

Verdict fair, timely

Say Buet VC, students demanding swift execution

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) Vice Chancellor Prof Satya Prasad Majumder demanded swift execution of the Abrar murder case verdict yesterday.

"We think the judiciary gave the right verdict after thorough analysis. We want the verdict to be executed swiftly, with due legal procedure," Prof Majumder told journalists at a press conference at his office.

He said the verdict on Abrar's murder was long-awaited, terming it "fair and timely".

In the verdict, 20 out of the 25 accused have been sentenced to death.

Urging students to not get involved in such crimes anymore, he said, "If anyone engages in such activities in the future, they must be punished."

Asked whether Buet as an institution can evade liability for the students' wrongdoings, the VC said, "The judiciary will look into whether the institution is responsible or not. We have nothing to say on this issue. We have rethought whether there was any fault in our system."

"For this, we have strengthened security



Abrar Fahad

arrangements on the campus," he added.

Mentioning Buet administration's decision to ban student politics on campus, he said, "I am not sure what the successor administration will do later. However, we want the current one to maintain this decision."

On the development, Buet student Megh Raha said, "We have been waiting for such a verdict since the murder. We are satisfied with the verdict and hope that no such incident will happen in any educational institution in the future."

Another student, Mizanur Rahman, said, "We want to see the verdict's execution as soon as possible. We don't want any of the accused to evade the verdict by using loopholes of the law."

In the early hours of October 7, 2019, Abrar Fahad, a second-year student of electrical and electronics engineering at Buet, died after being brutally beaten by some Chhatra League men at Sher-e-Bangla hall of the university.

The incident triggered a firestorm of protests on campuses across the country. Many took to social media to demand justice for Abrar.



The road in front of Ideal School and College at the capital's Motijheel was jam-packed with parents and children yesterday, amid no sign of social distancing. As educational institutions are vaccinating students who are 12 to 17 years old, such crowds have become a frequent sight.

Begum Rokeya Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Begum

Rokeya

Day will be

observed

countrywide

today to pay

tribute to

Begum Rokeya

Sakhawat, a

social reformer and

pioneer of

women's education.

The momentous

day marks the 141st

birth and

89th death anniversaries of

Begum Rokeya.

Various organisations

have chalked out

numerous

events to observe

the day.

The main event

will be marked by the

Begum Rokeya Award

giving

ceremony at Osmani

Memorial Auditorium in

Dhaka, reports BSS.

The awardees are -- Prof

Hasina Zakaria Bela for

contributing to women's

education, Archana Biswas

for establishing women's



ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

She was a victim of child marriage. Being only a ninth-grader, she was forcibly married off at 14 in 2003.

By the time she turned 18, Taslima Shirin Mukta was already a mother of two. Her life by then consisted of an endless series of household chores, which left little time for studies.

But Mukta wasn't one to give up. She envisioned for herself an educated future and kept fighting for it, overcoming all her obstacles.

Sticking to her goals, she went on to complete her graduation, qualified for the Bangladesh administrative service, and joined as an assistant commissioner and executive magistrate.

The story of her early struggles is shared by many women in the country, which is why her achievement is especially important. For those like her, Mukta's resilience shines a light of hope.

Mukta first became pregnant when



Taslima Shirin Mukta

she was in tenth grade. "My in-laws did not take it well that I still chose to continue my studies. Even my parents expressed their frustration," the Sandwip-upazila native told this correspondent.

"But even then, I knew that only education could change my and my children's lives."

SSC exams arrived when she was seven months pregnant. By the time the results came out, her baby was 29 days old. Mukta was 16.

From child bride to CHANGEMAKER

She then enrolled into college and came out of her higher secondary exams with good results.

But despite her educational success, she continued to be discouraged by family members.

She took the next step by enrolling in Chittagong College. While studying there, she got pregnant again. But even during her second pregnancy, she didn't give in to the pressure.

After graduation from college, she concentrated on preparing for a government job.

"My target was to pass the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) examination. All of my efforts paid off when I qualified in the 35th BCS exams in 2016 and got selected in the administration cadre," she said.

"I joined the office of deputy commissioner (DC) of Habiganj as assistant commissioner and executive magistrate. In the history of Habiganj, I was the first woman who served as NDC (nezarat deputy collector),"

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Unequal burden of unpaid care work

Women's unpaid work hindrance to entering labour market, say speakers at roundtable



Speakers at the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The unpaid care and domestic work that women do hinders them from entering the mainstream labour market and climbing the occupational ladder, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

The recognition of women's unpaid work has become crucial, as its monetary value stood at almost 40 percent of

Bangladesh's GDP in fiscal 2016-17, they said.

The roundtable, titled "Importance of care economy to reduce domestic violence against women and girls", was jointly organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and The Daily Star.

Sayema Haque Bidisha, professor of Dhaka University's economics department,

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At least find my son's body

Says father of 12-year-old Kamal who fell into an open drain in port city on Monday

SANJAY KUMAR BARUA, Ctg

"I called for help from everyone. Local shopkeepers. The police. But no one would come forward."

"I had to go down the drain myself, but returned empty-handed," said Md Kausar, father of 12-year-old Kamal who went missing inside a Chattogram drain on Monday afternoon.

