

Formulate nat'l policy to eliminate child labour

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Child labour must be brought to an end to break the vicious cycle of poverty in Bangladesh, said United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) Country Representative Louis Georges Arsenault at a seminar yesterday.

"Income-poor families tend to have more children who are more likely to be engaged in work. As a result they miss education and thereby miss the opportunity to earn a decent income in future. That's why we call it a vicious cycle," he said.

The national seminar on "Hazardous child labour in an urban informal economy" was jointly organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Unicef at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city.

According to National Child Labour Survey 2003, there are over seven lakh working children and more than 90 percent of them are in the informal economy both in rural and urban areas.

Speaking at the inaugural session, Louis Georges explained the

implications of vicious cycle of poverty and said child labour affects the development of a country.

If children can never break the cycle of poverty, the human resources of a country will also never develop, he noted.

"In a globalised world, a country's development depends on the quality of its human resources. So, I can safely say that preventing and avoiding child labour will contribute to the development of Bangladesh," the Unicef Country Representative observed.

He suggested formulation of a national policy and concrete action plan to address the issues relating to child labour, particularly hazardous labour, including commercial and sexual exploitation of children and child domestic workers.

"There are some factories of international standard in the country, but hazardous child labour is seen mainly in the small workshops and households," Secretary to the Ministry of Labour and Employment Ashfaque Hamid said, suggesting setting up of vocational training centres for the children who fail to pursue education.

Former vice-president of

Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF) Kamran T Rahman, who read out the speech of BEF President Manzur Elahi, said child labour is deeply linked to poverty and unequal distribution of resources.

"Elimination of child labour is not possible without promotion of their families," he said, adding that socially acceptable measures should be taken to stop hazardous child labour.

A paper presented at the working session of the seminar said the root causes largely relate to unemployment in rural areas, urban migration, lack of education and social awareness.

"There is a need to develop and implement community, local and municipality-based child labour monitoring systems involving all major stakeholders," the paper said.

It identified city corporations to be the best-suited public and primary authority to implement the programmes that address child labour in an urban informal economy.

Gopal Bhattacharya, director of International Labour Office in Bangladesh, and Mojibur Rahman Bhuiyan, chairman of National Coordination Committee on Workers' Education, also spoke at the seminar.

Cheating case against deputy speaker dismissed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The cheating case filed yesterday against Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui for misappropriation of Tk 12 lakh from his former gunmen on different dates was dismissed.

Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Baqui passed the order after SM Julfikar Rahman, former gunman of the deputy speaker, filed the case with the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka seeking an arrest warrant against the accused.

In his order, the magistrate mentioned that the documents submitted by the complainant in support of taking money by the accused are unclear. So, the complaint was dismissed, the magistrate added.

In his complaint, Julfikar, who was former member of Special Branch (SB), mentioned that Akhter Hamid took Tk 12 lakh through him from 11 people promising jobs to the posts of scientific and fire service and civil defence officials.

But the victims neither got jobs nor took the money back that they paid to the accused. Moreover, the accused sacked the complainant as he requested the deputy speaker to give their money back, Julfikar added.

Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, the deputy speaker defended aside the allegation and accused Zulfikar of cheating people using his office.

"The gunmen took money from people of Birhampur of Dinajpur promising them jobs, but he failed. The people, who gave money came to me and complained against Zulfikar.

Then I sent to the matter to special detective branch for investigation in 2004. In the investigation, Zulfikar was found guilty and he was sacked from the service," the deputy speaker said.

"Zulfikar came to me in 2006 again to provide him a job. But I did not entertain his appeal," he said.

Ainuddin resigns from LDP

Major General (retd) Mohammad Ainuddin Bir Pratik yesterday resigned from Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

He was the vice president of LDP, formed under the leadership of Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and former BNP lawmaker Col (retd) Oli Ahmed on October 27 last year.

In a letter sent to LDP Maghbazar office, Ainuddin said he resigned voluntarily for personal reasons.

Ainuddin was not directly involved with any political party when LDP was formed.

"We are yet to receive his resignation letter," said an LDP official.

Rejoinder

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Monday, February 19, 2007 issue published a long interview as a lead news with the sole intention of maligning before the nation the former prime minister and chairperson of BNP Begum Khaleda Zia, members of her family and some other former ministers and government officials.

The title of the interview was, "Khaleda Zia became reckless in her second term." The interview was given by Mr AHM Nurul Islam, who worked initially as private secretary (PS) to the then prime minister and subsequently as secretary-in-charge at the prime minister's office (PMO) during the four-party alliance government.

