



*An eNewsletter from SUPRO, Bangladesh*

**Issue: October, 2008**

## **NGO declared to resist IFI interference in Economic Policy**

**The BSF groups urge the cultural program on poverty day**

World Bank, IMF, ADB and other donors have to stop their interference in country's economic policy and they should cancel their unfair debt of Bangladesh. SUPRO demanded in a cultural program on poverty day on 18 October 2008 at Rabindra Sarobar, Dhanmondi. As the part of a series of programs across the country, the Bangladesh Social Forum organized the program. Earlier the forum announced a week long campaign titled 'Bangladesh Week 12-18 October' to protest the motive of donor agencies. The program was the culmination of weeklong campaign of the groups.



The BSF group along with Action Aid Bangladesh, Angikar Bangladesh, Shushasoner Jonny Pracharavizan (SUPRO), Incidin Bangladesh and some other organizations have organized the activities. The forum expressed its determination to resist the donor agencies at the concluding session of the program. Among others, Asgar Ali Sabri of Action Aid Bangladesh, M. Helal Uddin of Angikar Bangladesh, Ahmed Swapon Mahmood of Voice, Asrafi Zaharia Prodhan of SUPRO delivered speeches in that program. Chetona Drama Team of SUPRO, Chapainawabgonj staged a drama on poverty in that program.

The president of Angikar Bangladesh M Helal Uddin has readout a mock farewell letter for the IMF, World Bank and ADB on behalf the forum at the session. `` At present the Bangladesh has to pay annually Tk 11,000 per head to repay the loan to donors, amounting to loss of 14,000 crore per year, which is double of the health budget and 20% of total budget for the current fiscal year. The forum leaders alleged that the amount of loan for Bangladesh and other recipient countries were increasing every year due to hard conditions imposed by IMF, WB and ADB.

The NGO leaders said that, the world is now facing the adverse effect of climate change caused by the indiscreet consuming mentality of the rich countries while Bangladesh is one of worst vulnerable countries of natural disasters due to the climate change. They demanded the compensation of that. And they urged that they will not take any project in name of adaptation. If they undertake such project they have to consult with local experts. They also demanded compensation for that projects which were imposed by WB, ADB. The fund of compensation of climate change must be considered excluding the regular aid. They demanded the multi-donor fund should be split from WB, ADB and it should be implemented by independent authority of government and unfair loan must be canceled.



## **State will ensure health and education for people; the allocation of government will not reduce according to WB suggestion**

### **Speakers urge a roundtable of SUPRO.**



The State will ensure the health and education of citizens, because our constitution committed for that. The allocation and monitoring of government on service sector will not be reduced according to suggestions of WB, IMF. They suggest such things so that the poor state can not be able to repay their loan. They encourage market economy for development of the poor states. So the poorer of those countries is gradually are being excluded from all facilities of the state.

Therefore if we protest the tendency, state will formulate sovereign policy and politicians have to understand that we will not develop our country from conditionalities of IFIs. Speakers urged at a roundtable titled 'Impact of Foreign loan on Essential Service Sector: Context of Health Sector' organized by SUPRO on 13 October 2008 at National Press Club. SUPRO organized it as a part of weeklong (12-18 October 08) program to protest the motive of donor agencies.

SUPRO Project Coordinator Mohammad Shahid Ullah presented the keynote paper at the discussion while Prodip kumar Roy, CEO of SUPRO delivered welcome speech at the discussion. Shahidullah Said, Bangladesh has to spend \$ 1551.3 million to pay the foreign debts every year, which is almost 18 percent of the total expenditure of the government whereas the government spends only 7.4% in health sector.

He also said, the health policy should be finalized after taking the views of the people instead of bringing market –oriented reforms to this vital service sector.

SUPRO Executive Board member Ahmed Swapan Mahmood, National Committee member MA Salam, Matiur Rahaman, District Secretary Sawkat Ali, Sujit Kumar Ghosh, Dhaka Campaign Group member Abu Mohsin, Rubia Helal, Advocate Tanbiur Islam Siddikqi and BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahabubur Rahman also took part in the discussion.

The BNP Leader said, the people often do not get any benefit from such loans as the major portion of loan is used to meet the conditions of the loans. The Government should bring itself out of the culture of taking loans from different international financial organizations.

Ahmed Swapan Mahmood said, good governance should be ensured at the local level in health sector services. He proposed that the government could give health cards to pregnant women ensuring free treatment for them at government hospitals.

The discussion was presided over by Mustafijur Rahman Khan, Vice Chairman of SUPRO.

## **Seminar held on `` RTI Law Implementation: In Search of Forward Looking Strategies``**

Article-19 and its partners in Bangladesh organized the seminar titled `` RTI Law Implementation: In Search of Forward Looking Strategies`` on 29 September 2008 at IDB Bhaban auditorium, Agargaon, Dhaka. In the seminar discussant explored challenges and necessary strategies for the effective implementation of the new RTI law.

The three thematic sessions of the seminar was introduced by Thamina Rahman, Director of Article-19, with presentations from professor Asif Nazrul on 'Setting up an Effective Law Commission', Barrister Tanjib-ul- Alam on 'Framing Rules Under RTI Ordinance' and SM Shamim Reza on 'Preparing for Implementation: Role of Stakeholders'.



Tahmina Rahman in her opening remarks mentioned that Article-19 and its partners SUPRO, MMC and BNNRC have been active advocate for an RTI law in Bangladesh and welcomed the publication of the Right to Information Ordinance in the official Bangladesh Gazette on Wednesday, 20 October 2008.

Professor Asif Nazrul highlighted the importance of the immediate establishment of the information commission and setting up a selection committee to initiate the process. The financial independence of the commission would be of critical importance to ensure the autonomy and independence of the commission. In this regard, he recommended for 'Constituting of a Healthy Information Fund'. He also discussed the strength and measures to overcome the weaknesses of the ordinance.

Professor Asif Nazrul highlighted the importance of the immediate establishment of the information commission and setting up a selection

Barrister Tanjib-ul Alam highlighted on the need for rules to be framed by the government in consultation with the commission. He recommended that following its earlier example, the government will open the process to the civil society organizations, journalist, and other stakeholders. Especially with regard to rules that relate to the protection of the right to information, procedures for publication, dissemination and making information available (section 608 of the ordinance), types of information that will be supplied without fees (section 9.6 of the Ordinance) and procedure for appeal.

SM Shameem Reza highlighted that effective implementation would need system and capacity in place; infrastructure upon which information system will rest, public official with a different mindset. How will these be achieved? Who will lead? What will be the timeframe? What criteria would be used for the appointment of information officers?

Khurshid Alam, Member of drafting committee of RTI ordinance, presented a 14 point route map chalked out by the government for the implementation of the RTI ordinance.

Shahhen Anam, Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, Dr Hamida Hossain, human rights activist, Ed Campos, Local Governance Advisor of World Bank, AKM Hossain, Joint Secretary of Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Monjurual Ahsan Bulbul, President of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalist, Abdul Awal, Chairperson of SUPRO, Kamrul Hasan Monju, Executive Director of MMC, AHM Bazlur Rahman, Chief Executive Officer of BNNRC also spoke in the seminar.

Former Attorney general of Bangladesh Barrister Fida M Kamal was the chief guest and he concluded the seminar with vote of thanks.

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