

50pc pry children drop out

Reveals report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost half of the children drop out without completing primary education, revealed a report launched at Brac Centre auditorium in the city yesterday.

The report titled 'Access to education in Bangladesh: Country analytic review of primary and secondary education' is an inception phase output of the international Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE), of which Brac University-Institute of Educational Development (BU-IED) is a partner institution.

The report however assesses that without a reliable bench mark for this important indicator like drop out or completion rate, any kind of planning or setting targets for Millennium Development Goals (MDG) or Education for All (EFA) would be faulty.

"Virtual or silent exclusion from engagement in learning of those



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury speaks at a launching ceremony of a report at Brac Centre auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud and on his right are Elizabeth Carriere and Rasheda K Choudhury.

who continue to be enrolled nominally is as serious a problem as open exclusion", finds the report, adding that this phenomenon remains largely un-investigated and un-qualified.

"Poverty has to be addressed to achieve educational goals," said Elizabeth Carriere, acting head of DFID, while addressing the launching ceremony of the report. "Poverty is the most serious

barrier to achieving the educational goals", said Elizabeth, stressing the need for poverty eradication.

However, DFID would continue its co-operation in education sector of Bangladesh, she added.

"Government must ensure quality education for all," said Rasheda K Choudhury, director, Campaign for Popular Education.

Claiming that the poor are not getting quality education, Rasheda said, "Education is a public good and also a right. Education is not like a commodity."

Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud in his speech said, "Number of enrolled students in primary level is increasing in Bangladesh, compared to other neighbouring countries." Dr Wahiduddin at the same time questioned the quality of education in the country.

Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice chancellor of Brac University, chaired the programme.

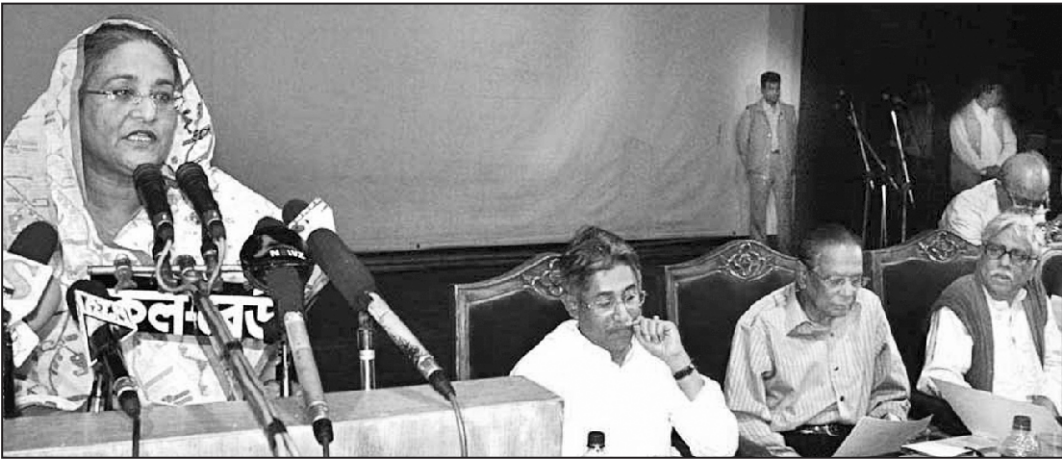


PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a seminar at the Engineers' Institute auditorium in the city yesterday on the occasion of historic March 7. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust organised the seminar.

Body recommends 40MW power plant at CEPZ

UNB, Dhaka

The Economic Affairs Committee at a meeting yesterday sent back for revision of the proposal to set up a 10MW power plant at Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ).

Finance Adviser Dr Mirza Azizul Islam presided over the meeting.

"We've sent back the proposal as we think that the 10MW power plant won't be enough for electricity

supply in CEPZ," Mirza Azizul told the journalists.

He said the committee recommended upgrading the power plant to minimum 40MW to meet the growing demand for electricity in the CEPZ area.

"We ask the ministry concerned to make a new proposal for setting up a 40MW power plant and place it again before the Economic Affairs Committee after proper scrutiny," he

added.

As per the proposal, the power plant was supposed to be set up by a private entrepreneur on the basis of Build-Own-Operate (BOO) at an estimated cost of Tk 400 million. The project was scheduled to be implemented from November 2005 to January 2008.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Saleh Uddin and other high officials were present at the meeting.

Indo-Bangla Rly meeting begins

A three-day inter-governmental railway meeting between Bangladesh and India began at Rail Bhawan in the city yesterday, says a press release.

