

## Pro-people healthcare will be a fitting tribute to him

### Speakers tell memorial event on Dr Zafrullah

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial event yesterday said continuing the fight for a pro-people healthcare system in the country would be a real tribute to Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury – a fearless freedom fighter and founder of Gonoshasthaya Kendra.

He passed away on April 11 at the age of 81.

To commemorate Dr Zafrullah's lifelong fight for the rights of the people, Swasthya Andolon (Health Movement) organised the event, titled "Struggle for a Pro-people Healthcare", at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

Poet and columnist Farhad Mazhar presented an introductory speech on the life and works of Dr Zafrullah.

"The usual policy of his work was being with the people; trying to understand their problem as his point of view and not that of any expert isolated from the people," he said.

"If the younger generation – who will change Bangladesh in future – cannot differentiate corporate science and real science, they would not be able to change anything truly," added Mazhar.

He highlighted that the people-oriented philosophy of Dr Zafrullah led him to work on the National Drug Policy in 1982 and the Health Policy in 1990.

"He became successful in the case of the drug policy... [But] his initiative to adopt a health policy failed due to the opposition of the majority of physicians and health experts," Mazhar said.

He also mentioned that the drug policy has a spirit of upholding national interest.

In his opening speech, Prof Dr Rashid-E-Mahbub, president of Health Rights Movement's national committee, highlighted how Dr Zafrullah was active in every pro-people movement.

"We have to remember him by completing his unfinished tasks," he said.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said Dr Zafrullah was a lifelong freedom fighter.

"He was a man who would have joined anyone for the sake of upholding the masses' interests," she said.

Monzur Qadir, coordinator (health division) at Gonoshasthaya Kendra, pledged to complete the unfinished task of Dr Zafrullah.

Dr Foyzul Hakim, Prof Dr M Muzaherul Huq, Dr Mushtuq Hussain, Samia Afrin and Prof Sohel Reza Chowdhury also spoke at the event.

Zafrullah Chowdhury's wife Shireen Huq and son Bareesh Hasan Chowdhury were also present.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting with IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva at the meeting room of The Ritz-Carlton hotel on Saturday (Washington time).

PHOTO: P10

## Govt depriving Khaleda of advanced treatment overseas

### Says Amir Khasru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday alleged that the government is depriving Khaleda Zia of advanced medical treatment abroad.

"She's unjustly sent to jail in false cases. She has been deprived of treatment. Her condition is not good. She's being denied the specialised treatment she needs at a specialised hospital abroad," he said.

Khasru made the remarks while briefing reporters after a meeting with Ganatantrik Bam Oikya at BNP Chairperson's Gulshan office.

Though doctors have long been repeatedly talking about sending Khaleda overseas for advanced treatment, he said the government has been ignoring it.

He said, "Everyone from the president to the lower-level politicians in Bangladesh often go abroad for treatment. But Khaleda Zia is being deprived of it."

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was admitted to Evercare Hospital on Saturday night for some medical tests and required treatment. She has been kept under close observation in a cabin at the hospital.

## Khaleda's illness a part of BNP's plan

### Says Hasan Mahmud

UNB, Dhaka

Khaleda Zia is physically alright, but she is being shown ill as part of BNP's political plan, said Information Minister Hasan Mahmud.

The minister made the remarks during an exchange of views with the leaders and journalists of Bangladesh Chalachitra Sangbadik Samity at the Secretariat yesterday.

"BNP's real objective is to make Khaleda Zia sick and make her appear sick. BNP has been doing it from the very first for gaining political interest," he said.

"A few days ago, BNP leaders said if Khaleda Zia is not taken abroad for treatment; her life will be in danger. But we have seen that she is physically well with treatment at a local hospital. It proves that BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul's claim about Awami League keeping Khaleda sick to keep her away from politics is not true," he added.

## POLICY REGARDING DOMESTIC WORKERS

# Protection remains only on paper

NILIMA JAHAN

The Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy 2015, which aims to safeguard the rights and well-being of over two million domestic workers – mostly women and children – have remained unimplemented for the past eight years due to the government's lack of political will and negligence.

The major stakeholders, including domestic workers, employers, and law enforcement officials, are still unaware of the policy and the need for adequate resources and training to respond effectively to rights violations.

Despite being required to meet every six months, the central monitoring cell, established under the labour ministry three years ago to oversee the implementation of the policy, failed to convene a meeting even once, said Abul Hossain, advisor of National Domestic Women Workers Union.

Furthermore, the monitoring cells that were supposed to be formed at the city corporation, district, and upazila levels – headed by chief executive officers, deputy commissioners, and UNOs – were never established.

Hossain expressed his concerns over the absence of inspection teams. The teams should have included mayors of the respective city corporations or municipalities, union parishad chairs, local elites, and government representatives under the local government.

Last year, the High Court condemned the policy for being "incomplete" and "vague" as it did not provide specific information such as the amount of compensation for victims of violations, payment method, number of leave days, and

the appeal process for domestic workers who were denied leave.

As a result, domestic workers are still subjected to various forms of abuse, including sexual abuse (4 percent), physical abuse (21 percent), mental abuse (67 percent), and verbal abuse (61 percent), found a recent study by Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies and Dnet.

