

AUW contributing to empowering women

Cherie Blair tells *The Daily Star*

STAR REPORT

Cherie Blair, wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair and a leading human rights activist, yesterday said she was impressed by the efforts of the Asian University for Women (AUW) in Bangladesh, which she found has contributed to empowering women who otherwise would have no future.

"Having come to Chittagong, I am delighted," Cherie said in an interview with *The Daily Star*. "The teachers are dedicated and trying to develop analytical and inquiring skills of the students who will be the leaders of tomorrow."

Cherie is now in Bangladesh to launch the Cherie Blair Fellowships at AUW.

She was upbeat on the education efforts for women in Bangladesh and observed that education helps bring about economic empowerment and changes women's status in the household.

"When they (women) contribute to their households economically, it changes their situation," she said.

"It is a good thing that Bangladesh has women leaders which shows the society is comfortable with women's empowerment," Cherie, also a lawyer, commented.

"No country in the world has closed the gender gap and in this context Bangladesh gets high scores for having women leadership and women's education. For example, in Bangladesh women get free education up to higher level which is very apprecia-



Cherie Blair, wife of former British prime minister Tony Blair and a leading human rights activist, makes a point during an interview with *The Daily Star* in the city yesterday.

ble."

She elaborated how education of women brings in other social benefits like use of clean water, immunisation, low child mortality rate and improved social health.

"But still when you look at the economic and political gap, you find a big gap between men and women," she added.

However, it is encouraging that some backward countries are having more and more women leaders, Cherie said. For example, Rwanda has now more women lawmakers than any other countries in the world. As many of the men were killed in genocide, women came out to the top of the leadership.

In this regard, Cherie said she was delighted to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina this time.

"She was looking splendid and very much in command of her nation. I got the personal pleasure to see her. And it is important that Bangladesh is back to democracy," she added.

Recalling her experience at the AUW, Cherie said she had talked with students from Afghanistan about how it was like to be in a country where education for girls was a controversial subject. These girls can now stand up and express themselves, they have learnt to open their minds and get into thoughtful engagement.

"What is interesting is coming from different backgrounds and families who cannot afford education for their kids; they get adapted to a multicultural situation," she observed.



A child receives polio vaccine at a centre at Mirpur in the city as the 18th National Immunisation Day was observed across the country yesterday.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT Bangladesh, India agree to enhance cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and India yesterday agreed to enhance cooperation in disaster management by sharing information and reaching out to the people affected by calamities.

The agreement was reached during a meeting between Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque and West Bengal's Minister for Agriculture Marketing and Relief Dr Mortaza Hossain

in the city, according to a press release of the food ministry.

During the meeting, Razzaque said Bangladesh is now focusing on pre-disaster preparation to reduce loss of lives and properties during any disasters.

Enhanced cooperation between Bangladesh and India in this particular case can reduce losses to a great extent, he added.

Mortaza Hossain said both India and Bangladesh were

affected by the cyclone Aila last year. In such cases, Bangladesh and India can take integrated initiatives to reduce damage.

He also said they are providing pre-disaster training to the members of Panchayets (local government units in India) to reduce losses of lives and properties during the natural disasters. Architects and engineers are also being trained on designing and constructing buildings, which are not vulnerable to earthquakes.

Change in lower judiciary

UNB, Dhaka

The government in consultation with the Supreme Court has made another reshuffle at the Dhaka District and Sessions Judge level.

According to an official announcement, Begum Krishna Devnath, member (district judge) of Dhaka Administrative Appeal Tribunal, has been appointed Dhaka District and Sessions Judge.

It said Dhaka District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Abdul Gafur has been made member (district judge) of Dhaka Administrative Appeal Tribunal on deputation.

PM's visit to strengthen relations with India

Hopes Workers Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers Party leaders yesterday hoped that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to India would help strengthen the friendly relationship between the two countries.

The visit would also help address longstanding unre-

solved issues such as river water sharing, maritime boundary, cross-border crimes, and trade imbalance, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and Secretary General Anisur Rahman Mallik said in a joint statement.

They hoped that the visit would bring positive results regarding the issue of halting

the Tipaimukh dam project.

They also condemned the propaganda campaign carried out by BNP chairperson and Jamaat leaders ahead of the prime minister's visit.

The Workers Party leaders urged the countrymen to remain alert and resist such propaganda.

'Pay pvt school teachers as per new pay scale'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB) yesterday urged the private schools, colleges and madrasas to pay their teachers according to the new pay scale.

WPB President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Anisur Rahman Mallik said although teachers in private schools, colleges and madrasas were brought under the new pay-scale, they are not getting salaries as per the pay-scale.



A poor rickshaw van-puller carries his ailing mother to a clinic at Shaymoli in the city from Fatulla in Narayanganj yesterday. The woman, Firoja Begum, who broke her leg in a road accident a month ago, was staying at her home after receiving treatment in the clinic. As her condition deteriorated, she was being taken to the clinic again. The photo was taken at Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Karwan Bazar intersection.

