

Steps to be taken to stop use of children in politics: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government will take necessary measures to stop use of children in political activities.

"Children should be aware of politics but should not be used in political activities," she said while inaugurating a programme on the occasion of World Children's Day and Child Rights Week 2009.

In her speech as chief guest, the prime minister said her government is committed to take measures to address the issue of those children who are affected and they have often become victims of violence.

Hasina also asked the ministry concerned to take special project to ensure the rights of children with disability as they are always deprived of their rights in the society.

Women and children affairs ministry organised the programme at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city. The World Children's Day and Children Rights Week 2009 are being observed this year with the slogan 'Child Rights Protection and Pledges of Change'.

The prime minister called upon the people from all strata of life to come forward to ensure the rights of children, as it is not possible only for the government to address the issue.

"Everybody has the responsibility to do something for the betterment of children as they are the future leaders of the country," she added.

Hasina also expressed her government's determination to take steps in building a congenial atmosphere for the children so that they could be ideal citizens of the country and compete globally.

"All children are entitled to have their rights but it is a matter of regret that many children in the country can not even get opportunity to meet their basic needs," she said, adding, "It gives me pain when I see children sleeping on footpath and they are deprived of education."

Posing a question to all, the premier said, "Can't we do something for the children who are neglected and deprived of their rights?"

Saying that there is no alternative of ensuring overall growth including basic needs of children to ensure the future of the country, Hasina said, "If we do not ensure their physical and mental growth, they will become the burden of country instead of being resources."

She said the government has already taken initiatives to update the Children Law 1974 and Children Policy 1994 enabling children to overcome the challenges of the 21 century.

About the AL's election

manifesto that pledged to combat child labour in the country, Hasina, also the president of Awami League, said, "The government is working sincerely to eliminate child labour, especially the worst form of child labour, from the society in phases."

"The government will take all steps declared in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) for the children's mental and physical growth," she added.

Terming the country one of the first countries that ratified the UNCRC, Hasina said the

government is committed to people to enact necessary laws and take action plan as well as allocating adequate budget for protecting the rights of the children.

"Only laws and policies are not enough to ensure overall development of the children unless there is change in people's mindset about the children's development," said the prime minister with a call to create awareness among the people to address the issue.

Mentioning media's responsibility towards the

issue Hasina said media is doing a good job to create awareness among the general people about different issues and as such it will have to come forward to ensure child rights.

The prime minister also focused on child health, immunisation, female education and reduction of maternal and child mortality rate to move

the country forward.

State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury presided over the programme which was also addressed by Rokeya

Sultana, secretary to the ministry, and Carel de Booy, country representative of Unicef.

The programme was followed by a cultural function participated by the children.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at the inaugural function of World Children's Day and Child Rights Week 2009 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday.

'Women worst victims of HR violations'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political instability and worsening law and order situation are linked to the violations of human rights in the country and the worst victims of HR violations are women, said Sultana Kamal, a former adviser to the caretaker government, at a seminar yesterday.

Though a democratic government is now in power, political stability and law and order are yet to be ensured, she said as the chief guest at the inaugural session of the three-day seminar titled 'Human rights and gender: core concepts, major debates and emerging issues' at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

"The state machineries have failed to provide justice for women who are abused

sexually, mentally and physically," she said.

Women do not have access to proper healthcare services, they are suffering from acute malnutrition, and they even don't have the right to information, she said.

The constitution grants equal rights to women and men, but women do not have enough access to all public facilities, she added.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) organised the seminar with the support of Diakonia, a Swedish NGO. Representatives from partner NGOs of Diakonia from South Asia are taking part in the seminar to share their experiences on gender and human rights issues.

Miriam Dahlgren, policy

adviser to Diakonia, was present as a special guest.

She said human rights involve all sections of people - rich and poor, men and women and children and the aged. To ensure human rights of women, men have to come forward and involve themselves more.

To curb violence against women, the government must ensure that the culprits do not go unpunished, she added.

The speakers also said human rights cannot be ensured without addressing the gender equality issues.

