

Over 52pc children of poor families economically active

Says study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 52 percent children of extremely poor families are economically active, which is higher than the national average, reveals a study.

The study also shows that only 60 percent girls and 50 percent boys from ultra poor households are attending schools while children are engaged in various livelihood options as part of their survival strategies.

Brac Development Institute (BDI) and Save the Children, UK (SCUK) jointly organised a workshop titled 'Poverty and Working Children' at Hotel Lake Shore in the city yesterday to disseminate the result of the study conducted over the period of five years on the trend of child labour and children involved in economic activities in Bangladesh.

The study was conducted as part of the SCUK programme on Poverty and Working Children in association with the European Commission.

The study also revealed that with a rise in safety net programmes (cash or asset transfers) and stipends for girls in the

schools, the number of children seeking employment outside their households is decreasing.

Net enrolment in primary schools may have achieved gender parity but differences remain in boy and girl children's accessibility to work and higher education, it added.

The speakers at the workshop called for taking proper initiatives to eliminate child labour with a view to establishing human rights.

While presenting the research findings, Dr Ferdous Jahan, academic coordinator of BDI, spoke on different programmes conducted to eliminate child labour, employers' attitudes toward child labour, literacy and education and dropouts of the children among the ultra poor.

Advocate Sultana Kamal, executive director, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), said researches that are being conducted on this issue are worthy of appreciation, but they are yet to give recommendations to guide the policymakers to solve the problem.

Referring to various programmes on child rights, child labour and poverty

alleviation, she said most often different organisations work on such issues, but they cannot go further due to many social, economic and cultural constraints.

She urged the authorities concerned not only to work with sympathy and empathy but also with commitment to abolish the practice of exploiting children in the country.

Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury, state minister for women and children's affairs, said the present government is working on the issue to eliminate child labour.

"The draft on National Children Policy will soon be finalised in light of United Nations Charter on the rights of Child," she added.

Prof Syed M Hashemi, director of BDI, said the research works should be used as instruments to safeguard the rights of the poor.

Such researches can create a vision to set a goal and a roadmap to solve the problems of the marginalised, downtrodden and ultra poor children in a country like Bangladesh, he also said.

Actions of an Australian speak louder at Charfashion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspiration is power, which is instilled from one person to another for beauty of someone's personality or actions. Lutfehy Siddiqi is one of such a person who was highly stirred by selfless work of Australian national Fred Hyde, who has been tirelessly working to educate children in remote island Charfashion in Bhola.

Hyde, 90, came to Bangladesh in 1980 to assist an orphanage. Seeing unfortunate children, he decided to stay back here and started thinking how to educate the people of Bangladesh, especially in the remote parts where there are less public facilities.

He found Charfashion, the last island in the Ganges delta, where thousands of people became landless because of regular river erosion and children had little scope for education.

In 1991, Hyde started building schools for non-formal primary education by founding a charity named Cooperation in Development (CO-ID).

Now, there are 41 such schools where over 50,000 children were educated. Interestingly, Hyde did not accept any financial help from the Australian government. His sources of money were the voluntary donations by the people of Bangladesh as well as Australia.

For his humanitarian work, Hyde was recently awarded the Order of Australia, one of Australia's highest civilian awards.

As a token of thanks, the



Rehana Siddiqi hands over a crest to Australian national Fred Hyde at a function at Australian High Commission in the city yesterday while Lutfehy Siddiqi, right, and High Commissioner Dr. Justin Lee look on.

children of Charfashion have recently donated Tk 40,000 to the people of Australia when they had received the news of devastating bushfires that had engulfed large parts of Australia.

Such an incident has moved Lutfehy Siddiqi, managing director of Barclays Bank, Singapore and an associate professor at National University of Singapore.

"This touching gesture from disadvantaged children inspired me to learn more about this truly remarkable Australian and his contribution to Bangladesh," the young Bangladeshi-born Lutfehy said at a function

organised at Australian High Commission in the city yesterday as a mark of recognition to Hyde by For You For Ever, an NGO.

Lutfehy, also a commercially important person (CIP), handed over 15,000 Australian dollars through 'Rehana Siddiqi Fund' while his employer Barclays Bank donated 30,000 Australian dollars to support Hyde's work.