Mr Hanif Mohammad took the interview. Before publishing such an interview, a daily newspaper such as Prothom Alo or the interviewer did not feel it at all necessary to contact Begum Zia or anyone else figuring in the interview on any issue discussed in the interview. This is undoubtedly repugnant to universally accepted norms of journalism. We have been surprised to see that such a report could be published by a daily of Prothom Alo's stature.

On every point mentioned in the interview, Mr AHM Nurul Islam's views are totally baseless, ill-motivated and are full of distortion of facts. In every matter, Mr Islam has tried with ill motive to assassinate the character of the honourable former prime minister, her family and the concerned respectable persons. As a result, on the one hand, the image of Begum Zia and others has been tarnished and their reputation tainted, and on the other, the whole nation has been misled with false and fabricated facts.

In actuality, Mr AHM Nurul Islam was retired compulsorily from service on some proven specific and serious charges during his terms first as PS to prime minister and then as secretary-in-charge in the PMO, both the posts being very important and extremely sensitive. The Bureau of Anti-Corruption also filed a case against him. He then filed a writ petition in the High Court which is still pending for disposal. The then government allowed the case to proceed and the law to take its own course. But now it appears that at the end of the term of the alliance government, Mr Islam has launched with vengeance, an ill-motivated effort to destroy the image and honour of the former prime minister and chairperson of BNP. His statements are absolutely out of grudge, and are baseless and false. He has thereby tried to confuse the people.

We hereby lodge a strong protest to this interview given with an ill motive and also to its publication in Prothom Alo. Although prices of power plant have gone up and dollar has been devalued in one and a half years since the bid submission on June 28, 2005, in no way a 50 percent jump from the bidder's quoted price can be explained in the revised cost estimate



(From right) Dr M Zahir, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, Dr Kamal Hossain and Abdul Baset Majumder talk to reporters at Supreme Court Bar Association office yesterday after the Supreme Court recalled its order regarding submission of eight-point information of election candidates.

Hasan Mahmud Khandaker takes over as DG of Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Additional Inspector General of Police Hasan Mahmud Khandaker yesterday joined the Headquarters of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) as its director general (DG), said a press release.

After doing masters in English literature from Dhaka University, Hasan joined Bangladesh Police Service in 1982 and performed his duty in various capacities with integrity and honesty.

He also did his graduation from National Defence College in 2005 and served in UN Peace Keeping Mission in Bosnia for three years.

Hasan received higher training in Australia, the UK and the US.

Before joining the Rab as its DG, he served as Additional Inspector General of Police in Special Branch and as director of legal and media wing of Rab during its inception.

Restoration of Nat'l Women Dev Policy '97 demanded

A team of Samajik Protirodh Committee, a platform of country's women and human rights organisations, yesterday submitted a memorandum to Information Adviser to the Caretaker Government Barrister Molin Hosein demanding restoration of the National Women Development Policy '97, says a press release.

The memorandum said the National Women Development Policy '97 is a milestone for the development of Bangladesh, as it was adopted in line with Cedaw agreement and Beijing +5.

"But the matter to regret is that the BNP-Jamaat led coalition government brought some basic changes in the Policy that women society cannot cope with," the memo added.

The team comprised of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad General Secretary Ayesha Khanam, Advocate Sultana Kamal of Ain-o-Salish Kendra, Dr Mahmuda Islam of Women for Women, Selina Khalek of Bangladesh Mahila Samiti, Shahin Anam of Manusher Jonno, Shahnaz Sumi of Bangladesh Nari Pragati, Gita Das of Nari Pokkho, Khadija Lina of Brac and Rokeya Rafiq Baby of Karmojibi Nari.

Arrest of Satyabir condemned

A group of civil society members and development activists yesterday expressed deep concern over the arrest of Satyabir Dewan, general secretary of Jonosanghati Samity, says a press release.

In a statement the signatories said Satyabir Dewan is an honest and idealistic political activist and also a founding member of Jonosanghati Samity. Even no complaint or case was filed against him with police.

The arrest of Satyabir would bring the government's ongoing drive to capture the corrupt politicians and godfathers under question, the statement said adding that the information of recovering arms from his house is also sprung.

Prof Mesbah Kamal, HK Arefin, Dalemchandra Barman and Shourav Shikder of Dhaka University, Sanjeeb Drong of Bangladesh Adivashi Forum and development activist Numan Ahmed Khan were among the signatories.

CA urged to release NGO official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trocaire, an Irish Catholic non-governmental organisation, in a letter yesterday urged Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed to release NGO official Shahidul Islam, who was arrested from Tala Upazila, Satkhira.

