



STAR PHOTO

Two little boys at work in an automobile workshop near the FDC building.

Working without pay for a 'better future'

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Ten-year-old Sumon is passing a hard life for what he thinks 'a better future.' He toils eight to ten hours a day at an automobile workshop at Tejgaon but the employers pay nothing for his work.

Like Sumon, a good number of underprivileged children work without pay at automobile workshops in the city, sacrificing their present for the future.

Underage boys, some as young as 10-12 years old, are a common sight in the automobile workshops near Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC). Most of the shops here cannot run without the help of

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Sumon usually wakes up at 8:00am and works until 11:00pm. He enjoys only a half-holiday on Friday. But he has no objection to

it as he plans to be an automobile mechanic in future.

He started working as a trainee at the advice of his elder brother, who works in Saudi Arabia. "My brother said that Saudi Arabia has demand for this job," he said, adding, "After my apprenticeship I want to go there."

The condition of other boys is the same as Sumon's. They say despite the hardships they face, they hope the experience will pay off in the end, providing needed training that will allow them to get higher salaries in the future job.

"Though they are paying me nothing, my efficiency will help me to get a good salary when I become a mechanic," said Sona Mia, 16, a trainee in Road Star automobile workshop.

Most of the apprentices, when asked, gave the same reason for choosing this profession. "This job has a fixed salary and it has demand abroad," says Masud, 14, another trainee.

The owners insist they do not prefer underage boys as apprentices. Instead, they say, the boys are drawn to the city for job prospective. "They came to this job at their own will," said Khaleq, owner of Mohiuddin Automobiles. "We do not force them to come."

"They have nothing to do in the villages except fooling around," said Kiron, owner of Makka Engineering Workshop. "So their guardians bring them here for their own good," he added.

5x3

4x2

8x3

9x2

10x3