

Flag hoisting day at Kolkata mission today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Today is the flag hoisting day of independent Bangladesh at the Kolkata mission.

On the day in 1971, the Bangladeshi diplomats and officials led by then First Secretary M Hossain Ali first hoisted the flag of independent Bangladesh at the Kolkata mission.

Since then, April 18 is being considered as a significant event in Bangladesh's national history, said a press release.

# Under-5 child mortality rate has dropped

Says BDHS preliminary report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The under-5 child mortality rate in the country has dropped to 53 per 1,000 in 2011 from 65 in 2007, says the preliminary report of Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS) 2011 released yesterday.

This is a factor that will help the country achieve the Millennium Development Goal-4 targeting to cut this rate to 48 per cent by 2015.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Dan W Mozena said at the launch of the report in the city, "Among other things, Bangladesh is solidly on track to meet the MDG to reduce under-5 child mortality rate by two thirds and reducing mater-

nal mortality by three-fourths between 1990 and 2015."

The BDHS report also shows one third of mothers giving birth in the country are now attended by trained medical personnel. The figure has gone up to 32 per cent in 2011 from 21 per cent in 2007.

However, 17 percent of all deliveries are done through caesarean operations giving rise to concern among some experts whether the caesareans performed are necessary or not.

Dr Ishtiaq Mannan who made a presentation at the BDHS report dissemination ceremony pointed this out saying, "This is a matter of concern and qualified professionals should look into the necessity of

such operations".

About 73 per cent of these caesareans are carried out in private hospitals and clinics, he said.

The sixth BDHS, which documents rates of child survival, fertility, use of contraceptives, neonatal and postnatal care, states 17 per cent of all births take place at health facilities, up from 12 per cent in 2004.

The BDHS report which is widely used by policymakers, development partners, researchers and programme managers, shows a sharp decline in reproductive rate among women. The fertility rate has been declining rapidly in the country; from 6.3 in 1975 it now stands at 2.3 in 2011.

The rate of contraceptive usage has marked a rise; from 45 per cent in 1993-94 it is now 61 per cent in 2011.

The percentage of breast feeding of babies less than six months of age also marked a sharp rise -- up from 43 per cent in 2007 to 64 percent in 2011.

However, the report marked a sharp decline trend in Vitamin A supplementation coverage which dropped to 60 per cent in 2011 from 84 per cent in 2007.

Severe Vitamin A deficiency can result in childhood blindness and also increase severity of infections especially of measles and diarrhoeal diseases. It can also slow down recovery from illnesses, the report

added.

The survey has been carried out every three to four years in the country since 1993-94 by USAID. Bangladesh is one of the 85 countries where such a survey is conducted.

Rafiqul Islam Sarker, director of National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT), Humayun Kabir, senior secretary of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Prof Dr Syed Modasser Ali, Family Welfare and Social Welfare adviser, Richard Greene, mission director of USAID Bangladesh and Dr Peter Kim Streetfield, director of CPUCC, ICDDR,B attended the programme held at city's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 5th death anniversary of Ajit Kumar Dutta, a freedom fighter and former chief accountant of now defunct The Bangladesh Observer, says a press release.

On the occasion, special prayers will be offered and recitation from the holy Geeta will be arranged for salvation of the departed soul at his residence at 23, Shriish Das Lane, Luxmibazar in the capital.



Drawing competition

Bangladesh Children TV Reporters Association will organise a drawing competition for children; Venue: National Museum, Sufia Kamal Auditorium; Time: 4:00pm.

AGM

National Housing Finance and Investments Limited will arrange its annual general meeting (AGM); Venue: Samari Convention Centre, Panthapath; Time: 12:00 noon.

Memorial meeting

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshti and Golam Mohiuddin Smriti Foundation will hold a memorial meeting; Venue: IEB Seminar Hall;



PHOTO: COURTESY

German Ambassador Holger Michael, right, Swedish Ambassador Anneli Lindahl-Kenny, left, and EU Ambassador William Hanna, centre, met on the premises of rights organisation, Odhikar, in the capital on Monday to discuss a project on education on the Convention Against Torture (CAT). The objective of the project is to criminalise torture and create awareness about the convention against torture and human rights abuses in Bangladesh.