On the first day, the two sides discussed issues relating to running of passenger trains and container trains between the two countries, Akhaura railway link, outstanding financial dues and infrastructural development.

ATKM Ismail, additional secretary, Ministry of Communications, led the Bangladesh team while Ashok Gupta, adviser (traffic), Indian Railway, led the Indian team at the meeting.

Other members of the Indian team are RK Tandon, Ajay Kumar Puthia, Shivaji Rakshit, DN Srivastava and K Nandini.

Bangladesh team members included Joint Secretary Md Abu Taher, Addl Director General (Operation) Quazi Asadullah, Addl Director General (Finance) Md Delwar Husain, Addl Director General (Rolling Stock) TA Chowdhury and Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, S Bodiruzzaman.

Seminar on learning languages

Speakers at a seminar yesterday emphasised the need to learn foreign languages to develop global citizens.

They said learning foreign languages, particularly English, is a must for everybody in this age of globalisation. Learning different languages helps one to understand not only the literature and culture of their own country but also the world civilization, they added.

Dhaka Language Club and Education Excellence organised the seminar in the city with Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid as the chief guest, said a press release.

Prof M Shamsul Huq presented the keynote paper. Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Bangladesh V Krishnamoorthy, Lt Gen (Retd) Nooruddin Khan, Lt Gen (retd) M Mahbubur Rahman, Lt Gen (Retd) Harun Ar Rashid were present as special guests while Dhaka Language Club President Masud A Khan presided over the seminar.

'Fishery resources dwindle everyday'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a conference yesterday stressed the need for proper maintenance of the water bodies to boost fishery resources in the country.

The two-day international conference on Community Based Fisheries Management started in a city hotel to ensure sustainable development of fishery resources around the world.

Bangladesh and South Asia Office of the WorldFish Centre and the Department of Fisheries have jointly organised the programme with the assistance of the Department for International Development (DFID-UK).

Speaking at the inaugural session, Adviser to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Dr CS Karim said country's fisheries resources are dwindling every day due to unscrupulous management of water bodies.

He said due to inadequate and poor maintenance, some of the country's richest fishery regions like Chalan Beel and low-lying areas of Sunamganj and Kishoreganj, have been losing productivity over the years.

Dr Karim also laid emphasis on the availability of market information and market access for poor fishermen so that they are not deprived of competitive prices for their fishes.

In a keynote paper at the conference, Director General of WorldFish Centre Dr Stephen J Hall underlined the need for external assistance to fishermen community to ensure sustainable development of the sector.

He also focused on the importance of community-based approach in small scale fishing in the developing countries like Bangladesh, India and Cameroon.

Secretary to fisheries and livestock ministry Syed Ataur Rahman called for reviewing the leasing policy.

He said although the water bodies are meant for fishing communities, their actual management ultimately goes to influential people.

Chaired by Alan Brook of WorldFish Centre, the inaugural session was also addressed by Director General of fishing department Md Nazrul Islam and Project Co-ordinator Muzaffar Ahmed.

Process of issuing visa made simple

Says British Dy HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

British Deputy High Commissioner to Bangladesh Stephen Bridges has said the process of issuing visa for his country has been made simple and transparent.

"We are not to reduce the number of visitors, rather we need more visitors and students. But things are to be transparent and there should be no forged documents," he added.

The envoy was inaugurating a seminar on UK visas organised by the British High Commission at Saifur Rahman auditorium in Sylhet yesterday.

The seminar was also addressed by Sylhet City Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, Divisional Commissioner Aziz Hasan, Deputy Director of Visa services Jonathan Verney, Chief Executive Officer of the Immigration Advisory Services (IAS) Keith Best, Second Secretary (Political) Derek Jones and Press and Public Affairs Officer Syeda Naznin Ferdousi.

Around 400 lawyers, journalists, officials, bankers, students, teachers attended the seminar. The envoy said the British High Commission always welcomes genuine applicants.

"For seeking visas, there are some simple guidelines that help us in taking our decisions. We take decisions quickly and issue visas to people whose applications meet the requirements of the immigration rules," he added.

One of the speakers said 29,500 visas were issued against a total of 44,000 applicants from Bangladesh last year.

But more than 50 per cent of students were refused visas for valid reasons, he added.

The speaker said nearly half of the country's total applications for UK visa are made from Sylhet region and most of the applicants want to visit family members in the UK or to go there after marriages with British citizens or to settle there as dependants of some others who are already residing there.

Thus the total number of visa applicants a year rises up to 20,000, they added.

