

A sound today for a better tomorrow

More care for children must for economic emancipation

MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

WHEN there is a widespread call for an end to repression on children, some educated and affluent families in the capital and other major cities in the country have hit the headlines for torturing domestic helps. Reports of brutal killing of the 40-year-old domestic help, Masuda and repression on two other young domestic helps Khodeja and Shilpi with photographs of festering wounds on their bodies published in the dailies on October 5 are horrifying. The demonic mistress Ishrat Jahan Ivy unleashed the worst kind of barbarism on Masuda for not serving omelette to the driver for lunch. Masuda was not alive to relate her predicament but the photographs of Khodeja and Shilpi, two other domestic helps in the same home, with burn wounds in their hands and feet shocked our collective conscious. All these acts reveal a growing frenzy of intolerance among a section of society.

Quoting Child Rights Forum reports it was revealed in a seminar at the Jatiya Press Club last week that, from last September to August, 587 children were murdered, 487 abducted, 565 raped and 787 were trafficked outside the country, mostly to be used as camel jockeys in Arab countries. The question is how a child living under such constant threat of abduction, rape and killing can grow up. A National Crime Records Bureau report says that crime against girl child is increasing dangerously.

While other countries talk about the need to invest in their youth, most of Bangladesh has converted its youth into a pernicous capital investment. Too many children are doing hazardous jobs in tanneries, shrimp processing units, glass factories, and welding and metal workshops. Child labour is hardly a new concern, having been fiercely debated and mostly outlawed in the West early this century. The phenomenon still persists in the developing world and lately it has been receiving considerable international attention. Child labour problem is most common in areas where there



They deserve a bright future

have been no land reforms and no education. Despite the fact that child labour has been withdrawn from the garments sector in Bangladesh following international pressure, there are still thousands of children now in the country eking out a living under oppressive situations in other vocations. These are children who are working either to support themselves or their families. The number of children doing such odd jobs as

14 being taken away from around the country and sold to foreign brokers and brothels are pouring in with sickening frequency and they make headlines when such secret trade is unearthed by women activist groups. In spite of the fact that the country has stricter laws to stop such illegal trade and abuse, the administration has hardly been able to ensure protection to these teenagers from exploitation.

advantage of their disadvantage. To employ children in harmful works is strictly prohibited by the country's labour laws but enforcement has never been taken seriously. Sometimes, the authorities' time honoured excuse is that removing a child from a job robs a poor family of needed income. In fact, child workers take jobs that might otherwise be given to adults who themselves suffer from significant unemployment or underemployment which by some estimate is over 40 million. The fact is factory owners prefer young workers because they can be paid less and bullied into working longer hours without complaint.

The real reason children are allowed to work in underdeveloped countries like India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Philippines is the indifference of the ruling elite to these impoverished groups. Shockingly, as things stand today in the country, certain kinds of children get the best education in the world. But there are others who are believed to be born to work with their hands and do not need an education. "The families of the child labourers are the same families who don't have access to healthcare. And they are the same families who

position to receive the most basic education. Ironically true, even when there has come about explosion of knowledge worldwide, education for the poor in Bangladesh is something we don't see as necessary at all. It's almost as if the poor don't have the same desires and aspirations as the rich.

They do, of course, although it is hard to imagine how any hope survives in individuals as Milon Sheikh hailing from Khulna who stood Third in the commerce group in the just announced HSC examinations under Jessore board. Milon, born of the poorest of the poor family in Terokhada village under Khulna came to work as a hired labourer in Jessore with his day labourer father to support his father's big family even after doing an excellent result in SSC examinations. Milon could not pursue higher education under such oppressive situation and grinding poverty. Even in a region where abuse, neglect and poverty are facts of life, all was not lost for Milon. Principal Abu Bakar Siddique of Talbaria College, Jessore dug Milon out from a farmhouse in Jessore and got him admitted in his college. Milon pursued his studies in the college with the financial support

appalling poverty, the grim battle against illiteracy poverty and economic emancipation of the country might at least be won. Predictably, in the vast Bangladesh region, we may have hundreds and thousands of meritorious boys and girls who are born to blush unseen because of lack of support and opportunities. Even in a favourable situation when the government encourages school enrolment through introduction of scholarships to the tune of 663 crore taka to lure children of the poorest section in society into primary schools, grim news of school drop-out cases from different parts of the country are pouring in. Reports published in a Bangla daily on September 23 last indicate that out of about 4 lakh 14 thousand children of school going age only three lakh 51 thousand got admitted in different primary schools of Kishoreganj district. That so many children, about 62 thousand in one district only are out of school is a profound tragedy. The feeling of powerlessness that goes with being illiterate comes through loud and clear in any conversation with ordinary people. And that emphasises the need for a major improvement of the country's schooling system. Despite the fact that government in the last one decade launched the literacy drive through programmes like "Food for education", "Total Literacy Movement" and now cash incentive for enrolment, success is still a far cry. Plainly speaking, if rhetoric is the yardstick, there has been a great leap forward. However much remains to be done in terms of action. Without confronting the alarming trend of the decline of teacher-pupil ratio, infrastructural facilities, general improvement in the economic condition of the parents, and over all monitoring and surveillance in curbing the endemic corruption embedded in the programme and educational administration success in educating the children of the country will remain an elusive proposition.

