global levels.

The current rate of species extinction as a result of human activity has been estimated to be up to 1,000 times higher than the natural rate, he said.

Director General of the DoE Jafar Ahmed Khan said, the 2010 nation biodiversity target assessment has been undertaken aimed at presenting the current national state of biodiversity, to identify the associated threats and show the gaps and hurdles those still remained in different areas/sectors.

## DHAKA-NEW YORK FLIGHTS HC asks Biman, govt to explain in two weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday in a rule directed the government and Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd to explain within two weeks why the management of Biman should not be prevented from re-opening Dhaka-New York-Dhaka route that incurs a loss of Tk 40 lakh per flight.

The High Court bench of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury issued the rule upon a writ petition filed by Barrister Masood R Sobhan, a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court.

The court also said if the rule is not disposed of by December 31, the petitioner can move to this court for an order to stop the re-opening of the route after the period.

Masood R Sobhan filed the petition as a public interest

litigation, on November 5, following a news story published in The Daily Star on October 22, titled "Biman plans for loss-prone NY route amid hikes."

He stated in the petition that Biman Bangladesh Airlines suffered a record loss of Tk 450 crore for the fiscal year 2005-06 as a result of which the losing routes were closed down and then Biman started making profit instead of losing.

"There could be no reason whatsoever to reopen the route where Biman readily admitted that it loses Tk 40 lakh per flight that means that it would be practically losing Tk 60 lakh per flight and would lose Tk 624 crore in a year, it can not be allowed to happen," the petitioner said.

Barrister Masood R Sobhan assisted by Barrister Fatema S Chowdhury moved the petition.

## Women migrant workers vulnerable to AIDS

Says UNDP study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi migrants working in different Arab countries are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS as 20 percent of them are abused sexually in their workplaces, according to a report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The report titled 'HIV vulnerabilities faced by women migrants from Bangladesh to Arab states' also revealed that 85 percent of women workers are abused physically.

The findings of the study conducted by UNDP and Oviyashi Karmi Unnayan Programme (OKUP) on 247 women were presented at a programme at a city hotel yesterday.

The study also revealed that only nine percent of women workers received pre-departure training. So, they know little about their workplaces, problems they might face there and where to seek help. They also have little knowledge on HIV/AIDS.

Speakers at the programme said that most women workers are unskilled or semi-skilled worker and receive minimal salary. The domestic workers in Bahrain and Dubai are paid just about \$100 a month.

They stressed the need for pre-departure training, voluntary counselling and testing of HIV/AIDS.

They also called for collaboration among the Bangladesh embassy or consulate office, support organisations, migrant workers' associations and medical testing centres in the recipient countries to help women workers.

Training for embassy or consulate staff on how to deal with HIV issues of migrant workers is also important, they added.

Labour Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said that around one lakh women are working abroad and that the government is planning to open a women labour wing in the embassies in different countries, especially in Arab countries.

"Women officers would be recruited in embassies soon to deal with the issues like HIV/AIDS and others," he said.

"The economic gains generated by migrant workers are enormous, making up almost 9.4 percent of GDP in Bangladesh in 2007," said Stefan Priesner, UNDP Country Director.

"It is, therefore, critical that good working conditions and support are provided to migrant workers throughout the migration cycle," he added.

Dr Salil Panakadan, UNAIDS country coordinator, Caitlin Wiesen, UNDP HIV team leader and regional programme coordinator, and Shakirul Islam, lead researcher and chairman of OKUP, also spoke.

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#### Mr. Rezaul Karim

(Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Elaihe Rajeun)

We pray to the Almighty Allah for the salvation of his departed soul and share our cordial sympathy with his bereaved family.

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### JAMUNA TV Hearing adjourned till Dec 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday adjourned till December 3 the hearing on a writ petition challenging the government action that stopped the test transmission of Jamuna TV, a private satellite television channel.

The High Court bench of Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mamnoon Rahman passed the adjournment order upon a time prayer moved by Attorney General Mahubey Alam.

The attorney general told the court that the government needs time for preparing to place arguments on this petition.

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