



PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

Women from all walks of life hold a candlelight vigil on the Central Shaheed Minar premises in the city just after midnight last night to mark the International Women's Day. 'Amra Paari: Paribarik Nirjatan Protirodh Jote', a platform for resisting domestic violence, organised the event.

Edn ministry awarded for e-service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Education has been awarded with the best prize for ensuring e-service in different sectors of education management on the last day of the Digital Innovation Fair-2010, says an official handout. The ministry has already ensured 23 services in different sectors of education management, it said. The jury board of the fair, which ended on March 6, took the ministry's different initiatives, including free registration for giving result of this year's SSC examination through email and admission process in the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology through mobile phone, into consideration, the handout said. Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid thanked all for their support and declared his firm commitment to continue the expansion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the ministry and all the directorates under it.

Int'l Women's Day programmes

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different government, socio-cultural and development organisations across the country have chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the International Women's Day today. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally inaugurate the celebrations at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city at 10:00am. She will also unveil a stamp to mark the day. State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury will inaugurate a six-day fair and cultural programme on the Shishu Academy premises at 12:00noon. She will also lead a procession that will start from the Central Shaheed Minar premises at 2:30pm. Marking the day, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam will inaugurate a seminar at the LGED auditorium in the city at 9:00am.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

The Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh will hold different programmes, including poster exhibition, discussion, procession and human chain with its 17 units across the country. Horitri Foundation will hold a fair and stage a drama on the Dalits at the TSC Sarak Deep on Dhaka University campus while Samajtantrik Mahila Forum will organise a daylong programme at Milon Chattar on the campus. The Department of Women and Gender Studies of Dhaka University will bring out a procession and stage a drama on the campus. Private television station Channel i at a programme at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre will honour successful women who are pioneers in different sectors in the country. The two-day nationwide programme of BILS will start today with a photography exhibition on women workers and a human chain in front of the National Press Club.

PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

The Global Human Rights Defense will hold a human chain in front of the Narayanganj Press Club. The two road-marches, one starting from Rangpur and another from Barisal, will arrive in the city today. The road-marches began with a call for stopping domestic violence against women. Jatiya Mukti Council, Samajik Protirodh Committee, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, Bangladesh Jatiya Mahila Ainjibi Samity, National Coordination Committee for Workers Education, Jatiya Nari Sramik Trade Union Kendra, Bangladesh National Council of Textile Garments & Leather Workers, Project for Rural Area Development and Improvement of Poor People, Citycell, Gono Sanghati Andolan, Shushashoner Jonno Procharavijan and The Christian Co-operative Union Ltd have also chalked out various programmes to mark the day.

Premier varsity students confine VC, teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The BBA students of Premier University in the port city yesterday confined the teachers to a room hours protesting the reported resignation of their Dean. The agitating students also shut down the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC)-run CNG refuelling station located at the ground floor of the BBA faculty building at Dampara. Around 1500 students of the faculty of Premier University, a private university run by Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), left their classes and staged a sit-in on the campus at around 10:30am when they heard about the sudden resignation of Faculty Dean Prof Milon Kumar Bhattacharjee, said the sources. They alleged that the popular teacher resigned on Friday amid pressure from the varsity administration. The students blocked all the gates of the university and held a rally on the campus demanding the authorities do not accept the resignation letter. When VC Prof Dr Anupam Sen, an eminent social scientist, arrived there from the main campus at Prabartak intersection, the students urged him to take steps to bring the teacher back. As the VC said that he has nothing to do with the resignation, the angry students kept him and other teachers confined to a room. Students later freed the VC and other teachers when Prof Milon himself came to the spot at around 4:30pm. Prof Anupam said only the city mayor can take step to resolve the problem.

Trial of war criminals must on this soil

Says home minister

BSS, Dhaka

To fulfil election pledges of the government, trial of the war criminals will be held on this soil, Home Minister Sahara Khatun said yesterday. The process of trial has already been started and the government would try to complete it during its tenure, she said during her speech at the inauguration of a water pump at Manikdi in the city. The government will also hold trials of the killings of four national leaders and former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and August 21 grenade attack and 10 trucks arms haul cases after conducting proper investigation, she added. Referring to the trial of BDR mutiny, she said the trial of BDR carnage would also be held. The anti-liberation forces and their accomplices are engaged in a deep-rooted conspiracy to make the country unstable as well as to turn it into a failed state, she said.

