



PHOTO: STAR
Rabindra Sangeet Shilpi Sangstha President Kalim Sharafi addresses a press conference at National Press Club yesterday. The press conference was organised on the occasion of the Eighth Jatiya Rabindra Sangeet Sammelan.

Listed criminal held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested a top-listed criminal following a shootout at his home at Hoseniganj Bedpatty in the city yesterday.

Injured Benjir Ahmed, who received two bullet wounds in his legs, was undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital till filing of this report.

Acting on a tip off, Rab members raided the house of Benjir. Sensing Rab presence, Benjir opened fire on the members of the elite force from his bedroom, prompting them to fire back.

He joined BNP along with hun-

dreds of political leaders in October 2004.

Former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa was severely criticised for welcoming him in the party presenting wreaths at a reception chaired by BNP leader Kala Chand.

He used to run an organised gang in the city and its suburbs and was wanted in a number of cases of extortion, terrorism and tender vandalism.

Benjir was involved with BNP, Awami League and Jatiya Party in turns.

During the Operation Clean Heart, the joint forces recovered a lot of firearms from his possession following his statement. Later, he was freed on bail last year.

'One crore children involved in hazardous work'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About one crore children, that is 23.5 percent of total population, are involved in hazardous work, reveals a study yesterday.

The study also reveals that 40 percent children of the country aged between five and 17 years work casually or to earn some money while 24 percent children are forced to work to earn their livelihood.

The statistics were disclosed at a press conference at the Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Save the Children, UK and Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) jointly conducted the study on 345 households in mostly poverty-stricken areas of Dhaka, Khulna and Kurigram.

Terming poverty the main reason of children's involvement in hazardous jobs, Prof Abul Barkat said the social structure, which hinders poverty reduction, is still prevailing due to lack of political commitment.

"Almost one crore children of the total population are engaged in hazardous jobs and it is quite inhuman that 60 percent of them said that they were happy with this status attributing it to their birth in the poor family," he said.

As child labour cannot be eliminated right away due to the existing social structure, we should have separate wage scale for the child labourers in order to protect their rights, Barkat added.

In the survey titled 'Prevalence of Child Labour in Harmful Work',

it was suggested that comprehensive measures should be taken to increase income of some targeted poor segments of households and raise their awareness so that they support their children's schooling at least up to completion of primary level.

The suggestions also include use of protective equipments, regulations concerning procedures and safety practices to control occupational health hazards and to lessen the degree of harm in child labour.

In another study titled 'Prevalence of Violence and Abuse Against Children', it was revealed that children are often victims of verbal and physical abuse and even the parents and teachers sometimes torture them.

The study recommended that the traditional notion of the virtue of physical punishment should be

replaced by counselling and psychotherapy for the children.

It was also suggested that awareness of the society against eve-teasing, early marriage and dowry should be raised.

Stressing the need for fair politics, Justice Muhammad Golam Rabbani said the governing system should be changed and the children's issues should be prioritised.

This programme seems to be a mourning session where we came to know that around one crore children are engaged in hazardous jobs who are the future of the nation, he added.

Among others UM Habibun Nessa, Suman Sengupta, Munir Ahmed of Save the Children UK, Ronald E Berghuys of International Labour Organisation (ILO) and child representatives were also present.



PHOTO: STAR
Justice Muhammad Golam Rabbani speaks at a press conference at the Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Prof Abul Barkat.