

Asian women rights groups support war crimes trial

BSS, Dhaka

Representatives of several Asian rights and women groups yesterday expressed solidarity with Bangladesh initiatives to try 1971 perpetrators of crimes against humanity particularly against women.

They expressed the solidarity on the concluding day of a three-day international workshop in the city.

"Rape and other forms of sexual violence against women in 1971 did constitute war crimes against humanity and/or a constitutive act with respect to genocide," said a special resolution of the workshop.

The resolution was read out at a press conference at the National Press Club.

It added: "We demand that the perpetrators of rape and forms of sexual violence against Bangladeshi women during 1971 be prosecuted

as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide at the appropriate forum."

A number of women and rights activists from Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Thailand and Indonesia joined the three-day meet at the BRAC Inn to review implications of "rising fundamentalism" on working women.

The workshop took the "special resolution" on trial of the perpetrators of crimes against humanity during the Bangladesh's 1971 War of Liberation.

"We are so sorry that the Pakistani troops did it with women here... It's our shame for us as women of Pakistan," Akleema Naz of Anjuman Muzareen Punjab of Pakistan told the press conference.

Naz said many women like her in Pakistan felt their government should seek apology to Bangladesh for violence against women in 1971.

Karmojibi Nari (KN), a forum of working women in Bangladesh, hosted the regional meet as a member of Thailand-based Committee for Asian Women.

KN President Shamin Kabir and General Secretary Sharmin Shirin, Shuvechha Adhikari and Phoebe So of the Committee for Asian Women and Secretary of Sri Lankan National Free Trade Union Leon Joseph also spoke at the press conference.

The declaration of the workshop also condemned the violation of women workers' rights and freedom as a "consequence of unfair neo-liberal domination".

The press conference was dedicated to the memories of Awami League leader and women rights veteran Ivy Rahman, who was killed in the gruesome August 21, 2004 grenade attack on a political rally at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city.

Govt firm to establish secular society: PM

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon the minority communities to work with sincerity, honesty and devotion for ensuring the welfare of the people of all faiths living in the country.

She made the call when members of the reconstituted Buddha and Hindu religion Welfare Trusts met her at her office.

Hasina said the aim of her government is to establish a secular society where people of all caste and creed will freely perform their religious activities.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed reporters after the meeting. He said both the delegations apprised the PM of their needs. The prime minister assured them of providing necessary support.

Referring to the trust funds given by the government, Hasina advised the trust management to raise the funds on their own

initiatives so that they can utilise the money for their benefits.

About the Vested Property Act, she said the issue is now under the consideration of the parliamentary standing committee. The government needs a unanimous recommendation from the Hindu community to take an early decision.

The prime minister said her party believes that the country is owned by the people of all faiths that has taken steps to ensure equal rights to all communities in all affairs.

Recalling the brutal attacks, suppression and repression of the past BNP-Jamaat government on the minority communities, Hasina said the present government is relentlessly working to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

State Minister for Religious Affairs Shahjahan Miah and senior officials were present at the meeting.



Saima Wajed Putul speaks at a view exchange meeting of guardians and service workers for children with autism and intellectually challenged held at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) auditorium in the city yesterday.

Create massive awareness about children with autism

Putul urges organisations working for them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saima Wajed Putul, an expert in autism and intellectually challenged, yesterday urged the organisations working with autism to launch a massive public awareness movement to create social acceptance for children with autism.

Social acceptance is the most important thing in this regard, she said, advocating for a society where parents can take their children to the streets without awkwardness and embarrassment.

Putul, daughter of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was addressing a view exchange meeting of guardians and service workers for autism and intellectual disability at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) auditorium in the city as the special guest.

National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD) in association with ActionAid organised the meeting.

There is a need to discard the term "handicapped," said Putul adding that autistic children may have certain prob-

lems but they can also be bright in other aspects.

"Even if someone studies a lot, she might not be good in mathematics. Does that mean she is a handicapped as well," she said.

She said many wonderful things are being done by different organisations working with autism, and they need to share their experiences with each other.

It is not just the organisations either, she said adding that parents of children with autism should form support groups to share experiences and tools with each other.

Other speakers at the meeting also stressed the need for forming a forum of parents of children with autism.

This would promote greater interactions among the parents to form a unity, said Nasima Begum, joint secretary of the social welfare ministry.

"The mothers must realise that there is no need to be depressed, and their children have civil rights like everyone else," mentioned Nasima adding that mothers of the children need training and education on the issue of autism and intel-

lectual disability.

Parents should take their children to doctors when symptoms of autisms appear, said Dr Mahmud Ahmed Chowdhury from Shishu Bikash Kendra of Chittagong.

The medical service providers need training on autism so that they can identify the problem of the children and give initial guidance to their guardians, he added.

The experts also stressed the need for giving counselling to mothers of autistic children, as they have to face immense mental tortures in their families and the society.

Noted writer Baby Moudud moderated the meeting while NFOWD President Khandaker Jahurul Alam was in the chair.

Special Olympics Bangladesh Chairman Dr Shamim Matin Chowdhury, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University's Centre for Neurodevelopment and Autism in Children specialist Dr Shaheen Akter, NFOWD Executive Director Dr Shamim Ferdous and Rabeya Sultana of ActionAid, among others, spoke at the meeting.

Shops fined for selling at higher prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court fined several shops at city's Fakirapul of Tk 32 thousand for selling essential commodities at higher prices than the government fixed yesterday.

National Consumer Rights Protection Directorate operated the mobile court.

The court fined some shops of Tk 19,000 for selling sugar at a higher price.

The mobile court also fined Tk 13,000 to three other shops -- a betel leaf shop as cautionary message was not written in the packets of Jorda and Gul.

A meat shop was fined for tempering weights and a restaurant for cooking food items in an unhygienic condition.

HC scraps sentence of Shahjahan Siraj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday overturned a lower court judgement convicting former minister Shahjahan Siraj and sentencing him to 13-year imprisonment in a corruption case.

An HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice AKM Zahirul Hoque delivered the verdict after granting an appeal filed by Shahjahan in 2009.

Shahjahan's lawyer Ahsanul Karim said the HC has overturned the trial court's verdict, since the allegations against his client was not proved.

29th BCS viva exams Sept 2

BSS, Dhaka

The viva examinations of the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) for 126 candidates of the 29th BCS general cadre will be held on September 2 instead of September 1, which falls a public holiday on the occasion of holy Janmashtami.

The time, venue and other conditions of the viva examinations will be as before, said an official handout yesterday.

Bill on alternative justice system soon: Shafique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to introduce alternative dispute resolution system as a mandatory trial mode in civil and criminal courts to remove the deadlock of cases for easing sufferings of justice seekers, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said yesterday.

"We're at the final stage and hope to place it before the parliament as a bill for passage," he said at a seminar at the city's LGED Bhavan.

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) jointly organised the seminar titled 'Restorative Justice System'.

Speaking as the chief guest, the law minister said lakhs of cases have been pending with the courts and it is impossible to run all the cases on the

part of the number of judges in the country.

"The mediators, without imposing anything, will help both the parties find out solution," the minister said.

The number of district courts in the country is 65 and the number of judges is 1,200 while more than seven lakh cases are filed every year, said ZI Khan Panna, general secretary of ASK.

By the restorative justice system, a huge amount of money and time of the justice seekers would be saved, Shafique observed.

Michel Cairns, director of RJ Global Consultant Ltd, presented the keynote paper while Dr Shabed Chowdhury, chairman of RJ Global Consultant Ltd, Sultana Kamal, executive director of ASK and Salma Ali, executive director of BNWLA, also spoke at the seminar.

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