

MARCH 7 SPEECH

Youths have so much to learn

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said youths have many things to learn from the historic March 7 speech of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"Youths have many things to know, learn and understand [from the speech]. By going through this, patriotism, dutifulness and sincerity towards the country will develop among them," she said.

The PM was addressing an academic seminar titled "Immortal Poem of the Poet of the Politics" at Krishibid Institution Bangladesh.

Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust organised the programme to mark the day of historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu.

The PM said how much one gets in this/her life matters little. "How much one can give to the country matters a lot. This is the main motto for a politician. How much he/she does for his country and society is the main thing for a politician."

Hasina, also the ruling Awami League chief, said in the historic March 7 speech, the Father of the Nation not only told about the oppressed and suppressed people of

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking at a seminar at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh in the capital yesterday to commemorate Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech.

PHOTO: PID

PM wins award for women empowerment

BSS, Berlin, Germany

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was awarded "Lifetime Contribution for Women Empowerment Award" on Thursday on the occasion of International Women's Day in Berlin.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Germany Imtiaz Ahmed received the award given by the Institute of South Asian Women, an official release said.

State minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Md Mahbub Ali, among others, was present at the award giving ceremony.

Hasina won the award for her outstanding contribution to the field of women empowerment as well as her dynamic leadership in the South Asian region.

BURIGANGA BOAT CAPSIZE

1 body found, 5 still missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The festivity of a wedding ceremony has been reduced to tears as six of its guests, all members of the same family, became victim of a boat capsized near Sadarghat launch terminal Thursday night.

Of them, the body of a woman -- Jamshida Begum, 30 -- was recovered yesterday. Five others of the family have been missing since the boat capsized.

Shahjalal, the only family member who managed to swim ashore, has lost one of his legs as it was cut after being hit by a propeller of a launch.

According to police, the boat sank as it was hit by a launch, MV Suravi-7.

The five missing family members are 35-year-old Delwar, six-month-old Zunair, eight-year-old Meem, six-year-old Mahi and Shahida.

A team made of Bangladesh Navy, Coast Guard, Fire Service and Civil Defence was conducting rescue operation in the area to find the missing persons.

The family was heading towards their hometown, Shariatpur. They took the boat to get onboard of a launch from Kamrangirchar area.

Media control

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provost committee chaired by Vice-chancellor Akhtaruzzaman, triggered widespread criticism among students and teachers.

The press release was sent to the media without explaining why the decision had been taken.

"The decision is certainly against the spirit of the university," said Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan, associate professor of international relations.

The university should not have imposed such restrictions on the media, he told The Daily Star.

"Through giving such instructions, the university authority has taken a position similar to that of a political party."

Prof Fahmidul Haq of mass communication and journalism termed the move illogical.

The Ducsu election will be the most significant event for the media on that day and they will try to gather as much information as possible through deploying as many reporters as possible, he said.

Nurul Haque Nur, vice-president nominee from the quota reformist panel, alleged that the authorities were trying to implement a "blueprint" for the election.

"They created the barrier, fearing that the journalists would publish stories on possible irregularities.

"After seeing the steps the administration has taken so far, it feels like they are working on giving unfair advantage to a particular student body. The administration is advancing towards a pre-planned election through restricting the mass media," he said.

Liton Nandi, VP nominee from the Pragatisheel Chhatra Oikya (Progressive Students' Unity), said the decision made his camp wonder if the election would be fair.

Independent GS candidate ARM Asifur Rahman said, "It proves that the university authorities are paying heed to a specific student body's demands."

Chhatra Dal general secretary nominee Anisur Rahman Khandaker Anik said, "If the election is held peacefully, the student body the administration is favoring will lose by a huge margin. Since the media is an important component for a fair election they are restricting it."

When asked about the reason behind the move, Chief Returning Officer Prof Mahfuzur Rahman did not provide any explanation and only said, "We have taken the decision unanimously."

He added that he would tell the authorities that the reporters had demanded that more journalists should be allowed to cover the polls, which is going to be held after 28 years.

Around 43,000 students are set to cast their votes between 8:00am and 2:00pm on Monday.

Dhaka to have circular rails

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study within two months. The consortium would also prepare the Detailed Project Proposal (DPP), officials said.

"If everything, including financing of the project, goes according to the plan, we are hopeful about starting the construction of the circular rail network by June next year," said Project Director Monirul Islam Firozi.

