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Sexual abuse is part of life for street children

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Dhaka's bustling streets are both a workplace and a home for 14-year-old Amina.

She navigates the bustling streets selling flowers by day and sleeping on the footpath at night – her undernourished frame becoming just one among the countless other children who call Bangladesh's streets their home.

According to a Unicef study, titled "Children Living in Streets Situations in Bangladesh 2024", over 3.4 million children find themselves in street situations in Bangladesh without parental care.

Sexual molestation has been highlighted as one of the physical and social environment risk factors for street children.

Amina is no stranger to that potential danger, especially without the safety of a family. Two years ago, she lost her mother at a young age. Then she came to Dhaka, escaping her abusive father and stepmother in Munshiganj.

"My father used to beat me for being a girl child. He remarried, and my stepmother and her family members tortured me as well. They did not give me food when I was hungry. They used to make me do all the household chores all by myself," she shared. "I don't have

any shelter in Dhaka. I live and sleep in the streets with other girls and boys," she added.

Sharing the problems she faces on the streets, Amina said, "I have only two frocks. When I change my clothes behind a tree or a bush, male pedestrians stare at me. That scares me."

Whether it's on the road, in a park, or in a crowded place, most girls and boys living on the streets face sexual harassment. They don't understand the abuse when they are young, but they realise it when they grow up.

WAHIDA BANU

Executive director

Aparajeyo Bangladesh

"Sometimes men touch my hands and shoulders when I sell them flowers. Sometimes, they even offer to take me elsewhere. But I do not go near them after they say such things," she said.

Amina's greatest fear, however, is nighttime when she has to sleep in a park. "Night is a horrible time

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Speakers at a discussion, titled "Transforming Bangladesh Public Administration: Overcoming Challenges and Shaping Reforms", jointly organised by UNDP and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Qualitative political change key to administrative reforms

Discussants tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Without bringing qualitative changes in politics, it is not possible to achieve desired reforms in administration, said speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

"Civil servants are like horses, and politicians are the riders steering them," they said.

They made the remarks

Corruption persists due to the lack of democratic accountability. Corrupt individuals are often promoted while honest officers are sidelined.

KHANDAKER AMINUR RAHMAN

Former additional secretary

at a discussion, titled "Transforming Bangladesh Public Administration: Overcoming Challenges and Shaping Reforms," jointly organised by UNDP and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

The discussion emphasised the urgent need for reforms to align Bangladesh's governance with people's aspirations.

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Global problem-solving must rely on cooperation

Says Prof Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

Highlighting the importance of "multilateral efforts" to overcome global challenges, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said global problem-solving must rely on cooperation, not conflicts.

Addressing a graduation ceremony, "National Defence Course 2024," Dr Yunus said they need to be together more than ever before, as global challenges do not belong to anyone or any nation alone.



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'Respect our sovereignty'

Fakhrul calls upon India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday called upon India to respect Bangladesh's sovereignty and democracy.

He also urged India not to align with any specific political party, particularly Awami League, in a way that could undermine the democratic aspirations of the Bangladeshi people.

"Bangladesh is a nation that fought for its independence through immense sacrifices," Fakhrul said during a rally in London at 2:00am

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Need to bring back people's confidence: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People's lack of confidence in the electoral system is a major concern for free and fair elections, said Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah yesterday.

"We need to bring back people's confidence in the electoral system," he said.

The remarks were made to reporters following a meeting with the Electoral Reform Commission at the Election Commission Building yesterday afternoon.

Asked how the EC will restore people's confidence in elections, Fazal said, "This will require a holistic approach and cannot simply be summarised into one or two points."

He also noted that no

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Prioritise public interest, liveability in DAP

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The amendments in the recently published Detailed Area Plan of Rajuk do not prioritise the city's liveability, capacity, civic amenities, and environment, said speakers at a virtual programme yesterday.

Instead, the interests of real estate developers and housing traders have been given an importance there, they said.

They also said the role of some officials of Rajuk and Ministry of Housing and Public Works in the DAP amendment process is questionable.

They were speaking at an online event, titled "Repeated revisions of Dhaka's DAP: Observations of IPD," organised by the Institute for Planning and Development (IPD).

The government, on August 23, published the gazette notification for the 20-year (2016-2035) DAP, which covers 1,528 square km of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk).

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STELLAR WOMEN SEASON 2

CALL FOR REGISTRATIONS / NOMINATIONS

The Stellar Women initiative aims to recognise twelve (12) extraordinary women throughout the year (From September '24 to August '25) for playing a remarkable role in their distinguished fields. Their work must have made positive contributions towards the development of society & the nation.

Inviting nominations/ registrations in the following categories:

Marketing Professional	Sports	Architect (Residential & Commercial)
(31 st December '24)	(31 st January '25)	(28 th February '25)

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