



Harijans fight for decent life



Harijan colony at Bandel Road in Chittagong.

PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

Harijan 'Child of God', was Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi's name for the untouchables to give them honour for their service to the society.

During the British rule, upper class people collected the Harijans from different parts of India for sweeping and cleaning their houses and premises as well as the city. Though the trend began in fourth century Before Christ (BC), sweepers got the recognition as the Harijan in British period.

The Harijans have been living in Chittagong for around two hundred years. In the beginning they used to live scattered here. In recent times, they have got four places to live in.

Though the Harijans have been providing essential service to the society, their life style and culture are mostly unknown to rest of the

society.

Living in twenty first century, we still have reservation to touch them. Society is still maintaining the discriminatory attitude to this community. Members of this community are facing the social taboo to participate in national festival. In some locality, they have been facing an unwritten prohibition of entrance into the tea stalls even.

Researcher Naiyma Hossain said if any one wants to see the discrimination of classes in the society, it is the right place. They would not get any respectable position in the society in the traditional system, she said.

Naiyma said through her research titled "Status of Harijan community in socio-economic and political scenery of Bangladesh" she had found discrimination among the Harijans also. She said like other society, leaders of this community always try to control their members with their power and money.

Although sweeping is a traditional profession of Harijan community, they also work in different institutions on temporary basis. Like other institutions, most of them are working under master roll in Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

A city corporation sweeper on condition of anonymity said he has been working in CCC on master roll basis for the last 15 years. He said former mayor had pledged to confirm their service without any step in this regard.

He said the city corporation is now appointing sweepers from other communities from different districts who are not involved in this profession.

He alleged that a quarter is trying to detach them from this profession saying that they (Harijans) do not belong to Bangalee community, which is a conspiracy to deprive them of their jobs in different public sectors.

CCC Chief Executive Officer Mohammed-E-

Elahi said they have taken some steps to solve the problem prevailing for the last ten to fifteen years.

"During the expansion of geographical area of CCC they were appointed for sweeping under the master roll contract. For various reasons we could not regularise their jobs. Now CCC is thinking of appointing them permanently", he said.

He said there are some access sweepers and we are trying to find a better solution for surplus ones.

In addition to problem in their service sector, they have also been facing accommodation crisis. The CCC-built dormitories are at Jhawtala of Momin Road, Bandel Road of Pathorghata, Firingi Bazar Kasaikhana and at East Madarbari in the port city. The rooms in the dormitories are very congested for living. Each family of five to ten has only two rooms for their accommodation, which is very

unhealthy to live in.

Nirmol Das, a resident of the Bandel Road said they are leading a very low class life as rooms are very congested to live in. Besides, there are acute problems of sewerage system and water supply in their residential areas, he said.

"There is no allotment from CCC for dwellers of the dormitories. We are living here without any documents of ownership," he said.

CCC Councillor and Chairman of Estate Standing Committee Md Sahidul Islam said they have discussed about their (Harijans) housing problems at the standing committee meeting and its solution would be provided as early as possible.

He said it is not possible to give them document of rooms at this moment as the authorities concerned are looking for a better place for them.

theweekthatwas

Call to punish culprits of Banskhalhi carnage

Speakers at a rally on Friday demanded punishment to the culprits of the Banskhalhi carnage that left eleven people burnt alive on November 18 in 2003.

Eleven people of a minority family were burnt alive at Sadhanpur of the upazila in the sensational Banskhalhi carnage on November 18 in 2003.

Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad organised the protest rally at Andarkilla intersection marking the day as Oppression on Minorities Resistance day. Oikya Parishad leader Ranjit Biswas presided over the meeting.

Parishad leaders said people who were saved on that night from the brutal attack are passing insecure life. The criminals and their followers are continuously threatening them to withdraw the case, they alleged, adding that the then BNP government tried to file the case as a robbery to save the real culprits.

Parishad leaders sought help from the prime minister as well as from his government to clear all the obstacles to this case. Presidium Member of the Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad Prof Ranjit Chowdhury, Advocate Bijoy Lanksmi Debi and victim of this incident Bimal Shill and Nirmal Shill were present at the meeting.

Mayor seeks support

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor M Manjur Alam sought cooperation from all to solve the waterlogging problem in port city.

He said the work will be easier if the grabbers remove their illegal structures from the bank of the canal on their own.

The CCC mayor said this while he was visiting the canal side of Chaktai, Chaktai Diversion and Hijra canal on Saturday. Chairman of the CCC Standing Committee on Waterlogging Bijoy Kumar Chowdhury and councillor Md Ismail accompanied him.

"Within a very short time we will start the dredging of canals in the port city. We hope it will bring a new life to the port city business", the mayor said.

He said, "It is our duty to keep neat and clean our city. We will not allow any illegal establishment here. Because they are main obstacle to waterlogging and dirtiness."

Pekua School reunion held

Vice-Chancellor of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (Cuet) Prof Dr Shyamal Kanti Biswas emphasised acquiring qualities, including human quality side by side building career for the sake of real peace in the society.

