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## 'Integrate dalit children into mainstream edn'

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Children of dalit and harijan communities should be integrated into the mainstream of education, as they are deprived of the right to education, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

The constitution guarantees that no citizens of the country will face discrimination based on their religion, cast or gender, but dalits and harijans are deprived of their fundamental rights, they said.

An estimated five to 12 percent of sixty lakh dalits and harijans living in the country are educated, according to Bangladesh Harijan Oikya Parishad (BHOP).

The discussion on 'Inclusion of Dalit/Harijan community in the mainstream of education' was organised by Sharee, a non-government organistaion, in association with Oxfam at the National Press Club.

The speakers called on the government to set up pre-primary schools in dalit-populated areas across the country to ensure easy access for Dalit children to schools.

Nirmal Chandra Das, secretary general of BHOP, presented the keynote paper at the discussion.

"Members of the dalit and harijan communities are falling behind day by day due to lack of their awareness about education," he said.

The dalit children think that they would not benefit from studying as they won't get any job, he said and called for elimination of discrimination against dalits in jobs.

He also demanded quota for children of dalit and harijan community in higher education.

Biren Shikder MP was present as the chief guest while Gul Hossain, agriculturist and executive committee member of Sharee, presided over the discussion.

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