

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS Daily Star inks deal with Unicef

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star has signed a partnership agreement with the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) to promote children's rights in the country.

Under the agreement, The Daily Star, country's largest circulated English daily, will publish two special pages every month until December 2013 putting priority on poor urban children, their nutrition status, gender discrimination against girl child and pre-primary education.

The objective of the cooperation agreement is to inform and create an enabling environment by publishing important information to uphold children's rights.

This project is a follow up of a pilot initiative implemented from September to December last year when the daily had published four special issues and received positive feedback from the readers.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and Satya Pal Vohra, OIC, operations of Unicef, signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations.

Mahfuz Anam and Dr Pascal Villeneuve, Unicef's representative to Bangladesh, yesterday exchanged the agreement document at a function at The Daily Star Centre.

The Daily Star's Deputy Editor Inam Ahmed, News Editor Reaz Ahmad, General Manager (admin) AFM Jamaluddin, Mizanur Rahman, GM (finance and accounts), Sher Ali, GM (advertisement), Selim SH Chowdhury, GM (production and events), Shima Islam, chief of Unicef's communication, advocacy and partnership section and Arifa S Sharmin, communication manager of the section, were present.



The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam and Unicef's representative to Bangladesh Dr Pascal Villeneuve exchange the document of an agreement at The Daily Star Centre in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Rulings whenever Khaleda speaks

Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the court [High Court] issued rulings whenever the chairperson spoke on crucial issues despite freedom of expression being a fundamental right of all.

"The prime minister is frequently making comments regarding the killing of a journalist couple. But the court issued a rule after our chairperson's remark while it is our right to make criticism against the killing of our leaders and journalists," he said.

On Tuesday, the High Court strongly criticised a comment that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia had made at a Lalmonirhat rally a day before over the murder of journalists Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

Khaleda alleged that some persons with links to the ruling party were involved in the murder and that was why the killers had managed to flee.

The BNP acting secretary general was speaking at a meeting with the leaders of a number of pro-BNP organisations at the chairperson's Gulshan office in the city.

The meeting was organised as part of the party's preparation for the March 12 rally, called to mount pressure on the government to restore the caretaker government system.

Mirza Fakhrul urged all the party leaders and activists to make the March 12 rally a success, saying that the country was passing a juncture and all had to be united to protect the country.

BDR CARNAGE CASE

Sepoy Selim with others opened fire: PW

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sepoy Selim Reza along with several other armed soldiers opened fire on the then BDR chief Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed and other army officials at the Darbar Hall in Pilkhana headquarters of BDR on February 25, 2009.

Hit by bullets, the officers fell on the floor and died instantly, lance nayek Al Mahmud Kabir yesterday told the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court at the city's Alia Madrasa playground in Bakshibazar.

Lance nayek Ekramul and sepoys Ibrahim, Altaf, Rafiqul and Aiyub were among the assailants, said the prosecution witness in the BDR carnage case to the court.

At around 12:30pm on that day, Al Mahmud saw havildar Shahidul Islam and sepoys Shamim and Abu Bakkar celebrating the gruesome killing of the officers near the signal sector building.

"We have finished many army officers," the soldiers rejoiced.

The court adjourned its proceedings for

five minutes following a heated debate between the defence and prosecution lawyers.

As soon as the judge left the court, some of the accused in the dock hurled abuse at the prosecution.

Surprised at this, defence lawyer Aminul Islam warned the accused to behave responsibly. "We won't fight for you in future if you do this again. Remember this is not Pilkhana."

Earlier, the court also recorded the depositions of two more prosecution witnesses -- Major Abu Sayed Khan and Nayek Subedar Rafiuzzaman.

The defence later cross-examined them.

The court adjourned its proceedings till Monday.

So far, 52 prosecution witnesses gave depositions to the court in this case.

Seventy-four people including 57 army officers were killed at the BDR (now Border Guard Bangladesh) headquarters during the two-day mutiny.

