

# NHRC chief for law protecting Dalit's rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman yesterday underscored the need for a law to prevent discrimination against underprivileged people in the country, particularly the Dalit community.

They remain victims of many kinds of discrimination despite the government initiative to enact a law to protect their rights, he said.

Rahman made the comments at two separate workshops held yesterday on Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a process created through the UN General Assembly in 2006 when establishing the Human Rights Council.

NHRC organised both the workshops, one titled "UPR and Progress in Achieving Rights of Destitute, Helpless and Underprivileged People of Bangladesh" and the other "UPR: Follow Up on the Recommendations on Women Rights and Bangladesh Compliance with CEDAW" at Brac Centre Inn in the capital.

The NHRC chairman said people with disabilities perhaps are unable to perform certain tasks but they can still contribute to the society with their God-gifted qualities.

Many people of the Dalit community are still treated as lesser humans, this attitude has to be changed through establishment of a humanitarian, equal and justice based society, he said.

After the workshops, Dr Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star that many countries have separate laws to ensure equal rights for the Dalit community but there is no such law in Bangladesh.

His office - which has received demands from different classes of citizens for a law to protect the rights of the Dalit community - will make the recommendation to the government, he said.

Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra Advocate Sultana Kamal, speaking at the first workshop, said the government has to inform people about what measures it has taken for development of the underprivileged and the marginalised as people have a right to know this.

Sultana Kamal stressed on mandatory registration of Hindu marriages and equal property rights for Hindu women.

Prof Mesbah Kamal of the history department of Dhaka University said that some 55 lakh people from the Dalit and Harijan communities present in the country today are 'excluded' from the mainstream population.

Deprived of basic rights like education, sanitation and accommodation, they live under inhumane conditions, he said.

He demanded that the government ensures equal rights for the underprivileged and the marginalised by enacting a law and establishing an independent commission for this.

NHRC members Selina Hossain and Director General of Social Welfare Department Nasima Begum also spoke at the first workshop. Nirupa Dewan and President of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad Ayesha Khanam and Brotee Chief Executive Officer Sharmin Murshid, among others, addressed the latter.



A row of cars parked in front of New Market in the capital causes long tailback on the narrowed-down Mirpur Road yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

# Road crashes kill three

METRO DESK

Three people were killed and four others injured in separate road accidents in Chittagong on Friday and yesterday.

Staff correspondent from Chittagong reports, Monju Shil, 70, hailing from Patiya, was killed as a bus rammed a CNG-run auto-rickshaw from the opposite direction on Arakan road at Boalkhali yesterday morning.

She was taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the doctors pronounced her dead.

UNB from Chittagong says, two women were killed instantly and four others injured when a bus hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw on Chittagong-Khagrachhari highway at Brahmanrasta in Fatikchhari upazila on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as Joly Bonik, 50, and her daughter-in-law Tumpa Bonik, 25, of the upazila. The injured were admitted to the CMCH.

# Liquor swamps Patenga beach

TAREK MAHMUD, Ctg

Patenga sea beach in Chittagong has turned into a haven for contraband alcoholic beverage peddlers due to a lack of proper law enforcement.

During a recent visit to the beach The Daily Star found that some alcohol vendors were roaming around seeking customers. They were approaching visitors for selling their contraband items, making some visitors quite uncomfortable.

AKM Saiful Islam, a non-alcoholic visitor, said, "I visit the beach every month with my family. But, I feel uncomfortable by the approaches of the alcohol vendors."

Some make-shift restaurants at the beach sell contraband liquors and beers almost openly, although they do not have the permission for selling the alcoholic drinks.

Two to three alcohol vendors stand in front of most of the restaurants, and openly offer alcoholic drinks to the beach goers.

Visitors said the vendors approach very politely. But many visitors get robbed once they enter the eateries for alcoholic drinks.

Abu Sayed Mohammad, a businessman who recently visited the beach, said he was robbed of valuables after he entered a restaurant for drinking alcohol.

"Along with some of my friends, I was walking on a road in the beach area. A boy invited us into a restaurant for food. He also offered foreign beers," he said adding, "After we entered the restaurant for beers, the boy and some of his associates robbed us of our mobile phone sets, wallets and money at knife point."

Tajul Islam, general secretary of Patenga Sea Beach Shop Owners' Co-operative Committee, admitted that some restaurants at the beach are involved in illegal sale of alcoholic beverages.