She also warned that those who are creating disorder by committing murders, looting and vandalism would be brought to book. Mentioning that the law and order has improved during the last one year, the home minister said some vested quarters don't like this success. "During the previous BNP-Jamaat alliance government, some sensational cases had been diverted into different courses to protect the real criminals," she said. Terrorists and extortionists do not belong to any party, Sahara said, adding that even if Awami League workers are found involved in such crimes, they would not be spared. She urged all to unitedly resist extortionists and militancy. She also said the city dwellers now can file general diary with 41 police stations of the capital online and in future they can make statements with the police stations from their home using internet.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangabandhu Prajanma League forms a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding trial of war criminals.

Man kills wife in Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

A housewife was killed allegedly by her husband at Jhaudogi village in Sadar upazila yesterday. The victim was identified as Mahera Begum, 28, wife of Zohirul Islam. Witnesses said Mahera Begum was locked into an altercation with her husband at about 8:00am over repayment of loan they borrowed from an NGO. At one stage, Zohirul hit her with a steel-made pot, killing her on the spot. Locals caught Zohirul and handed him over to police.

Of a warrior

FROM PAGE 1

Nasima has been waging a lonely war against influential opponents and an apathetic system, refusing to be silenced by the traditional taboos that say rape is too shameful for a woman to speak of. "Jiddi," her husband calls her -- "stubborn." Nasima vividly remembers the night her daughter was attacked. It was barely a year after she and her husband Yusuf, a marine spare parts dealer, had moved to Cox's Bazar in search of a better future. That evening, Nasima had taken her five-year-old daughter Tumpa to the doctor, leaving 11-year-old mentally challenged Jhumur alone at home. With her husband away on business, Nasima had no alternative. The round trip to the doctor's surgery took almost two hours. When Nasima returned, she saw a knot of people outside her door. "Fear gripped my heart," recalls Nasima. "My first thought was, 'Something has happened to my daughter!'" Jhumur lay in a foetal position on the bed, crying her eyes out. The neighbours gathered round the bed and told Nasima what had happened. The electricity had gone out around 7.30pm when they heard a single scream from Jhumur. "We tried to open the door

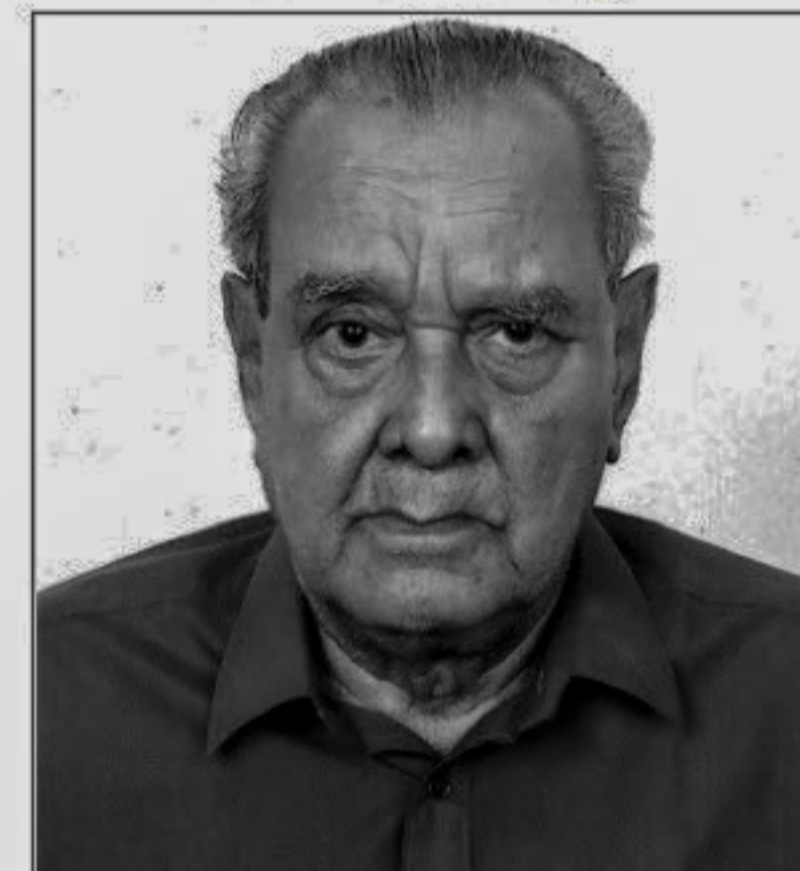
but it was bolted from inside," said Nasima's neighbour Mariam, in a statement to police. "We called Jhumur but heard nothing. About half an hour later, the door opened and out walked Yusuf's business partner, Aziz. He walked away quickly, pressing the keypad on his mobile phone. We rushed inside and found Jhumur bleeding and barely conscious, her clothes in disarray." The rape occurred on August 4, 2006. The next day Nasima lodged a case with Cox's Bazar Model Police Station. After investigating, the police filed a charge sheet implicating Aziz. The case went to trial a couple of months later. But for Nasima and her family, the ordeal had just begun. Inexplicably, the alleged child molester Aziz was never arrested. "They are locals -- wealthy and influential," said Nasima. "We were from another district and were poor. We were no match for them." Nasima was about to discover how prejudice, government inactivity and deficiencies in the criminal justice system throw up formidable obstacles for women who try to obtain justice following sexual offences. From the very beginning, Aziz's family pressured Nasima to withdraw the

