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Ensure safe, inclusive workplace for women

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Safe, secure, and supportive working environments are urgently required for all, particularly women and gender-diverse populations in Bangladesh, stressed speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They called for gender equity, harassment-free workplaces, and the implementation of gender-inclusive policies.

Participants also urged authorities to enforce the 2009 High Court guidelines on sexual harassment and to create a separate law to address harassment within institutions.

They stressed that robust legal frameworks are essential for accountability and fostering a culture of respect and safety in the workplace.

The roundtable, titled "Building Safe and Supportive Work Environment," was jointly organised by Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre and The Daily Star, in association with the BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health and Rutgers International, at the Daily Star Centre.

Dr Sanzida Akhter, professor of Dhaka University's Department of Women and Gender Studies, highlighted the importance of considering both online spaces and informal sector workplaces in

discussions about safety.

She noted that safety should not be limited to physical environments. Drawing on her experience working with RMG workers, she emphasised the need to consider the entire journey from home to the workplace, mentioning that many individuals leave their jobs due to harassment during their commute.

What we seek is a safe and supportive environment where employees can work, explore their potential, and contribute to society.

SANZIDA AKHTER
Professor of Department of Women and Gender Studies at DU

"What we seek is a safe and supportive environment where employees can work, explore their potential, and contribute to society," she added.

Dr Akhter pointed out that social norms are learnt from various sources but often conflict with workplace expectations. "We need more training starting from the

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Speakers at a roundtable on "Building Safe and Supportive Work Environments," at the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday. The event was jointly organised by Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre and The Daily Star, in association with the BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health and Rutgers International.

PHOTO: STAR

MEDIA COMMISSION

It will be formed after talks with all stakeholders

Says info adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will consult with all stakeholders of the media industry before forming the media reform commission, said Information Adviser Md Nahid Islam yesterday.

He was speaking at a discussion titled "Media Reform: Why and How?", organised by Media Support Network at Jatiya Press Club.

Over 50 journalists attended the event, voicing their frustrations over low salaries, the lack of wage board enforcement, and other issues plaguing the profession.

In response, Nahid said, "When discussions arise about issues like the wage board, we often see division among stakeholders [of the media sector], with editors and owners opposing it."

He emphasised the urgency of resolving wage issues, saying, "There can be no room for slave-like relationships between owners and journalists. Journalist organisations must act accordingly."

Nahid said while the government is working on this issue, the main resistance [against wage disparity] must come from the journalists themselves.

"We want to foster an environment that encourages young people to pursue this profession," he added.

Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

ACC needs to be overhauled

Says chief of reform commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission needs to be overhauled in order to make the anti-graft watchdog fully effective and independent, said Iftekharuzzaman, chief of the Anti-Corruption Reform Commission.

Appointments of commissioners on political consideration and deputation of bureaucrats to the ACC have made it a "hostage" to them, said Iftekharuzzaman, also executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh.

"We will try to find a way to resolve the issue," he told reporters at the TIB's Dhanmondi office after holding the first meeting of the reform commission.

For making ACC effective and independent, the reform commission's priority will be reviewing the ACC and other relevant laws and rules, he said,

For making ACC effective and independent, the reform commission's priority will be reviewing the ACC and other relevant laws and rules.

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN

adding that they will recommend amendments to the laws and rules if needed. Iftekharuzzaman said the ACC broadly has two types of jobs – holding the corrupt accountable and preventing corruption.

But the commission has yet to create a culture of taking action against those in power.

He said the reform commission will also have suggestions on how the corruption can be prevented.

He said the reform commission will solicit opinions from different stakeholders, like incumbent and former ACC officials, alongside people who fought legal battles on behalf of and against ACC.

The commission will also seek opinions from students who led the recent mass uprising that ousted the Sheikh Hasina-led government, he added. He hoped they would be able to submit the report within three months.

Travel ban on S Alam, wife, family members

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued a travel ban on S Alam Group owner Mohammed Saiful Alam, his wife Farzana Parveen, and 11 members of his family in connection with allegations of laundering US \$1 billion to Singapore and several other countries.

