

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

Roaring slogans, cultural activities call on ending violence against women

In Bangladesh, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women committee has historically observed the day with a specific theme every year. This year, they arranged the celebration around the theme “*Bicharer Naame Obichar Hoi, Nari Kothao Nirapod Noy*” (Injustice reigns in the name of justice, women are not safe anywhere).

ZAREEN NAWAR

As I stepped into the Central Shaheed Minar late in the afternoon, I was greeted with the jovial and embracing atmosphere of feminists from all corners of the city— and perhaps even beyond. Most were decked out in orange and red sarees, seemingly in line with a theme for the day. Some were even in work mode, going live on social media platforms to share updates on behalf of their organisations.

The gathering, consisting of 51 human rights-focused NGOs, came together to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This day traces its origins to the sacrifices of “Las Mariposas” (The Butterflies), better known as the Mirabal sisters. The United Nations General Assembly designated November 25 in their honour to remember these courageous women who stood against the tyranny of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic in 1960.

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This year, they arranged the celebration around the theme “*Bicharer Naame Obichar Hoi, Nari Kothao Nirapod Noy*” (Injustice reigns in the name of justice, women are not safe anywhere).

The organisations and individuals present used the platform to speak of the atrocities women endure daily. When our everyday women face unspeakable hurdles associated with the types of violence and torture, in the form of sexual harassment and rape, at home and outside — they become inadvertently shunned and victimised through no fault of their own. Therefore, human rights spokespersons gathered yesterday to urge governments, organisations, and society to prioritise preventing and addressing all forms of abuse—ensuring strong action, effective measures, and fair prosecution of offenders.



During the event, they particularly highlighted five demands that every individual ought to adhere to for the better of the other half of our population. These directives include the government and administration taking decisive and effective measures to prevent and address all forms of harassment, abuse, and violence against women; authorities must act firmly against violence against women, ensuring thorough investigations and prosecution of offenders; the vigilant reporting of incidents of violence against women to authorities to build public resistance; encouraging media to be more sensitive to women's issues and ensure the

publication of impartial and accurate news; and assist social media users in identifying perpetrators and ensuring they are handed over to the authorities while respecting the dignity of the women victims.

Tamanna Khan, a member of Nari Maitree and one of the primary organisers, remarked, “We have gathered today to demand just punishments for those who perpetrate violence against women. Injustice in the name of justice must end. Women are beaten or treated as pawns at the slightest sign of disorder, which is unacceptable. We demand equitable treatment for women in every sphere of life.”

The event began with spirited chants and continued with powerful recitations, performance art, protest songs, and dance presentations by organisations and individuals like Jibon Unnayan Songstha, Bonhishikha, Naripokkho, Karmojibi Nari, Proshika, Warda Ashraf, and Iqbal Ahmed.

A standout moment was the rap song *Thambe Kobe*, uniquely delivered by the committee. Attendees also had the opportunity to engage in a live art session. The day concluded with a torch procession leading to Mishuk-Munir Chattar, uniting everyone in their shared cause.



Shakib Khan, Tahsan collaborate for Remark-Herlan

Dhallywood superstar Shakib Khan and popular musician Tahsan Khan have joined forces for the cosmetics and personal care brand Remark-Herlan to protect consumers from counterfeit and substandard products.

Tahsan, a celebrated singer and actor, signed an agreement with Remark-Herlan in the presence of Shakib Khan, the brand's director, at a ceremony held at The Westin Hotel, Gulshan, on Monday (November 25).

Speaking at the event, Tahsan expressed his excitement, stating, “I’ve long admired Remark-Herlan for their commitment to authentic cosmetics. Today, I’m proud to join their mission to protect our people from counterfeit and substandard products. I look forward to representing their diverse brands.”

‘I’m now a filmmaker in exile’

Exiled Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof finds himself in a bittersweet predicament as his latest film, *The Seed of the Sacred Fig*, representing Germany,

vies for an Oscar. Despite its success, including awards at the Cannes Film Festival, Rasoulof remains conflicted, having been forced to flee Iran.

