

Shikkha Bhaban a cesspit of irregularities

It has turned into a centre of suffering for teachers and no role in improving education is found, says JS body

RASHIDUL HASAN and WASIM BIN HABIB

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), popularly known as 'Shikkha Bhaban' has turned into a centre of sufferings for the teachers and no role of DSHE in improving education is found, said a parliamentary subcommittee.

The parliamentary standing committee on education ministry formed the three-member subcommittee on April 30 to find out existing problems in secondary and higher secondary education under the ministry.

Led by Awami League lawmaker Shah Alam, the subcommittee found out many problems in the education sector and will submit its report with some recommendations soon.

The subcommittee in its report said different kinds of problems have only been accumulating in the sector which could hardly find their solution.

"Weaknesses in institutional and legal structures, slow progress in taking specific policy and decision, public interest and political influence are the main reasons behind the problems," it said.

The report mentioned that it seems DSHE was established only for bringing non-government schools under Monthly Payment Order (MPO).

Though the education directorate was established with an aim to ensure well management and development of education, it is riddled with gross irregularities, it added.

The subcommittee recommended reforming DSHE and setting up a separate directorate for secondary education as DSHE cannot contribute properly due to huge expansion of the country's population and education institutions.

It also recommended taking effective measures so that nobody could face harassment in transfer, approval of teaching, MPO, pension and other related activities of teachers.

Laying emphasis on the secondary level education, the subcommittee said this level of education in the country has not been prioritised much.

"Only 317 secondary schools run by

the government management also have many problems in their management," it said, recommending establishing at least one government secondary school in every upazila in order to ensure quality education.

The subcommittee found no significant role of the Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) in developing and modernising technical education.

"Seeing the activities of the education boards, it seems that these boards were established only to take public examinations," it said in its report.

"Neither the existing curriculum of technical education system is modern nor the institutions are equipped with modern machineries and allocation is also inadequate for this," the report said.

It suggesting, introducing modern curriculum in line with the demand of international market and establishing a polytechnic institute with modern facilities in every district and technical school in every upazila.

The committee recommended ensuring transparency in the activities of National Textbook and Curriculum Board (NCTB), making curriculum formulation and textbook printing activities of NCTB separate and strengthening National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM).

The teachers who have long been working in one institution or adjacent ones in the city and other major towns are involved in personal profit-making activities, including coaching centres and private tuitions, found the subcommittee and recommended adopting a specific transfer policy for teachers.

It also underscored the need for ensuring minimum necessary numbers of teachers in every school as the teacher arrangement in the education institutions is unequal.

The subcommittee found that many non-government education institutions, especially madrasas do not observe different national days and even don't play the national anthem in the institutions.

It recommended taking strict directives in this regard and cancelling MPO and academic approval of the institutions

which will not follow the directives.

The report suggested introducing MPO system for the non-government education institutions after selecting those on the basis of time of establishment of the institution, student numbers, pass rate and recommendations of the local lawmakers.

Suggesting that the system of withholding salaries and allowances of all the teachers of non-government institutions where no student passes be removed, it said MPO can be cancelled of those teachers responsible and a system to curtail salary of headmaster can be introduced for his administrative failure.

Without following any proper policy for establishing education institutions in the past, many unplanned and unnecessary institutions were established in the country which also caused manifold problems, it said, adding that the institutions can be merged with the similar institutions where a number of unnecessary institutions were established.

The subcommittee recommended increasing facilities of the non-government educational institutions teachers equivalent to the government teachers. Yearly increment, festival allowance, house rent, medical allowance should be increased.

It also suggested reducing the gap between madrasa and general education and taking immediate steps to modernise madrasa education.

Suggesting for formulating an integrated curriculum in school, college and madrasa level keeping students level of knowledge in mind, it also said Qaumi madrasa education system should be brought into the same system.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shaikh Abdul Wahab, member of the committee, said there are multifarious problems in the education sector and they have tried to uphold all the problems in their report.

"We have tried to give priority to teachers so that they wage a movement for quality education as well as results, he said, adding, "We will submit the report in the next parliamentary standing committee meeting and hope the government will evaluate our recommendations."



Students of Home Economics College take out a procession on Dhaka University campus yesterday to press for their six-point demand, including removal of its principal. (Story on Page 2)

Fatwa incidents on the rise

New law needed to stop such practice

ALPHA ARZU

Maya Noor, a mother of three children, has been on the run for over two weeks after some village leaders issued fatwa (religious edict) against her, labelling her a fallen woman.