Lutfehy, son of former secretary and IGP AYBI Siddiqi and Rehana Siddiqi, said Fred Hyde is a man of actions and results.

Expressing gratitude to Siddiqi, the Australian national said, "I have been

fortunate to having a person like Lutfehy."

"I want to build more schools and educate children. I think it is only the education that can enlighten people."

Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Dr. Justin Lee said, "It is fantastic that people are showing gratitude."

When there are such people who connect the hearts of the people of two countries, embassies and ambassadors are of no importance to build relations between two nations, the envoy noted.

TONGI LABOUR UNREST

Probe body report in 2 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The committee formed to probe the violence in a garment factory in Tongi and the subsequent killings has completed investigation and is set to submit report in a day or two, Labour Secretary Ataharul Islam, the head of the five-member committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, Ataharul, who has recently been transferred to the land ministry, declined to disclose the findings of the investigation.

The committee will suggest a set of recommendations for government's consideration to check violence in the apparel industry.

A member of the committee seeking anonymity said that they had detected 'police excess' as a primary reason behind the clashes and the killing of three people.

"Several hundred rounds of bullets were fired. Why were so many bullets fired? Why did the police not have a sufficient number of rubber bullets? Why didn't the factory owner inform the workers beforehand about the closure of the factory? These points have been included in the report," he added.

The committee comprises representatives from the home ministry, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BKMEA) and workers.

"We have visited the scene for several times and took interviews of several hundred witnesses, including garment workers and members of the law enforcing agencies," said the member of the committee.

The committee, formed on November 1 following the clashes at the Nippon Garments Industry Ltd in Tongi, is supposed to find out those responsible for the violent clashes and the reason behind the labour unrest. It was asked to submit its report within two weeks. On November 11, the committee sought more time to complete the task as Ataharul Islam went to Geneva on an official tour for two weeks. He returned on November 27.

Ataharul Islam, however, termed the incident very sensitive and said they needed more time to complete the investigation.

Seminar on improving public services

METRO DESK

A seminar on 'Improving public services through total quality management' was held at Sheraton Hotel in the city on Saturday, says a press release.

Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) jointly organised the seminar under the project 'Enhancing capacity of public service training in Bangladesh'.

HT Imam, adviser to the prime minister, was the chief guest, while Tamotsu Shinotsuka, Ambassador of Japan, and Dr Takao Toda, chief representative, JICA Bangladesh Office, were as special guests at the programme. Delwar Hossain, rector of the BPATC, chaired the function.



Planning Minister AK Khandaker inaugurates the four-day victory festival organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday.

BIJOY UTSAB BEGINS

'Form probe agency for war crimes trial'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural activists yesterday demanded the government form a separate investigation agency within this month in order to start the trial of war criminals but the government, however, is not sure whether it would be set this month.

"I support the demand but I am not sure whether it could be set up this month or not," said Planning Minister AK Khandaker.

He told reporters after inaugurating the victory festival of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote (SSJ) at the Central Shaheed Minar.

He said, "The government is committed to trying the war criminals and they will start the trial very soon," adding: "The war criminals should be tried to make the nation free from black spots."

Earlier, the minister, also the deputy commander-in-chief of the liberation war, inaugurated the four-day victory festival organised by SSJ at different venues of the city.

SSJ President Nasiruddin Yusuf Bachchu said the government should form an investigation agency within this month because the freedom fighters, mothers, wives and sons of the martyrs of the liberation war want to see the trial of war criminals.

Noted theatre personality Ramendu Majumder, lawmaker and Awami League leader Asaduzzaman Noor and Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation General Secretary Jhuna Chowdhury spoke at the function.

Noor said the countrymen now want to see the trial of war criminals and the execution of the verdict in the Bangladesh murder case.

He called on all to be aware of the anti-liberation forces as they are still conspiring against the country.

Ramendu Majumder said the government's duty would be to try the war criminals and killers of the intellectuals.

Jhuna delivered her address of welcome at the event.

5 martyred FFs' death anniversary



DU CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 38th death anniversary of four martyred brothers -- Bakhtiar Hasan Makhani, Kamrul Hasan Ratan, Rakibul Islam Lucky and Iqbal Hasan Shahar -- and their relative martyred Ataur Rahman Khan Nehal, says a press release.