Despite Germany's support, Rasoulof grapples with the pain of exile. “It’s hard to accept that six months have passed... that I’m now a filmmaker in exile,” he said. While grateful for international recognition, Rasoulof longs for his homeland.

The film is set against the “Women, Life, Freedom” protests that erupted in Iran two years ago.

NEWS

Parties want caretaker govt, 2-term limit for PM

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Jamaat also proposed that the High Court bench to deal with electoral petitions should dispose of all cases within 12 months.

They also sought the restoration of the provision of The Representation of the People Order, 1972 that empowered the EC to postpone elections at any stage after announcing the schedule.

After an amendment in July 2023, the EC now can postpone elections only on the polling day.

Jamaat also recommended direct power for the EC to take action against misconduct, corruption and irregularities of election officials.

CPB President Ruhin Hossain Prince said they have proposed the reintroduction of the “no” vote system and not to use EVM in the election.

The party also called for banning the use of religion in the electoral process and is in favour of the selection of candidates by the grassroots leaders and direct elections

to the reserved seats for women.

It is also in favour of full financial autonomy of the EC. The commission should bear the election campaign expenses, print posters and banners and organise events where all candidates will be able to hold campaigns.

The candidates should publish the accounts of their electoral campaign expenses and they should file the financial statement to the EC within 21 days of the election.

Alliance coordinator Fariduzzaman Farhad said that Jatiyotabadi Somomona Jote proposed a balance of power among the president, the prime minister and the cabinet.

The alliance also said specialists of different sectors will be selected to become members of the Upper House.

They also sought the reintroduction of the referendum system.

For forming the government, a party or alliance should get at least 51

percent of casted votes.

The alliance also called for scrapping Article 70 of the constitution which deals with the cancellation of membership of parliament members for voting against their political party.

GOP General Secretary Rashed Khan said they proposed having eight election commissioners for eight divisions.

The party proposed 10 years’ jail or a Tk 10 crore fine if it is proved that the CEC or EC had taken the side of any candidate or influenced the polls.

The tenure of parliament should be four years, he said.

The party proposed that expatriate Bangladeshis should have the right to contest in the polls and cast votes.

Khelafat Majlis proposed a separate polling centre for women where all election officials will be women.

Like CPB, the party sought full financial autonomy of the EC and the commission should bear the election campaign expenses.

Multidrug-resistant

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and intestines) were still effective, several microorganisms were detected to be in the process of developing resistance to these drugs, he mentioned.

“MDR bacteria share resistance genes with other bacteria, which spread rapidly in the environment, mainly through food and water,” said Prof Azad, adding that the organisms will disseminate uncontrollably if water quality and sanitation systems are not improved.

Aniruddha Ghosh, professor of medicine at Chittagong Medical College, blamed the prolonged and irrational use of antibiotics for this issue.

“Bacteria naturally develop resistance against antibiotics if used for a long time or irrationally [leaving the medicine course incomplete]. However, it might lose the resistance gradually if the drug is used after a long interval,” he explained.

Pratik Chowdhury, associate professor of medicine at Chandpur Medical College, recommended a unified effort by doctors, city corporation, and WASA authorities as most drinking water is contaminated due to poor sanitation systems.

No option

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He added that all have heard that Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said this government wants to hold the polls at the earliest.

“However, the reforms that have been undertaken must be carried out. Everyone’s goal is to go to the polls. We will talk about [holding] the election at the appropriate time.”

Earlier, newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin and four other ECs – Anwarul Islam Sarker, Abdur Rahman el Masud, Tahmida Ahmad and Sanaullah – held a meeting with the EC officials.

The CEC told the officials that they want a free, fair, and good election and all should work to ensure this, said several officials.

He added that no corruption and negligence of duties by anyone will be tolerated. He asked the officials to be present in their workplaces on time.

Sanaullah while talking to reporters said the chief election commissioner has instructed all officials to perform their duties with integrity and honesty.

