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## Pathakali Trust to raise funds

The first meeting of the Pathakali Trust was held at the President's Secretariat in Dhaka on Saturday with chairperson Begum Raushan Ershad presiding, reports BSS.

President Hussain Muhammad Ershad, who initiated the formation of the Trust seeing the plight of the children engaged in hard manual labour like making of brick and stone chips, was present at the meeting.

The seven-member Pathakali Trust was formed recently aimed at achieving welfare of the distressed and under-privileged children engaged in improving their own conditions.

Briefly speaking on the occasion, President Ershad said the Pathakali Trust was an organisation with a difference since it had been entrusted with the noble task of saving a segment of our future generation as well as making it useful for the society.

He underlined the importance of taking the task very seriously and said we should not keep the activities of the Trust limited to mere formalities. Rather, he pointed out, everyone connected with the Trust should make efforts to rear it up like their own child with their sincere feelings to make it successful.

The President called upon all to donate generously to Trust Fund and said its programmes should be expanded to other cities where there were concentrations of working children. He said more schools, training and medical centres would have to be built for the Pathakalis.

Begum Raushan Ershad referred to her visit to places where children had been engaged in hard labour of making brick and stone chips and said it was very difficult to bear this heart-rending scene.

In an emotion-choked voice, she said despite her wish she could not go there to see the plight of the children which was unbearable for her. We must take steps to free these children from the shackles of hard manual labour and ensure an easy life for them so that they could make meaningful contributions to the national development efforts when they grow up, she said.

The meeting decided that the children below 15 years of age, engaged in hard manual labour like making brick and stone chips be diverted to such work which is lighter in nature.

### Survey

It also decided to undertake a survey to determine the number of children engaged in arduous manual work in order to help them in leading a reasonably tolerable life as well as finding easier means of livelihood.

The meeting accepted the offer made by eminent Child specialist

Prof. M. R. Khan to render his services to the cause of Pathakalis on voluntary basis and appointed him as a Honorary Consultant of the Trust on health and nutrition.

First Lady Begum Raushan Ershad will accept donations for the Trust personally twice weekly. The donation may be of any amount.

The Trust will organise walkathons and football matches to create social consciousness about the problems of the Pathakalis as well as to raise funds for it. Accounts will be opened at Sonali, Janata, Agrani and Rupali Banks for accepting donations for the Trust.

### 3-member body

The meeting formed a three-member executive committee with Education Minister as its convenor to run the day to day affairs of the Trust. Dr. Mizanur Rahman Shelley, a member of the Trust, has been given the responsibility to prepare the teaching materials for the Pathakali schools.

The children who are better-off will be encouraged to take note of the distressed children like Pathakalis and programmes in this respect will be drawn up and implemented by the Directorate of Primary Education.

The Trust noted with satisfaction the enthusiasm and response generated among the members of the public about the Pathakalis.

Earlier, the Education Minister welcomed the personal initiative of President Ershad in forming the Trust which was the demonstration of his deep concern for the well-being of the Pathakalis. He also thanked the First Lady for accepting the chairpersonship and expressed the confidence that the Trust would work hard in fulfilling its task.

President Ershad handed over a cheque of Taka fifteen lakh for the Trust which he had sanctioned earlier.

The meeting was attended by the members of the Trust-Dr. Mizanur Rahman Shelley, Advocate Rezaur Rahman, renowned footballer Salauddin and Director General of Primary Education Directorate.

Education Secretary Hadayet Ahmed was also present.