



Participants at a national dialogue titled "Road to Recognition: A First Step towards Gender Equality", organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at a city hotel yesterday. Planning Adviser Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud and MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam were present, among others.

PHOTO: STAR

## Child abuse now a national crisis Says rights organisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Child abuse in Bangladesh has reached alarming levels and is now a serious national crisis, warned the Local Education and Economic Development Organization (LEEDO), a child rights organisation, yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club, LEEDO officials said abuse, both physical and sexual, is rising despite constitutional and legal safeguards.

According to data presented by the organisation, child rape cases increased by nearly 75 percent in the first seven months of 2025 compared to the same period last year. From January to July, 306 children were victims of rape, up from 275 during the same period in 2024.

Citing recent reports in national newspapers, it highlighted several cases, including the abuse of a 10-year-old by her stepmother in Dhamrai, the sexual assault of a 7-year-old madrasa student in Cumilla, and the rape of a 12-year-old domestic worker in Gaibandha.

Incidents of children being exploited for online content have also emerged. In one case, a woman known as "Cream Apa" was arrested in Ashulia for allegedly abusing her children and forcing them to appear in videos on social media.

Between January and October 2024, at least 482 children were murdered, and 580 faced various forms of abuse, including physical assault, sexual violence, and corporal punishment by teachers, said LEEDO, citing figures from Dhaka Tribune.

Citing Unicef data, the organisation also said nine out of 10 Bangladeshi children aged 1-14 experience violent discipline at home at least once a month.

Meanwhile, a 2025 study by Springerlink found widespread physical abuse among child labourers in rural informal sectors, it added.

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- RECOMMENDATIONS
- Ensure safe environments, counseling support in schools
- End child labour by providing families with social protection
- Prioritise probe, speedy trial of child abuse cases
- Protect children's identities in media coverage
- Strengthen cyber laws to curb online abuse

### ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Thirteen years have passed since the night of horror at Ramu in Cox's Bazar, when zealots set ablaze centuries old Buddhist temples, looted homes and spread fear among the minority community.

Despite multiple investigations, dozens of cases and promises of accountability over the attack, not a single perpetrator has been convicted and punished.

On September 29 and 30, 2012, a group of zealots unleashed violence after spreading a rumour that the Facebook page of a local Buddhist youth, Uttam Barua, carried a photo demeaning Islam.

An investigation by The Daily Star later revealed that the page with the anti-Islam picture had been photoshopped.

The attackers set fire to Buddhist temples, vandalising and looting more than 50 houses in Ramu. They also attacked Moshurikhola crematorium at Khurushkul village in Cox's Bazar Sadar upazila and attempted to attack the houses of Hindus in Kharulia village.

The following day, they attacked and ransacked five Buddhist temples in Ukhia upazila and damaged two Hindu temples in Palongkhali union. Buddhist houses were also torched and vandalised in Hoikong union of Teknaf upazila.

In total, 18 cases were filed in connection with the attacks, but none has reached conclusion. All the accused have since walked free

on bail, and court proceedings remain stalled.

"The cases may be pending with different courts, but I have no updated information," said Advocate Md Sirajul Islam, public prosecutor of Cox's Bazar District and Sessions Judge's Court, while speaking to The Daily Star over cellphone.

His predecessor, advocate Md



The debris around a Buddhist temple in Ramu, Cox's Bazar after the violent attacks in 2012.

FILE PHOTO

Faridul Alam, had earlier said many victims lost interest in pursuing justice because the then Awami League government built them new houses and pagodas as compensation.

Rights activists reject this as an excuse.

"If exemplary punishment had been delivered after Ramu, later attacks in Nasirnagar,

Brahmanbaria (2016) and even those after August 2024 could have been prevented," said ZI Khan Panna, Supreme Court lawyer and chairperson of rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra.

He said Ramu's main victim, Uttam Barua, disappeared soon after the incident and remains missing.

