

Release all DSA victims before Eid

Demand speakers at event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Digital Security Act must be repealed and those held under the act should be released immediately, urged the DSA Victims Network yesterday.

The network, a recently floated organisation of people arrested and kept in jail under the DSA, announced their demands at a press conference held at Dhaka Reporters Unity.

At the conference, they also demanded adequate compensation for all victims.

Pritom Das, member secretary of the network, read out a written statement on behalf of the organisation. Besides, the network's convener Golam Mahfuz Joarder, activist Didarul Alam Bhuiyan and others spoke at the programme.

In the statement, the network said the DSA was purportedly created to ensure the safety of citizens through digital means.

However, over the past five years, it has failed to provide any security to the people. The law severely restricts freedom of expression and dissenting opinions, the statement read.

The statement further emphasised that the DSA has become a tool for government's oppression, affecting ordinary individuals, politicians, journalists, students, and even children. The law has created a culture of

fear and insecurity among all.

Quoting government data, the network mentioned that 7,001 cases have been filed under the DSA as of January 2023.

The DSA Victims Network has collected data on the most recent 1,331 cases, which revealed that 4,169 individuals were accused in these cases. The highest number of cases – 431 were filed against

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politicians, followed by 368 cases against journalists and 164 cases against students. Sultana Jasmine, who died in Rab custody, and writer Mushtaq Ahmed, who died after 10 months of detention without trial, were both victims of the DSA.

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President Shahabuddin and his wife Dr Rebecca Sultana welcome Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a bouquet on her arrival at the Bangabhaban yesterday evening.

PHOTO: PID

Roads occupied for cattle markets

HELEMUL ALAM

With Eid-ul-Azha being just six days away, lease holders of different cattle haats have started setting up markets on various roads in the capital illegally.

According to lease conditions, traders are allowed to set up markets four days prior to Eid. However, the markets are being set up four days early, violating the rules.

A visit to the various areas of the capital, including Hazaribagh and Dholaikhal, revealed that several roads in these areas were blocked as the leaseholders had allowed cattle traders to keep their sacrificial animals.

The road between Hazaribagh Bazar and Dhaka Tenari crossing was completely blocked by traders.

This correspondent also faced inconveniences as volunteers halted his rickshaw near the BRD gate-5 crossing, claiming that vehicles are not allowed to ply this road.



A road turned cattle market in Hazaribagh. PHOTO: STAR

Mohammad Rubel, who, along with around eight others, was busy clearing the roads, said they were assigned by the market authority to do the job.

An hour after the incident, chairs were put up to prevent motorised and non-motorised vehicles from plying the road.

The locals have to put up with traffic jams due to cattle markets being set up on the roads too early. Even patients and expecting women have to bear the burden for almost a week, said Ataur Rahman, a resident of Hazaribagh.

"I even saw two private bank guards carrying a couple of money-filled trunks to their branch at Hazaribagh Bazar as their vehicle was barred from entering the road

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72pc girls victim of early marriage

Societal pressure, poverty main reasons, says Mahila Parishad report from 2018 to 2021

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Between 2018 and 2021, 72 percent of 13 to 15-year-old girls became victims of child marriage, found a Bangladesh Mahila Parishad report.

The report titled "Causes and Social Impact of Child Marriage", which used data from 37 districts of 8 divisions, was unveiled at an event at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

According to the report, about 53 percent of girls agreed to get married because of family and societal pressure and 50 percent for poverty.

Though only 0.5 percent of girls died due to early marriage and pregnancy, 44 percent faced complexity later, mentioned the report.

Based on the survey, not only girls, 37 percent of boy children have also experienced child marriage.

Around 2,060 people responded to the survey, which includes 870 family members of child marriage victims, 825 victims themselves, 169 marriage registrars, 169 municipal officials, and 27 members and presidents of the government's child marriage prevention committee.

The study discovered that while 67 percent of the 844 respondents' family members were unaware of the punishment, 56 percent of them were aware of the child marriage law but still they conducted the marriages.

According to the survey, 39pc of girl children under the age of 18 falsified their birth certificates to get married, while 40pc did so with the help of union parishad, municipal corporation, and other local government members.

Faking birth certificates, kazis (4pc), local computer shopkeepers

child marriage."

"There are more ignorant people in rural areas, which increases the number of child marriages. Even the kazis and other trustworthy individuals demand substantial sums of money to alter the birth certificates and marry them off," he added.



Speakers at the event at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

(25pc), notaries (4pc) were also directly responsible.