He was addressing as chief guest a reunion of former students of Pekua Mehernama School on the school premises on Friday. Headmaster Gyas Uddin presided over the meeting.

Pekua Upazila Chairman Safayat Aziz Razu and Principal of Meron Sun School Md Sanaula were present as the special guest at the meeting.

"Degradation of morality and ethics is responsible for all kinds of injustice, discrimination and illegal works. If we fail to resist this degradation, the society will fall into acute problem", he said.

Reminding the duty of teachers, the chief guest said teachers should be more intimate to create human quality among the students.

CCC extends help to fire-hit temple

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor M Manjur Alam visited Sree Sree Radha Madhob and Gopalji Bigroho Shebasram damaged in a fire at Chawkbazar intersection on Saturday.

Manjur announced that he would help for the renovation of the temple. He said all of us must keep patience to recover the damages.

He called upon all to help in this regard saying that this the time to come forward to help the distressed.

"We should raise the awareness about the fire safety in society to build a secure life", he said. Councillor Sayed Golam Haider Mintu, General Secretary of the Shebasram Omritankur Sen, Tarun Das Vanu, Nepal Chandra Das and CCC officer Mominur Rashid Amin were present.

Social resistance a must to stop stalking

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) leaders at a meeting called for building a social movement to stop stalking in the society.

They made the call at a meeting organised by CPB Kotwali thana unit at Pathorghata on Saturday. Kotwali thana unit President Ashok Saha presided over the meeting.

Speakers said the party would launch a programme along with the mass people to remove all unethical activities in the society.

Demanding rationing system for the low income people, they said government must start the system immediately to keep the market stable.

CPB leaders Propid Bhattacharia, Ripayan Barua, Kefayet Ullah, Rekha Chowdhury, Kakali Biswas, Faridul Alam, Amrito Barua, Md Jahangir and Manos Biswas were present at the meeting.

Workshop on HIV held

Speakers at a workshop of interneer doctors on Saturday said HIV/AIDS is a burning issue of this time. They called for creating awareness about the disease.

They said mass people have a lot of confusion about this disease which are the strong obstacle to preventing the disease for ever.

Bangladesh Integrated Social Advancement Programme (BISAP) arranged the seminar on "Training on HIV/STI/AIDS prevention for the doctor" under the project of HIV/STD/AIDS prevention in Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) at Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMC) Conference Hall.

Director of CMC Brigadier Jahangir Hossain Malik was the chief guest at the inaugural session. Head of the department of Skin and Venereal of CMC and Associate Professor Dr Monshurul Alam, CCC Councillor Chowdhury Hasan Mahamud Hasni and member of BISAP Dr Biddut Vhusan Das Gupta were present as the special guests.

Thirty-five interneer doctors and some senior doctors participated in the training.

Digital innovation fair enlightens visitors



People crowd the digital innovation fair at gymnasium hall of MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong.

STAR PHOTO

PRANABESH CHAKRABORTY

Do we know how the Chittagong port, the lifeline of our national economy, is functioning digitally and providing services to its stakeholders? Or do we know how the government and non-government institution's digital innovations can help us in our everyday life with many services?

A three-day digital innovation fair organised by Divisional Commissioner's Office Chittagong and access to information project of prime minister's office jointly organised the fair, providing the visitors with unique opportunity to know not only about the digital functioning of the sea port but also other government, private and autonomous organisations' digital innovations, services and activities.

The divisional innovation fair, first of its kind in the country, aimed to introduce their new innovations, communication technologies, digital services to mass people. Forty-seven organisations, including 27 government organisations, participated in the fair with their products and services.

Various stalls of different institutions and organisations exhibited how to use their

digital technologies. They showcased the contents of specially made products and services.

Md Afsarul Ameen, minister for primary and mass education, inaugurated the fair as the chief guest at the gymnasium hall of MA Aziz Stadium on November 11.

The minister at the inaugural programme said the main aim of the fair is to make the people aware about e-technologies, e-services and reach government services to the people's doorstep.

He said with a view to building digital Bangladesh by 2021, the government will organise such fairs at division and district levels step by step.

Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Md Sirajul Hoque Khan said the administrations do not know what kinds of technologies are being used by the private organisations. The same is with the private organisations too. This kind of fair will help them learn from each other and will create a healthy competition between them.

Two seminars titled 'The development of digitalisation in Chittagong Division' and 'Strategic priority of digital Bangladesh' were also organised at the fair.

How rural and mass people can benefit

gathering information through digital technologies and using other innovations, was screened using multi-media projector at every stall in the fair.

Various cultural events were performed in the three day long fair.

The fair drew young boys and students from the city's schools and colleges. Tanbir Siddique, a student of Chittagong College, said it was a new experience for him. "Really I could know many things about new digital innovations and communication technologies visiting the fair," Tanbir said.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP), Bangladesh Bank, Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Chittagong, Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) and many other organisations displayed how to use their websites on the screen among the people at the fair.

CPA displayed how the port deals with Container Terminal Management System (CTMS) digitally at its stall.

How the mass people can lodge complaint about criminals or against members of the police force by using their website were screened at the CMP stall.