SC allows battery rickshaws

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lakh people depend on the vehicles. We now urge the government to formulate guidelines and issue licences to ensure discipline in the operation of the vehicles,” Abdul Hakim Mridha, president of Rickshaw-Van-Easy Bike Sramik Union, told The Daily Star after the SC order.

Attorney General Md Asaduzzaman appeared for the government while Shanjid Siddique argued for the writ petitioners during the hearing.

Senior lawyer Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal also placed arguments on behalf of the petitioners.

Lawyer Shanjid told The Daily Star that the existing battery-run rickshaws can now operate in Dhaka, but the new ones will not be able to enter the city following yesterday’s order.

During yesterday’s hearing, Attorney General Asaduzzaman argued that the HC order suffers from gross infirmity as it has given full relief to the writ petitioners without issuing any show-cause notice to the owners and drivers of battery-run rickshaws.

Earnings of an indefinite number of people were hampered because of the HC order, he said.

The attorney general appealed to the apex court chamber judge to stay the HC order and give at least three months’ time to the government for framing a specific rule over operation of the battery-run rickshaws.

Writ petitioners’ lawyer Shanjid

opposed the government’s petition saying that such vehicles were running without valid licences and causing accidents due to their high speeds.

He added that the Dhaka city corporations do not have the authority to issue licences for these vehicles.

He informed the court that in July 2014, the HC banned the operation of unlicensed mechanised and battery-run rickshaws nationwide.

As this directive had not been enforced, Pedal Rickshaw Owners Unity Alliance filed the petition for immediate intervention.

Following the writ petition, the HC on November 19 this year ordered the government authorities concerned to take necessary steps to stop operation of the battery-run rickshaws in the city.

In another development, several hours before the SC order, representatives from rickshaw drivers and owners met Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sk Md Sazzat Ali and promised not to run these vehicles on major roads and urged him to allow in the feeder roads.

The commissioner then assured them of meeting with them again to discuss the issues.

To tackle extortion on the streets, the DMP chief advised forming committees involving police personnel and community members.

He also warned that OCs of police stations will face suspension if they refuse to register cases after incidents that require legal action.

Ex-ISKCON leader arrested at HSIA

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a day after filing the case.

According to the case statement, the incident occurred on October 25, when some youths reportedly placed a saffron-coloured flag over the Bangladesh flag on the Shadhinata Sthombho (independence pillar) at the Zero Point near the New Market intersection during a rally organised by the Hindus under the banner of Sanatan Jagaran Mancha.

PROTESTS

Protesting the arrest of Chinmoy, former divisional organising secretary of the Chattogram ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), hundreds of people from the Hindu community gathered at Cheragi Pahar intersection in the port city around 6:00pm yesterday. They brought out a procession and demanded his immediate release.

Kazi Tarek Aziz, additional deputy commissioner (public relations) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said police have been deployed there to prevent any untoward incident.

In the capital, hundreds of members of the Hindu community, including ISKCON supporters, came out on the streets and blocked the Shabbagh intersection in the evening to protest the arrest.

Witnesses said around 200 ISKCON supporters gathered there, disrupting traffic movement. Tensions escalated when another group, armed with sticks, confronted the demonstrators, resulting in clashes.

The ISKCON supporters were eventually beaten and forced to leave the area.

Contacted, AKM Shahabuddin Shaheen, officer-in-charge of

Shabbagh Police Station, said, “An unidentified group initially blocked the Shabbagh intersection, but another group soon intervened and dispersed them.”

Processions were brought out also in Rangpur, Dinajpur and Narayanganj to protest the arrest.

Meanwhile, the Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad in a statement condemned the arrest.

Its presidents Ushaton Talukder, Prof Dr Nim Chandra Bhowmik, and Nirmal Rozario, and acting general secretary Manindra Kumar Nath demanded the release of the Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote spokesperson Prabhu Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari in the interest of the nation.

They said the arrest has the potential to tarnish Bangladesh’s global image on the issue of freedom of expression and human rights.