Mentioning the spike in child marriage during Covid-19, Md Abdul Aziz, member, standing committee on Ministry of Women and Child Affairs, said, "No matter how many laws we pass, without widespread support and a focus on the fundamental issues, they will never be fully implemented. Young women must be included in programmes designed to prevent

Rasheda K Chowdhury, executive director of mass literacy campaign network, said, "There must be stipend arrangements for women who were already married during the pandemic; they would then begin enrolling in school again, but evidently with conditions; otherwise, the in-laws would send the girls to school only to obtain the money."

Fauzia Moslem, president of

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GENDER EQUALITY

Bangladesh best in South Asia

Ranks 59th worldwide in WEF Gender Gap Report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has been ranked as the top South Asian gender-equal country in the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap Report 2023", obtaining the position since 2016.

This year, the 17th edition of the Global Gender Gap Index benchmarks gender parity across 146 countries, providing a basis for robust cross-country analysis.

Globally, Bangladesh ranks 59th with a score of 72.2 percent, improving from the 71st position last year, according to the report published recently.

"The country's trajectory is mostly characterised by continuous progress of Political Empowerment," says the latest report, adding, at 55.2 percent parity, Bangladesh ranks seventh globally on this subindex.

Bangladesh has had a woman head of state for 29.3 years out of the last 50 years, the longest duration in the world, as per the report.

However, its shares of women in ministerial (10pc) and parliamentary positions (20.9pc) are relatively low, it adds.

On Health and Survival (96.2pc), there is parity in sex ratio at birth, the report says. However, gender parity in healthy life expectancy has been dropping as men's life expectancy has been increasing faster than that of women since the 2020 edition, it says.

Bangladesh's Educational Attainment parity is at 93.6 percent. Both women and men's literacy rate and enrolment in secondary and tertiary education has been increasing steadily over the last decade, it adds.

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LIVEABILITY INDEX

Dhaka seventh worst city to live

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka was named the seventh least liveable city in the world for the second consecutive year in the Global Liveability Index for 2023.

The annual global survey by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a sister organisation to The Economist, was published yesterday.

The EIU ranked 173 cities around the world on more than 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure, according to the report.

Dhaka became the 166th, with 43.8 points. This makes it the seventh least liveable city this year. The Bangladesh capital shares the spot with Zimbabwe's Harare.

In 2022 also, Dhaka was ranked the seventh least liveable among 173 cities. However, its liveability score was 39.2 points in 2022.

This year, like the previous one, Vienna of Austria has been ranked the most liveable city with 98.4 points, Copenhagen of Denmark and Melbourne of Australia ranked second and third.

TOP 3 LIVEABLE CITIES

- Vienna
- Copenhagen
- Melbourne

TOP 3 LEAST LIVEABLE CITIES

- Damascus
- Tripoli
- Algiers

REASONS BEHIND DHAKA'S SITUATION

- No improvement in quality of life
- Lack of growth control, management
- Failure to protect environment
- Unchecked number of vehicles

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Decentralisation
- Shifting industries gradually
- Controlling growth rate
- No new industries in city

Port Moresby of Papua New Guinea, Karachi of Pakistan, Lagos of Nigeria, Algiers of Algeria, Tripoli of Libya, and Damascus of Syria are the six cities worse than Dhaka in terms of liveability with Damascus being the worst among the total 173 cities.

Adil Mohammad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said Dhaka has been allocated with the lions share of development budget, however, no significant improvement has been achieved in terms of liveability of the city.

"It is partially true that Dhaka has been burdened with tremendous population and high level population density. However, why the government has failed to implement decentralisation policy as stipulated in the five-year plan is a major challenge," he said.

The government should take appropriate planning strategies to implement density control policy in the detailed area plan. Otherwise, investment in large infrastructure and other development projects would not significantly increase liveability of Dhaka, said Adil.

Univ teachers reject uniform financial policy

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The University Grants Commission has finalised a uniform financial policy and accounts manual for the public universities, significantly decreasing remuneration for teachers for setting question papers, invigilation and script evaluation.

The UGC has sent the guideline to all 53 public universities that will come into effect from July 1.

However, the teachers of different universities rejected the policy, terming it "naked interference" in the autonomy of the higher educational institutions.

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association, in a statement issued yesterday, said the policy appears to be an attempt to put the government and the teaching community face to face just ahead of the upcoming 12th national elections. The policy is "anti teachers".

The federation urged the UGC to cancel the "controversial uniform financial policy" by July 9; otherwise, they will be forced to take a strong stand against the UGC.

When everyone is eagerly counting the days for increasing of salaries and allowances to keep pace with increasing inflation, the UGC has behaved in a hostile manner with the teaching community, said the statement.

"How and on what basis, the uniform policy was

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