

Dist legal aid funds unutilised

Says MJF study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Free legal aid service of the government for the poor and vulnerable remains largely unused and ineffective, as the general people are not aware of such service, according to a study conducted by the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

As a result, the budget allocated for the district legal aid committees remains unutilised in most cases. The study found that a total of 16 district committees failed to utilise even a portion of the funds.

Only eight committees have utilised up to 90 percent of the funds while the performance of others is also quite poor, the study said. Besides, the funding itself, which is about Tk 80 lakh per year, is too inadequate.

The entire system is also limping along due to a lack of staffs and logistics. The National Legal Aid Services Organisation, a statutory body which is responsible for monitoring the district committees, only has a director.

The MJF shared the findings of the study at a discussion titled 'Government Legal Aid Services in Bangladesh: Challenges and

Opportunities' at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday.

Presenting the findings, Barrister Aftab Uddin said, "Apart from the lack of availability of information, there is a lack of motivation among the service providers (lawyers), as their fee is very low. The fee range starts at only Tk 300."

"Senior lawyers seldom get involved with the free legal aid service," he added.

He also said the legal aid offices are located far away from the town centre. So, application forms are not easily available. The procedure of getting free legal service is also too complicated.

Speaking at the programme, Suranjit Sengupta, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry, suggested decentralisation of the judiciary so that justice can be delivered at the doorstep of the people.

Those who need free legal aid often cannot afford a bus ride to go to the district office, he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, Law Minister Shafigue Ahmed differed with Suranjit, saying that decentralisation of the



Suranjit Sengupta MP speaks at a discussion on 'Government Legal Aid Services in Bangladesh: Challenges and Opportunities' at Brac Centre Inn in the city yesterday. On his right are Law Minister Shafigue Ahmed, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam and Advocate Shahdeen Malik.

judiciary was introduced by General Ershad, but it didn't work as expected.

The main problem facing the state in providing free legal aid is the lengthy process of disposal of a case, he said, adding that if it takes five years to dispose of a case, the state will have to pay the lawyer throughout this period.

The minister also said the government is considering making it mandatory to use the Alternative Dispute Resolution system so that the parties involved in the legal battle can settle their dispute outside the court.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, Dr Shahdeen Malik, an advocate of the

Supreme Court, Faustina Pereira, director of Human Rights and Legal Services, Brac, Farida Yasmin, deputy director of Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust, Toufique Al Mannan, senior coordinator of Ain O Shalish Kendra, and Aminul Islam, director of National Legal Aid Services Organisation, also spoke.

Trader murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man allegedly killed his business partner yesterday over an affair with a female employee in their factory.

The dead, identified as Anisur Rahman, 28, used to live alone in a rented room on the first floor of a three-storey building in the city's East Islambagh.

Chawkbazar police recovered the body from the room at around 11:30am and sent it to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Police and morgue sources said the body bore marks of torture in the back of the head.

Anisur's brother Jahangir Miah filed a case with Chawkbazar Police Station accusing Anisur's partner Abdur Razzak.

Investigation officer of the case Sheikh Abdul Motaleb said a girl named Jyotsna works in the industry owned by the two.

He added Razzak took his parents to the factory Tuesday evening and they discussed Razzak's marriage to Jyotsna. But Anisur said he was having an affair with the girl. At one stage Razzak and Anisur were locked in a fight.

Razzak went into hiding following the death.

PILKHANA MUTINY

Charge framing on June 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The special court-5 trying BDR mutiny at Pilkhana headquarters yesterday fixed June 26 for charge framing against the 667 accused of 24 Rifle Battalions after reading out individual charges.

The court took four days to complete hearing the charges when all the accused involved in the February 25-26 massacre were present in the dock.

The court headed by BDR Director General Md Rafiqul Islam continued from 9:00am to 2:00pm and was adjourned till June 26 after the day's proceedings.

"Processes for framing charges against the accused will be finally completed on June 26," said Col Aziz Ahmed, BDR sector commander of Dhaka, while briefing the newsmen.

The court said the accused played active role during the mutiny staying inside Pilkhana.

They first left the Darbar Hall ignoring the order of the

then director general of Bangladesh Rifles Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed. They looted the magazines, took up firearms and forced others to take up arms, the court observed.

After the massacre, most of them left the place spreading a rumour of army attack, said the court.

The accused admitted their involvement in the mutiny to the investigators though they tried to dupe the inquiry by giving misleading information initially.

As the court was reading out the charges, some of the accused were looking pale.

They could also see the charges against them on display by two projectors set on both sides of the court.

Initially the number of the accused was 668. The court exempted Naik Jainal Abedin from the charges as he died in the meantime.

A total of 74 people including 57 army officers were brutally killed during the bloodbath at Pilkhana in 2009.

Project to rehabilitate slum dwellers on the cards

Says planning minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering a project to ensure access to food, education and health security of the slum dwellers, said Planning Minister Air Vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandker.

