

# A farewell to child labour

More than 2000 children 'freed' from hazardous bidi factories in Kushtia after an NGO sign accord with owners on Thursday

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

About 2,090 children were freed from the hazardous job at bidi factories here, at last. They were freed following signing of a historical accord at a simple ceremony here on Thursday. Local

NGO, Setu signed the agreement with the owners of four major bidi factories. The factories are Akiz Bidi Factory, Nasir Bidi Factory, Banani Bidi Factory and N Zaman Bidi Factory. With immense pleasure, parents

of the children aged between 5-17 and people from all walks of life witnessed the accord signing ceremony held at Nasir Uddin Biswas Memorial Hall at Allahar Darga Bazaar in Daulatpur upazila. ILO (International Labour Organisation) sponsored the agree-

ment. The United States Department of Labour (USDOL) funded the ILO project named PEWFCL (Prevention and Elimination of the Worst Form of Child Labour). Chief Technical Advisor of the IPEC project of ILO, Suwjeeka Fonseka was present as special guest while AT Siddique, Section Coordinator of the USDOL Project attended the function.

MA Kader, Executive Director of SETU, Ahsanul Haq Assistant Programme Coordinator of BTUK, Jasim Uddin Assistant Programme Coordinator of SETU, Faruk Ahmed, Chairman of Mothurapur Union Parishad, Nurur Rahman of Nasir Bidi Factory, Sahidul Islam of Banai Bidi Factory, Babu Susil Kumar of Mansur Bidi Factory, Khorshed Alam of Akiz Bidi Factory and Abdus Sattatr of N Zaman Bidi Factory addressed on the occasion. Abdus Siddique Mollah, President, Primary School Teachers' Association, Daulatpur upazila presided over.

Another major factory, Mansur Bidi Factory signed a similar agreement on May 10 last year freeing 200 child labourers. With the latest accord, all the bidi factories here declared not to employ children in their factories in future.

ILO launched the programme targeting all working children freedom from bidi factories. SETU took the responsibility. In two years, SETU freed 2,090 children from five bidi factories.

SETU distributed Tk 28 lakh among parents and trained children with a view to raising their income so that children are not employed in bidi factories.

## Reopening of railway route in Faridpur demanded

A CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

The business community and the people in general suffer a lot due to closure of the Panchunia-Faridpur railway route in 1988.

Train communication between Rajbari and Faridpur was introduced in 1920 to meet the long-felt demand of greater Faridpur district. From the very inception of the service, trains used to run six-time a day along the route smoothly. People from all walks of life enjoyed train journey with the northern districts via Rajbari.

But the train service began to deteriorate after the independence of Bangladesh due to unknown reasons. As a result railway earning in this route came down sharply. Ultimately, train communication stopped at a time when a project was also under process to extend train service from Faridpur to Barisal. But the railway authorities did not take any measure to protect the railway property.

From then on, unscrupulous people looted railway tracks, sleepers, trees along the railway line, telegraphic posts and wire indiscriminately. Influential people grabbed railway land illegally and built unauthorised structures on it.

However, on query, a few of the illegal occupants told that they had taken lease of the railway land from the concerned authority legally.

Local businessmen who suffered much due to stoppage of train service, have demanded its immediate reopening. Since its closure, they are spending an additional amount of money to carry goods including rice from the northern districts by truck resulting in rise in rice prices in local markets.



PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

Bricks being unloaded from cargo trawlers at a river ghat (terminal) near Fatullah in Narayanganj. Bricks are in great demand in the ongoing brick manufacturing season. At present, one thousand bricks are on sale at between Tk 2,500 to 2,600.

PHOTO: STAR  
Joy of learning: A group of children who were freed from the curse of child labour stepped into a primary school for the first time in their lifetime yesterday. A Kushtia based NGO, Setu signed the accord with four major bidi factories discarding child labour on Thursday.

## NGO workers call for security of life

Federation of NGOs to hand over memoranda to Nilphamari DC, SP today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Memoranda will be handed over to the deputy commissioner (DC) and the superintendent of police (SP) here by the Federation of NGOs, Bangladesh (FNB) here today.

In the memoranda, the FNB will seek security of life and property of the staff of all NGOs working here, according to its president Liaquat Ali Khan.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the FNB held at the Brac office here on Friday.

Meanwhile, panic grips the staff of the NGOs working here following bomb attacks on the Grameen Bank office at Ullapara, Sirajganj and Brac office in Porsha upazila, Naogaon and recovery of grenades from Brac office in Rangpur.

Nilphamari SP Chowdhury Abdullah-Al-Mamun told The Daily Star police vigilance was intensified in all the NGO offices. He further told that he had already consulted with the officials of Brac and Grameen Bank regarding their security measures.

A meeting between the representatives of NGOs and police administration will be held soon for

coordinated efforts about security measures.

Additional security measures were taken in all the NGO offices. NGO staffers were alerted and asked to remain vigilant.

Visitors are being compelled to undergo thorough check up at the entry points of NGO offices. Their identities are being verified. NGO employees were asked to complete their office work at daytime.

NGOs like Brac, Grameen Bank, Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) employed the guards of private security services in their offices.

Senior Programme Manager of RDRS, Nilphamari, Liaquat Ali Khan told The Daily Star they took additional security measures in their various offices located all over the district. Newcomers are being interrogated and searched at the main gates, he told.

The District Team Leader of ASA, Khademal Islam told this correspondent their staffers were asked to remain ever vigilant. They were asked to complete their official work as early as possible.

## Making women self-reliant thru' income generating activities

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A two-day training workshop for women on Income Generating Activities (IGA) concluded at North Dharandi Government Primary School in Sadar upazila here on Thursday.

Rural Development Project-16, a DANIDA-assisted project, organised the workshop.

Fifty women who are involved in road construction by earth filling work, canal excavation, roadside tree plantation, growth centre development, pipe culvert installation and pavement work took part in the

training.

Course Coordinator Anisur Rahman conducted the training while sadar upazila livestock officer, fisheries officer and agriculture officer served as trainers.

The agenda was poultry farming, fish culture, nursery, kitchen gardening, improved productivity through modern technology, adjustment, sense of balance in regular income in consideration with small capital investment, link with service provided organisation for assistance of IGA, rapport with local NGOs and government institutions for future development support services.



PHOTO: STAR

A powerful blowout of suspected biogas from a roadside drain blew off about a 100-foot stretch of covering slabs used as footpath at Golepahar intersection in the port city of Chittagong yesterday evening.

5X3

8X3

12X3