

Star BUSINESS

E-mail: business@thedailystar.net

Poverty reduction target in citizen's charter urgent

Say speakers at seminar

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Setting some achievable targets, which include reducing poverty, establishing human rights and protecting environment, in Citizen's Social Charter for South Asia is urgent, speakers at a seminar in Dhaka felt yesterday.

They also said a number of targets of the proposed charter, already incorporated in Bangladesh's poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), should be avoided.

They were speaking at the seminar on 'Implementation of the Citizen's Social Charter: Bangladesh' organised jointly by South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS), Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) and Nijera Kori.

The objective of the seminar is to deliberate on the findings of a recent study on the progress achieved in Bangladesh with regard to various goals and targets put in the Citizen's Social Charter for South Asia.

The charter set targets in the areas of poverty alleviation, women empowerment and their well-being, protection of rights of children and aged population, development of youth, environmental degradation and ecological imbalance and development and utilisation of human resources.



PHOTO: STAR

Industries Adviser Sultana Kamal (2-R), speaks at a seminar on 'Implementation of the Citizen's Social Charter: Bangladesh' in Dhaka yesterday. Khushi Kabir (R), coordinator, Citizen's Social Charter Preparation Task Force, M Syeduzzaman (2-L), CPD trustee member, and Advocate Faustina Pereira, a director of Ain-o-Salish Kendra, are also seen.

Industries Adviser Sultana Kamal attended the seminar as chief guest, while CPD Trustee Member M Syeduzzaman conducted it.

In her speech Sultana Kamal said that she has found it too difficult to earmark even a small amount of fund from the budgetary allocation for the jute growers, though the industries ministry spends a lot every year, as the existing system is not a supporting one for the cause of human rights.

"The country as well as the south Asian region is full of resources and potentials, so fulfilling targets will not be difficult, if such potentials can be utilised in social development," she observed.

Khushi Kabir, coordinator, Citizen's Social Charter Preparation Task Force, and Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, chairman of Unnayan Onneshan, presented the keynote papers on the issue.

Ahmed Mushtaque Reza Chowdhury, deputy executive

director, Brac, Ainun Nishat, country representative, IUCN, Faustina Pereira, advocate, Bangladesh Supreme Court and also a director of Ain-o-Salish Kendra, took part in the discussion.

Taslim Siddique, deputy director, DFID, Assaduzzaman, research director, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Jafrul Hasan, joint secretary, Bangladesh Jatiyabadi Samik Dal, also discussed in the open session.

The discussants urged the charter writers to incorporate the issues that are not getting priority in other local or regional fora.

They underscored the need for incorporating environment and trade union issues in the charter on priority basis.

Dr Ainun Nishat said ecological perspective is directly related with integrated development of the society, but the water and river issue is not incorporated in the charter.

Criticising the country's environmental policy, he urged the government to rewrite the policy in line with international conventions.

Jafrul Hasan said despite having all-out pressure and staging upsurge to increase readymade garments workers' wages, it could not be enhanced at a satisfactory level.

He urged the authority to incorporate the workers' welfare in the civil society charter.

BANKER AWARDS 2006

StanChart bags 10 awards

Standard Chartered Bank has won a total of 10 awards at the Banker Awards 2006 including the top award for Global Bank of the Year.

The Banker magazine awards were announced in London on Thursday, says a press release.

The award recognises the bank's performance in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and its 'prudent acquisition strategy'. The Bank's acquisitions include SC First Bank in Korea (2005) and Union Bank in Pakistan and Hsinchu International Bank in Taiwan (2006).

Standard Chartered Bank also won two key regional awards (Asia Pacific and Africa), six country awards and the award for Best CSR (Corporate and Social Responsibility) Bank.

About the awards, Chief Executive of the bank Peter Sands says: "I would like to thank our employees for their hard work and our customers for allowing us to serve them."

Chairman of the bank Mervyn Davies said, "Standard Chartered's strategic intent is to be the world's best international bank, leading the way in Asia, Africa and the Middle East."

Following is the full list of awards won by Standard Chartered Bank: Global Bank of the Year Award, Best Regional Bank in Africa, Best Regional Bank in Asia Pacific, Best CSR Bank Award, Best Bank in Afghanistan, Best Bank in Botswana, Best Bank in Kenya, Best Bank in Sierra Leone, Best Bank in Gambia and Best Bank in Cote d'Ivoire.



PHOTO: PID

President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed visits a stall after inaugurating Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF)-2006 at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital yesterday.

TRANSPORT HALT DURING POLITICAL UNREST

Bus operators seek bank interest waiver

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Companies that operate commuter buses in Dhaka yesterday urged the government to waive their bank interests for those days when their buses could not ply due to political unrest.