95 slum children out of 1,000 die under age 5

Says Unicef report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 95 children out of every 1,000 born in the country's slums die before the age of five. The figure is 48 for every 1,000 births in the country, says a Unicef report.

Bangladesh ranks 61st in the under-five mortality rate list of 190 countries, says the report, "The state of the world's children 2012: Children in an urban world".

However, the report contains no comprehensive data on the country's slum dwellers, thought to number around 41.7 million, 28 percent of the population, and slum children who are considered as the most vulnerable in society.

Rapid urbanisation leaves millions of urban slum children excluded from and deprived of necessary services, said a Unicef official while launching the report at Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday.

For example only 18

percent of slum children attended secondary school compared to 53 percent of children in urban areas and 48 percent in rural areas, said the report.

Around 22 to 50 percent of the 2.5 million people forced into labour after being trafficked are children. In Bangladesh, 22 percent of infants are born underweight, it said.

Though HIV infection was seen to have decreased in a survey among 60 countries, it rose by more than 25 percent in Bangladesh and six other countries, it added.

Addressing the programme, Unicef Bangladesh country representative Pascal Villeneuve said, "Children in slums and deprived neighborhoods are often invisible to decision makers and lost in a hazy world of statistical averages that conceal grave inequalities."

Noted economist Prof Abul Barkat said the number of slum dwellers is increasing day by day in the name of urbanisation in the country.

Planning Secretary Bhuiyan Shafiqul Islam stressed the need for effective initiatives on the basis of the report's data to end discrimination on and deprivation of slum children.

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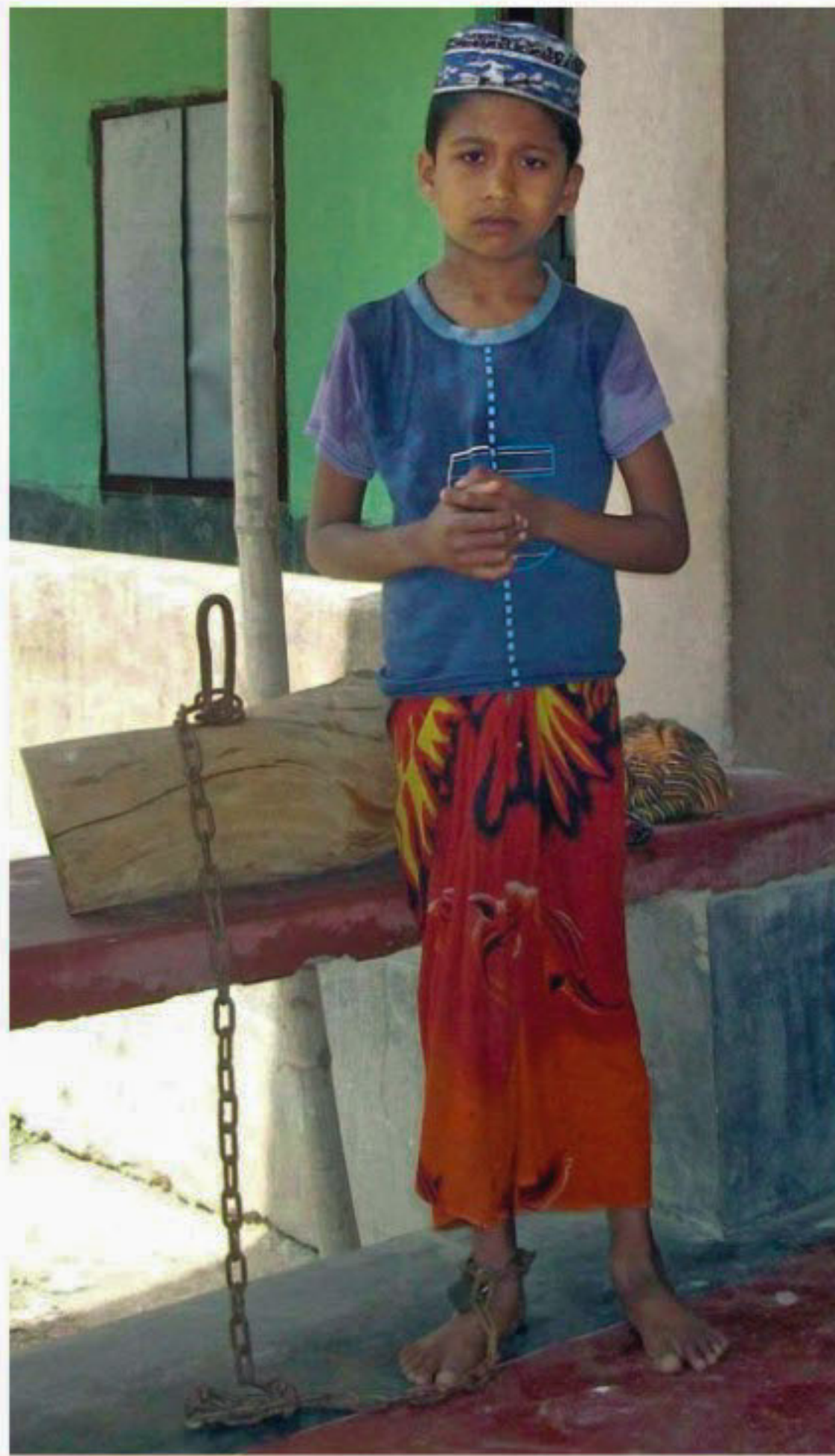


