



PHOTO: SHAWKAT JAMIL

International Children's Day and Children's Rights Week have been a major theme of public discourse in recent days. These impoverished children, against a background of the Shishu Academy, where deliberations have gone on regarding their future and that of others like them, appear to be in a state of bliss. Even as it rains, they prance away, cheered by the food given to them at the end of a seminar. Their innocence says it all. Their right to a life free of poverty is, of course, another matter.

**EC Sakhawat misses seminar as US embassy delays visa**

UNB, Dhaka

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain could not attend a conference in the United States as he was not issued visa on time.

Sakhawat was scheduled to attend the Oracle Open World 2011 conference from October 2 to 6 but was issued the US visa on October 2, said a press release from Election Commission yesterday.

The database of some nine crore Bangladeshi voters with photographs was preserved through the Oracle software. Election Commissioner Sakhawat was invited to attend the conference to discuss how the concerned database can be preserved efficiently.

After completing all necessary formalities, Sakhawat submitted his visa application to the US Embassy in Dhaka on September 14. A verbal note was also provided from Ministry of Foreign Affairs but the visa was not issued on time.

**EU for abolishing death penalty**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) has again called for abolishing the death penalty.

"The European Union reaffirms its absolute opposition to the use of the death penalty," said a letter signed by nine heads of mission of the EU countries in Dhaka.

The letter marked the observance of the European Day against the Death Penalty and the World Day against the Death Penalty today.

To mark the day, the EU countries are carrying out a range of activities to highlight the importance of minimum standards being observed in the application of the capital punishment.

ment.

The EU envoys in the letter said, "The death penalty concerns everyone's right to life. The state, with its particular responsibility as the ultimate guarantor of all persons' human rights, should not deprive anyone of his or her life."

They said the European Union encourages all measures aimed at abolishing the death penalty.

The envoys referred to a United Nations resolution adopted in 2010, which called upon all states in the world to establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

"We hope that all members of the

UN including Bangladesh will take the actions which the Resolution calls for, and thereby contribute more to the development of fundamental rights and human dignity in the world," the EU envoys said.

The letter was signed by French Ambassador Charley Causeret, German Ambassador Holger Michael, the Netherlands Ambassador Alphons Hennekens, Swedish Ambassador Anneli Lindahl Kenny, Danish Ambassador Svend Olling, Italian Ambassador Giorgio Guglielmino, Spanish Ambassador Luis Tejada Chacón, British High Commissioner Robert Gibson and Ambassador of the European Union William Hanna.

**PUBLIC, PRIVATE SCHOOLS' SELF-EVALUATION**

**Ministry unhappy over outcome**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry is unhappy with a project, the first of its kind it initiated a year ago, where around 18,000 private and public schools were asked to self-assess their standard and progress.

Secondary Education Sector Development Project, the project of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE), was conducted on 17,873 secondary schools of 482 upazilas.

The project officials held a workshop at National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM) in the city yesterday where they announced a grading of the schools as per the self-evaluation report.

The ministry officials present at the workshop expressed their dissatisfaction over the method, saying it did not reflect the real picture of the schools.

"The questionnaire was subjective," said Education Secretary Dr Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, adding that it took for granted that the headmasters would provide the true information and there is no scope to re-check the information.

Additional Secretary SM Golam Faruk agreed, saying that there were some exaggerations as the ministry's information about the schools contradicts the report.

The headmasters of the schools prepared the evaluation report by filling up forms on the basis of 45 sub-indicators of seven main indicators

within April 30. The upazila and district education officers sent the forms to DSHE after scrutiny.

Categorisation came with 2,455 schools graded as A (very good), 8,897 as B (good), 4,749 as C (medium), 1,619 as D (weak), and 153 as E (ineffective).

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said there might be some limitations since the evaluation was done for the first time and that is why it seemed subjective.

He said it is possible to know the weaknesses of the institutions. From now on the headmasters would send their evaluation by January 31, he added.

Nahid, however, asked to form an expert committee which will prepare the questionnaire for the next year.

**WAR CRIMES TRIAL**

**Number of courts to increase if needed, says Qamrul**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would increase the number of International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) to try war criminals in the future, if necessary, said State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam yesterday.

One tribunal is not sufficient to try all the war criminals, he said, adding that trial of some identified war criminals will surely be held through this tribunal within this government's tenure.

Talking about people's confusion over whether Ghulam Azam would be tried, Qamrul said he certainly would. "Wait and see," he said.

He was speaking at a cover unveiling ceremony of a DVD titled "Al Badr", a documentary on war crimes at Jatiya Press Club in the city.

Referring to Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayeede, Qamrul said, "Trial of one identified war criminal has begun. Trial of another five identified war criminals is expected to be launched within the next two months."

The war criminals absconding abroad would also be brought under the trial, he said. Addressing the function, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (retd) AB Tajul Islam said Ghulam Azam would be arrested after specific evidence is gathered against him.

Sectors Commanders Forum Organising Secretary M Hamid and Sammillito Sangskritik Jote General Secretary Hasan Arif also spoke at the function. Producer Fakhru Arefin Khan directed the documentary.



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