

CONDOLENCES POUR IN

## Call to stand by fire victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties, socio-cultural organisations, professionals' bodies and individuals expressed profound shock and grief at the loss of 117 lives in the fire at Nimtoli in old Dhaka.

The main opposition BNP has announced a two-day doa mahfil programme for the fire victims -- at the party's Naya Paltan office after Asr prayers today and at all district and divisional headquarters tomorrow.

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, in a meeting yesterday, said his party would stand by the fire victims and help them, said a press release.

Jamaat-e-Islami held a doa mahfil at Al Falah Auditorium in the city to pray for the salvation of the departed souls. Its chief Motiur Rahman Nizami moderated the programme.

In a statement, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid called on the affluent members of society to come forward and assist the government in the rehabilitation of the families affected by the fire.

In separate statements, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) expressed deep shock at the loss of huge lives in the blaze.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) and Khelafat Majlis held doa mahfils separately to pray for the salvation of the departed souls.

They also called on the government to ensure proper treatment of the injured victims and proper rehabilitation of the affected families.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad and

Sammilito Nari Samaj said the disaster points towards the vulnerabilities of the city residents due to unplanned constructions.

They also hoped that the authorities would investigate the causes of the blaze and take necessary steps to prevent such accidents in the future.

In separate statements, National Alliance of Disabled People's Organisation (NADPO) and Pallima Sangsad also expressed deep shock and prayed for the salvation of the departed souls.

The 11-Party took out a mourning procession and held a rally at Muktaganj in the city to express sympathy to the families of the fire victims. They blamed unplanned urbanisation, factories in residential areas and faulty transformers for the shocking incident.

They also urged the government to provide medical and financial assistance to the affected families.

## AL programmes to observe historic June 7

UNB, Dhaka

The ruling Awami League has drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the historic June 7 in commemoration of the six-point movement, which was launched 44 years ago demanding autonomy of the then East Pakistan.

The programmes include hoisting of the national and party flags at party offices across the country and placing wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 7:30am and a discussion at 4:00pm.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the AL president, will attend the discussion as the chief guest at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium, said a party press release.

Acting general secretary of the party Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif in a statement yesterday urged all, including the party men, to observe the day in a befitting manner.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had launched his historic six-point political and economic programme in Lahore in 1966, aiming to attain greater autonomy of the then East Pakistan.



PHOTO: STAR  
Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha and Jono Udyog take out a colourful procession in Chittagong yesterday to mark the World Environment Day.

## Zillur visits fire victims at DMCH

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman visited the injured victims of Nimtoli fire at the burn and plastic surgery unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) yesterday afternoon.

He stayed some time with the injured people and inquired about their treatment.

After coming out of the burn unit, Zillur Rahman said: "I'm deeply saddened... I have no words to console the people who had lost their near and dear ones in the devastating fire."

The president also expressed gratitude to individuals and private and government organisations who took part in the rescue operation.

Health and Family Welfare Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, Health Adviser to the Prime Minister Prof Syed Modasser Ali, State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku and high officials were also present.



PHOTO COURTESY  
Deputy Commissioner of Khulna Md Jamsheer Ahmed Khandker speaks at a consultation meeting organised by MRDI in Khulna yesterday. MRDI Executive Director Hasibur Rahman, Barrister Tanjib-ul Alam and Executive Director of D.Net Dr Ananya Raihan were also present.

## 'Ensure best use of RTI Act'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and all stakeholders should work jointly to ensure the best use of the Right to Information (RTI) Act and its proper implementation, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

They also called for launching an effective campaign to raise awareness about the act amongst its beneficiaries.

The RTI Act was enacted in a landmark move to ensure people's access to information, they said, adding that now the major challenge is to make the people aware of the rules and provisions under the law.

The Management and Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) with support from the USAID and Progati organised the consultation meeting in Khulna. Government officials, local government representatives, NGO and rights activists, journalists, teachers and other professionals, and members of the civil society took part in the meeting.

Speaking at the programme, Deputy Commissioner of Khulna Jamsheer Ahmed Khandker termed the culture of secrecy the biggest obstacle to the implementation of the RTI Act.

He also emphasised the need to make

voluntary disclosure of information.

Barrister Tanjib-ul Alam made a presentation on the strength and weaknesses of the law, limitations of the Information Commission and major clauses and provisions under the RTI Act.

He stressed the need for determining the status of the information commissioners to strengthen the Information Commission.

Executive Director of D.Net Dr Ananya Raihan, who moderated the discussion, said every institution involved in the implementing process has to make its own preparations.

Executive Director of MRDI Hasibur Rahman said the law will succeed only when the marginal people will benefit from it.

He added that the institutions have to be pro-active in providing information to those who need information and seek information.

Findings of the divisional consultation meetings will be presented to the government at a national seminar to help the government and development partners set out strategy to properly implement the law.

MRDI will organise similar consultation meetings in other divisional headquarters to identify the problems and prospects in the implementation process of the act.

## Security of Ahmadiyyas demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at and civil society members yesterday condemned the May 28 bomb attacks on two Ahmadi mosques in Lahore, Pakistan, that killed 85 people.

They also demanded punishment to the attackers and steps to ensure security of the people of Ahmadiyya community across the world, especially in Pakistan.

The demands were placed at a press conference at the national headquarters of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Bangladesh, in the city.

Prof Meer Mubashsher Ali, nayeab-e-amir of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, urged the international community to take necessary steps to stop such barbaric attacks on them.

Strongly criticising the Pakistan government for declaring the Ahmadi Muslims of the country 'Non-Muslim' in 1974, he urged the international community to take necessary measures to repeal the law to uphold freedom of religion.

A global charter must be formulated to curb such violence in future, he added.

Noted writer and columnist Shahrier Kabir said the international human rights organisations should raise their voice to ensure the right to freedom of religion.

He also called for putting an end to the culture of impunity to prevent such attacks. "If we cannot get rid of the culture of impunity, it would not be possible to ensure security of lives."

Prof Parveen Hasan of the department of Islamic history and culture of Dhaka University laid emphasis on the formulation of a law to end religion-based discrimination.

Abdul Awal Khan Choudhury, missionary-in-charge of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, Bangladesh, and Sharif A Kafi, executive director of Bangladesh Development Partnership Centre also spoke.

### Piles, Constipation, Dysentery, Cancer

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### Zakat-based scholarship for students

UNB, Dhaka

Centre for Zakat Management (CZM) launched its Zakat-based scholarship programme for meritorious undergraduate students titled 'Genius' yesterday.

Sixty-one students were selected from Dhaka University (DU), Dhaka Medical College (DMC), Suhrawardy Medical College, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Jagannath University (JNU) for the scholarship.

Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, former adviser to a caretaker government, launched it and distributed scholarship money among these selected students at a city hotel.

CZM Chairman and Rahimafrooz Group Director Niaz Rahim presided over the function.

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