

Legal system needs to be more child-friendly

One of the most pressing and least addressed problems facing the nation currently is the increasing violence against children. Some children, such as those engaged in domestic work, are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Shagufta Hossain of The Daily Star talks to Salma Ali, Executive Director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association, to further explore the issue.

In your opinion, what are some of the most common reasons contributing to the rise in violence against children?

It is a good time to bring up this topic. We have just received a judgement for a case involving a four-year-old who was raped in Keraniganj in 2015. So, I am feeling optimistic that as a nation, we have the resources to hold people accountable for their actions. Personally, I am particularly bothered by sexual violence committed against children. When cases like this are brought to court, matters of victim and witness protection must be kept in mind, which is a challenge. Cases where violent acts have been committed against children are sensitive, and require that the public prosecutor, police and judges work together with full commitment towards ensuring justice. Also, all those who are involved need to have a specialised set of skills to enable courtrooms to be more child-friendly.

But to answer your question, in my experience, there is no one reason that children are victims of sexual violence. If I were to state the biggest cause, it is the fact that women and children, especially girls, are still seen as lesser human beings. Children who see their mothers being abused at home often develop the mindset that women are "supposed" to be subjected to ill-treatment. The girl child grows up thinking she "deserves" to be abused because she is female. The boy child grows up thinking he has a right to abuse women because he is male. This social inequality is ingrained in the psyche and then becomes a cycle. There is also an erosion of social values. Drugs and pornography are so easily accessible. Crimes are not seen as crimes, violence not seen as a punishable offence. The powerful are rarely held accountable for their actions. Combined with a patriarchal mindset, this moral erosion is outright dangerous.

In what situations do you think the children are most vulnerable to violence and abuse?

I think adolescent girls who are engaged in domestic work are the most vulnerable. If you think about it, a young girl moves far away from her family to work with a family she knows nothing of, moving in with complete strangers. In such a situation, both her

physical and mental wellbeing are dangerously at stake. These children don't even have separate quarters and if they do, they are usually in the darkest corner of the house. And at an age when they need it the most, they have nobody looking out for them.

The government approved the Domestic Workers Protection and Welfare Policy in 2015. However, implementation of the policy remains limited. Why is it so?

For any policy to be effectively implemented, the supporting infrastructure needs to be strengthened. While we see significant political will and commitment, coordination among different ministries such as the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Ministry of Labour, the city corporations, etc. would make the process much smoother. There needs to be a monitoring mechanism to check if the policies are being implemented. Better yet, steps towards ensuring that children don't have to be engaged in domestic work should be taken. However, it's not solely the governments' responsibility to ensure successful implementation of laws and policies. In case of Aduri, for example, the media was so alert, the public were so outraged, that the perpetrators were held accountable for their actions. There needs to be at least as much attention given to other cases as well. The judicial system really needs to be child-friendly and so does the mindset of the



Salma Ali



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PHOTO: STAR

people so that legal systems that hold perpetrators accountable can be effective. Speaking of legal reforms, I think we have come a long way. What we need to focus on now is the implementation of the frameworks that are in place and building awareness of the laws that exist. Most people are not aware of the laws related to children's safety. Our approach should be more proactive rather than reactive to ensure the safety of the children.

Aside from the implementation of legal frameworks, is there a role that the private sector can play in reducing vulnerability of the children engaged in domestic work?

Of course! The private sector has a huge role to play. I think if the private sector invested some of its funding as Corporate Social

Responsibility to take on some sustainable projects aimed at ensuring the safety of children, especially those engaged in domestic work, progress could be more easily achieved. Also, if we are to have help at home, they should at least have their own quarters. Both buyers and sellers of apartments need to take into account that if the culture in Bangladesh is such that we must have domestic help, living spaces should be designed to accommodate for them.

A legal framework is important, of course. The fact that domestic workers don't have formal recognition is problematic. Those who are employed in the ready-made garments sector, for example, have formal recognition and so are respected. But those who are engaged in domestic work don't have

their work valued. Because they have no formal recognition, they have no respect. So children as young as 12-year-olds become victims of forced labour and even bonded labour. We all need to work together to ensure a healthy environment for our children.