"As it is a tourist spot, many people come here and want to drink different kinds of alcohol," he said adding, "Though there is no licenced bar or shop for selling the items, some sell those contraband items secretly."

An alcohol peddler on the beach, on condition of anonymity, said a three-level syndicate is involved in the contraband alcoholic beverage business in the area.

A section of the syndicate buys various alcoholic drinks from foreign merchant vessels anchored at the outer anchorage in the Bay of Bengal. Then they sell those to a secondary syndicate. The secondary syndicate sells those to some retailers at the beach area. The retailers appoint a number of

vendors who sell those to the consumers.

On condition of anonymity a retailer said, "At least 10 to 15 groups are involved in alcohol selling in the beach area."

"Around three to four groups buy the items from foreign merchant vessels," he said adding, "We get the items from the secondary syndicate."

According to him, the retailers appoint a number of teenage boys as their informers. The boys inform them over cellphones about law enforcers approaching the beach area.

A total of seven traders sell the contraband alcohols at the sea beach through their retailers and vendors, he said.

Another retailer, on condition of anonymity, said a team of police from Patenga Police Station recently raided the beach area, and caught some vendors and customers red-handed with alcohol in their possession. But they released the detainees after taking bribe, he alleged.

Pradip Kumar Das, officer-in-charge of the police station, said they are trying to stop the illegal business in the beach area.

"As the network of the traders is very strong, police often fail to arrest the traders who remain behind the scene," he said adding, "We conduct drives regularly."

Asked about the allegation that police released some detained alcohol peddlers in exchange for bribe, the OC said, "I did not get any such allegation. But I will look into it."

Mukul Jyoti Chakma, deputy director at Narcotics Control Department in Chittagong, said, "We conduct drives on a regular basis, but we cannot achieve desired success due to a lack of manpower."

Acknowledging that there are syndicates of alcohol traders at the beach, Jyoti Chakma said, "I joined the office not too long ago. I am trying to collect detailed information about that."

Bangladesh Coast Guard, the country's maritime border patrol agency, seized around 13,000 bottles of different kinds of beer and liquor in several drives in the bay and the outer anchorage areas between December last year and April this year.

Lieutenant Commander Jashimuzzaman, team leader for anti-drug operation of Coast Guard in Chittagong, told The Daily Star, "We seized many contraband items in our regular drives in the bay area, but we could not arrest the gangs who are behind the scene of the business."

"We have a lack of manpower and modern patrol boats to conduct the drives effectively," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

In a dearth of water availability, residents of Rajuk residential area at Shampur in the capital demonstrate holding up empty pots and pitchers demanding immediate water supply yesterday.

# BANGLADESH-INDIA RELATIONS

## India may amend constitution to strengthen ties

STAR REPORT

India's United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government is likely to introduce a constitutional amendment bill designed to improve ties with Bangladesh, despite stiff opposition from coalition ally Trinamool Congress, Indian newspaper Deccan Herald reports.

UPA feels that the ratification of the 1974 Bangladesh-India land boundary agreement and the protocol added to it when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Bangladesh in 2011 is necessary to improve relations, the newspaper added.

Though the ruling alliance lacks the numbers in either Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, sources said it is likely to introduce the bill during the monsoon session of parliament.

The opposition parties, especially Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), are expected to oppose the bill as they feel that India will lose more than it will gain.

Sources said UPA wanted to send out a message to Bangladesh that Manmohan was committed to ratify the agreement and protocol, said the newspaper.

The agreement includes resolving pending disputes on undemarcated border

stretches, facilitating the exchange of 51 enclaves of Bangladesh in India and 111 Indian enclaves in Bangladesh and preserving "adversely possessed lands" as status quo.

West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress feels that the deal would cause India to lose large chunks of its territory to Bangladesh. It has also stalled a deal on sharing of Teesta's waters between the two nations.

Protesting against the deal last year, BJP and Asom Gana Parishad in Assam alleged that it would make the northeastern state lose territory.

Bangladesh is understood to have told India to put forward some "visible steps" for the agreement's ratification, said the newspaper.

Sources said Bangladesh Foreign Secretary M Mijarul Quayes told his Indian counterpart Ranjan Mathai last month that introduction of the bill would help Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government.

The Bangladesh government would be able to justify its policy of walking the extra mile to maintain friendly ties with India, a move criticised by the opposition parties which alleged that she was giving too much to India, said Mijarul.