allegations. But when faced by a stream of threats, Nasima remained determined. "I want justice for my daughter," she said repeatedly. She was to pay a high price for her defiance. September 1, 2008 is a date that will live with Nasima forever -- it is burnt into her memory and her face. She had gone to court with her sister and brother-in-law to testify in the case. Before she did so, the defendant's brother, Hakim, approached her with a settlement offer. He insisted that she talk to him privately, so Nasima accompanied him to a secluded corner of the court premises. Hakim gave Nasima a stark choice. Take some cash and drop the case -- or face vengeance. "He had a wad of cash in his right hand," says Nasima. "When I refused, he took a bottle out of his left pocket and poured its contents over my body. I felt like I was on fire. I saw flesh melting before my eyes. I fell to the ground and screamed and screamed..." Hakim was nabbed on the spot and turned over to the police. But astonishingly, he was soon back on the streets. The police found no case against him. In his final report, Inspector Mohiuddin, Officer-in-Charge of Cox's Bazar police station wrote, "It appears the plaintiff poured acid on herself in an attempt to frame the defendant, against whom she had a prior grievance..." For Nasima, incarcerated in the burns unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, it was an insult heaped on injury. The acid had burnt the left side of her face, neck and breasts. She had difficulty eating and was in constant pain. "I was burnt for demanding justice," she mumbled through her tears. Three long months and two operations later, Nasima was discharged from hospital. Her family had long ago fled Cox's Bazar and returned to their hometown in Khulna.

"The acid destroyed the skin on my neck," laments Nasima. "I have trouble swallowing or talking. My breasts have almost melted away. I avoid looking in the mirror these days." The story of Nasima's plight and her unrelenting courage in the face of adversity has drawn the attention of human rights campaigners. BRAC has come to her aid. Through the NGO's human rights and legal aid services programme, BRAC lawyers have given the family legal assistance -- help that the financially crippled Nasima desperately needs. The Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF), another NGO that campaigns against acid violence, helped pay for Nasima's surgery. BRAC and ASF both contributed to the cost of buying a dairy cow for the family. Aside from the disfigurement, the psychological damage is enormous. It has taken months for Nasima to work up the courage to go outside. She keeps all the doors and windows locked, is terrified by unexpected callers and is frightened to make hot drinks because of the memories it revives. For months she couldn't bear to have a shower because the feeling of liquid moving across her body revolted her. But she is determined not to give up. "I want others to learn from this and to refrain from committing these crimes. I believe that rape is a crime against the whole society, not just a crime against my mentally challenged daughter."

"My wife is strong-willed," says Yusuf. "There were times when I weakened and wanted to settle, but she wouldn't allow it. 'We want justice, not handouts', she kept saying." Nasima's courage may be extraordinary, but the facts of the case -- the rape, the vengeful defendants, the cup of industrial-strength sulphuric acid -- are all too familiar in a country that sees upward of 150 acid attacks and 400 rapes every year. Nasima wants to encourage other women to fight for justice. But she acknowledges that her own battle has been harder than she ever imagined. "We are cowering in fear. My husband has lost his business and I have lost everything. Meanwhile the culprits are still going about their daily lives." The details of how she lost her dreams, her identity and almost her life will stay with Nasima forever. While her attackers walk free, Nasima has nothing but her scars. Some names have been changed to protect the privacy of victims.

Obituary



M. Ijadur Rahman breathed his last at 1.10am on 7th March 2010 at Apollo Hospitals, Dhaka at the age of 83 (Inna lillahi.....raji'un). One of the senior most bankers of the country, Mr. Rahman was former Deputy Governor, Bangladesh Bank and former Managing Director of Sonali Bank Ltd. His quikhwani will be held at his 7/A, Ispahani Colony, Moghbazar Residence after Asr prayers on Friday, March 12, 2010. Friends, relatives and well-wishers are requested to attend the doa mahfil. D-169

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