## 'Managing committee at every ferry ghat to stop extortion from May'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan yesterday said his ministry will form 'managing committee' at every ferry ghat to stop extortion and maintain discipline there from May onwards.

However, the minister earlier proposed for legalisation of extortion at transport sector.

A managing committee will be formed at every ferry ghat to stop extortion and remove irregularities there. The committee will supervise all the activities at ferry ghat," he said.

A central monitoring cell will also be set up to watch the activities of these managing committees, he added.

Shajahan was talking to reporters after a meeting with transport operators, workers' union leaders and government officials at his ministry.

Earlier on February 12, the minister demanded before a parliamentary sub-committee that extortion be made legal to stop rampant corruption in the transport sector.

A representative each from local par-

liament member, deputy commissioner, superintendent of police, transport owners, transport workers, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation will be included in each managing committee.

The representative of deputy commissioner will coordinate the committee, which is supposed to start working from May 1, the minister said, adding, "The committees will also place recommendations whether a taskforce should be formed to end extortion and irregularities."

"We have also directed the police to take stern action against those responsible for running extortion businesses," he said.

Earlier, Shajahan, who also heads the Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, formed a 10-member convening committee at Daulatdia ferry ghat to check illegal toll collection, extortion and maintain serials of the waiting vehicles.

On April 5 this year, a section of bus owners threatened to suspend bus services to 22 southern districts for indefi-

nite period protesting extortion at Daulatdia-Paturia ferry ghat.

Briefing reporters yesterday, the minister admitted that rampant extortion is going on at Paturia-Daulatdia and Mawa-Kawrakand ferryghats.

CCTV cameras will be installed and computerised ticketing system will be introduced at the ferry ghats to curb corruption, he said, adding, "Wreckers will remain stand by at the ferry ghats to remove any stationary vehicle."

The minister said he will request the communications minister to widen roads near ferry ghats to reduce traffic jam.

He also denied the allegation that a section of transport workers is involved in extortion at ferry ghats, and claimed that a section of local people is involved in such extortion ring.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku, deputy commissioners and superintendents of police of different districts, representatives from transport owners and workers associations, among others, attended yesterday's meeting.

Earlier, Raquibul Islam and Shafiqul Islam, students of two private universities, went to attend an invitation at Sonargaon in Narayanganj in the morning, leaving Mukta alone in the house.

Raquibul returned home at 10:30pm and found the main door of the flat open but the door of Mukta's room locked from inside. When she did not respond to his call, he along with the neighbours broke open the door and found her body hanging from a ceiling fan with two scarves.

Raquibul informed the matter to police. Police went to the spot and detained Raquibul.

The police said they found the body lying on the floor.

Raquibul told the police that Mukta had an affair with a youth whom they had sublet a room of their flat. The youth went to Chittagong last week. Raquibul suspected that Mukta might have committed suicide due to some problem in her relation with the youth, said the police.

Meanwhile, Kafrel police recovered the body of Shapla, a garments worker, from her house at section-13 in Mirpur yesterday morning. The police said she allegedly hanged herself from the ceiling fan with a scarf.

Shapla, who lived with her parents, went to sleep at 12 midnight and might have committed suicide afterwards, said the police.

The reason behind the suicide could not be known.

## Two girls commit suicide in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two teenage girls allegedly committed suicide at the capital's Mirpur and Rampura on Monday night and yesterday.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Rampura Police Station Delwar Hossain said police recovered the body of Mukta from a house at Malibagh Chowdhury Para at around 11:00pm on Monday.

Mukta had been living in the house with two sons of a man named Rafiqul Islam, who adopted her, since November 2011 as Rafiqul and his wife have been living in Saudi Arabia for the last six months, said the OC.

The two sons Raquibul Islam and Shafiqul Islam, students of two private universities, went to attend an invitation at Sonargaon in Narayanganj in the morning, leaving Mukta alone in the house.

Raquibul returned home at 10:30pm and found the main door of the flat open but the door of Mukta's room locked from inside. When she did not respond to his call, he along with the neighbours broke open the door and found her body hanging from a ceiling fan with two scarves.

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