The immigration officials said applications containing forged documents are instantly refused and unfortunately one in four applicants submitted forged documents in 2006.

"Our visa processing firm VFS will be able to accept on line applications for visa shortly," said a high commission official.

Chief Executive Officer of Immigration Advisory Services (IAS) and former British MP Keith Best said his organisation works closely with the British High Commission to ensure that the applicants get the best possible advice for migration to the UK.

IAS started working in Sylhet seven years back, he added.

The victims' relatives and locals blamed Mobarak, saying he rather became busy with saving his rags instead of alerting the neighbours.

They also blamed slum owner Khaleq Sawdagar for building houses in such close proximity leaving no provision for escape.

The slum built on around 1,500 sq-feet land inside a brick boundary wall looked like a death trap.

Victims and locals recalled that a fire burnt down nine adjoining godowns and five houses owned by Zafar Sawdagar and Nuruddin recently, without any casualty though. Sufficient space between the godowns and houses saved the people living there, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khaleq defended himself saying he could not make sufficient exit and entry points as the owners of the adjoining houses did not allow him to use their land to facilitate the movement of his tenants.

Many also blamed the slum itself, which was built in the densely populated area of Boubazar in an unplanned way, for the huge extent of damage and casualty.

As many as 300 slums are located in South Bakalia, said Phui Mia, former president of South Bakalia Byabashayee Samity. The closely grown shanties have narrowed the roads making vehicular movement through the area quite impossible, he added.

One can reach the area only by rickshaw and the roads do not even allow two rickshaws to go side by

side, said locals. The fire fighters also faced difficulties in controlling the fire yesterday as the fire-fighting vehicles had to be kept over 1,200 feet away from the scene.

Local people, meanwhile, alleged that the casualty at Boubazar could have been reduced had the fire brigade team from nearby stations reached the spot quickly and acted sensibly during the rescue operation.

The locals, however, admitted that inaccessibility to the slum, too many zigzag streets, and absence of a water body made it very difficult for the fire fighters to go on with their work.

The locals told The Daily Star that the fire fighting units reached the scene about half-an-hour after the fire broke out, which they believe was a major reason behind the higher number of casualties.

"The fire broke out around 1:45am and I tried to contact the fire brigade control room but failed as my cell phone battery suddenly died. Then I took help of one of my friend's and called the Fire Brigade office," said Mohammad Aziz, a Boubazar resident.

According to Aziz, the fire fighting team arrived around 2:30am.

"Upon arrival, the fire fighting teams primarily tried to extinguish the flames of the rags instead of concentrating on rescuing the people trapped just behind the pile of rags," he said.

Shariful Islam, in-charge of Chandanpura Fire Sub-Station, claimed that the first information of the fire came to them around 1:50am and they reached the place around 2:00am.

Sharif admitted that they had no idea that such a large number of tenants might live in such a tiny slum although the locals insisted them to enter the houses to save lives.

"But the situation worsened because of the inaccessibility to the slum," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chittagong district administration, Chittagong Metropolitan Police and the Fire Brigade formed three separate committees to probe the incident.

Additional District Magistrate Tajul Islam, Deputy Police Commissioner (North) Mostafa Kamal and Fire Brigade Director (Operation) Major Sheikh Shahjalal head the three-member committees.

The committees are to submit within three days their reports on the reason of the fire, if the slum was constructed with proper approval, and allegation of negligence in rescue operation.

Meanwhile, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal visited the place yes-

terday afternoon. He enquired about the incident and talked to the locals.

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury also visited the place earlier.

CASHOCKED UNB adds: Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed has expressed deep shock at loss of life in a devastating fire in Chittagong early yesterday.

In a condolence message, the chief adviser directed the authorities concerned to ensure quick and proper treatment of the injured.

He urged all concerned to come forward for the rehabilitation of those affected by the fire.

The CA conveyed his sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls.

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has also expressed her profound shock at loss of life in the fire.

She urged the authorities concerned to ensure quick treatment of the injured and arrange compensation for the victims.

21 killed in Ctg slum fire

FROM PAGE 1

Murshid's daughter Kohinoor, 20, who had been married off recently, also escaped death as she went to her in-laws' the previous evening.

None of those who survived could go inside the houses on fire for a second time to rescue the other family members as the fire blocked the lone narrow entry-exit passage.

Shilpi Akhtar's presence of mind saved her two-year-old daughter Yasmin, husband Baten and herself, but she failed to save her parents and son Anis, 10.

