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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়



Speakers at a roundtable at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. The event, titled "Building Climate-Resilient and Inclusive WASH Infrastructure: Creating Period-Friendly Schools, Health Care Facilities and Workplaces," was jointly organised by Unicef, WaterAid, and The Daily Star.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Prioritise menstrual hygiene in climate crisis response

Experts call for inclusive, climate-resilient WASH systems in schools, workplaces, health centres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ranked among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, Bangladesh frequently faces disasters that disrupt water and sanitation infrastructure, making menstrual hygiene management (MHM) increasingly challenging, said speakers at an event yesterday.

As a result, climate-smart water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) systems are urgently needed in the country, they added.

The remarks came during a roundtable titled "Building Climate-Resilient and Inclusive WASH Infrastructure: Creating Period-Friendly Schools, Health Care Facilities and Workplaces", jointly organised by The Daily Star, Unicef, and WaterAid at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

"Menstrual hygiene management is about dignity, health, education, gender equality, and resilience," said Peter Maes, chief of Unicef's WASH Section.

"Inadequate MHM affects girls' school attendance, women's ability to work, and

health workers' capacity to serve – especially during climate-induced emergencies such as floods and cyclones," he added.

Recalling the 2022 floods in Sylhet, Maes noted that women and girls faced severe shortages of sanitary products and a lack of privacy in shelters, highlighting the need for WASH systems that remain functional and inclusive during crises.

Unicef WASH specialist Md Shofiqul Alam delivered the keynote address at the programme.

He highlighted that 68 percent of Bangladeshi women and girls rely on old cloth for menstruation. "Cloth use isn't inherently problematic if properly cleaned and dried. Many choose it because it's accessible and free," he explained.

Alam also pointed to the impact on the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, where female workers lose an average of six days a month due to vaginal infections caused by unsanitary menstrual materials. "Many wear the same pad all day, harming their

reproductive health," he added.

He further noted that 90 percent of adolescent girls in Dhaka slums reuse unclean rags, leading to skin infections, urinary problems, and pregnancy complications.

Partha Hafez Shaikh, director of programme and policy advocacy at WaterAid, called for inclusive and climate-resilient menstrual hygiene solutions, particularly addressing water scarcity in South Bengal and coastal areas.

Fayazuddin Ahmed, policy and advocacy lead at WaterAid, said, "Menstrual hygiene services must be accessible to all, including people with disabilities."

Mushfiqua Zaman Satiar of the Netherlands Embassy highlighted the need for true inclusivity, encompassing all genders and communities.

She urged full implementation of the National MHM Strategy and greater societal efforts to break longstanding taboos.

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toilets shared by dozens of families lacking privacy, and menstrual products often unaffordable, managing a period becomes a monthly ordeal.

As the world marks Menstrual Hygiene Day today (May 28) under the theme "Together for a #PeriodFriendlyWorld," the lived experiences of girls like Ayesha reveal how far Bangladesh's urban poor remain from that goal.

To avoid changing clothes during the day, Ayesha layers damp rags and secretly washes her soiled clothes in limited water when no one is around.

"There's nowhere proper to dry them, so I hang them behind the stove," she said. "They stay damp and smell bad. It's hard to maintain proper hygiene like this."

The consequences are predictable – rashes, irritation, infections, and long-term reproductive health issues.

Each month, Ayesha suffers severe cramps, worsened by the repeated use of unsanitary clothes.

"I feel sick. I vomit. I miss school," she said. Her mother can only offer warm water for relief.

Such experiences are far from isolated. The 2018 National Hygiene Survey found that only one-third of Bangladeshi women knew about menstruation before their first period.

In low-income settlements, where access to education and healthcare is limited, the figure is likely even lower. Generations of silence and misinformation have left thousands of girls unprepared and unsupported.

Last year, 13-year-old Rina Akhter of Kalyanpur slum got her period unexpectedly just before class.

With no sanitary pads at home, she folded two sheets of newspaper and placed

In Dhaka's slums, menstruation is not seen as a natural biological milestone. It is endured as a recurring emergency – shrouded in shame and compounded by poverty, inadequate sanitation, and social silence.

them in her underwear – an unreliable improvisation her mother had once taught her out of necessity.