Maya, 36, who hails from Chandpur, was also beaten up until she lost her consciousness as she filed a case against six village leaders who have been teasing her for long. Her husband is an expatriate living abroad for job.

She was finally compelled to flee her village home at Mulakandi in Matlab, leaving her three children behind after the village leaders circulated leaflets and pasted them on walls on May 31, describing her as a bad woman.

The leaflet says she has been leading youths astray. So, she will be made to walk around the village, with a garland of shoes around her neck and her hair cut off, and then she will be ousted from the village.

A group of so-called leaders issued the fatwa as she refused to have relations with one of them and also declined to give toll, said Maya, who is now undergoing treatment at One Stop Crisis Centre at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"I filed another case on June 8 with Matlab Police Station, as I could no longer endure their harassment, both physically and mentally," she added.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad has been providing legal assistance to her. It has sent the copy of the case to the deputy commissioner and assistant superintendent of police of Chandpur district, calling for proper investigation into the

incident and security of the victim.

When contacted, Office-in-Charge of Matlab Police Station Syed Mahbub Rahman said, "We have arrested Khalil Dhal, one of the accused in the case and produced him before the court. However, the issue is going to be solved through mutual understanding and negotiations among the parties involved."

Rahima Akter, a woman from Noagon, is another victim of fatwa.

She was whipped 39 times before she lost her consciousness at a village arbitration on May 22. Local Islamic leaders had issued a fatwa that Rahima should be whipped 100 times as she sought to have her son's paternity socially acknowledged.

She also underwent treatment at the One Stop Crisis Centre of DMCH.

Najma Akhter, another victim who hails from Comilla, has now been staying at an NGO-run shelter home in Dhaka.

She said she was whipped 100 times as she eloped with her boyfriend and married him in September last year.

These incidents of whippings took place after religious leaders or the village leaders had given such orders, grossly violating the women's rights, said human and women's rights activists.

The victims were flogged or harassed in front of their neighbours, friends, relatives and other people of the village. Though the High Court in 2001 declared fatwa illegal, the perpetrators do not care about it.

The perpetrators are usually influential people having links with the rich, and the victims are usually women from

poor families, said Advocate Sultana Kamal, executive director of Ain-O-Salish Kendra.

The number of incidents of issuing fatwa has increased recently as a group is now trying to show their power by carrying out such illegal activities, she said, adding that the police, NGOs and neighbours could play a vital role in stopping the fatwa.

According to statistics provided by the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, 39 women fell victim to fatwa in 2002, 44 in 2003, 59 in 2004, 69 in 2005, 66 in 2006 and 77 in 2007, while nine women were issued fatwa in the five-month period from January to May 2009.

According to an unofficial figure, at least 10 women fall victim to fatwa in June alone, which is alarming.

The real figure will be much higher, said Advocate Maksud Akhter of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad.

Not only rural women, but also some progressive women leaders became the target of fatwa-mongers. Jahanara Imam, who launched a movement against religious fanaticism, was declared 'murtad' by a section of religious leaders.

Writer Taslima Nasrin was compelled to leave the country after religious fanatics issued a fatwa against her, demanding her execution for criticising Islam.

Rokeya Kabir, a rights activist, of Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha, said, "There is no specific law to control fatwa. So, the government should take a proper initiative to enact a new law to stop fatwa."



Former adviser to a caretaker government Sultana Kamal speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. On her left is Shamsul Huda and on her right are Rashida Begum and Farida Yasmin.

ATTACK ON INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN PORSHA

Rights bodies for arrest of culprits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights organisations have put forward a seven-point demand calling for immediate arrest and trial of all involved in the attack on and eviction of indigenous communities from Porsha in Naogaon on June 12.

Five legal and human rights organisations made the demands following a joint investigation they conducted from June 17 to 19.

ALRD, Ain O Salish Kendra, Blast, Nijera Kori and TIB disclosed their findings, and demands, through a press briefing held at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday morning.

"Grabbing land is a big issue in Bangladesh. There are a number of land grabbers who grab land whenever they come across a chance to do so," human rights activist Sultana Kamal said at the briefing.

"And there always remains a fear that victims of such incidents will not get justice when lawmakers and law enforcement agencies form committees with representatives of the occupiers," she added with reference to the Salish committee formed in Naogaon, which comprised representatives of the land grabbers.

