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Overshadowed, underplayed

Report says issues concerning women and girls getting sidelined amid political unrest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Issues concerning women and girl children are being sidelined as Bangladesh grapples with political unrest and national crises, said a new media monitoring report yesterday.

From January to August 2024, media coverage predominantly focused on the 12th parliamentary election, cabinet formation, and subsequent anti-discrimination student movements, overshadowing ongoing challenges faced by vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls, it added.

The report, titled “Monitoring Violence and Abuse Against Girl Children - 2024,” was prepared by the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, a coalition of 206 government and non-government organisations aimed at improving the status of women and girl children.

It was presented at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

It highlighted a sharp decline in coverage of gender-based violence, discrimination, and girl children's rights during the first eight months of 2024.

The report also found that while some victims or their families sought legal recourse, very few of the accused were arrested or punished. This lack of accountability has exacerbated the situation, emboldening perpetrators.

“For example, data from the One-Stop Crisis Centre shows that over 62,000 women and children have received assistance for physical and sexual abuse over the past 23 years. However, only 19,441 cases were filed, with verdicts reached in just 3 percent of them, and less than 1 percent of perpetrators were punished,” said Ahsana Zaman Aney, national coordinator of the forum.

Aney further noted that between January and August 2024, a total of 28 girl children were subjected to sexual harassment and abuse, 224 were victims of rape, 19 were abducted or trafficked, 10 girl domestic workers were abused, 133 chose suicide, 81 were murdered, 20 died under mysterious circumstances, and there were reports of 187 drownings.

Aney said, “The media has provided very little information regarding women and girl children due to national events,” she added.

The platform compiled the report using information from 70 daily newspapers, including 24 national dailies, 45 local newspapers, and five online platforms.

The report was released ahead of National Girl Child Day on September 30, with this year's theme being “Shaping Tomorrow's Bangladesh Through the Dreams of Girl Children”.

Md Shahidul Islam, child rights and protection specialist at Educo Bangladesh, emphasised the role of NGOs and the media in establishing the rights and welfare of women and children.

“If the media could publish a report on girl children every month, it would raise public awareness and prompt policymakers to take necessary actions,” he said.

Forum president Dr Badiul Alam Mazumder said, “If we do not prioritise girl children, make adequate investments

If we do not
prioritise
girl children,
make adequate
investments for
them, and create
widespread
awareness through
National Girl
Child Day, our girl
children will fall
behind, which will
be detrimental to
us as a nation.

BADIUL ALAM MAZUMDER
Forum President

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Due to a lack of maintenance and protective measures, this riverside walkway by the Buriganga, spanning from Dhaka's Shyampur to Narayanganj's Pagla area, remains in a dilapidated condition. In fact, one can hardly detect the existence of the walkway these days. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Health hazards lurking in veggies, fruits

Study finds alarming levels of heavy metals, pesticides

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A recent study has found alarming levels of heavy metals and pesticide residues in widely consumed vegetables and fruits across nine districts of Bangladesh.

The research, conducted by Bangladesh Agricultural University and the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute, and funded by the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority, analysed vegetables and fruits from markets in Mymensingh, Sherpur, Jamalpur, Gazipur, Dhaka, and Narayanganj.

The study, Heavy Metals in Vegetables and Associated Human Health Risk Management, led by Professor Shafiqul Islam and Dr Mohammad Golam Kibria of Bangladesh Agricultural University, focused on commonly consumed vegetables like brinjal, cabbage, country bean, cucumber, okra, pointed gourd, potato, red amaranth, and tomato.

“We found the highest levels of heavy metals in red amaranth because we consume the entire plant, unlike other vegetables where parts are discarded,” said

The study revealed that the dietary intake of arsenic, cadmium, chromium, and nickel from these vegetables could increase cancer risks.



Golam Kibria.

“The outer layers contain higher amounts of heavy metals, which is why it's critical not to grow these vegetables in contaminated areas.”

Red amaranth, a widely eaten leafy vegetable, showed the highest contamination levels, with cadmium reaching 704.32 micrograms per kilogramme, far exceeding the permissible limit of 190 micrograms per kilogramme.

Lead and cobalt levels were also consistently above safe limits across all districts, while cadmium levels

were found to be dangerously high in most vegetables, particularly in Narayanganj.

Vegetables like brinjal (275.66 micrograms/kg), cucumber (349 micrograms/kg), and tomato (195 micrograms/kg) also contained hazardous levels of cadmium, predominantly in Narayanganj.

“These findings are alarming because these metals are toxic and can lead to long-term health problems, including cancer,” the report said.

The study revealed that the

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‘What if we kill you like Abrar?’ RU seniors threaten fresher, force him to seek forgiveness from mother during ragging

STAR REPORT

In the early hours of Monday, Nazmul Hossain Nabil and Antor Biswas barged into the room of a Rajshahi University fresher Mohammad Rocky at a hostel in Lehubagan area near the campus.

They forced Rocky to engage in an “uncomfortable conversation” which quickly escalated into a “dark game” of fear and intimidation.

The two instructed Rocky to make a phone call -- one that would grip his heart with dread.

“Call your mother. Tell her this will be the last time you'll speak,” they demanded.

Rocky, caught off guard, dialed the number with shaking hands. His mind raced, his heart sank.

On the other end, his mother, unaware of the nightmare unfolding miles away, answered.

The seniors told him to seek forgiveness from her, leaving the young student torn between terror and confusion.

The atmosphere turned even darker when the two seniors from the university's marketing department, referenced the brutal death of Abrar Fahad, a BUET student who was beaten to death by fellow students in 2019.



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The water reservoir in front of the Swadhinata Stambha (Independence Monument) at Suhrawardy Udyan, Dhaka, was initially constructed to beautify the area. However, over time, indiscriminate littering has turned it into an eyesore, stripping it of its intended appeal. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



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নিয়ে এলো নতুন প্যাকেজ



নতুন যুগের
নতুন প্রজন্ম



প্যাকেজ অফার

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৫ টিকা

২৫ জিবি ডাটা

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