Call for initiative to protect rights of working children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday underscored the need for taking an initiative to protect the children engaged in domestic work from being deprived of their rights and exploited economically.

The press conference was jointly organised by Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), Together with Working Children (TWC) and Save the Children-Sweden Denmark (SCSD) at Dhaka Reporters' Unity on the occasion of the National Child Domestic Worker Convention 2010.

The convention, to be held tomorrow at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city, has been designed to

make recommendations to the government for establishing rights of the child domestic workers in the country.

Senior Deputy Director of ASK Gita Chakravarty said this at the press conference.

Presenting a keynote paper, she said children's engagement in domestic work is one of the worst forms of child labour and 78 percent of the total child domestic workers are girl children who suffer more unfair form of discrimination, exploitation and oppression.

"A survey by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 1995-1996 shows that 1.4 percent of 6.29 million working children are domestic workers," she said, adding that another survey reveals

approximately 1,32,000 child domestic workers work in Dhaka alone out of 400,000 workers aged between 6 and 17 years.

"This estimation indicates 'domestic work by children' as the single largest hazardous child labour sector in the country."

Shamsul Alam, deputy country representative of SCSD and Moslema Bari, Shaheen Akhter Dolly and Fazlul Chowdhury from TWC also spoke at the programme.

Labour and Employment Minister Khanaker Mosharraf Hossain and State minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury will be present at the daylong convention.

SCF memo to edn minister

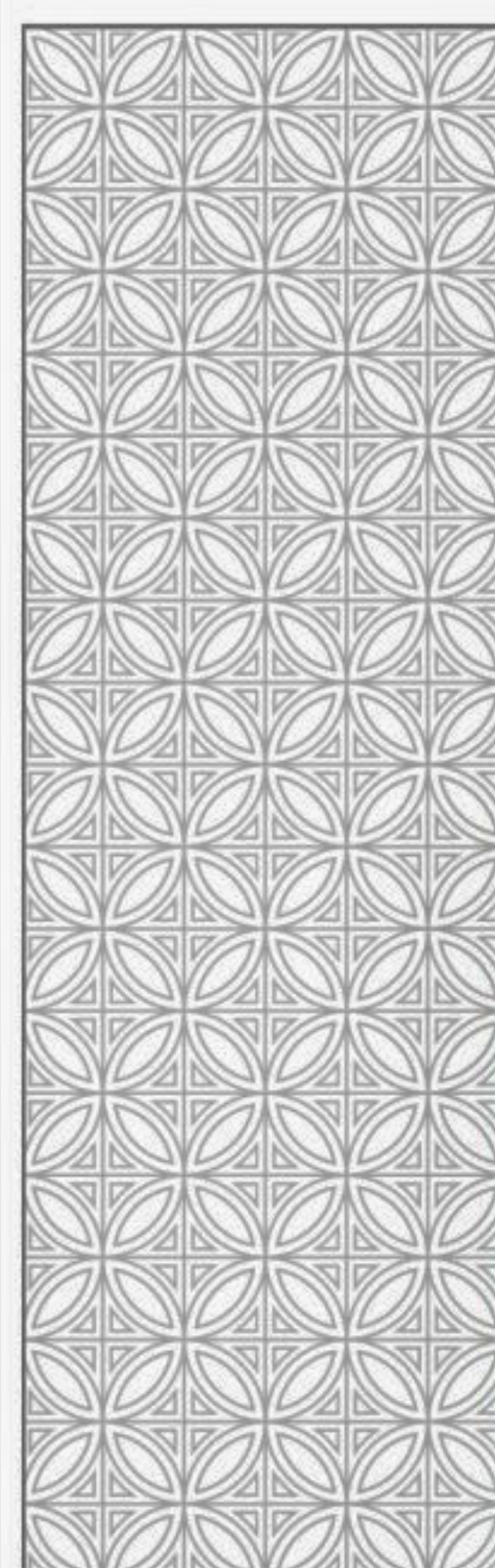
DU CORRESPONDENT

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front (SCF) submitted a memorandum to the education minister yesterday demanding regular holding of classes, separate examination halls and sufficient classrooms at colleges under the National University.

A four-member team led by organisation's general secretary Janardan Dutta submitted the memorandum at the ministry at noon.

Earlier, police intercepted a procession brought out by SCF men near Doel Chatter on the Dhaka University campus, as it was moving towards the ministry. Later, the organisation held a rally there.

Speakers said the quality of education at colleges under the National University is deteriorating gradually due to lack of essential infrastructures and books at the libraries.



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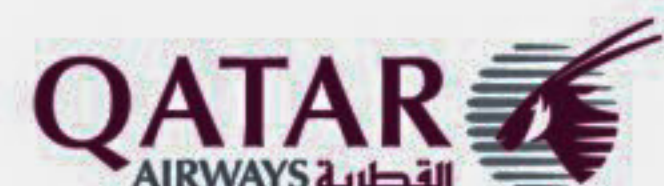
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