

## Child Labour: Bangladesh Perspective

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**D**ESPITE the anti-child labour campaign across the world, child labour is an unpleasant and unwanted reality in many countries including Bangladesh. Recently an important magazine of Boston, published an article called "Child Labour in Asia" and mentioned that among nine countries with the highest child labour, Bangladesh is in 6th place.

At present, the number of child workers in Bangladesh is 8.6 million. Among them 4.12 million child workers are employed in agriculture. In urban areas, there are half a million girl child workers among 1.13 million child workers.

With possible lower population growth and increase of women education rate in view, it can be anticipated that child labour will gradually decrease in the future.

### Types of Work

Children are employed in various forms of economic activities. From a rapid survey conducted by ILO and Unicef in 1994, it was disclosed that children are employed in about 301 types of economic activities in the urban areas. This includes breaking stones/bricks, selling flowers, collecting garbage, knitting, various forms of industrial labour etc. The survey says that there are 201 types of child labour in old district headquarters, 133 in new district headquarters, 133 in thana headquarters, 23 in hill tracts and 95 in rural areas. The findings of another survey on "Hazardous form of Child Labour" shows that Children are also employed in some dangerous works. Electrical work and welding, working in chemical materials factories, selling and carrying of drugs are included in this category.

### Laws about Child Labour

The existing laws about child labour in Bangladesh are:

#### Mine Act-1923

No child under the age of 15 will be employed or will be allowed to be present underground places.

#### Child Act (Labour Mortgage) 1933

If any guardian or any employer employs any child under 15 in any form of labour harmful for the child, without proper salary or for any other gain, or any form of labour which is not terminable within one week's notice, they will be considered to have committed punishable crimes. Agreements for such work will be void also.

#### The Employment of Children Act, 1938

No one will be allowed to employ any child under the age of 15 in any goods delivery work related with railway passengers, cargo or mail transportation or in the areas near any port.

#### The Tea Plantations Labour Ordinance, 1962

No child who has not completed his twelfth year shall be required or allowed to work in any tea plantation.

#### The Shops and Establishments Act, 1965

No child under the age of 12 will be employed in any institution. Permission has to be taken from chief inspector to employ children of 12 to 18 years any time after 07 AM to 08 PM.

#### The Factories Act, 1965

No child under the age of 14 will be employed in any factory work. If any child under 18 years employed in any work with dangerous machinery has to be trained about the work or has to work under supervisor.

#### Children Act, 1974

It is forbidden by the law to employ children in beggary or any kind of exploitation.

Provisions of Punishments for Violating Child Law (Labour Mortgage) 1933:

- For employing any child under 15 in any form of labour harmful for the child, without proper salary or for any other gain, or any form of labour which is not terminable within one week's notice —

- For a person despite being the guardian or parent of a child and doing an agreement for labour mortgage of the child will be fined up to Tk 50.

- Any person doing an agreement with the parents or guardian of a child under which the parents or guardian employs the child into labour mortgage will have to give a penalty of Tk 200.

- Any person employing any child or giving permission to employ any child in any place under his authority knowing about the child labour mortgage and for implementing the agreement, he will be punished to pay a penalty of Tk 200.

#### Anti Child Labour

##### Programmes in Bangladesh

Government and NGOs have been implementing mainly two types of anti child labour programmes in Bangladesh. These are

- Anti Child Labour Campaign Programme for creating mass awareness.
- To fulfil children's needs through alternatives of child labour.

On the other hand, according to the agreement, signed by BGMEA, UNICEF and ILO on 14 July 1995, children under 14 working in garments industries are exempted from their employment and are given the aid for education with a monthly scholarship.