They also sought remedies for indiscriminate requisitions of their buses by law enforcers on various occasions.

The bus operators under the banner of 'Combined Transport Companies of Dhaka City' were speaking at a press conference in

the capital.

Managing Director of My Line Limited Hamidur Rahman Jhantu said they took loans to buy the vehicles, but their buses come to a halt during political agitation, causing a huge loss to the operators.

"We pay Tk50,000 to Tk60,000 in interest a month to banks," he said.

He also said law enforcers indiscriminately requisition buses.

"Although they are supposed to give allowances to the drivers, helpers and bear fuel costs, they provide nothing," he complained.

Chairman of My Line Limited Ali

Ahmed and Managing Director of Trans Silva Zaheed Al Latif were also present at the press conference.

PETROL PUMP OWNERS ASSOC

In a separate press briefing in the capital, Petrol Pump Owners Association, a platform of petroleum dealers and distributors, urged parties to keep the petroleum sector out of the purview of the political programmes.

They also said they are incurring huge losses due to the political unrest.



PHOTO: STAR

Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB) organised a seminar on 'Poverty, Initiatives of the Disadvantaged and Development' in Dhaka yesterday. Dr Shamsul Bari, chairman of the organisation, Dr Rob Visser, chief scientist, DGIS, the Netherlands, Prof MM Akash of Dhaka University, Prof Muinul Islam of Chittagong University and Dr Hameeda Hossain, vice chairperson of RIB, were present among others.

People-to-people tech co-operation a tool to cut poverty

Seminar told

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

People-to-people technical cooperation could be a way of poverty alleviation as well as a strategy for development, said a keynote speaker at an international seminar in Dhaka yesterday.

The speaker said sharing of the fruits of modern civilization more equitably is a question of structural reform for which no easy answer is available at the moment.

"But, even within the present structural framework a lot can be immediately done for alleviating poverty by learning from the creative initiatives of the poverty groups themselves, and by spreading the word and experiences of the ability of the people themselves to do a lot by way of creatively moving forward, taking inspiration from and learning from each other," said Prof Anisur Rahman, a member of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB), presenting the keynote paper on 'poverty, overcoming poverty and self-realisation - insights from people's self-initiatives in Bangladesh.'

RIB, a non-governmental non-profit research-support agency, organised the seminar titled 'Poverty, Initiatives of the Disadvantaged and Development' at the CIRDP auditorium.

RIB Chairman Dr Shamsul Bari presided over the seminar attended, among others, by Dr Rob Visser, chief scientist, DGIS, the Netherlands, Prof MM Akash of Dhaka University, Prof Muinul Islam of Chittagong University and RIB Vice Chairperson Dr Hameeda Hossain.

Anisur said, "A lot more can be done, that what the NGOs and may be some dedicated government programmes are doing, by way of poverty alleviation, by a strategy yet not taken that I shall call for 'promoting and assisting people-to-people technical cooperation for development'."

He said disadvantaged people of the country are showing what they can do by way of moving forward, individually or collectively, may without outside assistance, some with assistance but not necessarily financial, many just assistance by way of technical knowledge, or organisational guidance, some with external financial help, not necessarily of 'micro-credit' nature but of both small and large magnitude, and

soon.

"Organise 'people-to-people study tours', 'people's initiative festivals' to inspire all so-called 'poverty groups' to startle the world with their creativity stimulating, educating and cooperating with each other," he suggested.

Citing Anisur's keynote paper, Prof Peter Reason of University of Bath, UK in a written statement read by Prof Meghna Guhathakurta of the RIB said finding ways of 'thinking together' is something that is needed right now by both fortunate and disadvantaged people round the globe.

He said self-initiative in collaboration with others is a fundamental human need, not one that is just driven by extreme poverty.

"I am reflecting that we as animators and facilitators of action research need to consider how we can create a context in which action research and 'gono-gobeshona' initiatives can thrive and expand, as well as how we can facilitate change in individuals and communities," he said.

'djuice-Project d youth' contest

DU CORRESPONDENT

djuice and Project Bangladesh Foundation have organised a contest for younger generation of the country in a bid to extend them a platform for extra-curriculum activities in business and community service, according to a press release.

As students at different levels do not have much opportunity to practice extra-curriculum activities in Bangladesh, which results in students' inconveniences in job markets, the competition is intended to help them with providing a platform to enhance their extra-curriculum skills, Saizidul Islam, brand officer of djuice, said.

The contest, djuice - Project d youth, first of its kind in the country, a joint venture of GrameenPhone's youth brand djuice and a voluntary organisation Project Bangladesh Foundation, began two months back.

The competition will find out Bangladesh's first 'djuice - Project d youth' team, which will be djuice and Project Bangladesh brand ambassador.