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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়



Children, rescued and rehabilitated by a non-government organisation, along with experts and rights activists at a discussion titled, "Disadvantaged from a Young Age: Young Journalist Changemakers Urge Action for Vulnerable Children", at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## They too deserve a dignified life

Once street children, now students, they question policymakers, experts on rights, justice at discussion

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They once roamed the streets with no home to return to. Now, they sit in classrooms and speak up with confidence about the rights and dignity every child deserves.

And yesterday, they took the floor to question policymakers, lawyers, and rights activists about their rights, safety, and future.

Around 15 children, rescued and rehabilitated by the non-government organisation LEEDO, joined a discussion at The Daily Star Centre where they asked sharp, thoughtful questions on issues ranging from legal protection and political exploitation to the right to shelter and education.

The discussion, titled "Disadvantaged from a Young Age: Young Journalist Changemakers Urge Action for Vulnerable Children", brought together government and non-government stakeholders who listened and responded to the young participants' concerns.

The students introduced themselves as "sons and daughters" of LEEDO, a non-

profit NGO that has been working to improve the lives of street-connected children since 2000. All of them are members of a LEEDO initiated "Young Journalist Changemaker" group.

If a street child is harassed by police, where can they go for justice?

There are laws to protect us, but why don't they work in real life?

How to stop people from using children in political programmes?

How the constitution ensures rights of street children?

For instance, Rudra Karmakar, who has completed his schooling with LEEDO's support and is now preparing for university admission, asked whether there was any legal remedy if a street child was

harassed by a police official. "There is no specific provision. But we found in our survey that street children are mostly abused by low-ranking officials, and if they can reach a higher-ranked one, he or she can intervene," said Dr Hasan Reza, associate professor at Indian University's School of Social Work, who joined virtually.

Hasan Ali Musafir, a ninth-grader, expressed concern about the use of street children in political programmes and asked how to act against those who engage children in politics. Arifa Chowdhury Himel, assistant director of the National Legal Aid Services, replied that there is no scope to involve children in any unethical activity, including political programmes.

The National Legal Aid Services provides legal support free of cost, and children are one of the major beneficiary groups. If any child needs legal help, they can visit our offices in all 64 districts," she said.

Another participant, Ayesha Akter, asked Additional

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