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splitting stones for the construction works or picking trash from the streets, or packing groceries, or working as hotel boys or coolies in bus and railway stations outnumber those 10,000 child workers just withdrawn from the garment factories. In a report released by an international NGO group in 1998 named "Anti-Slavery Society", it has been revealed that as many as three million children are working in different parts of Bangladesh. In comparison, 115 million children work in India, eight million in Pakistan, 5.7 million in Nepal, 5.5 million in the Philippines and five million in China.

Grim accounts of poor girls under

The condition of the children lacking support of family or parents in the country beggars description. They wander homeless in the streets of Dhaka, Chittagong and other cities often surviving by thieving or begging in absence of any means of living. Although we talk glibly that children are the future of the country, we mean it in a very narrow sense. We employ them either in our homes, factories or business concern to perform chores that we would normally hesitate to delegate to our own children. Born of poor parents these children don't have the money to buy their own freedom, and starkly true that this grim fact has emboldened us to take

are largely illiterate," says Richard Young, chief of Community Development in SE Asian region, U.N. Children's Fund.

China is a vast country with a population of about 1.2 billion but child labourers there are vastly fewer only an estimated five million, a relatively new phenomenon prompted by a decade of explosive economic growth. In Beijing the most common official complaint is one rarely heard in other regions that children in factories are missing out on education. Lamentably, in Bangladesh population boom takes place mostly in the impoverished families and most of the children born of poor parents were ever in a

of his college teacher Bidhan Chandra Adhikary. Milon, as it turned out, was to be the luckiest and most proud student now having fared so well in the HSC examinations. Predictably, it is child penny that repressed the ambition and noble rage of Milon and Joydev Samadder who stood fourth in the HSC examinations in the commerce group under Barisal board. Joydev's father could hardly arrange square meals a day for a big family with the scanty income of Muri (puffed rice) Biscuit shop on a roadside stall. With educationists like Principal Abu Bakar and Bidhan Adhikary coming to explore such impoverished meritorious students languishing in

Recognition, facilitation and promotion of voluntary service

A Beijing experience

GOUTAM K SANYAL

VOLUNTEERING provides chances of learning and working for common good. Voluntary work is carried out not merely for charity or out of pity, but at one's free will because of people's identification with the objectives of the work being undertaken. Voluntary work is often driven by people's aspiration and altruism to contribute. In a way, voluntary work is part and parcel of humanity, and a manifestation of human values. The spirit of volunteering is often embedded in culture, heritage, traditions in our societies. For instance, it may take form of self help and mutual support in the society. In Japan, *otogaisama* is the word meaning the satisfaction and happiness of helping others, reflecting that volunteering and helping one another has long been a Japanese tradition.

Similarly, volunteerism in the Philippines traces its roots to *banyanihan*, also meaning 'helping each other'. In Bangladesh it is called *seba kara*. **Volunteers:** Volunteers are commonly regarded as people with good frame of mind. They show their endurance and work hard. Instead of getting monetary or material benefits, volunteers build up their self-confidence, strong moral sense of satisfaction and acquire different outlook of life after their participation in voluntary work. Anyone can be a volunteer. In many parts of the world, elders and women are doing very well in voluntary work. **Work:** Volunteer work can take a variety of forms including formation of volunteer team, work projects, occasional activities and as campaigns. There are chances for volunteering during ordinary days or in time of crises. Rural development, eradication of poverty, education, environment, health, language

teaching, protection of the environment, protection of orphans or elders are common themes in volunteering. According to some panelists, volunteering work are vital in the process of social development. What the volunteers do can fill gaps, speed up social and technological advancement, particularly in the developing countries. As volunteers work on overseas projects for transfer of information, they help in the exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills among different places. Such processes increase understanding among people and remove barriers among societies. Volunteering can be both work and fun. Most of time, experiences last long and are treasured throughout people's lives. From experience and researches, it has been seen that volunteering work can bring about short, medium and long term benefits to in dividuals

