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50 Bangladeshi women trafficked to India a day

Says home adviser

Staff Correspondent

Every day 50 Bangladeshi women are lured to India and sold there, Home Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin yesterday told the inaugural ceremony of a new police investigation unit formed to strengthen fight against human trafficking.

"According to one report, every day 50 Bangladeshi girls are lured across the Indian border and sold. India shares 4,222 kilometres of border with Bangladesh and most of the border is open to trafficking," he said.

The unit labelled "Trafficking in Human Beings (THB) Investigation Unit" has been set up within the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) with Additional Deputy Inspector General Abdul Jalil as its head.

The unit will initially have 12 police officials having specialised training on investigations into human trafficking at home and abroad.

Held at a city hotel, the function was also addressed, among others, by Home Secretary Abdul Karim, Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, Additional IGP and National Project Director of Police Reforms Programme (PRP) NBK Tripura, advocate Salma Ali of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association and THB unit chief Abdul Jalil.

The home adviser said poverty, land fragmentation, natural disasters, landlessness, and demand for dowry push people of Bangladesh to search for opportunities abroad.

He added with an average per capita income of approximately \$500, Bangladesh is one of the largest migrant-exporting countries in Asia.

He went on to say most illegal migration flows to India as Bangladeshi traffickers have built up bases in the border districts of India. He also said an estimated 90 percent of trafficked women are forced into prostitution.

MA Matin said reportedly 400,000 Bangladeshi women are engaged in forced prostitution in India, while 300,000 boys have been trafficked to that country. Besides, an estimated 40,000 female children are exploited in Pakistani brothels.

Mentioning statistics, he said from January 2000 to June 2003, an estimated 2,405 Bangladeshi children disappeared, with 510 boys and 451 girls confirmed to have been trafficked.

The home adviser said: "Human trafficking is a diverse crime which requires diverse policy measures and interventions to be tackled effectively."

He stressed the need for close collaboration and cooperation between the police, community and social partners to effectively fight against human trafficking.

Home Secretary Abdul Karim said: "We have declared war against human trafficking as we all know it is the worst form of crime."

He said the government has already given more focus and priority on fighting this particular crime.

The PRP has supported Bangladesh police in setting up the THB unit, which will exclusively deal with cases of human trafficking. The PRP has also published a human trafficking investigation workbook to enhance skill of the police personnel dealing with trafficking cases.

THB unit chief Abdul Jalil said their staffs will investigate serious cases while supervise all other trafficking cases of the local police.

A music video and two documentary films were also launched during the ceremony to raise awareness against human trafficking.