



Garment workers' organisations yesterday pay their respects at the Zurain graves in the capital of some of the workers, totalling at least 112, who died in a devastating fire at Tazreen Fashions in Ashulia on the day in 2012.

PHOTO: STAR

# Violence against women on rise

## Say rights activists; find dowry a major contributor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
Despite massive campaigns, violence against women has increased over the past few years in the country, with dowry becoming a major contributor, according to two development organisations.  
Worse still, the form of violence has been more horrifying and brutal than the past, said Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, citing that the number of rapes was 307 in 2008; 393 in 2009;

593 in 2010; 635 in 2011; 508 in 2012; 696 in 2013, and 544 in the last 10 months this year.  
"Rape has been a major tool of violence, and women are being tortured brutally before and after rape," Ayesha Khanom, president of the parishad, told a press conference at Jatiya Press Club in the capital. "The perpetrators do it to strike fear into people's minds," she said.  
A culture of impunity, bias by law enforcers and administration, social

and political unrest, drug addiction and a lack of awareness are major contributors to the rise in the violence, she added, and described the trend as a reflection of criminality in social and political arenas.  
Separately, Khan Foundation revealed a survey report, showing that out of 806 cases on trafficking and violence against women and children in the last 10 months this year, 197 were dowry-related violence.

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### BCL CLASH AT SUST

## Probe committee yet to investigate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet  
The three-member probe committee formed by Shahjalal University of Science and Technology to investigate the recent clash between two factions of BCL is yet to begin probing the incident even though five days have passed.  
Prof Mohammad Yunus, a member of the committee, yesterday told The Daily Star that the team is yet to probe the incident, but they will hold a meeting in a day or two.  
The clash on Thursday left one person dead and 20 others injured.  
Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) central committee as well as the Sylhet district and city units have held press conferences on Friday and Saturday saying the Sust administration was to blame for the clash.  
Meanwhile, two assistant proctors -- Niloy Chandra Sarker and Abu Awal Md Shoeb -- have tendered their resignation from the proctorial body citing personal reasons, said Proctor Himadri Shekhar Roy.  
He said Vice Chancellor Prof Md Aminul Haque Bhuyan, who is in India at the moment, would take a decision after his return.

## Law needed to stop acts of discrimination

NHRC chief Mizanur Rahman tells discussion  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT  
The passage of an antidiscrimination act will not fix the discriminatory mindsets of people but it will prevent them from acting on their predispositions, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman said yesterday.  
While the law would be a milestone towards ensuring the rights of Dalits, a discrimination-free society will require broadening of people's minds, he told a roundtable on the human rights and social dignity of the Dalit people, at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.  
The event was organised by ActionAid Bangladesh and Regional Antyaja Forum (RAF).  
In June, the Law Commission recommended formulation of a law to prevent discrimination against Dalits, adivasis, cleaners, tea-garden labourers, hermaphrodites (hijras), people with disabilities, and sex workers, but no visible step has been taken yet.  
According to the recommenda-

tions, the law would provide for a fine of up to Tk 10 lakh or 10 years' imprisonment to anyone guilty of committing an act of discrimination.  
The NHRC chief said the initiative did not come from the government, but people.  
He said that though the Dalit people cleaned the whole city, they did not get the full payment, as they were not officially employed.  
"Bangalee sub-contractors always skim off the top of their salary," he added.  
Urging immediate passing of the law, ActionAid Bangladesh's Executive Board Member M Hafizuddin Khan said the conscious people must see to it that the act was enforced.  
Taposhi Sarkar, secretary of Nari Antyaja Parishad, said her people, Dalits, were treated as untouchables almost everywhere in the country. "Even the barbers refuse to cut our hair while our children are discriminated against and insulted in school every day," she said.

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