China Railway SIYUAN Survey and Design Group Company Ltd, along with local firms BETS Consulting Services Ltd and Engineers and Advisors Ltd, will carry out the feasibility study within a year at a cost of Tk 18.92 crore.

"We are hopeful that the contract with the consortium will be signed within two months and feasibility study will start," Mofazzel Hossain, secretary of railways ministry, told The Daily Star last month.

The stations will be located at Tongi, Termuk, Purbachal, Beraid, Kayetpara, Demra, Siddhirganj, Chowdhury Bari, Chasara, Fatullah, Shyampur, Sadarghat, Babu Bazar, Nawabganj,

Sankar, Gabtoli, Dhaka Zoo, Birulia, Uttara, and Dhour, according to project documents.

The project cost as well as the number of stations and interchanges with metro rail could be revised after the feasibility study, said Firozi.

WHY CIRCULAR RAIL?

Even though the project is yet to break ground, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujaan in parliament on February 4 said 19 percent progress had been made until December last year.

Project Director Firozi, also director (engineering and estate) of Bangladesh Railway, said it was not possible for road, as a single mode, to handle the huge number of passengers in the city.

"[Circular rail] would play a vital role in reducing traffic jam in the city," he added.

Traffic jams in Dhaka eat up around 5 million working hours every day and the average speed of vehicles during rush hours in the city has come down to 5kmph, according to the Accident Research Institute of Buet.

ARI's former director Prof Moazzem Hossain said success of the circular rail would depend on its proper integration with road and other rail [metro rail and commuter train] routes inside the city.

He said people would use the circular rail and at one point his or her journey would require entering the city. "So a proper integration between rail and road routes inside the city is a must."

As per the Revised Strategic Transport Plan (RSTP) for Dhaka city and its adjacent areas, the government would build five metro rail lines and two Bus Rapid Transit, dedicated lane for buses, routes to ease congestion.

The circular rail line is not in the RSTP.

Asked, Firozi said the RSTP was not something that was locked. It needed to be revised every five years.

"We have asked the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority, which is now revising the RSTP, to incorporate the circular rail in the plan," he said.

The DTCA is responsible for preparing strategic transport plan, providing regular supervision, and coordinating all possible planning for transportation infrastructure development within Dhaka city and nearby districts.

An official of the DTCA said they were considering the inclusion of the circular rail in the plan.

"The rail authorities have informed us about the feasibility study and we would decide after going through the study report," the official added, asking not to be named.

FINANCING

Last year, more than a dozen Japanese companies had shown interest in investing in eight infrastructure projects in Bangladesh under a new government-to-government initiative. The Dhaka circular rail line was one of them.

Under the new arrangement, Japanese companies would invest without participating in any bidding.

Mofazzel Hossain, secretary of the railways ministry, said it was yet to be decided how the project would be financed.

Not all forms recognised

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At first, the study participants were given a case study which described how a working husband regularly abuses his wife verbally. Asked, more than half of the respondents (54 percent) said that was not violence at all.

The participants were given another case study on the stalking of a girl on her way to and from school and asked whether her father did the right thing by not protesting the incident.

As much as 80 percent of them said the father should have protested. Fifteen percent -- 92 percent of them women -- said it was not safe to stand against stalkers on the streets.

Asked why they used case studies in the survey, Moutushi Kabir, director of communications at Brac, said, "Seeing a situation as a third person often brings out authentic, impersonal and objective responses. So, we used case studies in order to make sure that the respondents

remained impartial and unprejudiced."

Six out of 10 people surveyed said they understood that mental torture -- which includes creating pressure for dowry, threat of divorce and "not talking" -- is also violence against women.

Marital rape turned out to be one of the least understood forms of violence against women, with only 4 percent considering it to be one.

Only 1.1 percent respondents thought threat of divorce is a form of violence and 6.9 percent recognised creating fear of violence as a type of violence against women.

Besides, more than nine out of the 10 respondents said they were not happy with the way the media reports incidents of violence against women.

Around 25 percent thought that the media should refrain from giving vivid description of such incidents and stop publishing the identity of the victims.

They also said indecent representation of women in popular culture and pornographic content in digital and offline media instigated the tendency among men to inflict sexual violence on and harsh behaviour towards women.

