

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY OBSERVED

Pledge to eradicate poverty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was observed in the country as elsewhere across the world yesterday with a call for concerted efforts for eradicating poverty from the society.

Different organisations chalked out various programmes, including rally, open-air concert and gathering, highlighting this year's theme 'Stand up against poverty and inequality'.

Employees and officers of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) brought out a procession and held rally on its premises where participants urged all to take proper measures to root out poverty.

DCC Mayor Sadique Hossain Khokha inaugurated the programme.

He said unplanned population growth is the main cause behind sustainable poverty.

"It is very difficult to remove poverty from our densely populated country because three-

fourth people are still now under the poverty line. Concerted efforts are needed for eliminating poverty from our society," he said while addressing the rally.

The Hunger Project, Karmajibi Nari (KN) and Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) also participated at the programme.

People's Forum on MDGs (PFM), an alliance of 200 private organisations and trade union centres, organised different programmes simultaneously in 30 districts, including Dhaka, to mark

the day.

The People's Forum, a broad-based coalition of civil society groups, along with other partner organisations held a mass gathering at Rabindra Sarobar at Dhanmondi in the city where renowned artists also performed.

The People's Forum in association with CAMPE and Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) also organised rally and concert at educational institutions across the country.

ATTACK ON UDICHI PROGRAMME

Arrest of culprits demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpi Gosthi Central Committee yesterday demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the people who set off an attack at the cultural programme of Udichi at Habiganj on the Eid day.

A 'communal' group under the banner of 'Shariat Birodi Karjokolap Protirodh Committee' (Committee to resist the activities that goes against Shariah) attacked the programme on the local Shaheed Minar premises at Baniachang in Habiganj and injured 10 to 12 artists and activists.

At a press conference at the Udichi office at city's Topkhana road yesterday, central committee members also demanded to ban the Shariat Birodi Karjokolap Protirodh Committee and to ensure security while staging cultural programmes across the country.

Memorandums were sent to the chief adviser through the deputy commissioners and upazila nirbahi officer in all the districts. The central committee also sent a memorandum to the Chief Adviser's Office in this regard.

While reading out the written statement, General Secretary of Udichi Shilpighosthi Mahmud Selim said that Udichi Baniachang branch filed a First Information Report (FIR) with the police station.

But police did not register the complaint as a regular case and the invaders, who have been threatening the Udichi activists, are at large.

NGOs and development partners, the welfare and rights of women and child prisoners will be more ensured," she added.

Highlighting the situation of the prisons, IG (Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hassan stressed the need for more shelter homes for those women and children who are victims, not convicts.

There are 86,000 prisoners in jails across the country, with the capacity of 27,294, he said.

Executive Director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) Advocate Salma Ali stressed the need to change the jail code in order to ensure proper management and develop women- and children-friendly support system.

German Ambassador Frank Meyke, DIG (Prisons) Shamsul Haider Siddiqui, Barrister Sara Hossain, Hamida Hossain and Faustina Pereira of Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) also spoke.

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provisions for safe custody for women and children that focus on the protection of their rights, practical use of these provisions is quite insignificant.

"As the prison authorities are not provided with a separate budget for the upkeep of women and children in safe custody, women are forced to carry out menial chores for convicted prisoners in return for food. They are also subject to abuse and harassment in prison," she said, adding that it is important to amend legal system in this regard.

There are only six safe homes in six divisions under the Ministry of Social Welfare. Ministry of Women and Children Affairs has only one safe custody and six shelter homes in six divisions. But these institutions are too few to meet the needs of rising numbers of victims, she said.

Speaking as the chief guest, Women and Children Affairs Adviser Geetiara Sufiya Choudhury said that although there are legal

provisions for safe custody for women and children that focus on the protection of their rights, practical use of these provisions is quite insignificant.

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