The five organisations also demanded necessary steps against the local administration

and police after conducting an impartial investigation, ensuring security to the affected indigenous families, their rehabilitation, separate land commission for plain land Adivasi people, withdrawal of false cases filed against the adivasi and some Bangali dwellers, and regular monitoring so that land occupiers cannot influence government officials.

"The government must give constitutional recognition to customary land rights alongside property rights. Otherwise the rights of Adivasi people cannot be ensured," Shamsul Huda, executive director of ALRD, said.

Executive director of Blast Farida Yasmin, central trainer of Nijera Kari Rashida Begum, and one of the victims of land grabbing Noren Murmu also spoke at the press briefing.

The investigation by the team also found complaints of continuous non-cooperation from the local administration and police who are helping the land grabbers since the attack.

Hired musclemen of a BNP adherent evicted at least 74 families, including 56 indigenous families, from their land in a series of attacks at Khatipur in Porsha upazila of Naogaon and grabbed their land on June 12.

identified as BCL activists Parvez, Halim, Rafiq, Palash, Shimul, Roni, Jewel and Sabuj and JCD activists Zahidul, Selim, Suman, Saiful and Roman.

Zahirul Huq Sabuj, officer-in-charge of Tongi police station, told The Daily Star that the clash began when a group of JCD activists swooped on the BCL men during exchange of hot words on the college campus.

Witnesses said both the groups chased each other in the hour-long clash equipped with sticks and bricks from around 1:00pm to 2:00pm.

Police said of the injured,

two were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as their condition was stated to be critical.

UTTARA CLASH Meanwhile, at least six people were injured in a clash between the students of Maulana Bhasani Medical College and the members of Boom Voice Club at the city's Uttara in the afternoon.

Police said the clash took place at about 2:00pm over cricket match at a playground at Sector-11.

Police arrested four members of the club in this connection.

JCD, BCL clash at Tongi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 20 people were injured and five vehicles damaged during the clashes between the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Tongi Government College yesterday.

Transport movement on the Tongi-Gazipur Highway was disrupted for about one hour, causing traffic jam in the area.

Police arrested two JCD activists -- Hiron and Saiful -- during the clash.

Of the injured, 13 were

MORE SUPPORT FOR AILA VICTIMS

PM for massive afforestation drive for ecological balance

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday emphasised conducting massive afforestation drive across the country to maintain ecological balance to save the country from disastrous impacts of the global climate change.

She made the call while receiving donation for the victims of the recent cyclone Aila, one of a chain of natural calamities blamed on the climate change caused by

global warming.

Various donors donated Tk 47.11 lakh to the relief fund of the Prime Minister to support the victims of Aila that battered the country's coastal areas.

Buet Teachers' Association, Bangladesh Reconditioned Vehicle Importers and Dealers Association (BRVIDA) and Destiny Group donated Tk 2.11 lakh (one day's salary of the Buet teachers), Tk 30 lakh and Tk 15 lakh respectively.

Hasina thanked them for standing by the Aila victims and said, "Such social service will inspire the people to fight against natural calamity."

State Minister for ICT Architect Yafesh Osman, Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Buet Teachers' Association President Prof Habibur Rahman and BRVIDA President Habibullah Don and former Ambassador M Ziauddin were present.



US Ambassador James F Moriarty speaks at a lecture on 'Engaging South Asia: Obama's South Asia Policy' at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. Sitting on his right is BIPSS President Maj Gen/ANM Moniruzzaman. (Story on Page 16)

PILKHANA CARNAGE

Pintu's lawyers file criminal appeal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Lawyers of detained former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu yesterday filed a criminal appeal with a Sessions Judge's Court seeking bail in connection with the Pilkhana carnage case.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court fixed July 2 for full hearing on the appeal filed against the rejection order of lower court on June 18.

The Detective Branch of police picked up Pintu along with his brother-in-law Maimur Rahman Apu on June 2 from the High Court premises.

He was arrested for his alleged "involvement" with the Pilkhana carnage in helping BDR munitions to flee by arranging engine boats to cross the river Buriganga at Keraniganj ferry ghat.

EXTORTION CASE

Hena gets bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to former BNP lawmaker Mohammad Abu Hena on his surrender in connection with a Tk 10 lakh extortion case.

Judge Syed Akhter of the Third Joint Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order upon a bond of Tk 50,000 each with two guarantors after he along with his lawyers appeared before the court and sought bail in the case.

According to the prosecution, it was alleged that Mohammad Nazrul Islam, principal of Rajshahi Damnas College filed the case against Abu Hena with Ramna Police Station on charge of extorting Tk 10 lakh from him on August 5 in 2007.