The study notes violence against women is one of the most pervasive and fundamental violations of human rights and it's also one of the most under-recognised problems in Bangladesh.

It went on to explore the root causes of violent behaviour against women.

Around half of the respondents said violence against women was on the rise due to an overall lack of values in today's society.

The study also said one fourth of the respondents had thought that a lack of proper execution of law had also resulted in the rise in the violence.

The director of communications at

Brac, Moutushi, said, "The question of morality is deep rooted in the very fabric of our society. We need to relook at the power play of patriarchy in our social value system, which comprises family, education system and culture."

She also said, "The traditional definition of masculinity has to change and a good starting point could be ensuring gender sensitive education for adolescents and an enabling environment for women everywhere."

"Raising awareness and strong enforcement of law should go hand in hand. They're not mutually exclusive because the targets are different. Raising awareness is for all and it helps in preventing violence. Stronger law enforcement, meanwhile, will ensure that perpetrators will always fear the consequence," Moutushi added.

Women voters the deciders?

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ensuring safety of female students on the campus, bringing an end to sexual harassments, extending the time limit for entering the female dormitories at night and setting up medical stores with sanitary pads and other necessities available.

General students said the student organisations have less control on the female dormitories in comparison with the male ones. So, candidates are paying more attention to the female voters.

However, some female voters claimed that the number of female candidates was very low in the panels, though the students' bodies were coming up with ambitious promises for female students.

They blamed the "patriarchal outlook" of the society and poor practice of democracy for the situation.

"We are giving extra care to address the issues related to female students and this is why our panel has the highest number of female candidates" said Sonjit Chandra Das, chief of BCL's election conducting committee and DU unit president of the student body.

Liton Nandi, Ducsu vice-president nominee from the left-leaning Progressive Students' Unity, said, "We

are paying special attention to make the campus safe for female students and wipe out all sorts of sexual harassments from the campus."

Umme Habiba Benojir, Ducsu general secretary nominee from the Bangladesh Students' Federation, said female voters could play a vital role in this election, adding that they should go for the candidates who have specific plans to address various issues related to women.

According to the Ducsu website, as many as 16,312 female voters out of a total 43,000 voters will cast their ballots for 229 candidates, including 30 female students, from different panels to elect 25 leaders.

Pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal has nominated only one female student and is conducting campaign with a promise to increase facilities at the female common rooms and extend the time limit for returning to halls from 9:30pm to 11:00pm.

Progressive Students' Unity has nominated a female student for Ducsu election and promised to establish gender equality on the campus and cancel the existing time frame for returning female halls in the evening.

Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, the

platform that spearheaded the quota reform movement, with one female candidate on board, promised to force the authorities so that non-resident female students could enter the dormitories without much difficulty.

Bangladesh Students' Federation panel has promised to establish a martial art centre for females, a taskforce to hold trial of sexual harassment-related cases and medical stores with sanitary pads at female halls.

Swadhikar Satantra Parishad, with its one female candidate, promised to build a safe and sound environment for female students on the campus.

The Daily Star talked to several general students on the campus and majority of them hailed those panels who promised to take initiative for keeping the hall gates open till 11:00pm and stop sexual harassment on the campus.

"It has been very difficult for me to enter the hall within 9:30pm every day as I remain busy with tuitions till 9:00pm. So, I think it will be helpful for us if the elected panels stick to their promises about keeping the female hall gates open till 11:00pm" said Suraiya Akter, a residential student of the university's Ruqayyah Hall.

BCL's Golam Rabbani violates election code

Seeks "prayers" during campaign at DU mosque

DU CORRESPONDENT

Golam Rabbani, general secretary candidate from the pro-Awami League students' wing in Ducsu polls, allegedly violated the code of conduct of the election yesterday.

Breaching section 5 (Chha) of the code, he did electioneering at the DU central mosque following Jumma prayers.

He said, "I seek your prayer for the Bangladesh Chhatra League nominated Shovon-Rabbani-Saddam panel. I want mandate of love from you."

"I am Golam Rabbani, general secretary contender. My ballot number is 03. Pray for me so that I can be on your side like before."

The section 5 (Chha) of the election code says no one can conduct electioneering at mosques, temples or any other places where people gather to worship.

Contacted, Rabbani denied the allegation and said, "Seeking vote and prayer are not same."