and the society. **Management:** Volunteer management is pointed out as a key issue for volunteer organisations, and has the important function of sustaining the volunteering efforts. Regardless of situation or strategies, the indicators for effective volunteer management are that: 1. volunteers understand the purpose and scope of their work; 2. volunteers believe in the value of the volunteer involvement; and 3. volunteers are committed to the team approach. The followings are essential elements in volunteer management programmes: 1. Clear policy and overall guidance for voluntary work and volunteers; 2. Orientation, training, coaching and support for volunteers; 3. Appropriate work assignments for volunteers, leaving complicated and demanding tasks

such as handling domestic violence, transfer of children etc. to professionals; 4. Coordination and monitoring of various aspects and progress of voluntary work; 5. Perception of volunteers as creative, motivated people who seek responsibility and are capable of higher level performance; 6. According to volunteers' knowledge, skills, experience, needs and expectations, matching them to the most suitable voluntary work; 7. Openness to lead volunteers of different ages, background, ideas; 8. Being considerate and willing to stand up for the rights of volunteers; 9. Cooperation and collaboration among organisations to make voluntary work programmes to the fullest potentials; and 10. Engaging volunteers in leading and promoting of voluntary work as volunteering is person-to-person job and people's commitment can influence it. **Promotion:** The promotion of volunteerism needs to be conducted with reference to the social, cultural and ideological contexts. It is much more facilitating if promotion is steered from the top and guided with policy directions. Apart from the organisational issues, it is useful to have slogans and positive images. Support from the mass media is important and 'good stories' of volunteering can be impressive. Hence, organisers of voluntary work should actively provide information for media coverage. For sustaining the efforts, recognition should be given to volunteers and those who provide different kinds of support for the voluntary work. Award schemes are useful means for giving recognition. **Government's role:** Government is expected to play a significant role in the publicity, promotion of volunteerism and organisation of volunteering work. The followings are specific roles and functions: 1. Promotion of awareness and understanding with dissemination of information on volunteering spirit and voluntary work. 2. Formulation of policy, plan and strategy. 3. Direct involvement in organisation and management of volunteering activities. 4. Building or strengthening the infrastructure, networks and systems which can be effective and sustainable for voluntary services. The systems may include local networks, intermediary roles, standardisation and registration of organisations etc. 5. Cooperation with community groups within the country and internationally for more opportunities of and support for voluntary work. 6. Setting up legal framework e.g. legalisation of volunteering organisations to ensure professionalism of voluntary work. 7. Creating environments and conditions conducive to the growth of voluntary work e.g. introducing tax laws or tax exemption, leverage funds, providing materials and supports etc. 8. Increasing the capacity of

non-government organisations so that they can be engaged in different aspects of volunteerism. 9. Launching research and evaluation projects which can in turn generate information for formulation of policy and plan on voluntary work. Recently a workshop on volunteering was held in Beijing. There, as participants, we shared experience, thoughts and insights on volunteerism and voluntary work. Panelists made their informative presentations and we heard about a variety of programmes, organisations and the progress of volunteering work through different phases of social development. As a result of rapid economic development, the Chinese Government sees the need to meet people's raising aspirations for undertaking voluntary work, to help address disparity and various demand of services in the communities. Volunteering is intended to be a national movement and the government is devoting efforts in comprehensive "system engineering" within the country. While there are plenty of rooms for voluntary work, the Administration at various levels are searching their ways to coordinate development and speed up the social construct which are required in the organisation and management of voluntary work. **Role of private corporations:** Unlike what people may think, some private corporations are active in voluntary work. Their motive of doing so is not to have direct monetary gain, but for reasons such as: ! Attracting best talents who are aspired to work for corporations with social conscience. ! Raising employees' working morale and in turn, their work productivity. ! Fulfilling the corporations' social responsibilities. ! Utilising the corporations' capability to help solve community problems. As noted from some voluntary services project, multi-national corporations focus on service areas which are more related to their own competence and business domains. Besides, they may set up schemes to allow working time for their employees to participate in voluntary work. People care about people, places, community and the earth. Voluntary service is an important kind of social investment and can build up valuable social capitals. Voluntary service can be particularly beneficial to young people, in developing their talents and transforming them into responsible and confident leaders for the future. Volunteering is an important step towards world peace, unity and social progress. At the same time, volunteering provides ample opportunities for life-long valuable learning for volunteers.

Assessing the export sector

Lingering impact of terrorist attack in the US

UMMEE SAILA

THE September 11 terrorist attack in the USA caused disastrous and lingering effect on the global economy including that of Bangladesh. The United States is the major market for export from Bangladesh (37 per cent of our total export volume). The consequence of the attack with a long recession in global economy has reduced our export by 7.44 per cent in 2002.

