

Universal Children's Day

Every year Universal Children's Day is observed on this day with a view to projecting the problems pertaining to children's welfare, especially in the developing countries. It is in these countries that the standard of living is incredibly low and millions of children live almost a subhuman life. This year's theme is 'children's rights' which reminds us of the basic needs of children like nutrition, shelter, clothing, education and health service. This also brings home the point that even in the developing countries including Bangladesh, there are two groups of children, one group enjoying the privileges of life and the other living in shockingly poor conditions. The unfortunate ones, as observed, grow up to increase the number of the victims of neglect, ignorance, poverty, indignity and diseases. They do not get proper paternal care and society's attention. They live and die in penury and pain.

Seminars, discussion meetings, cultural functions and the like are usually held to mark the observance of the Day, primarily highlighting its significance and emphasising the responsibilities and obligations of the parents, guardians and society towards the children. We in Bangladesh have also chalked out different programmes for the occasion. While the Day is observed, it has to be ensured that it should not be reduced to mere annual ritual but the observance of the Day must be aimed at creating the desired social awareness of obligation towards children. This awareness has to be reflected in tangible action throughout the year. In other words, steps must be

taken to ensure that we can bring up our children living both in urban and rural areas as healthy, educated, enlightened and responsible citizens, so that they may be able to steer the ship of the nation in the future. Having fully realized its paramount importance as an investment in the nation's future, Bangladesh has taken up certain programmes to translate these phrases of profound thought into deeds.

In keeping with the spirit of total development, the Government in cooperation with various child welfare organisations are formulating and implementing various schemes for the welfare of the children. International agencies like UNICEF and WHO are rendering tremendous services in this respect. Initially, the national children academy (Shishu Academy) has started functioning not only to impart education to children but also to help them develop their potential qualities and personality. And since overwhelming majority of the children live in rural areas, its activities are expected to spread to villages shortly. Apart from setting up several child health clinics in the country, a massive programme has been launched to immunise the country's 4.5 crore children under 15 years with BCG and attention is being paid to provide them with sports facilities in academic institutions. Concerted efforts are also being made to combat malnutrition. In unison with this year's theme 'children's rights', measures have to be geared up to make the efforts in this direction even more effective and meaningful.