

Put pressure on Gulf states to ban camel jockeying

Speakers tell BNWLA discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for enforcement of laws and concerted pressure on the Gulf states to stop using children as camel jockeys.

Terming it a form of slavery, Programme Manager Nikhil Roy of Anti-Slavery International, a London-based human rights organisation, said, "We have to put a collective pressure on the Gulf states at both government and non-governmental levels to outlaw the malpractice."

"Use of children as camel jockeys is a clear violation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other ILO conventions," he said.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) organised the discussion at the Brac Centre Inn in the city.

According to a study by the association, some 7,000 to 10,000 children are being trafficked from Bangladesh to different Gulf states by air and via India and Nepal a year.

The findings also show that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the main destination for the Bangladeshi

children trafficked for camel jockeying.

Several trafficked children have to share a small room and sleep on the floor. They are often denied adequate food and subjected to beating if they perform badly, the study said.

Secretary of the home ministry Munshi Alaudin Al Azad said, "According to the official figure, there is no case of child trafficking but it may take place in secret way which is beyond our knowledge."

Director Ali Reza Khan of Air Traffic Services and Aerodromes, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, said, "Traffickers are well-organised and well-informed, more knowledgeable and skilled than we are because of the existing system."

A documentary of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) was presented at the programme. It showed how inhumanely children aged between five to ten are being abused for camel jockeying in the UAE.

The camel jockeying sometimes causes death of the children. Other impacts on the children include mental and physical disability,

kidney failure, trauma and serious injuries, the BNWLA study revealed.

The study also said the UAE has declared illegal the use of children as jockeys in 1980 under its Federal Labour Code.

Employing a child under 15 years

or weighing less than 45 kilograms has been declared illegal in the early 1990s.

Qatar enforces a strict ban on child jockeys unless guardian accompanies them.

Programme Officer Mizanur

Rahman of International Organisation of Migration, and Faridur Rahman of Brac were also present. BNWLA Executive Director Salma Ali moderated the discussion.

'Promote indigenous knowledge'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday called for promoting the use of indigenous knowledge to preserve the heritage and culture.

They also underscored the need to use indigenous method of cultivation to get rid of diseases.

Indiscriminate and excessive use of pesticides has caused an adverse impact on the food chain, they said. Toxic ingredients were also found in crops due to indiscriminate use of pesticides.

The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) organised the discussion on 'Our heritage and environment' in collaboration with the Ministry of Forest and Environment and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Dr Babar Kabir, co-ordinator of Sustainable Environment

Management Project (SEMP), Dr Aminul Islam, sustainable development advisor of UNDP, and Farhad Khan, former director of Bangla Academy, took part in the discussion presided over by Rasheda K Chowdhury, director of CAMPE.

Presenting the keynote paper, Aparash Kumar Banerjee said the people could lead a better life if they follow the indigenous knowledge and apply it properly.

The country would not need to import pesticides if a single neem tree can be planted on each acre of land, he said.

He called on all to plant trees such as neem, tulsi and nisinda to keep the diseases at bay.

Rasheda Chowdhury suggested incorporating environmental topics in textbooks to raise awareness among the learners.

Agreement on ICT with China to be signed

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh and China yesterday decided to sign an agreement on expanding cooperation in the science and ICT sector.

It was decided at a meeting between Science, Information and Communication Technology Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan and Chinese Ambassador Chai Xi at the secretariat.

Dr Moyeen Khan expressed

his keen interest in the cost effective and high-tech products of China. The minister mentioned the recent tremendous achievement of China in the science and technology sector.

They referred to strong friendly relations between the two countries and expressed the hope that the friendship would be further strengthened in the coming days.