"I was too scared to ask to go to the toilet – it's filthy and there's never any water," she said. The blood soaked through her school uniform. Boys laughed.

"I froze. I just ran home crying."

Her mother, Shahida Akter, a garment worker, repeated what she herself had once been told: "It's natural. It happens to all girls."

"But the truth is, I didn't know how to help," Shahida admitted. "No one ever helped me either."

Raised in a village in Mymensingh, Shahida has never used a sanitary pad.

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ISHRAQUE'S MAYORAL OATH Services remain halted as protest drags on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supporters of BNP leader Ishraque Hossain have now been protesting for two weeks, demanding his appointment as mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

The movement's coordinator, Moshir Rahma, announced that they will hold a sit-in protest today from 11:00am to 2:00pm.

At around 11:30am yesterday, the protesters gathered at the main gate of Nagar Bhaban under the banner "Dhakabashi" (People of Dhaka), blocking one side of the road and causing severe traffic congestion from the High Court intersection to Gulistan during peak hours.

Commuters suffered as vehicles lined up in long queues. Afzal Hossain, a government officer, said, "We don't need politics; we just want the road to be opened."

Protesters claim that despite two court rulings in Ishraque's favour, his mayoral responsibilities have yet to be handed over. A significant number of DSCC employees and officials have also joined the demonstration.



All entry gates of Nagar Bhaban have remained locked since the protest began on May 15. As a result, all civic services – including birth and death registration, trade licences, and tax processing – have been suspended. Even officials are unable to enter the building.

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A DSCC official said, "As long as the mayoral issue remains unresolved, this deadlock will continue."

Meanwhile, the LGD issued a press release yesterday, stating that it is awaiting a Supreme Court verdict before proceeding with Ishraque's swearing-in.

Signed by Md Salauddin, public relations officer of the LGRD ministry, the statement said the division's legal wing informed that preparations for the swearing-in were underway following the High Court's dismissal

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Identify those creating division among anti-fascist parties

Says Moyeen Khan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday said those trying to create divisions among the political parties involved in the anti-fascist movement must be identified.

"Those who are creating division among the parties – I believe it is intentional. We must identify who is doing this. I don't see any division here," he said while addressing a seminar organised by Jubo Dal, Swechhasebak Dal, and Chhatra Dal in the capital.

The BNP leader said political parties, students, and others all want to see a better and more moral society and that he sees no division in this shared aspiration.

He added, "Saying we will first reform, then deliver justice, then hold elections – this is not how the world works. The interim government must realise this reality."

"If we all believe in democracy, then the democratic process must involve a fair and impartial election. People are the rightful decision-makers," he continued.

Referring to the desire for freedom from fascism and the recent political transition, Moyeen Khan warned, "But this change must not lead us into a new trap. My fear is that we may be falling into another trap."

Photographer Shahidul Alam, Hefazat-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque, and Gano Adhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur also spoke.

The event was moderated by Mahdi Amin, adviser to the BNP acting chairman.



Ending violence against women, children a national priority

Sharmeen Murshid tells MJF event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an event yesterday expressed their aspiration to build a country free from violence and discrimination against women and children.

They made the call during the launch of the "Renewed Women's Voice and Leadership in Bangladesh" project, organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at a city hotel.

Speaking as the chief guest, Women and Children Affairs

Adviser Sharmeen S Murshid said, "We need to support grassroots-level organisations to empower women, the way Manusher Jonno Foundation does. We should also have a policy where both government and non-government organisations work in coordination to achieve national priorities."

She also emphasised that ending violence against women and children will be a national priority this year.

Praising MJF's role as "exemplary", she said the

organisation has strengthened women-led and women-managed organisations and helped build a violence-free Bangladesh.

Over the past 18 years, MJF has not only provided support to hundreds of small and large non-governmental organisations across the country, she said, but has also helped them become well-organised and efficient, said Sharmeen S Murshid, also the social welfare adviser.

"As a result, many of these

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Participants at the launching ceremony of a project 'Renewed Women's Voice and Leadership in Bangladesh', organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation, at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday. Women and Children Affairs Adviser Sharmeen S Murshid was present as the chief guest. Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Ajit Singh also attended the event.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS