

Human Trafficking in Bangladesh; Over one million trafficked out of country in last 30 years

Human trafficking in many countries, including Bangladesh, rivals illegal drug and arms trades because of its high profit and low penalty nature, according to experts, reports UNB.

They said this illicit business has become attractive to small criminal rings and large-scale organised crime, forcing a growing number of people into slavery around the world. Women and children are the ones who suffer the ugliest abuse. They said tens of thousands of women and children are trafficked out each year from Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty provides traffickers with people who have no alternatives for survival. They trust the offers of work or marriage abroad, which promise security but lead them to slavery.

The experts include Prof Ishrat Shamim of Sociology Department, Prof Tasneem Siddiqui of Political Science Department of Dhaka University and Rina Sen Gupta of International Organization of Migration (IMO). They were interviewed by news agency, for a study on human trafficking.

According to the study, over 1 million women and children were trafficked out of the country in last 30 years and many of them were forced to become prostitutes, domestic helps, camel jockeys and beggars.

A senior BDR official was quoted in the study as saying, “At least 1,008 Bangladeshis were trafficked out of the country between 2001 and 2003. During this period, 1,116 women and children were rescued from the traffickers.” Even though the figures of different sources differ from each other, one thing is clear: trafficking is a major problem in Bangladesh where extreme poverty forces tens of thousands of people to look for work abroad making them vulnerable to traffickers.

According to official statistics, over 80 per cent of the country’s poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture, but life for many of them has worsened significantly.

Political leaders, according to the experts, always say that food security is important and they take steps to feed the people, but the contents at national budgets have nothing to do with what they promise. Improving the lives of the

rural poor depends on improving agriculture. Some progress is being made in cutting down the number of hungry people but not enough.

Unless the fight against rural hunger takes priority now, trafficking of women and children will continue to rise. In a country, which achieved food autarky and self-sufficiency in many other sectors, millions of people still do not have enough food to eat. The battle against poverty and hunger must be won to put an end to human trafficking, they said.

In Bangladesh, social and economic vulnerabilities of women and children have left them with only a few options to eke out a livelihood. Many women have been forced, through the ages, to market their bodies to maintain themselves and their dependents, the study says.

With growing complexities in the market forces of supply and demand, prostitution has become highly diversified. Traffickers can easily procure women and children by alluring with promises and hopes of a better life. Women from Bangladesh either migrate voluntarily or trafficked into foreign countries where they become pawns in the sex trade without any hopes of escape.

About placing of Bangladesh in the tier 3 by the US last year, Rina Sen Gupta of the International Organization of Migration said, “They focused on prosecution and did not count repatriation and prevention. Our situation is not yet that much bad that we’ll fall into tier 3. If they only calculate prosecution, their assumption is correct because so far only 21 cases saw verdicts.”

“Trafficking is a moral problem, a legal problem, a social problem, an economic problem and a health problem. Therefore, we all -- the academicians, the researchers, the teachers, the students and the professional from diverse fields -- have to work together to address this organised million-dollar heinous business to pay respect to human dignity, to ensure equality and maintain a non-discriminatory society,” she said.

Source: The Bangladesh Observer, February 12, 2005

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