

Sexual abuses almost double



The infographic features a dark background with a white silhouette of a girl on the left and a white silhouette of a boy on the right. To the right of the girl icon, the text 'CRIMES, ACCIDENTS' is written in large, bold, red capital letters. Below this, a table with a white border and a grey header row is displayed. The table compares data for the years 2013 and 2012. The rows are labeled 'DEATH' and 'INJURY' in red and yellow text respectively. The numbers are also in red and yellow to match the row colors.

| YEAR | 2013 | 2012 |
|--------|-------|-------|
| DEATH | 1,702 | 1,697 |
| INJURY | 1,100 | 1,295 |

The incidents of child rape in the country nearly doubled in the last year compared to those of the previous year, finds a report of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). According to the study, 267 children were raped last year whereas the number was 155 in 2012.

The report titled "Bangladesh Child Rights Situation-2013 (Reflection from Newspapers)" shows that 12 of the rape victims in 2013 died while 239 were severely injured.

"Moreover sexual harassment of children is also on the rise," said Abdullah Al Mamun, programme coordinator of MJF, while presenting the report at a press conference at the National Press Club on 3rd April, 2014. "Of the 24 children, who fell victim to attempted rape, 19 received severe injuries. Another 183 children were sexually harassed and 136 of them were injured and two died while trying to save themselves from the perpetrator," he said.

"The tradition of early marriage prevents us from considering a minor girl as a child," said Shahnaz Huda, governing board member of the MJF and chairperson of Dhaka University's Law Department. She held this perception of the society as a key reason behind the child rape incidents. "We need to change our social and individual perception of a girl," she observed.

Since 2011, the MJF has been preparing and sharing yearly assessment of child rights situation in the country based on news published in six national dailies --- the Prothom Alo, the Ittefaq, the Jugantor, the Samakal, the New Age and The Daily Star.

A total of 1,702 children died and 1,100 were injured in different kinds of crimes and violence in 2013. In 2012, the number of deaths was 1,697 and of injury 1,295, according to the report.



Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, speaks at a press conference at the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday where the organisation presented a report on the last year's child rights situation in the country. On her right is MJF programme coordinator Abdullah Al Mamun, and on her left are Grameen Telecom Trust managing director Parveen Mahmood, MJF governing board member Shahnaz Huda, and MJF media coordinator Shahana Huda. Photo: Star

Highest 502 children died from drowning last year, with 118 deaths in August alone.

Furthermore, 335 children were murdered last year and two were injured because of their presence in the murder scenes. The number of murder incidents, however, was higher the previous year -- 414. Nonetheless, 36

other children became victims of attempt to murder last year. Road accidents and suicide were the other major menaces for children, causing 266 and 166 deaths respectively.

"This year we have added a new category -- political violence with children. Because of political violence last year, many children lost their lives and many more were injured," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of the MJF. As many as 41 children died and 107 received severe injuries in political violence last year, the report shows. Besides the gloomy picture of crimes against children, the report presents some positive news as well.

A total of 1,286 reports containing positive news, including rescue of abducted children, prevention of early marriage and trafficking, achievements of children, were published in the dailies last year. The number of such reports was 1,181 in 2012.

CHILD VICTIMS

|  YEAR 2013 | INJURY | DEATH | AFFECTED |
|---|--------|-------|----------|
| Rape | 239 | 12 | 267 |
| Rape attempt | 19 | 0 | 24 |
| Sexual harassment | 136 | 2 | 183 |
| Abduction | 2 | 2 | 90 |
| kidnap attempt | 11 | 0 | 11 |
| Missing | nil | 2 | 167 |
| Early marriage | 1 | 2 | 84 |
| Torture | 130 | 1 | 264 |
| Acid attack | 10 | nil | 10 |
| Trafficking | nil | nil | 42 |

The data is based on reports of 6 national dailies

Parveen Mahmood, managing director of Grameen Telecom Trust, stressed the need for proper coordination between the government and the NGOs to improve the child rights situation.

Abdullah Al Mamun urged the government to set up a separate directorate for children under the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs to this end. "You won't find even a single authorised person who can tell you the child rights situation in a district. The District Child Officer only looks after the cultural affairs and maintains their local office," he said, adding that a separate directorate would help improve the situation.