## Five arrested over land grabbing attempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested five people from Katgar Hindupara area in Chittagong city on Friday for attempting to occupy a land of a temple.

The arrestees are Mohiuddin Munna, 40, Saifuddin Khaled, 44, Abdul Hakim, 45, Mahub Alam, 36, and Mosharrif Hossain, 35, residents of the area.

Police and the locals said Munna, with some 70 of his cohorts, forcibly hung a signboard bearing his name on the land in an attempt to occupy it on Friday and chased away those who tried to prevent them.

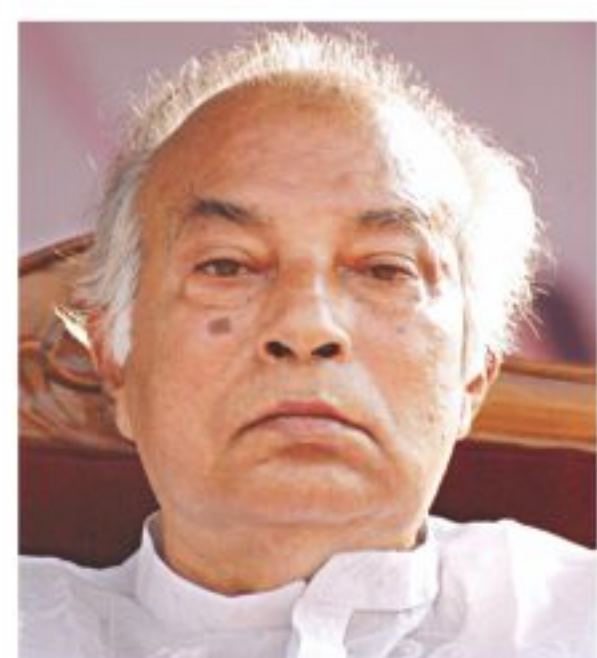
The group had tried to occupy the land earlier as well on June 6 and 12, alleged the locals.

Police were deployed in the area to avert any untoward situation.



PHOTO: STAR

Sunagorik organised a human chain programme in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to food adulterators.



# Abdul Matin Chowdhury passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former home minister and BNP leader Abdul Matin Chowdhury died of old-age complications at a hospital in the capital yesterday.

He was 78. A confirmed bachelor, he left behind his relatives, political colleagues, and well-wishers to mourn his death.

He breathed his last at Monowara Hospital around 10:15am. He had been fighting against various diseases since he suffered a severe brain haemorrhage in 2002.

Family sources said Matin was admitted to the hospital two months ago due to deterioration in his health.

His body will be buried today at his family graveyard in Rugganj of Narayanganj district.

Hearing the news of his demise, BNP leaders including acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir rushed to the hospital.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held in front of BNP central office at the city's Nayapaltan yesterday afternoon.

His second namaz-e-janaza will be held at the South Plaza of the parliament complex at 11:00am today.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and acting secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir expressed their deep shock at the death of the veteran leader.

Khaleda also visited Matin's residence in the evening and consoled his family members.

Speaker Abdul Hamid and Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali also expressed deep sorrow at the death of Matin Chowdhury.

Born in Rugganj in 1944, Matin was involved with BNP since its inception in 1978 and was elected as parliament member for four times.

He was the home minister in Khaleda's cabinet during the 1991-96 tenure and later in 2001 was made the textiles minister during the BNP-led four-party alliance's rule.

The former Muslim League leader had been a member of the BNP's standing committee from 1991 to

# Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg



Najimuddin Ahmed Khan (Nantu) passed away yesterday

due to cardiac arrest at his residence in OR Nizam Road area of Chittagong city. He was 52, says a press release.

He left behind his mother, wife and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at OR Nizam Road Jame Masjid.

He was buried in his family graveyard at Bara Uthan village of Patiya upazila in Chittagong following his second namaz-e-janaza there in the afternoon.

Nantu was involved with different cultural organisations, including Swadhin Gosthi, Nabin Mela and Saikat Chari, and was a member of the popular music band 'Souls.'



**Drawing competition**  
Abahani Samarthok Gosthi will organise a children's drawing competition; Venue: Abahani club premises; Time: 11:00am.

**Sit-in**  
Save the Rural Development Association will stage a sit-in; Venue: