

Set up ombudsman to safeguard child rights

Speakers call at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even after 19 years of ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Bangladesh is yet to set up the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) to safeguard the child rights, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said under the UNCRC it is mandatory to set up children's ombudsman for the signatory countries.

The roundtable titled 'Ombudsman for Child Rights Protection' was organised by the Prothom Alo at its conference room in association with the Unicef.

Stressing the need for setting up children's ombudsman, an independent body for litigation of child rights, the speakers said it is high time to work on it.

They said a draft law was prepared to set up children's ombudsman in 2006 and it should be revived now.

The speakers said setting up of the ombudsman for children's office would be

helpful to make different government and non-government bodies accountable and transparent in protecting the child rights.

Simultaneously, it would be a platform for the children to place their complaints and listen to them on their rights issues, they added.

G Nayeem Wahra of Save the Children Australia said it does not need huge money to set up OCO and if the government wants, it can start the work with the existing set up and manpower.

"There are three women commissioners in every upazila in the country who have little work to do. If they listen to the children of their areas and place it to the authorities concerned, it would be one step ahead," he said.

"Child abuse would reduce considerably if an independent children ombudsman could be established," said Advocate Salma Ali, executive director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association.

It might work under the Human Rights Commission, said Sheeba Hafiz of Brac, adding that local representatives also could start the job under the community's watch.

Admitting the need for OCO, State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury said it is not enough to establish OCO, rather active involvement of all concerned should be ensured.

The speakers also recommended that the government and non-government organisations should work in a coordinated way to ensure child rights and resolve the complexities regarding the definition of children.

Prothom Alo Editor Matru Rahman moderated the discussion which was also addressed by Quomaran Nissa Khanam, secretary of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Mohsin Ali Khan of BLAST, Aminul Islam Sajal of Unicef, Anisul Haque of Prothom Alo, and Nazrul Islam, additional inspector general of police.

UN to consider recruiting police commissioner from Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Under-Secretary General for UN Peacekeeping Activities Alain Le Roy yesterday assured that the United Nations would consider recruiting a police commissioner from Bangladesh for its peacekeeping mission.

The assurance came during a view exchange meeting between the visiting UN delegation, led by Alain Le Roy, and senior police officials at the Police Headquarters yesterday.

Acting IGP NBK Tripura and DIG (Admin) Benozir Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

Alain praised the Bangladesh Police for its professionalism and efficiency in maintaining peace in different conflict-prone countries in the world.

Another report adds: Alain Le Roy also called on Chief of Army Staff General Abdul Mubeen at the Army Headquarters yesterday.

Later, he paid a courtesy call on Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman at the Air Headquarters where they discussed issues of bilateral relations.

He also called on Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Major General Abdul Wadud at AFD.

Alain Le Roy and his entourage also visited Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) at Rajendrapur Cantonment and witnessed different training activities on peacekeeping operations.

Many dailies yet to implement wage board award: Minister

UNB, Dhaka

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad told parliament yesterday that many newspapers in Dhaka still did not implement the latest wage board award.

Replying to a supplementary question, he said the government often conducts survey in newspapers through the Department of Films and Publication (DFP) to know about the level of implementation of the wage board.

Replying to a starred question, the minister said 74 newspapers are published daily from Dhaka while 180 others from outside Dhaka.

The Prothom Alo is the highest circulated newspaper in the country with 3,85,100 copies, followed by Jugantor (2,00,150), Amader Shomoy (1,48,270), Ittefaq (1,25,250), Samokal (1,21,300), Naya Digonto (1,15,250), Inquilab (1,15,120) and Amar Desh (108,350).

Responding to another question, Azad said there are 11 private TV channels in the country and they sometimes do not maintain the ethical standards of journalism.

"The prime minister has already talked with the high-ups of these TV channels in this regard. I also talked with them," he said.

Responding to another question, he said the government has no option to intervene in the ongoing crisis in the daily Ittefaq.

"This is purely their family feud; we have nothing to do here officially. But we are trying to resolve the matter unofficially," he added.

He also mentioned that crises are also prevailing in The Bangladesh Observer and daily Janakantha.

In this connection, the minister urged the journalist leaders to come forward to help the government resolve the crisis in the media.

Replying to another question, the minister said that criminals killed six journalists in Khulna and injured six journalists in Bagerhat during the period from 2001 to 2008.

Qulkhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Qulkhwani of Hasina Akter Khatun, wife of Harun-ur-Rashid, former director of family planning department and president of Shah Ali Bag Jame Mosque at Mirpur in the city, will be held at her village home at Ruhitpur in Munshiganj after Juma prayers today, says a press release.



National Eye Care, WHO and NGO Forum jointly take out a colourful procession at Manik Mia Avenue in the city yesterday marking the World Sight Day.

91pc schoolchildren fall victim to physical punishment

Reveals opinion poll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 91 percent of children receive physical punishment at schools while 74 percent at homes, according to an opinion poll, which showed a widespread use of corporal punishment in Bangladesh.

It found that use of sticks or canes in punishing children at schools is about 88 percent. Of them, hitting the palm with ruler sticks is 76 percent, standing in class is 63 percent and hitting other body parts with rulers or sticks is 60 percent.

The Children's Opinion Poll 2008, jointly conducted by Unicef and the ministry of women and children affairs, was launched at a ceremony at the National Press Club in the city yesterday, with State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury as the chief guest.

A total of 3,840 households from slums, urban, rural, char and Adivasi (ethnic) areas were sampled and one child per household aged between nine and 18 were interviewed.

The types of punishment include slapping (49 percent); ear, hair or skin twisting (36 percent) and kneeling (25

percent), the findings of the poll showed.

In addition, 53 percent of students reported that 'many to most' schoolchildren suffer physical punishment and 23 percent stated that such punishment at schools takes place daily.

About seven percent reported cuts or injuries to students due to physical punishment with relatively high incidence in urban and slum areas and among boys 14 to 17 years old.

A home, more than one-third of children reported that the frequency and severity of punishment were 'moderate to high'. The most common forms of punishment were scolding, rebuking, cursing, threatening (99.3 percent), slapping (69.9 percent) and beating or throwing things and kicking (39.7 percent).

The report disclosed that about 65 percent of working children reported being physically or mentally punished and of them older girls and young boys reported more physical punishment to working children occurs in slums.

Shirin said children should not be subjected physical punishment in the name of

teaching discipline.

"Physical or mental punishment affects children's dignity and it also hampers their mental as well as physical development," she said, adding that it is important to teach children discipline with affection or love instead of hitting.

She stressed the need for creating mass awareness for changing traditional mindset of teachers and parents towards discipline method, as they believe that physical or mental punishment is helpful for children to be discipline is completely wrong conception.

She expressed hope that suggestions of the study would be considered in the National Action Plan regarding the child rights issue.

Unicef Representative Carel De Rooy said violence used as a means of discipline can have devastating effects on the child and can never be justified.

Women and Children Affairs Secretary Rokeya Sultana presided over the programme which was also addressed by Osman Gani Talukder, project director of Capacity Building for Monitoring Child Rights Project.

City ward BNP leader shot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed criminals shot a ward BNP leader, leaving him critically injured when he was closing his business centre at Bangshal in the city on Wednesday night.

Injured Mohammad Shahjahan, 45, secretary of 67 No. Mohanagar Ward BNP was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with bullet injuries in his throat and back.

He is the owner of Sajib Transport Centre. Police said some local criminals made the gun attack on him as a sequel to previous enmity, not over political rivalry.



Taylor wins Ahsanullah Gold Medal

METRO DESK

Valerie Ann Taylor, founder of the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), has been selected for the prestigious Khan Bahadur Ahsanullah Gold Medal Award-2008 in recognition of her outstanding contribution and services to society as well as the distressed humanity, says a press release.

A favourite name in Bangladesh as a saviour of the paralysed as well as distressed people, Taylor spread her noble activities across the country by establishing a service organisation like CRP.

Born in Kent in the United Kingdom, Valerie came to Bangladesh as a physiotherapist in 1969 as a member of Voluntary Service Overseas, an international organisation. She got the citizenship of Bangladesh in 1998.

HC grants bail to Mamun

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday in separate verdicts granted bail to controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun in four extortion cases.

Four businessmen filed the cases under emergency power rules 2007 against Mamun with different police stations in Dhaka during the past caretaker government.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Muhammad Dastagir Husain and Justice Md Rais Uddin came up with the verdicts in four separate bail petitions filed by Mamun.

Earlier, the HC bench had issued the rules asking the government to explain why Mamun should not be granted regular bail in the extortion cases against him.

Mamun's lawyer advocate SM Sabir Hamza Chowdhury told The Daily Star that his client was arrested in January 30 in 2007 on different charges, and he was shown arrested in a total of 19 cases.

Mamun got bail in 18 cases out of 19, he said, adding Mamun could not get released following the HC judgments, as he was still arrested in another case.

Death anniversary of Comrade Farhad

DU CORRESPONDENT



Today is the 22nd death anniversary of Comrade Mohammad Farhad, former general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), says a press release.

Comrade Farhad was also a former member of the parliament.

To mark the day, CPB will place wreaths at his grave at Banani graveyard in the city.

A milad mahfil will also be held at his wife's residence at 94/F Azampur Colony after Asr prayers.

Prof Tawhidul Anwar

METRO DESK



Tomorrow is the ninth death anniversary of Prof Md Tawhidul Anwar, former director general of Bangladesh Press Institute and a teacher of mass communication and journalism at Dhaka University, says a press release.

A milad and doa mahfil will be held at the central mosque of Dhaka University after Juma prayers today.

Hamida Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Today is the first death anniversary of Hamida Islam, wife of Justice Syed Amirul Islam, says a press release.

A special doa and milad mahfil will be held after Maghrib prayers at her residence (House-45, Road-35, Gulshan-2) in the city.

3 children hurt as bomb goes off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three students of a primary school were injured in a bomb explosion when they were unfasting a ball-like object at their school compound in the city's Mirpur yesterday.

Injured Safina Akhter, Hridoy and Mehedi are the students of class V of Sher-e-Bangla Government Primary School in Mirpur-13.

Of the injured, Safina was rushed to Mirpur General Hospital with injury to her hand, neck and back while Hridoy to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with injury to his belly and hand. Mehedi who sustained a minor injury received treatment at a local clinic.

Amrapali Basak, headmaster of the school, told The Daily Star that they closed the school for the day as panic gripped the institution following the explosion.

"I heard a bang around 9:10am and came out of my office room. I saw panicked children rushing to different directions at the school compound," she said.

After the explosion, she went to the ground floor of the two-storey building and found Safina and Mehedi lying there wounded while Hridoy was running in panic despite his injuries.

Hearing the explosion, Safina's brother rushed to the school from their house, which is adjacent to the school, and took him to the hospital.

The two other injured children were rushed to the hospital and clinic with the help of locals.

Amrapali Basak said that Hridoy found the bomb-like object wrapped with scotch tape near the school gate while he was entering the school around 9:00am.

He then picked the object and took it to the school, the headmaster said. When he along with around five other children were unwrapping tape from it for using on their football.

She said usually the classes of the school begin at 9:30am while the students start coming from 9:00am.

Officer-in-charge (OC) Delwar Ahmed of Kafilul police station said on information they reached the school and found glass pieces, small metal balls and stone chips on the spot of the explosion.

He said it might have been a handmade bomb and criminals might have kept it in a bush near the school gate. The police are investigating the matter, he said.

DHAKA TODAY

Dialogue
Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) and Shikha Shasthya Unnayan Karjakram will jointly organise a dialogue on 'Genetics and golden paddy: Potentials and risks in Bangladesh'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 9:30am.

Art competition
Bangladesh-China Friendship Centre organises a children's art competition to mark the 60th anniversary of the People's Republic of China. Venue: Faculty of Fine Art premises, Dhaka

University. Time: 9:30am.

Conference
South Asian Society for Newborn Screening (SASONS) and the Institute of Pediatrics and Child Health (IPCH) will jointly organise the 1st Saarc Conference on Newborn Screening. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Time: 6:30pm.

Publication ceremony
The publication ceremony of 'Shotrur Matiley Muktiuddho' by Altafur Rahman will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 5:00pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Moderate rain likely
UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places across the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may rise slightly over the country, Met office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:38pm today and rises at 6:54am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 32.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 22.5 degree at Dinajpur.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.8	26.3	89	93
Chittagong	30.5	26.2	89	82
Rajshahi	31.8	26.2	95	83
Khulna	29.5	25.8	96	95
Barisal	30.0	25.4	93	100
Sylhet	29.3	25.5	85	96
Cox's Bazar	32.5	25.8	77	82

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