"If you couldn't save him, at least find my son's body," he said in a despondent tone.

As of the filing of this report yesterday night, a search operation by the fire service was still on. A fire service personnel told this correspondent, "We will keep looking until we find the body."

A day-labour by profession, Kausar said Kamal was the youngest among his two sons and a daughter.

Kamal went missing in the drain while playing in the area with a friend, Rakib. Both had fallen into the open drain around 4:30pm. Although Rakib managed to get out, Kamal could not.

Located in the port city's Sholashahar



PHOTO: STAR

Railway Station area, this is the same drain where 55-year-old vegetable trader Saleh Ahmed disappeared on August 25.

This is the third such incident over the last three months for Chattogram.

Experts believe that due to lack of solid waste management, drains in the city have turned into waste dumps. As a result, the risk of death is multiplied if someone falls into a drain.

Shafiqul Islam, a fire service personnel who came to rescue the child, said, "Although the drain is 10-12 feet deep, it is clogged with waste."

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And the rage continues

Students say they will keep protesting until road-safety demands are met

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The protests demanding safe roads are still raging on. Students from several schools and colleges of the capital were seen yesterday, carrying placards that stated many of their demands, aimed at ensuring road safety and ending corruption and mismanagement in the transport sector.

Their demands also include justice for Notre Dame College student Nayeem Hasan and Ekramunnesa High School's SSC candidate Mainuddin -- two victims of recent road accidents.

Speaking on behalf of the protesting students,

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Civil society struggling due to shrinking space

Observe speakers at CPD conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the significant role it played in the lead up to and during the Liberation War, the country's civil society is currently struggling due to shrinking intellectual space and weakening democratic environment.

As a result, many are adapting to the situation by scaling down their criticism or activities, or adjusting their positions on issues in line with government policies and activities.

Speakers said this at a session at the virtual international conference to reflect on Bangladesh's 50 years. The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), in collaboration with South Asia Program of Cornell University, organised the four-day event, which concludes today.

While presenting a paper, CPD distinguished fellow Debapriya

The decline of civil society-government relationship parallels the deterioration of domestic polity in the country.

DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA
Distinguished Fellow
Centre for Policy Dialogue

Sticky social norms and gatekeepers still restrict women's access to resources, spaces within formal institutions and their voice.

SOHELA NAZNEEN
Research Fellow
IDS (University of Sussex)

Bhattacharya said the civil society played an important role during the pre-liberation period, helped uphold the spirit of liberation and ensured trial of the collaborators afterwards, as well as restoring and protecting democratic values and promoting the peoples' interests.

Post 1971, the decade between 1990-2000 was one of the most productive periods of competitive

collaboration between civil and political elites, he said.

Unfortunately, this collaboration declined later and only improved to an extent after the 2008 national election.

He said till the national elections of 2014, there was a degree of openness on the part of ruling elites to listen to the opinions and suggestions of the civil society.

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With patriotic fervour at a high during the month of December, flags become much sought-after around this time every year. Makeshift shops selling the red and green in different shapes, sizes, and prices have popped up all around the capital. This photo was taken from Gulistan area yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

4 including 3 siblings crushed under train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Four including three siblings were killed after being crushed under the wheels of a running train near Bou bazaar rail crossing in Nilphamari Sadar's Monshapara village around 7:30am yesterday.

The deceased are siblings Lima Akhtar (11), Rima Akhtar (10), and Mominur Rahman (10), children of rickshaw-puller Rezwan Ali, and Shamim Hossain (28).

Shamim was a neighbour of the deceased siblings. Eyewitnesses told this correspondent that the victims were sitting on the rail track beside their house. Their father was with them, but he left a little while before the tragic accident.

But as the Khulna-bound mail train from Nilphamari rail station reached the spot at high speed, the siblings could not escape. Shamim Hossain, who was standing nearby, died while trying to rescue them.

Locals said they couldn't notice the approaching train as there was dense fog all around.

It became all the more tragic for the family as Mozir Ali (68), maternal grandfather of the deceased siblings, died of a heart attack as the news reached him.

After the incident, agitated villagers obstructed movement on the line for two hours but left after the Nilphamari SP and Saidpur Railway Police Station's OC pacified them.

The obstruction compelled the mail train Rupsha Express to remain stranded for the duration.

Locals have levied allegations that though the spot is an open rail crossing that hundreds of people pass through every day, no train blows whistle to caution people while passing the spot.

'Labour fare' for migrant workers

Demand recruiting agencies amid recent airfare hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recruiting agencies yesterday demanded that the government introduce "labour fare" for migrant workers.

They made the demand in the wake of the recent hike in airfare on different international routes.

The press conference was organised by "Sammilita Samannay Parishad, Baira", a platform of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies members at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

They mentioned that airfare of major destinations for migrant workers, especially the Middle East, has reached a range between Tk 75,000 to Tk 90,000 recently, from earlier prices of Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000. Fakhruul Islam, former finance secretary of Baira, said the labour fare could be two-third of the regular fare, in acknowledgement of the contribution of migrant workers to the country's economy.

Former Baira president Abul Basher and its former secretary-general Ali Haider Chowdhury attended the press conference.