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Basic Training Module for Paralegals' launched

Bangladesh needs to recognise paralegals and increase their numbers for they are best suited to resolve community-level disputes, especially through “shalish” which is beneficial for the poor, marginalised and vulnerable communities, said Manzoor Hasan OBE, executive director of the Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ).

This will not only reduce the flow of cases into the formal legal system along with case backlog but also improve legal service quality, strengthen rule of law and address impunity which undermines citizens' respect for institutions, he said.

Hasan was addressing the national launching ceremony of a “Basic Training Module for Paralegals” organised by the CPJ of BRAC University in a hotel in the capital on Saturday.

The module, comprising six individually usable parts in English and Bangla, brings together previous works of different organisations explaining paralegalism, human rights and gender, essential laws and legal systems and social processes for dispute resolution.

The work was brought about by the CPJ with the assistance of BRAC's human rights and legal aid services programme, Ain O Salish Kendra, Madaripur Legal Aid Association, Nagarik Uddyog, Council of Minorities, Friendship, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, MOVE Foundation and SHUJAN.

Guests present at the programme advocated for counselling before arbitrations, training union parishad members as paralegals, specialised paralegals for police stations, courts and prisons and restorative justice.

Begum Nurun Naher Osmani, member, National Human Rights Commission, stressed on paralegals preserving evidence and for increasing the number of labour courts from the existing seven.

Sheepa Hafiza, executive director, Ain O Salish Kendra, urged following in the footsteps of rural healthcare workers who changed the whole scenario of supplementing government efforts in ensuring healthcare for all.