The 11 others include S Alam's sons – Ahsanul Alam and Ashraful Alam; his brothers – Mohammad Abdullah Hasan, Osman Goni, Abdus Samad, Rashedul Alam, Shahidul Alam, and Morshedul Alam; Osman's wife Farzana Begum; Samad's wife Shahana Ferdous; and one Miskat Ahmed.

Judge Mohammed Ash-Shams Joglul Hossain of the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court in Dhaka passed the order after the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director (Money SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

MJF concerned over lack of security for girls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citing the recent alleged rape of a class seven student in Khagrachhari by a teacher, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has expressed deep concern over the lack of security and safety for girls in educational institutions.

In a statement to the media yesterday, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said girls are vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse in schools, and the authorities have not taken adequate measures to protect them.

"Such incidents are reported regularly, and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice. Fearing reprisals, girls suffer in silence as there is no safe space for them to express their torment," the statement read.

According to news published across various newspapers, the teacher was earlier accused of attempting to rape a 10th-grade student and was jailed for the crime.

After his release, he was reassigned to the same school despite protests from residents. He had previously been accused of the same crime in Kushtia in 2018 during his prior employment.

MJF questioned the reasoning behind hiring a teacher with a history of sexual misconduct at a SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



'They killed my son for speaking up'

Father tells event marking Abrar Fahad's fifth death anniversary

DU CORRESPONDENT

Various social and political organisations organised different events yesterday marking the fifth anniversary of Buet student Abrar Fahad's murder.

At Palashi intersection, the Abrar Fahad Smriti Sangsad erected a memorial titled "Agrasan Birodhi Aat Stambha". This structure features eight pillars, symbolising sovereignty, democracy, public security, communal harmony, economic self-sufficiency, protection of local industries, agriculture, rivers, forests, and ports, cultural freedom, and human dignity.

It was inaugurated by Mahmudur Rahman, the acting editor of Amar Desh.

The original memorial was demolished in 2020 by members of the Chhatra League shortly after its construction. Many, including now member secretary of Jatiya Nagorik Committee Akhtar Hossain, were attacked by BCL at the time.

Speaking at the event, Abrar Faiyaj, SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Father of Buet student Abrar Fahad, who was beaten to death by some Chhatra League activists on October 7, 2019, speaks at a programme at Palashi marking his son's fifth death anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

RAIL, ROAD BRIDGE OVER KARNAPHULI

Project gets approval, deadline Dec 2030

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following a decade of planning, the project to build a rail cum road bridge over the Karnaphuli river at Chattogram's Kalurghat was finally approved yesterday, aiming to reduce bottleneck on Dhaka-Chattogram-Cox's Bazar rail corridor.

The Ecne approved the Tk 1,156.77 crore project. However, the dual gauge double-line rail plus double-lane road bridge will not be functional till December 2030.

It means the rail connectivity between the capital and Cox's Bazar via Chattogram will not be smooth before December 2030, even though the Bangladesh Railway opened Chattogram-Cox's Bazar rail line in November last year, spending over Tk 11,000 crore.

Apart from the century-old Kalurghat bridge, the 52km-long single line from Chattogram city to Dohazari is considered a major obstacle to ensuring smooth rail connectivity.

BR in October last year took a project involving Tk 10,797 crore to turn the Chattogram to Dohazari metre-gauge section into a dual-gauge line. The deadline

for the project is June 2028.

LONG-AWAITED BRIDGE

Built in 1931, the metre-gauge single-line rail bridge at Kalurghat was reconfigured in 1962 so that vehicles could use it too.

The Ecne approved the Tk 1,156.77 crore project. However, the bridge will not be functional till December 2030. It means the rail connectivity between the capital and Cox's Bazar via Chattogram will not be smooth before December 2030.

With time, the bridge has become unsafe, and the authorities have to repair the bridge occasionally.

However, the process to replace the bridge started in 2014 when the government decided to build the new bridge and SEE PAGE 4 COL 1