Shilpi lived next to Mobarak's house and when the fire broke out the three hastily came out.

"While we were getting out of the house I asked my father and mother and son Anis to follow us, but they could not make it in time," a tearful Shilpi said, adding, "When I came back to my house it was all over."

Hearing the news, bereaved relatives of the victims rushed to the place. The air was heavy with their wails and cries.

"I was saved but I lost my parents, my brother and sister. My family has vanished into ashes in a few seconds," Kohinoor burst into tears.

The victims' relatives and locals blamed Mobarak, saying he rather became busy with saving his rags instead of alerting the neighbours.

They also blamed slum owner Khaleq Sawdagar for building houses in such close proximity leaving no provision for escape.

The slum built on around 1,500 sq-feet land inside a brick boundary wall looked like a death trap.

Victims and locals recalled that a fire burnt down nine adjoining godowns and five houses owned by Zafar Sawdagar and Nuruddin recently, without any casualty though. Sufficient space between the godowns and houses saved the people living there, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Khaleq defended himself saying he could not make sufficient exit and entry points as the owners of the adjoining houses did not allow him to use their land to facilitate the movement of his tenants.

Many also blamed the slum itself, which was built in the densely populated area of Boubazar in an unplanned way, for the huge extent of damage and casualty.

As many as 300 slums are located in South Bakalia, said Phui Mia, former president of South Bakalia Byabashayee Samity. The closely grown shanties have narrowed the roads making vehicular movement through the area quite impossible, he added.

One can reach the area only by rickshaw and the roads do not even allow two rickshaws to go side by

side, said locals. The fire fighters also faced difficulties in controlling the fire yesterday as the fire-fighting vehicles had to be kept over 1,200 feet away from the scene.

Local people, meanwhile, alleged that the casualty at Boubazar could have been reduced had the fire brigade team from nearby stations reached the spot quickly and acted sensibly during the rescue operation.

The locals, however, admitted that inaccessibility to the slum, too many zigzag streets, and absence of a water body made it very difficult for the fire fighters to go on with their work.

The locals told The Daily Star that the fire fighting units reached the scene about half-an-hour after the fire broke out, which they believe was a major reason behind the higher number of casualties.

"The fire broke out around 1:45am and I tried to contact the fire brigade control room but failed as my cell phone battery suddenly died. Then I took help of one of my friend's and called the Fire Brigade office," said Mohammad Aziz, a Boubazar resident.

According to Aziz, the fire fighting team arrived around 2:30am.

"Upon arrival, the fire fighting teams primarily tried to extinguish the flames of the rags instead of concentrating on rescuing the people trapped just behind the pile of rags," he said.

Shariful Islam, in-charge of Chandanpura Fire Sub-Station, claimed that the first information of the fire came to them around 1:50am and they reached the place around 2:00am.

Sharif admitted that they had no idea that such a large number of tenants might live in such a tiny slum although the locals insisted them to enter the houses to save lives.

"But the situation worsened because of the inaccessibility to the slum," he said.

Meanwhile, the Chittagong district administration, Chittagong Metropolitan Police and the Fire Brigade formed three separate committees to probe the incident.

Additional District Magistrate Tajul Islam, Deputy Police Commissioner (North) Mostafa Kamal and Fire Brigade Director (Operation) Major Sheikh Shahjalal head the three-member committees.

The committees are to submit within three days their reports on the reason of the fire, if the slum was constructed with proper approval, and allegation of negligence in rescue operation.

Meanwhile, LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal visited the place yes-

terday afternoon. He enquired about the incident and talked to the locals.

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury also visited the place earlier.

CASHOCKED UNB adds: Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed has expressed deep shock at loss of life in a devastating fire in Chittagong early yesterday.

In a condolence message, the chief adviser directed the authorities concerned to ensure quick and proper treatment of the injured.

He urged all concerned to come forward for the rehabilitation of those affected by the fire.

The CA conveyed his sympathy to the bereaved family members and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed souls.

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has also expressed her profound shock at loss of life in the fire.

She urged the authorities concerned to ensure quick treatment of the injured and arrange compensation for the victims.

Bangladesh, Japan students hold TV confce

Bss, Dhaka

Alive television conference in participation of the students of Bangladesh and Japan was held here yesterday to acquaint one with the culture, lifestyle and education system of the other.

The conference was organised by the Japan International Corporation Agency (Jica) at its office at Gulshan in the city.

Twenty-two Bangladeshi students of Abdul Gafur Shikkha Shibir School at Sahjahanpur and 63 Japanese students of Kitakoshigaya Primary School at Saitama in Japan participated in the conference.