Trocaire also sent a copy of the letters to the Irish Embassy in India, the Bangladesh Embassy in Belgium and to the home ministry, urging the government to take all necessary measures.

The letter was signed by the head of Trocaire's international department, Mike Williams.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Tomorrow is the second death anniversary of Aleya Khatoon, a social worker of Bogra and wife of former police officer Md A b d u l Halim, says a press release.

Relatives and admirers have been requested to attend a milad mahfil at her residence after Asr prayers tomorrow.

PDB sticks to Harbin

FROM PAGE 1

manipulation in which the company hides cost of plant spare parts to show a low cost offer. Besides, after the ERL blacklisted the company how can any government agency even want to use this company to install a new power plant?" asks a PDB official.

Sources said this demonstrates that the PDB is still under the grip of the same corrupt axis of officials who pushed the Harbin deal ahead to comply with the wishes of Hawa Bhaban, and thereby undermined the national interest.

The cabinet purchase committee and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) during the four-party alliance rule had played a part in this scam to overrule the decision of the first Review Panel formed by the Central Procurement Unit (CPU), Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Planning.

The panel was formed late in 2005 to investigate corruption allegations against the PDB brought by another Chinese company—CMEC—which it did not submit on June 28, 2005, the last date for submission.

Following Unesco's November 17, 1999 declaration of February 21 as the International Mother Language Day, 188 countries across the globe observe the day to promote linguistic diversity and

multilingual education and raise awareness of cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

On this day in 1952, students and the general public in Dhaka took to the streets in protest against the then government's denial of Bangla as the national language and imposition of Urdu as the sole official language of Pakistan.

Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Shafiq, Jabbar and many others sacrificed their lives as the then Pakistani rulers ordered firing on the agitation.

The brave children of the soil established mother tongue Bangla as a state language through shedding their blood.

The protest sparked on February

21, 1952 progressed into the long-drawn struggle that eventually led to the birth of Bangladesh.

The Shaheed Minar and its adjacent areas went through a facelift, and roads and medians were festooned with Bangla alphabets and national flag.

The Dhaka University authorities that are supervising the Ekushey February [February 21] programmes have prohibited display of portraits, posters or banners and processions or rallies in and around the Central Shaheed Minar.

The day is a public holiday and the national flag will fly at half-mast atop government, autonomous and private buildings.

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With the help of a powerful syndicate of politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and lobbyists, Harbin Power Engineering bagged contracts for most of the power projects—Tongi 80 MW, Fenchuganj 90 MW and Chandpur 150 MW—during the disqualification of the PDB.

The PDB includes some new items and puts some items into two categories while a few items have been shown with exaggerated price. For example, the cost of foundation, installation, erection, testing and commissioning has shot up by more than \$ 3.27 million. Civil and building work costs have shot up by \$ 2.14 million. Land charges, inland transportation costs, insurance and others have increased by \$ 410,000. The above costs will be clear if estimated of the RDPP is thoroughly scrutinised and compared with what was shown in the original PP of the project. Costs are now plugged back in exaggerated form under different heads to cover the items and spares missing from Harbin's proposal.

Using the argument of price difference, the then PDB chairman ANH Akhter Hossain and state minister for power Iqbal Hassan Mahmud convinced the Cabinet Purchase Committee (CPC) to legalise an illegal act by awarding the project to the disqualified bidder Harbin.

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With the help of Harbin repeatedly to secure contracts for projects and make the clients suffer due to its poor workmanship and charging for spare parts at exorbitant rates. An example is the Harbin-built Tongi 80 MW Plant that has failed to deliver from the very first day of its inauguration in September 2005.

In spite of the negative Tongi experience and the ERL's blacklisting, nothing could stop Harbin due to intervention from the Hawa Bhaban, noted one source. "The then state minister for power Anwarul Karim Talukder drew the wrath of the PMO and Hawa Bhaban for filing a case with the ACC against the PDB officials involved in supporting Harbin in the Tongi 80 MW Plant."

In its scrutiny, the IMED Review

panel found that Harbin did not submit the technical proposal at the second stage of the two-stage tendering process. In violation of Regulation 29 of the PPR 2003, Project Director Tulsi Das Saha in his letter dated July 9, 2005 sought from Harbin a Revised Technical Proposal which it did not submit on June 28, 2005, the last date for submission. Surprisingly, Tulsi continues to be the project director and no action has been taken against the corrupt officials against whom the Review Panel recommended specific disciplinary measures in its report. The Review Panel also declared Harbin's proposal as null and void.

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No change in temperature