Two petitions were filed with

## Change mindset on energy sector, fight corruption

Speakers urge political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A shift in the mindset of political party leaders regarding power and energy supply is essential to ensure a smooth transition to renewable energy, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday.

They said if party members rid themselves of corruption, people would be able to attain "energy justice".

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) organised the dialogue at the capital's CIRDAP auditorium with representatives of various political parties.

The party leaders promised to work against corruption at the event.

CAB energy adviser Prof M Shamsul Alam said if the government stopped making "predatory profit" from the sector, people would get affordable energy.

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Prof M Shamsul Alam  
CAB energy adviser

said the energy sector had become a totally profit-driven sector. He assured that if the BNP comes to power, it would not allow development projects like Rampal, which has been polluting the environment and the biodiversity of the Sundarbans.

Jamaat's Dhaka city south committee's Nayeb-e-Ameer Md Helal Uddin said if Jamaat comes to power, it would work for the people with honesty and integrity.

CPB central committee member Ruhin Hossain Prince said they have always stood for ensuring 100 percent ownership of natural resources for the people and would continue to do so.

AB Party general secretary Asaduzzaman Fuad said the political parties which appear likely to come to power in the future had already surrendered themselves to the oligarchs.

Representatives from Basad, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, National Citizen Party, Nagork Oikya and Gono Odhikar Parishad also joined the dialogue. Students from different universities presented their thoughts on energy security at the programme.



A Dhaka North City Corporation worker sprays mosquito repellent with a fogger machine along the Ring Road area of Mohammadpur in the capital yesterday. With dengue cases on the rise, experts have recommended intensifying such activities to curb Aedes mosquitoes.

## Redistribution of care work vital for equality

Speakers tell MJF national dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women will soon have the legal right to take their children to workplaces, as the interim government has decided to introduce this provision, said Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud, adviser to the planning ministry, at an event yesterday.

"It will pave the way for a future where recruiters are required to set up mandatory daycare facilities in every office," he said.

He made the remarks at a national dialogue titled "Road to Recognition: A First Step towards Gender Equality", organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at a city hotel.

The dialogue highlighted the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics' Household Production Satellite Account Report, which values unpaid household work at Tk 6,70,000 crore, equivalent to 18.9 percent of GDP. Women contribute 85 percent of this, representing 16.14 percent of GDP.

Discussing the limitations of GDP calculations, Mahmud said it is a

poor measure of people's well-being, particularly for women.

He said the exclusion of women's unpaid household work dates back to economist Alfred Marshall, who wrote in his Principles of Economics that such work is not an economic good or service.

"That made the damage," he said, adding that the contribution of women's domestic work has since been left out of economic calculations.

"Women are contributing comparatively better than men in workplaces. A country's development can only be celebrated when women receive due respect."

Wahiduddin Mahmud  
Adviser to planning ministry

At the event, speakers also stressed the need to recognise, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work as key steps towards

gender equality. They said women not only bear most of the burden of unpaid household work but are also excelling in formal employment, in some cases surpassing men.

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### VIOLENCE IN RAMU

## 13 years on, justice remains a far cry



Aerial view of the aftermath of the Khagrachhari violence.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## KHAGRACHHARI VIOLENCE Calls grow for judicial probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights groups and political parties across the country have demanded an independent investigation into the violence in Khagrachhari that left three indigenous people dead and many others injured.

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB), a platform of 23 organisations including indigenous representatives such as Raja Devashish Roy, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Kapaeeng Foundation, as well as other civil society groups, also called for a judicial inquiry into the incident.

"Protests may be held over any reasonable demands, but they must never be met with excessive use of force, nor turn violent. Law enforcement agencies and relevant authorities must act with restraint, responsibility, and respect for human rights, so that the safety of civilians is ensured," the platform said in a press statement.

HRFB also stressed the need for justice, compensation for victims, and proper medical care for the injured.

Ain o Salish Kendra also called for a judicial inquiry to ensure evidence-based action against those responsible.

"If any excessive force was used during the incident, the government must investigate and take appropriate measures," it said.

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