

Establish inter-ministerial focal point to curb acid violence

Speakers tell ASF workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An inter-ministerial focal point under the stewardship of home ministry should be established to periodically assess the status of acid-related offences and court cases in order to curb acid violence, speakers at a workshop said yesterday.

The incidents of acid violence are still taking place despite enactment of special laws and that the investigations are often inadequate and flawed, leading to lower conviction rates, they said.

Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) organised the national workshop titled 'Towards effective prosecution of acid-related cases: Finalisation of recommendations of the study of feasibility of establishing a formal monitoring process' at Biam Foundation auditorium in the city.

Legal experts, police officers, union parishad chairmen and representatives of other stakeholders took part in the workshop supported by CIDA Legal Reform Project Part-A.

Presenting a paper, Prof Dr Sumaiya Khair of law department, Dhaka University, said some 1,395 acid violence cases were filed between 2002 and September 2007, but 808 cases were sent for trial. Of them, only



ASF Executive Director Monira Rahman speaks at a workshop at Biam Foundation auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right are Paula Kingston, director of CIDA Legal Reform Project Part-A, and ASF acting chairperson AM Showket Hossain.

107 cases resulted in convictions and 329 ended in acquittals.

She also pointed out some impediments to effective prosecution such as costly and lengthy legal system, unwillingness to report offence, unreliable medical report, inadequacies in First Information Report (FIR),

slack and flawed investigation and absence of witness protection laws.

She suggested setting up an inter-ministerial focal point to periodically assess the status of acid-related offences and court cases.

"The police department should develop a database that would encapsulate comprehensive records of all cases reported, investigated and sent for trial or otherwise. The database should be updated on a routine basis," she said.

She also called for establishing a network of NGOs at the thana level to support acid victims, monitor cases and provide the police with relevant information.

Addressing the workshop, Mozammel Hossain, AIG (Crime-3), Police Headquarters, said a monitoring cell has already been formed to help curb acid violence.

Sujat Ullah, deputy secretary (law), Ministry of Home Affairs, said absence of a victim-friendly legal framework is responsible for acid violence.

He suggested that the state should take all responsibilities to ensure treatment of acid victims and punishment to the attackers.

"The existing laws should be amended alongside establishing strong monitoring system to ensure justice for acid victims," said Dr Shahdeen Malik, director of School of Law, Brac University.

AM Showket Hossain, acting chairperson of ASF; Paula Kingston, director, CIDA Legal Reform Project Part-A, and Mohammad Iqbal, deputy secretary (organisation), Ministry of Social Welfare, also spoke at the workshop moderated by Monira Rahman, executive director of ASF.

Bishwa Sahitya Pathchakra soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bishwa Sahitya Pathchakra 2008 will start functioning soon at Bishwa Sahitya Kendra (World Literature Centre) in the city.

The Kendra will organise book-reading programme to build up progressive spirit among the readers, says a press release.

The readers will get the opportunity to read 40 selected books of anthropology, philosophy and history apart from literature by world famous authors.

The readers could also enjoy world famous movies and theatrical dramas, musical and cultural programmes.

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed will lead the Pathchakra in collaboration with country's noted academics, authors and cultural personalities.

HSC passed persons are requested to contact Bishwa Sahitya Kendra with two passport size photographs between 5:00pm to 8:00pm from December 12.

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