Swedish Ambassador Britt F Hagström, Executive Director of BLAST Mohsin Ali Khan, seminar coordinator Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi and Sultana Begum of Diakonia Bangladesh also spoke.

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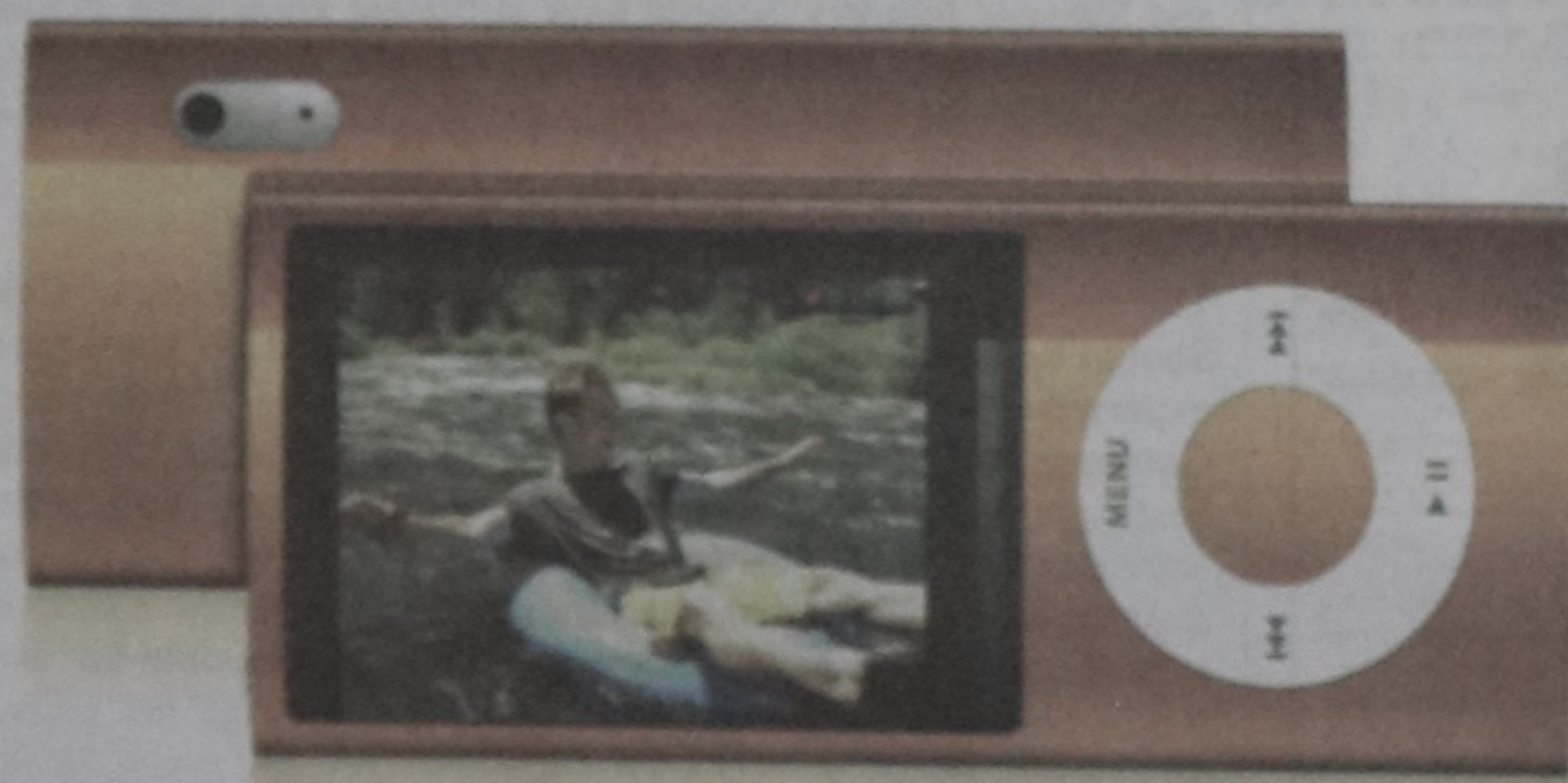
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