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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Public Authorities and Private Developers Should Take Steps to Ensure Housing for the Poor, Homeless and Slum Dwellers under the Concept of Social Housing**

Today, on 3 September 2016, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) organised a seminar on housing rights. Margaret O'Brien, former Director of Housing Services at a Local Authority in London, spoke of her experiences regarding housing rights for the homeless in the United Kingdom.

The seminar focused on the possibilities of bringing housing rights in Bangladesh within the ambit of the law and the role of the private organisations in this regard, in the light of experiences in the UK. Participants highlighted the need to prepare a Housing Policy and a Land Use Policy in Bangladesh.

Margaret O'Brien outlined the legal framework on housing rights for the homeless in the UK, including the key provisions of the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002. Housing is provided for those defined as homeless both by public and the private sector authorities. Local government authorities determine who is eligible for housing on a priority basis using specific criteria. In recent years, the availability of housing has been inadequate compared to the demand. Different strategies are being implemented to ensure housing for the poor and homeless; one is a requirement imposed on developers to develop social housing for the homeless whenever they construct a new private housing project.

At the seminar, the Editor of Protidinier Songbad Abu Sayeed Khan, the Executive Director of Nagorik Uddyog Zakir Hossain, Urban Development Manager of BRAC Saif Iqbal, SM Rezaul Karim, Md Mostofa Zamil, Mahbuba Akhter, and Md Tajul Islam from BLAST were also present, among others.

Barrister Sara Hossain, Honorary Executive Director at BLAST moderated the seminar. Representatives from ALRD, SAILS and Ain and Salish Kendra (ASK) were also present at the seminar.

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