The freedom fighters embraced martyrdom on this day in 1971. On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at South Tejuri Bazar mosque at 45/1, South Tejuri Bazar, Farmgate in the city.

Police ready to prevent Ulfa activities: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home minister yesterday said the law and order is now better than in any other times in the past, while the inspector general of police spelt out adequate preparations of his forces to prevent any subversive acts of the United Liberation Front of Assam (Ulfa).

Both the minister and the inspector general of police (IGP) expressed their views while talking to reporters after their meeting with the police high-ups at the Police Headquarters in the city.

"Eleven months into our office, we can say the law and order situation has improved significantly and it is better than in any other times in the past," Home Minister Shahara Khatun said.

Talking to reporters, IGP

Noor Mohammad said, "As of now, we do not have specific information about Ulfa trying to carry out any subversive activities. Since the issue is being discussed in the media, we have taken enough preparations to prevent them."

He also said the process to recruit 17,000 policemen and sanction an additional fund of Tk 500 crore for logistical support is at the final stage.

The IGP said they have got approval to set up 10 new police barracks in Dhaka and other places.

CRIME CONFERENCE Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque at a 'Monthly Crime Conference' yesterday said the number of robbery and mugging incidents has increased in the capital last month.

Programmes of Martyred Intellectuals' Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-cultural and political organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes to observe the Martyred Intellectuals' Day today.

Sector Commanders' Forum, a platform for the sector commanders of the Liberation War, will stand in silence for one minute in front of the Martyred Intellectuals' Mausoleum at Rayerbazar to pay tribute to them at 4:00pm.

They will form a human chain there demanding immediate holding of trial of the war criminals.

Awami League (AL) has taken various programmes, including hoisting black flags at its central office, Bangabandhu Bhaban and offices across the country. National and party flags will be hoisted at half-mast.

AL leaders will place wreaths at Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' Graveyard at 7:00am and Intellectuals' Mausoleum at Rayerbazar at 7:30am. They will place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 8:00am.

There will be a discussion at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre at 3:00pm with Prime Minister and AL chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

BNP will place wreath at Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' Graveyard at 9:00am and hold a discussion at Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh at 3:00pm.

Dhaka University has also taken programmes to pay respect to the martyred intellectuals, many of whom belonged to the university.

Black flags will be hoisted at all dormitories, vice-chancellor's residence and other important buildings of the university at 7:30am.

Teachers, students, officials and employees of the university will gather at Aparajeyo Bangla at 7:45am and place wreaths at the graves of martyred intellectuals near university mosque, at Jagannath Hall and different residential areas from 8:00am. After that, they will start for the Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' Graveyard to pay tribute. A discussion will be held at TSC auditorium at 11:30am.

University Central Mosque and other mosques on campus will hold special prayers after Zohr prayers for salvation of the departed souls of the martyred intellectuals.

Apart from placing wreaths, Bangla Academy will hold a discussion at 4:00pm on its premises.

Liberation War Museum, Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Nazrul Institute, Ain O Salish Kendra, Jatiya Samik League, Shaheed Paribar Kalyan Samity of Dhaka University, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, National Awami Party, Bangladesh Gono-Azadi League, Jatiya Party (JP-Monju), Bikkhubdha Deshbashi (Aggrieved Countrymen), Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Punorbashon Shingtha, Bangladesh Jubo Union, National Front of Teachers and Employees, Bangladesh Gonorantrik Ainjibi Samity and National Garment Workers Federation will place wreaths at Mirpur Shaheed Intellectuals' Graveyard and will hold discussions.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami will also hold a discussion and do a mahfil at 4:00pm.

Call to review vested property return bill

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called on the government to review the proposed Vested Property Return (Amendment) Bill 2009 before placing it in parliament for enactment.

The proposed bill, approved by the cabinet on November 2, is not acceptable since it will protect the interest of only the vested quarters, not the genuine owners of the vested property, they said.

If this bill is passed in parliament without necessary amendments, it would complicate the issue rather than resolving the long-standing crisis, the speakers said at the roundtable on 'Amendment and immediate implementation of the vested property return act: Expectations of people' at the National Press Club.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon MP said the authorities should carefully prepare a list of the victims who lost their property due to vested property act.