"The slum dwellers are the most under-privileged section of the society. They have no access to nutritious food, education and health security. The government is mulling over to take project for their rehabilitation," he said.

He was talking to newsmen after launching a Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)-2009 at a city hotel yesterday.

Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) jointly conducted the survey to evaluate the living standard of slum dwellers both in urban and rural areas.

Addressing the function as the chief guest Khandker said the findings of MICS would help the government implement different projects for welfare of the women and children.

He also stressed the need for enhancing the BBS coverage across the country to disseminate accurate information that would help the government implement different projects for poverty alleviation and improving living standard.

Speaking as the special guest, State Minister for Women and Children affairs Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury said her ministry has taken an initiative to review the National Children Policy-1994 and National Plan of Action for Children (2005-2010) for protecting children.

About the MICS report, Unicef representative in Bangladesh Carel de Rooy said, "There is evidence that mitigating socio-economic inequities is a powerful strategy to accelerate both economic growth and poverty reduction."

"Children who do not have access to basic services, cannot get out of the vicious cycle of poverty, if specific programmes are not put in place to address their basic needs," he added.

The MICS report says that the urban

slums have the worst performance regarding women's and children's well-being and access to basic services compared to rural and non-slum urban areas.

The proportion of children's enrolment in primary education is 84 percent in urban slum while 79.8 percent in rural areas of Kushtia.

Moreover, the highest dropout rate was recorded in slum areas where it is six times higher than the national level.

The survey also found a major improvement in birth registration with 53.6 percent of children under five against 9.8 percent in 2006.

Some 85.2 percent of population have access to water, which is free from arsenic, revealed the survey.

Data of the MICS was collected from 3,00,000 households in 481 upazilas across the country.

Shahjahan Ali Mollah, director general of BBS; Riti Ibrahim, secretary of Statistics Division of Planning Ministry and Samsul Alam, project director of BBS, also spoke at the function.

Call to review national youth policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national youth policy should be reviewed and made up-to-date to involve youths, who account for one-third of the population, in the development process, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

They said the youths should be prepared as skilled workforce for the world job market and that the youth policy should address this issue.

The recommendations came from a national dialogue on 'Revisiting Youth Policy of Bangladesh' jointly organised by the population sciences department of Dhaka University and the UNFPA at a city hotel yesterday.

According to the Department of Youth Development (DYD), some 4.9 crore people of Bangladesh are youth who are aged between 18

to 35, said Noor Mohammad, assistant representative of UNFPA, in his keynote paper.

The youths, who are being considered as liability, can be made assets with a proper youth policy, he added.

"The National Youth Policy formulated in 2003 does not address how to make youths competent for a job market. It also did not give any direction about self-entrepreneurship of youths, which could be an effective way to reduce the unemployment rate," said Director General of DYD Md Azizur Rahman.

"We need to address these issues through revisiting the national youth policy," he said.

UNFPA Representative Arthur Erken said studies have shown that investing in the needs of young people --

education, jobs, health care, information -- is perhaps the single best way to bring benefits to society as a whole.

"Failing to invest adequately in the full potential of young people will mean losing this one-time demographic opportunity," he said.

Secretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports Mahbub Ahmed said youths should be instrumental in reducing poverty and ensuring development and global peace.

"We want to revisit the youth policy so that the youths would be able to assist the government in achieving the Vision 2021," he added.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University Dr Harun-Rashid, Prof Rowshan Ara and Prof Dr MM Akash also spoke at the dialogue moderated by Prof Dr AKM Nunun Nabi.



Matin Choudhury's death anniversary today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 24th death anniversary of Prof Abdul Matin Choudhury, former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University (DU) and founder chairman of the Bangabandhu Parishad, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quarkhwan will be held at the DU mosque, at his village home and at his Banani residence in the city.

Wreath will be placed at his grave and foods will be distributed among the destitute.

A milad mahfil will be held at his Banani residence at 7:00pm today.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend milad and pray for salvation of his departed soul.

Obituary

METRO DESK

Begum Amena Ali, wife of former home secretary Mohammed Ali, passed away at a hospital in San Jose, USA on June 21 at the age of 70, says a press release.

She is survived by her husband, two daughters and a son to mourn her death.

Amena was the daughter of Khalilur Rahman Khadem and younger sister of AR Yousuf, former information adviser to the Ershad government.

Gazi Md Aminul Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Alhaj Gazi Md Aminul Islam, a freedom fighter of Ullania of Mehediaganj upazila in Barisal, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Birdem Hospital in the city yesterday at the age of 50, says a press release.

Aminul, a lifetime member of Mehediaganj Samity, left behind his wife and two sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

The Samity expressed profound shock at his death and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

Chehlum

METRO DESK

Chehlum of Baby Islam, veteran cinematographer, director and producer, will be held at his Dhanmondi residence after Asr prayers tomorrow, says a press release.

All relatives, friends and admirers requested to attend the programme and pray for salvation of his departed soul.