However, 95 percent of workers did not report the abuse to anyone – as domestic violence is considered a

leave, while 87 percent of domestic workers have no days off. Most work for more than 12 hours per day.

More than half of the workers suffer from health issues such as asthma, skin diseases, fever, and urine infections, and mostly seek treatment from dispensaries.

Most domestic workers in Bangladesh earn Tk 5,311 per month, which 96 percent of them believe is insufficient to cover basic needs. Also, 23 percent of these workers incurred hospitalisation expenses in the past year, costing Tk 25,999.

The study recommended implementing existing policies and laws, raising awareness of compensation and survivor rights, creating a compensation fund, establishing a minimum wage to address the issues faced by them and training law enforcement to handle gender-based violence cases and ensuring safe working conditions.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, emphasised the importance of bringing domestic workers under the purview of the existing labour law to effectively implement the policy.

"Without the law, the government cannot be made responsible," she said.

"To provide domestic workers with equal pay and protection has been a persistent challenge due to the nature of their work and economic disparities among employers. To address this, different employment grades should be established, and formal appointments with job security should be offered," she stated.

"Besides, registering and inspecting child domestic workers regularly is crucial to combat the culture of impunity surrounding the abuse that they face," she said.

**Domestic workers in Bangladesh are still subjected to various forms of abuse, including sexual abuse (4 percent), physical abuse (21 percent), mental abuse (67 percent), and verbal abuse (61 percent). More than half of the workers suffer from health issues such as asthma, skin diseases, fever, and urine infections, and mostly seek treatment from dispensaries instead of hospitals.**

regular occurrence to them and they do not seek legal measures against it.

Around 99 percent of domestic workers are unaware of the policy, while only 66 percent of employers have some knowledge about it.

Titled "Decent work and intersections with VAW/GBV: A study on Domestic Workers in Bangladesh", the study also revealed that despite the policy guaranteeing 16 weeks of maternity leave, only 0.5 percent of them are eligible for paid

## SSC, equivalent exams begin

STAR REPORT

The Secondary School Certificate and its equivalent examinations began across the country yesterday morning.

The exams started with Bangla (first paper) while the duration of the exam was from 10:00am to 1:00pm. According to the education ministry, 20,72,163 candidates are likely to take this year's SSC and equivalent exams. The exams will be held on all subjects with full marks but on revised syllabuses.

Meanwhile, while visiting SSC exam centre at Badda High School in the capital, Education Minister Dipu Moni said, "If anyone tries to spread rumour over question paper leak, strict action will be taken."

Regarding the schedule of SSC and HSC exams next year, the education minister said the government is considering to start the exams earlier, giving proper time to the candidates to prepare themselves.

## AC FAILURE FOR 13 DAYS Cardiac surgery to resume tomorrow at NICVD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease and Hospital (NICVD) said they would resume cardiac surgeries – which has remained halted since April 18 for failure of the air-conditioning system at the intensive care units – from tomorrow.

Public Works Department has completed the repair works yesterday and handed over the ICU to the hospital authorities, SM Forhaduzzaman Azad, sub-divisional engineer of PWD, confirmed The Daily Star.

Prof Monzur Alam, head of Cardiac Surgery Unit, said the authorities have prepared for bypass surgeries on two patients and valve implantation on another.

While visiting the cardiac surgery ward (15 and 16) yesterday, multiple patients said they were relieved that the surgeries will resume shortly.

The hospital accommodates 1,200 indoor patients at a time against its 800-bed capacity and has two ICUs with a total of 48 beds.

Patients often require intensive care for 3-7 days following a surgery.

## PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES Raise voice against torture on students by BCL activists

DU CORRESPONDENT

Torture on students by the members of Chhatra League has become a common occurrence in public universities of the country, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

During a programme titled "Torture on Students at Universities", the speakers expressed that the reason why such activities continue to occur is because the majority of students and teachers do not speak out against them.

The event was attended by university teachers, student leaders, and politicians who all shared their concerns about the matter.

The speakers highlighted how the ruling party's student leaders are known to take over residential dorms to establish their dominance and control the general students, leading to an intimidating atmosphere in the halls.

Despite this, neither the university authority nor the government has taken steps to address the issue, and civil society members have not been vocal about it either.

## Eleven more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least nine dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new ones, the total number of dengue cases rose to 986, according to the DGHS.

The total number of deaths stands at 11 this year.

Some 44 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment while 986 have been released from hospitals.



South Korean Ambassador to Bangladesh Lee Jang-Keun yesterday visited The Daily Star Centre and interacted with the newspaper's Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam and other senior journalists. He also sat for an interview.

PHOTO: STAR

## New UK envoy in town

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

British High Commissioner Designate to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke arrived in Dhaka yesterday.

She succeeded Robert Chatterton Dickson.

On her appointment, Cooke said she is delighted and deeply honoured to be returning to Bangladesh.

"I am committed to strengthening the long and friendly bilateral relationship... between our two countries," she said.

Cooke previously served in Bangladesh from 2012-2016, as the Country Representative for the Department for International Development (DFID).

**PRAYER TIMING**  
MAY 1

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:15	12:45	4:45	6:31	8:00
JAMAAT 4:50	1:15	5:00	6:35	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION