



Participants at a roundtable on 'Challenges before the caretaker government' organised by The Daily Star at its office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

# Form national council to implement labour law

Experts tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lack of unity among the trade unions and non-implementation of labour law are the major obstacles to ensure health, safety and better working conditions for industrial workers, said legal experts and labour leaders at a discussion yesterday.

They said shortage of skilled inspectors under the labour ministry and awareness among the workers are also responsible for the situation where the rights of workers are not ensured.

The discussion on Bangladesh Labour Law 2006: Challenges in implementing occupational health rules and security was organised by Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation (OSHE) at the National Press Club in the city.

The speakers demanded formation of a national council for industries to formulate a national policy and a

monitoring cell to ensure all kinds of safety for workers and make a guideline for implementing the labour law.

Advocate Bikash Kumar Basak and Research Officer Nishat Sharmin in their keynote presentation proposed formation of the national council, which they said, will comprise eight government officials, including the labour minister, seven representatives of employers and seven from the workers.

The council will formulate a national policy, proper health rules, create awareness among the workers and give guidelines for implementing the policy, said Bikash.

Taking part in the discussion, Senior Research Fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) M Sayeed Ahmed said the workers fail to realise their demands because of their lack of unity, while the employers are very united in case of their interests.

The workers must continue to

raise their demands which can contribute to necessary changes in labour law, he said.

Workers' leader Abdul Matin Khan lauded the Labour Law 2006, but said modification of the law is a must as the socio-economic conditions change with the change of time.

There could be a section for review of the law every four to five years, he noted.

Advocate AKM Nasim said the labour law that was enacted in October last year does not have any guideline on the criteria of the inspectors' satisfaction about the working condition of workplaces or what steps they will take if they have objections.

"Workers must be actively involved in the formulation of the national policy on their rights," he added.

Rezaul Karim Reza of Bangladesh Sangjukta Sramik Federation said the divisions among the workers' leaders have increased

dangerously, as partisan leaders represent different trade unions.

He said the workers should be very careful in selecting their representatives to the proposed national council.

Kabir Ahmed Choudhury, deputy director of labour department, said if implemented, the present law, formulated in combination of many scattered labour laws, will definitely ensure the workers' rights.

"But it becomes a major problem when workers' representatives are not found in labour courts that settle the disputes of the workers," he said while speaking as chief guest at the discussion.

Workers' leaders Mohammad Shahebullah, Sheikh Nurul Haque, ZM Kamrul and Sheikh Azizur Rahman of BLAST also took part in the discussion presided over by OSHE Chairperson Saki Rezwana.

## UNDP aid for cold-hit people

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will distribute 31,000 pieces of warm clothes among the victims of cold wave in 14 districts of the country.

The districts are Dinajpur, Kurigram, Rajshahi, Bogra, Sirajganj, Pabna, Sunamganj, Satkhira, Faridpur, Jhenidah, Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Moulvibazar and Munshiganj.

The 'target beneficiaries' will be women, children and the elderly people in the affected areas. The relief items include shawls, sweaters, Monkey caps and family blankets.

Victims of Nilphamari, Panchagarh, Moulvibazar and Munshiganj will get 4,000 family blankets.

The emergency relief by UNDP, using OCHA grant, aims to complement the ongoing national efforts in responding to cold wave victims.

Some 7,000 family-size blankets, 6,000 shawls, 2,000 sweaters for men, 3,000 sweaters for children (5 to 15 years), 2,000 sweaters for infants (below 5 years), 2,000 caps for men and 3,000 caps for children will be distributed in the remaining 10 districts.

UNDP will make emergency procurement of warm clothes from local markets and arrange distribution through existing partners, Bangladesh National Scouts (BNS), Bangladesh National Cadet Corps (BNCC) and three pre-qualified NGOs -- RDRS, NDP and Samata.

## BCFCC staff stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Assailants stabbed a staff of Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC) to death in the city's Kafrul area early yesterday.

Family members of Jobayer Hossain Labu, 27, said a gang of criminals waylaid him near his house at Mollahpara near Taltola in West Kafrul at around 12:15am and stabbed him.

Hearing Labu's scream, locals rushed to the spot and took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with a deep wound in his chest, but the doctors declared him dead.

Police could not arrest anyone until 6:00pm yesterday.