In the programme, Bangladeshi students sang a song and performed a dance followed by a song played by the Japanese students with various musical instruments. The Japanese students also gave a lively presentation of their schools and demonstrated karate.

Tumpa, a student of Abdul Gafur Shikkha Shibir, said, "I really enjoyed it, through this programme I learned many things.

Asaka, a Japanese girl on the other side of the screen, said to her Bangladeshi friend, "I am very happy that through this TV conference system I can see you and talk to you. But I would be happier if I could meet you in real life".

Tk 3.10 lakh looted, 4 shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Miscreants sprayed bullets on four persons leaving them injured critically and snatched away over Tk 3 lakh in two separate incidents in the city yesterday.

A group of miscreants riding on two motorbikes followed Mohammad Safiullah, an electronics trader of Eastern Plaza, who was returning to Paribagh from Dhanmondi also on a motorbike after drawing Tk 3.10 lakh from a bank at 7:15pm.

Sensing presence of the miscreants Safiullah tried to escape the scene leaving his motorbike at the spot but the criminals opened fire on him and snatched the money from his possession.

Safiullah and a security guard Abdul Malek, 45, was injured during the firing.

In another incident, two construction workers identified as Mohammad Shakil, 20, and Rakib Uddin, 45, sustained bullet injuries when local extortionists opened fire on them at East Rampura area at 3:00pm.

The extortionists attacked the labourers when the owner of the under-construction building refused to pay them money.

All the injured were sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Necessity of village court emphasised

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday emphasised the necessity of village court in ensuring justice, good governance and democracy, says a press release.

Democracywatch organised the discussion on 'The importance of village court to ensure justice at the grassroots' at its office in the city.

The speakers said performances of village court and village police are very poor. Union Parishad Chairmen opt for 'Salish' rather than assisting the village court.

Most of the people are not well aware of the function of village court either. They are not even acquainted with the effectiveness of the village court where minor cases could be disposed easily without any harassment.

Democracywatch will organise a series of awareness campaign to let people know the function and effectiveness of village courts.

Mostafa Sohel, Saiful Islam, Ashrafuzzaman Sarker, Feroze Nurun Nabi Jugol, Shaheen Gazi, Towfik Elahi and Nilufa Yasmin Moon were present at the discussion.

Roundtable on development constraints

Coordination and collaboration between government and non-government organisations are a must for sustainable development, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

Bangladesh Field Office of Muslim Aid-UK organised the roundtable on 'Development constraints: Bangladesh perspective' at the National Press Club in the city, says a press release.

The speakers also identified the lack of good governance, lack of political commitment, lack of social justice and non-participation of women as development constraints.

It is high time to find out the solution and everybody should be committed to removing all the constraints in order to ensure sustainable development, they said.

Mizanur Rahman, acting country director, Muslim Aid-UK Bangladesh Field Office, presented the keynote paper.

DFID Representative Richard Bouffer, former secretary Marghub Murshed, Dr Abdus Sabur, country director of Water Aid, and Advocate Habbunnessa took part in the discussion moderated by Shah Abdul Hannan, chairman of Bangladesh Field Office, Muslim Aid-UK.

Obituary



on March 5, says a press release. She is survived by her husband and two sons.

A milad and doa mahfil will be held at her residence at 368 Madhubagh, Maghbazar after Asr prayers on March 8.

Death anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of Chowdhury Amir Kawsar Kislui, writer and painter, says a press release.

He was killed in a road accident at Sharsa in Jessore on this day in 2005.

On the occasion, Quarnkhani and milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers at his residence at Goalchamot in Faridpur.

DHAKA TODAY

Seminar

Jatir Janak Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust will hold a seminar on '7th March speech of Bangabandhu'. Venue: Engineers' Institution. Time: 4:00pm.

Roundtable

Governance Coalition organises a roundtable on 'Good governance and strong local government'. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Seminar

Steps Towards Development organises a seminar on 'Gender sensitive and effective communication materials'. Venue: Chhayanaut Sangskriti Bhavan. Time: 3:00pm.

Discussion

A discussion on 'Women's access to justice: Current perspective' will be held. Venue: Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar

Partnership of Women in Action will hold a seminar on 'Condition of women in non-institutionalised sector and our duty'. Venue: WVA Auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Workshop

Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum organises a workshop on 'ILO Convention 138 and Recommendation 146 ratification'. Venue: Biam auditorium. Time: 10:00am.