The major commodities exported this year to United States are frozen fish (US\$97.57 million), jute yarn and twine (US\$6.55 million), hessian (US\$7.08 million), knit wear (US\$363.66 million), woven garments (US\$1473.93 million). In the fiscal 2002 total export earning from United States is worth US\$221162 million. It was US\$2500.85 million in the 2000-2001 fiscal. So volume of trade reduced to 11.57 per cent with the US.

Other markets where we export our commodities European Union (48%), Germany (11.39%), United Kingdom (10.83%), Italy (4.38%), France (6.19%), Belgium (3.55%), The Netherlands (4.78%), Japan (1.60%), Singapore (.41%), Pakistan (48%), India and China.

In 1999-00 the export earning was of US\$5752.20 million. In 2000-01 fiscal it was US\$6867.30 million.

In the fiscal 2001-02 the export target was taken at US\$ 7170 million. But because of September 11 terrorist attack and long economic recession in United States, Japan and European Union the target was reviewed and reduced to US\$ 5950 million. However, a sum of 5986.09 million dollar has been earned against the revised target of 5950 million dollar during 2001-2002. Though the revised target has been achieved, it is 7.44% less than the previous year's \$ 6867.30 million. The export volume was increased by 7.43% but the export process has been reduced by 14.8% due to global economic recession and allowing discount to the foreign buyers.

Major items and present condition

Readymade garment: Readymade garment (RMG) is the most important item of our export. It contributes 76 per cent of the total export earning. This sector employs 1.8 million workers, 80 per cent of which are women. It has promoted supporting sectors like shipping, hotel, banking, insurance, poly bags, buttons, woven labels, sewing thread, strapping band, gum, tape etc. Bangladeshi garments are exported to nearly 90 countries in the world.

In the fiscal 2001-2002 garments worth US\$3124.56 million has been exported that accounts for 77.02 million dozen, but in 2000-2001 fiscal 71.48 million dozens were exported at US\$3364.20 million. Though the volume of woven garment has increased this year but the export earning has decreased by 7.12%.

In 2001-2002 fiscal 63.39 million dozen knitwear was exported at a price of US\$1496.36 million. But in the previous year 52.54 million dozen was sold at 1496.36 million dollar. Therefore the volume of export increased by 20.66% this year but export earning actually decreased by 2.48%.

According to BGMEA latest information there were 3500 gar-

ment factories up to 2000-2001. But due to 11 September attack the demand for Garment reduced and it caused 1276 factories to close down. As a result of which thousands of people lost their jobs.

However, the reason behind this decline in garment sector is not only 11 September attack. The Trade Development Act 2000 passed by USA gave duty free access for 72 sub-Saharan and Caribbean countries. This is also a great threat to garment sector. North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which granted Mexico an unrestricted access to the US market and allowed to increase share in the apparel market from 4.6 percent to 14.1 percent over six years period between 1994 and 2000 is also a reason behind this.

Frozen Food: The export volume of frozen food is 88.36 million pound this year which was 76.70 million pound in the previous year. The price per unit increased in the international market this year but as the volume of export decreased the export earning is reduced from 363.23 million to 276.11 million which is due to lower export volume in international market.

Leather: Both the export volume and price decreased in leather sector. In the previous year 211.61 million square feet of leather was sold at the price of 253.93 million dollar. But during the 2001-2002 fiscal 184.12 million square feet has been exported at 207.33 million dollar. The volume of export and per unit reduced by 12.99 percent and 5.83% respectively in this sector.

Jute goods: Jute goods export increased to 418.56 thousand M.T in 2001-2002 which was 372.04 thousand M.T in 2000-2001 year. The volume increased to 12.50 percent during the last fiscal year. But price of per unit decreased by 6.26 percent and as a result the export value has increased by 5.72 percent only.

Raw jute: The volume of raw jute export was 1282.90 thousand bales which was 1500.22 thousand bales last year. The price per unit increased by 6.41 percent but the export decreased by 9.01 percent due to reduced volume.

Chemical fertilizer: In 2001-2002 fiscal year 4.65 lac tons of chemical fertilizer has been exported at a price of 47.93 million dollar. In 2000-2001 fiscal year 5.46 lac tons has been exported at 68.17 million dollar. But the price per unit is reduced by 17.39. Therefore the total export earning reduced by 20 million in this fiscal year.

Tea: 13.56 million kg is exported at the price of 17.38 million dollar in 2001-2002 fiscal year. But in 2000-2001 fiscal year, 17.83 million kg of tea was exported at 21.58 million dollar. This year price unit increased by 5.79 percent but volume of export decreased by 23.95 percent. As a result the earning has decreased.

To overcome this slowdown in export business, we have to diversify our export by introduction of more export items. Our export market is confined to United States and European Union which requires to be expanded to different other countries. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world. This population can be used by exploring the countries where manpower resource is scarce. Large scale manpower export is perhaps the crying need of the time.

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