

'14 lakh children engaged in hazardous jobs'

Draft National Child Labour Policy to be placed before Council of Advisers for approval soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft National Child Labour Policy, which was circulated for opinions from the stakeholders, will soon be placed before the Council of Advisers for approval, said Labour and Employment Adviser Anwarul Iqbal yesterday.

"I believe once approved the policy will contribute to the elimination of child labour both in government and private institutions," he added.

The adviser was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session of a national seminar titled 'Eradication of hazardous child labour' organised by labour and employment ministry at Biam auditorium in the city.

has been eradicated from the garment sector in cooperation with BGMEA, ILO and Unicef, and the government is now working to free children from all hazardous jobs.

"It is expected that the children will enjoy their childhood and develop their talents through education, but many children end up being employed in hazardous jobs for poverty," he said.

Bangladesh joined the UN efforts to free the children from such menace, he said, adding that Bangladesh has discouraged child labour enacting 14 laws and signing various charters in this regard.

"Children are our future. It is the duty of all of us to create opportunities for their mental and physical development," said the adviser.

Vice-president of Bangladesh Employers Federation Alamgir MZ Rahman said besides poverty, some familial problems like divorce, dropouts from schools and lack of interests in education also lead to child labour.

"We should work together to root out the reasons to eradicate child labour," he said, adding that safety-net programmes among the poor will help reduce child labour.

Shamsul Alam, project director of Eradication of Child Labour Project (second phase), said removal of child labour in the socio-economic context of the country is a challenge, but all must work together to fight it.

Arifa Islam Shimu of Rupsha Mahila Kalyan Sangstha, one of the

76 NGOs working under the project, said it is impossible for the poor to come out of the poverty cycle if child labour cannot be eradicated from the society.

She called for continuing the project, increasing the stipends provided to working children for schooling, and strong monitoring of NGO activities for its effective implementation.

Workers' representative Nazma Akter said entrepreneurs are more interested in employing children because they can be managed by poor wages and are not able to protest any unjust event.

According to labour and employment ministry, there are around 74 lakh child labourers in the country and 14 lakh of them are engaged in hazardous jobs.

Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour project (second phase 2005-09), financed by the government, has been targeted to withdraw 30000 child labourers from hazardous jobs through a two-year non-formal education and 6-month-long skill development programmes and providing micro-credit to 20000 parents of child labourers for income-generating activities.

The children, who will achieve better results in the trainings, will be provided with tools for self-employment.

The project activities are going on in Dhaka, Chittagong and Khulna metropolitan areas, Sylhet and Barisal city corporations, and Bogra and Narayanganj industrial areas.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad inaugurates a mass signature campaign against corruption at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.



Rights activists raise hands at a meeting at the Engineers Institute auditorium in the city yesterday to express allegiance to the demand for immediate implementation of the National Women Development Policy. Nagorik Protirodh Committee and Nagorik Samaj organised the meeting. (Story on Page 16)

Turkey to help build shelters for Sidr victims

UNB, Dhaka

Turkey will provide assistance in building 1,000 cyclone shelters and schools at Golachipain Patuakhali.

Apart from \$1,00,000 grant of Turkey government, the Turkish people and NGOs will arrange the cyclone shelters and schools in the district.

It was disclosed when a three-member delegation of Turkish parliamentarians led by Hüseyin TÜDCU met Foreign Adviser Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the latter's office in the city yesterday.

The delegation also comprises representatives from Turkish NGOs.

The foreign adviser thanked the delegation, saying that this act of generosity demonstrated the close relations existing between "our two governments and peoples".

They also discussed bilateral relations between the two countries and the means to expand them in future.

Mass awareness a must to curb corruption: Prof Muzaffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad yesterday said corruption prevails everywhere in the society which is not possible to be uprooted overnight.

We are confined to a circle of corruption. Mass awareness against corruption can only improve the situation, he added.

Prof Muzaffer said this at the inaugural ceremony of a mass signature campaign against corruption at the National Press Club in the city.

Support Advertising Ltd and World Peace and Cultural Foundation jointly organised the campaign in association with Tele

Talk, Excel Telecom, Channel-i and Kidzee.

Organisers of the campaign said they have targeted to collect around 5 crore signatures through the campaign across the country.

"Corruption has its different forms and it occurs where principles are violated," Prof Muzaffer said, adding that efforts to violate rules create corruption.

Hailing the initiative of the signature campaign against corruption, he said, "I hope those who will take part in the campaign will rethink before engaging themselves in corruption."

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) M Sakhawat Hussain, in a message sent to the organisers, hoped that mass signature cam-

aign would create consciousness against corruption.

Writer Imdadul Haq Milon said corruption would be curbed if people of all walks of life are made conscious against it.

Wasting of anyone's time is also a corruption, he added.

Milon further said anti-graft drives should be launched from grassroots levels to curb corruption forever.

BCS Freedom Fighters' Association Secretary General Muhammad Musa said most of the ministers were engaged in corruption.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad and Imdadul Haq Milon inaugurated the mass signature campaign through signing their names on a paper.

RODENT ATTACK

UN food aid for 1.20 lakh CHT people

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has started distributing food assistance to meet the immediate food needs of over 120,000 people affected by rodent attack in Rangamati and Bandarban districts.

WFP will continue to assist 25,680 households of the 31 most affected unions of the seven severely affected upazilas for a period of four months, from May to August, 2008, said a press release.

WFP assistance would help affected people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) maintain adequate food consumption and protect livelihoods. The rodent plague caused by the seasonal flowering of bamboo has destroyed the crops and livelihoods of people in CHT, the release said.

Thousands of poor tribal families would have remained destitute due to the loss of their crops and livelihoods. The donor assistance has enabled WFP to respond quickly to feed these vulnerable poor families who are in need of food," said WFP acting representative in Bangladesh Edward Kallon.

WFP will distribute over 5000 metric tons food commodities during the period following a significant contribution from Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), European Commission Humanitarian Assistance (ECHO) and Australia.

WFP will reassess the situation in August 2008 and design further assistance accordingly.

In conjunction with the government relief efforts, WFP food assistance is being distributed with the help of government officials, local NGOs and community representatives.

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