PHOTO: STAR

Ten-year-old Awal, a madrasa student, was kept chained to a wood log as his punishment for being absent from lessons for one day. The photo was taken Tuesday.

Madrasa staff sent to jail for torturing student

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

A madrasa superintendent was sent to jail yesterday for torturing a student.

The victim was Awal, 10, student of Mohipur Hafezia Madrasa.

Police said Anwar Zahid, superintendent of the madrasa, chained Awal to a wood log on February 27, as he was absent the day before.

The boy had to eat, sleep, and bathe with the wood log weighing about 12kg till Tuesday noon when one Moniruzzaman Khan noticed the incident and informed it to police.

Immediately, police rescued Awal and arrested Anwar.

A Patuakhali court sent Anwar to jail yesterday.

The victim is now with his family.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina distributes checks among families, victimised by the 2009 BDR mutiny, at her official residence of Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Application for 33rd BCS on web

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday published the circular for 33rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examination to fill up 4,206 vacant posts, said the PSC officials.

Of the total vacant posts, 2,905 are in professional and technical cadres, 582 in general cadre, 607 in education cadre (general colleges), and 112 in education cadre (teacher training colleges).

For the first time, the candidates will have to apply through online for the BCS exam.

The detail information about the circular is available at its website: www.bpsc.gov.bd.

DoE fines Tk 12 lakh for pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined Tk 12 lakh to a factory in Gazipur and a developer in the city's Dhanmondi area for air and noise pollutions respectively.

A DoE team headed by Director (enforcement) Munir Chowdhury fined Radiant Renewable Energy Limited Tk 10 lakh at Mirzapur in Gazipur for polluting air.

The team sealed the factory.

The team detected a thick black layer on trees, buildings and fields of the adjacent area caused by polluted air emitting from the factory.

The waste tyre recycling factory was polluting air by producing sulphur-dioxide, nitrogen oxides and tiny rubber particles.

The produced gas and particles were causing several diseases, said a DoE statement.

In another drive, the team realised Tk 2 lakh in fine from a developer company, South Breeze Housing Limited, for creating huge noise at night during construction work in the city's Dhanmondi area.

The team also asked the company to follow environmental code in building construction.

HC asks govt to transfer Nilphamari UNO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to transfer Nilphamari Sadar upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) on charge of addressing a female student of Nilphamari Govt College as a "prostitute" and penalising her for "having a love affair" with its teacher on January 13.

UNO Kawsar Nasrin yesterday appeared before the HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim.

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