He also called on all concerned to persuade the parliament members not to pass the bill without necessary amendments.

JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu MP said there are some flaws in the proposed act and he would discuss it in parliament.

Prof Ajoy Roy said the government should declare that lands and properties, which had been grabbed after March 23 in 1974, would be returned to their owners.

The speakers also said the government should consult with the victims' representatives and legal experts before placing the bill in parliament.

Advocate Subrata Chowdhury in a keynote paper placed a six-point recommendation, including a clear definition of vested property on the basis of Supreme Court's orders, return of all properties grabbed after 1974 and formation of tribunals at district levels to dispose of the cases.

CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim and Gono Forum presidium member Pankaj Bhattacharya also spoke.

Four organisations -- Arpito Sampatti Ain Pratirodh Andolan, Sammilito Samajik Andolan, Nijera Kari and Association for Land Reforms and Development (ALRD) -- jointly organised the roundtable.

Milad mahfil

METRO DESK



A milad mahfil will be held in memory of Shaheed Ghyasuddin Ahmad, a martyred intellectual, at 4/3 Lalmatia, Block # E, in the city after Maghrib prayers today, says a press release.

Anti-liberation forces picked up Ghyasuddin Ahmad, a teacher of history department at Dhaka University, on this day in 1971 and killed him.

Friends and relatives are requested to attend the prayers.

TIB signs MoU with DU dept

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University and Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to build capacity of journalists on investigative reporting, says a press release.

DU Treasurer Dr Mizanur Rahman and TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman signed the agreement on behalf of the respective sides at the vice-chancellor's office on the campus yesterday.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Dr Gitara Nasreen and TIB officials were present during the signing ceremony.



Prof. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury speaks at a report launching ceremony at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are M Syeduzzaman, Dr Mahabub Hossain and Prof. Abdul Bayes.

'Ensure electricity for rural people'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should ensure electricity for rural people to materialise the dream of 'Digital Bangladesh', speakers said at a report launching ceremony yesterday.

Brac in collaboration with Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre (MHHDC), Pakistan jointly launched the report titled 'Human Development in South Asia 2008' at Brac Centre Inn in the city.

Prof. Abdul Bayes of Jahangirnagar University was a discussant at the programme said 35 to 40 percent people in the country have access to electricity which is a barrier to materialise the dream of digital Bangladesh.

He described the impact of information and communication technology on telecom

sector as a remarkable example and the potential sector already took 40 percent rural market. He also talked about the telemedicine that is also contributing to change the people's fate.

Academics and development activists shared their experiences at the launching ceremony.

Prof. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of Brac University, spoke at the programme as the chief guest, while executive director of Brac Dr Mahabub Hossain chaired.

Dr Naem Chowdhury, a consultant associated with preparation of the report, commented on the report. M Syeduzzaman, member of International Advisory Board of the MHHDC, and Brac Chairman Fazle Hassan Abed also spoke.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Advocate Md. Wahiduzzaman, a member of Dhaka Bar Association, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at his residence in the city on Friday at the age of 46, says a press release.

He was buried at family graveyard in Munshiganj. He left behind his wife, son, daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Sakina Khatun

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sakina Khatun, mother of Gonorantik Majdur Party general secretary Zakir Hossain, passed away due to old-age complications at her village home in Noakhali on Saturday at the age of 85, says a press release.

She left behind her three sons, three daughters and a host of relatives to mourn her death.

She was buried at her family graveyard yesterday. Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Anisur Rahman Mallik expressed shock at her death and prayed for salvation of her departed soul.

Mantaz Uddin Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Dr. Mantaz Uddin Ahmed alias Mantaz Majhi, founder of Taj Private Hospital in Monohordi, Narsingdi and father of Tuhid Rahman, art director of AIN Bangla, passed away due to brain haemorrhage at Taj Private Hospital on Saturday at the age of 76, says a press release.

He left behind his five sons, one daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard after namaz-e-janaza yesterday.

Death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 10th death anniversary of Kutubul Alam, an actor and pioneer of folksong Gombhira, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his Chapainawabganj residence today.