He passed away at a hospital in the city on May 24.

5 die in Sylhet road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Five people were killed in a collision between a minibus and an autorickshaw on Sylhet-Zakiganj road last night.



The accident took place at Kayesthogram in Golappanj at about 8:00pm when the five victims, including a five-year-old boy, were travelling in the autorickshaw, locals and the police said.

Three died on the spot and two others succumbed to their injuries at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College and Hospital.

Only one of the victims was identified as Salimuddin, 40. The others, including two women, could not be identified immediately.

Soon after the incident, agitated people set fire to the minibus and put up a barricade on the road.

However, the police

brought the situation under control about an hour later.

Police official killed
Our correspondent in Mymensingh adds: A police official was killed in a road accident in Tangail Bus Stand area in the early hours of yesterday.

The police official Tamsheer Ali, 50, was seriously injured when a speeding truck hit his motorcycle on Mamensingh-Tangail Road at around 10:30pm on Monday.

He was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where he died at around 2:30am yesterday.

Police seized the truck, but its driver managed to escape.

Ctg grocer stabbed, mugged of Tk 5 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A gang of muggers snatched around Tk 5 lakh from a grocer after stabbing him at Colonel Hat market in the port city yesterday.

The victim was Mohammad Musa, 55, proprietor of a grocery store 'Jamal and Brothers' in the market.

Sources said a gang of three intercepted Musa in front of Janata Bank in the market at around 11:30am where he was going to deposit the money.

The gang stabbed him in the arms, legs and forehead and left him seriously injured as he resisted mugging.

They also stabbed Sohag, 27, a local trader who rushed to his help and fled the scene with the money by a CNG-run autorickshaw.

Musa and Sohag took treatment at Muktijoddha Sangsad Command Council (MSCC), which is set to conduct its elections on June 26.

A vacation HC bench of Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice AKM Abdul Hakim yesterday fixed the date for delivering order after concluding hearing on the petition.

Malek Hossain Peer, a freedom fighter of Sunamganj and also a candidate in a district unit election of MSCC, filed the petition with the HC on June 21.

FFS' ELECTION

HC order today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) will pass an order today on a writ petition against the election commission of Muktijoddha Sangsad Command Council (MSCC), which is set to conduct its elections on June 26.

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'Ensure shelter for Dalits'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government should take immediate measures to ensure that the Dalit community in the city is not deprived of shelter -- a basic human right, said the speakers at a press conference yesterday.

Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad in association with Oxfam, a non-government organisation and Self help Association for Rural People through Education and Entrepreneurship (SHAREE) organised the programme at the Jatiya Press Club in the city.

While presenting the keynote paper, Parishad Secretary General Nirmal Chandra Das said, Dalits have been subjected to social stigma of 'untouchables' for many years. They are the most neglected segment of the society as they belong to the lowest of all castes and do the most demeaning jobs. They are highly discriminated against and cannot obtain the basic human rights such as shelter, education, health services etc, he added.

Previously all governments have shown

reluctance regarding their accommodation in residential areas, said Das. They were never accepted as tenants and never provided with any land by the government to stay, he added.

Though they work as cleaners, the Dalits themselves live in most unhygienic conditions in the 27 overcrowded Sweeper Colonies in the capital, he added further.

Parishad made a number of recommendations to the government in order to improve the lives of this deprived community.

The government should provide Dalits Khas land and include them in government's housing programme of Gucchha Gram, Adarsha Gram and Ashrayan, they said.

Multistoried buildings can be built in their existing colonies to solve the accommodation problems. They can be permanently allotted homes on payment in instalments.

Laws and policies can be formulated and implemented on eradication of racism and discrimination on the basis of profession, they mentioned in their recommendations.

Qualitative change in tech education soon

Nahid tells roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The students having technical and vocational degrees would get opportunity to pursue higher studies at any time, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said yesterday.

The government would take all necessary steps to modernise and bring qualitative changes in technical education, he also said.

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a roundtable titled 'Importance of Technical Education in National Level' organised by The Daily Ittefaq at the Jatiya Press Club to mark the Technical and Vocational Education Week 2010.

Nahid opined that technical education would exert a

positive impact on the country's economy, mode of production and overall socio-economic scenario.

He, however, said technical education is yet to reach a dignified level socially and that is why many people do not want to enroll their children in such courses.

"This mindset needs to be changed", he said and also stressed the need for a massive campaign to raise awareness in this regard.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua said technical education had been ignored since independence.

"Technical education is needed for the sake of industrialisation of the country, as industries have become more technology oriented", he said.

Prof AMM Safiullah, vice chancellor of Buet, said technical and vocational education should be turned into a social movement to explore its potentials and increase its social recognition.

Prof Md Zafar Iqbal, head of the department of Computer Science and Engineering of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, said "We could turn our human force into resources through providing technical education to the poor students."

Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, noted economist Qazi Kholikuzzaman Ahmad, among others, addressed the programme.