

Indigenous children need multilingual education system

Experts at a seminar in Dhaka on Monday underscored the need for multilingual education system at the primary stage for the country's indigenous people for their proper learning, reports UNB.

They said teaching either only through their mother tongues or only through Bangla and English will not be effective and sustainable as it cannot help them reach the threshold of the modern world.

Citing findings of a research report, Dr Mejbah Kamal, a noted researcher on indigenous issues, told the seminar that some 94 percent of indigenous people still use their mother tongues instead of Bangla. "Again when an indigenous child grows up, then Bangla will be his marketing language and English is the international language. So, we cannot ensure their balance education only using one language."

Manusher Jonno Foundation arranged the seminar titled 'Going to School: Challenges in the Chittagong Hill Tracts' at CIRDAP auditorium in the afternoon with its executive director Shaheen Anam in the chair.

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury, addressed the programme as chief guest, while CA's special assistant for CHT Affairs Raja Debashish Roy and sociologist Dr Sadeka Halim of Dhaka University as special guests.

Dr Mejbah Kamal, also a professor of Dhaka University's History Department, said the multilingual education has to be community

based one.

"Two things—incorporating mother tongues of the communities alongside Bangla and English in an indigenous-friendly syllabus—are important to ensure the effectiveness of the multilingual education. The education system will have to be community based one, as each of the aboriginal group has its own language," he said.

Alleging that many schools in the CHT areas do not want to admit indigenous children, Dr Mejbah urged the government for enacting a law in the country to remove the discrimination.

The other speakers said the indifference of the local authorities to implement the government policy and projects, negligence of schoolteachers to attend schools regularly and repeated displacement from homes are the major obstacles to ensuring education for all in the hill districts.

Dr Sadeka Halim said an indigenous family keeps changing its home as Bangali settlers has created a sense of insecurity among the indigenous people, raising the dropout rate of their children.

Dr Sadeka also urged the gov-

ernment to bring a change in the school calendar in the three CHT districts as the festival times of the indigenous groups do not coincide with other areas of the country.

Manusher Jonno Foundation presented a research report on primary education of the indigenous children where it placed 13-point recommendation for effective education of the indigenous children.