One Aduri is one too many. But sadly, it doesn't begin or end with Aduri. We have had Rajons, Rakibuls and most recently Sabina, an 11-year-old subjected to gruesome abuse. It is high time that measures be taken to not only curb the culture of impunity that is the aftermath of abuse, but also build a society where there is no room for cases like this to occur.

The future of work is ours to create

AMEENAH GURIB-FAKIM and STEFAN LÖFVEN

Rather than adopting a wait-and-see approach, we must think seriously about the future of work that we want and how to get there. The future is not pre-determined and can be influenced by the societal choices and policies that we make today.

It is our belief that work is the foundation for people and societies to grow. With a decent income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities.

Yet technology, demography, climate change and globalisation are transforming work more quickly, more profoundly and on a greater scale than ever before. These changes have great potential, but we also face many uncertainties about the future of work. The fear that while some may benefit greatly from these sweeping changes and many will not, has become a major concern, not least at a time when so many countries are facing high unemployment.

And if too many people worry that they are being left behind and that our societies are no longer capable of delivering positive change, there is a strong chance that disruptive forces will undermine growth and destabilise social and political harmony. Indeed, the tendency that we are witnessing a shift towards populist thinking is one of the key challenges of our time.

Therefore, we need to support the job-creating potential of the shift to environmental sustainability and a fair and open world trading system, founded on strong values of rights, freedom and solidarity. Globalisation must benefit all



SOURCE: IMF

Only people who feel safe in the present can welcome an uncertain future.

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determined and can be influenced by the societal choices and policies that we make today.

To generate ideas and solutions for addressing these fundamental work-related challenges, we have agreed to co-

chair the new Global Commission on the Future of Work launched today by the International Labour Organization (ILO). This Commission, which is part of the ILO's Future of Work initiative, brings together eminent thinkers and

practitioners from around the world. It will report to the ILO's member states in 2019.

This initiative is, indeed, a truly global effort—over 100 countries have held national dialogues, with governments, employers and workers, to elaborate on approaches to meet the future challenges in the labour market. The contribution of the Commission will also be an important part of the follow-up to the landmark 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Goal eight, in particular, entails promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

For almost a century, the ILO has made a significant contribution to making the world of work a much better place. It has done this by bringing together representatives of governments, workers and employers to promote social justice.

By recognising that the future of work is ours to create, rather than one imposed by forces which we are powerless to control, we are convinced that the future holds a powerful message of hope. We are committed to leading this Global Commission in that spirit, and to focus on concrete solutions, policy advice and best practices, with the goal of making the future of work, a future that includes everyone.

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim and Stefan Löfven are President of the Republic of Mauritius and Prime Minister of Sweden, respectively.

A WORD A DAY



GEORGISM
noun

An economic philosophy developed by American 19th century economist Henry George, the primary focus of which is the "single tax" on land values and elimination of all other taxes.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Jon Hamm series
 - 7 Idiosyncrasies
 - 11 Show up
 - 12 Massage target
 - 13 Cajoled
 - 14 Cutting
 - 15 Colorado resort
 - 16 Striped grazer
 - 17 Hoe target
 - 18 Prevalied
 - 19 Manipulative sort
 - 21 Homer's pop
 - 22 Writing systems
 - 25 Hit letters
 - 26 Land along the Tigris
 - 27 Cleanse
 - 29 Priority Mail org.
- DOWN**
- 1 Raucous bird
 - 2 Stood
 - 3 Hang loosely
 - 4 Confused
 - 5 Tied up
 - 6 Homer's neighbor
 - 7 Occupied
 - 8 Wind-driven vehicle
 - 9 Little angels
 - 10 Capitol group
 - 16 Quinn role
 - 18 Tired
 - 20 Computer key
 - 22 Bitter salad green
 - 23 River siren
 - 24 Semiannual event
 - 25 Word separators
 - 28 Military info
 - 30 Marsh bird
 - 31 Track horse
 - 32 Winter gliders
 - 34 FDR pooch
 - 36 Sukkothe celebrant



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

WIPER PALMS
AMORE ELIOT
SPEED PIQUE
HAT SAP USE
ELT PRY OER
SECTOR ERRS
LATERAL
SNIP SERIFS
PIC PTA CAT
ICE ISL ERA
CONAN MANOR
ELSIENSUE
REELS NYETS

BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

