



## Disabled denied rights

EMRAN HOSSAIN

About 35 years after adoption of the constitution enshrining equal rights and status for every citizen, around one crore disabled people across the country remain deprived of fundamental rights due mainly to government negligence.

Though a law titled "Bangladesh Disability Welfare Act, 2001" was passed in 2001, it could not be implemented in the last six years in absence of a set of rules.

Legal experts say that the act itself is fundamentally flawed and it calls for some major amendments. It does not even have clear-cut definitions of disability.

The non-government organisations working with disability have already proposed a number of amendments to the law. Their proposals were based on comparisons between the disability laws in different countries.

In the developed countries, the state ensures basic rights and status for the people with disabilities. It provides them with allowance and jobs in both private and public sectors.

"In our country, successive governments had been indifferent

to meeting the needs of people with disabilities. But the present one is working sincerely to secure the rights of the disabled people," said MA Hye Howlader, social welfare secretary and also a vice-president of the national coordination committee for the disabled

persons.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, he said, "Though late we are doing the job. Earlier, the government officials won't even bother to attend meetings of the national coordination committee regularly.

"I hope the rules that have already been drafted will be approved by this year."

He added, "We are aware of the proposed amendments. Our country has signed the United Nation's convention on the rights of the persons with disability and the agreement now awaits ratification by the advisory committee."

That the government does not have the exact number of people with disabilities and that no public census has ever been done in this regard bear testimony to government apathy over the years.

The people with disabilities have troubles even getting

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### CHILDREN OF NEGLECT

- No govt census on the disabled
- NGOs tell number over 80 lakh
- Welfare act not implemented yet
- Disability not well defined in act, let alone rights
- Only 9,000 get education opportunity

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Filing of case  
questioned  
reasonably

RU verdict stated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rajshahi court that convicted four university teachers of violating the emergency power rules (EPR) by bringing out a silent procession said in its verdict that questioning the filing of the case against only a few participants is reasonable.

If the offence is committed for silent procession, then all participants of the procession are guilty of the same crime. So, filing the case against a few of over a hundred

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## Govt urged to back farm sector, business climate

BB concerned as economy slows down

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASHFAQ WARES KHAN

The economy slowed down in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (FY) and will not rebound unless the government ensures adequate agricultural inputs, and a conducive business and investment environment, says the central bank.

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momentum 'somewhat slowed down' during the first quarter largely due to losses in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors.

The report also said economic growth faces a number of risks, including socio-political instability, natural disasters, fallout from phase-out of textile export restriction on China, and rising oil prices.

Although the BB forecasts the economy would bounce back in the 'near-term', it notes the government must "ensure timely

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## Pollution alarming in Dhaka, Ctg

Particles in air now double the recommended level

WASIM BIN HABIB

A serious health hazard looms over the residents of Dhaka and Chittagong metropolises as the particulate pollutants in the air are more than double the level recommended by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The EPA guidelines say presence of particulate matters (PM) 10 and PM2.5 should remain within

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## Saarc nations to share crime info

\$300m regional fund put into operation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

education and strengthening regional telemedicine networks.

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They also decided that Sri Lanka will host the 15th Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit next year as the Maldives opted out Friday due to preoccupations with national elections.

Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee disclosed the decisions at the conclusion of the 29th Saarc council of ministers meeting in New Delhi yesterday.

A cell is being established in the Kathmandu-based Saarc Secretariat for implementing the Saarc Development Fund (SDF) projects, he said.

The council identified the social sector and physical connectivity projects as priorities, which include programmes for empowering women, enhancing quality of

education and strengthening regional telemedicine networks.

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