



Participants at a roundtable on 'School health and nutrition' held at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. The Daily Star and Save the Children-USA jointly organised the roundtable with the theme 'Achieving health is essential for completing education'.

THE DAILY STAR AND SAVE THE CHILDREN-USA ROUNDTABLE

# Improving children's health a must for better future

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expressing deep concern over the poor health status of primary school-children, medical experts and educationists at a roundtable yesterday recommended a comprehensive programme to improve children's health and termed it the key to building the future generation of leaders.

The roundtable agreed to form a committee to develop concrete recommendations specifying the responsibilities of different segments such as government sectors, NGOs, local government, teachers and community, and make it a national agenda for improving the health of children.

The Daily Star and Save the Children-USA (SC-USA) jointly organised the roundtable on 'School health and nutrition' with the theme 'Achieving health is essential for completing education' at Spectra Convention Centre in the city. The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the session.

The speakers said political will and cooperation among NGOs, UN agencies and government departments is the key to improving health status of schoolchildren.

They also called for ensuring

access to safe water and sanitation both in schools and communities and raising social awareness among schoolteachers, management and parents.

They also suggested incorporating basic health issues into the curriculum of primary schools and teachers' training module.

Anuradha Harinarayan, deputy country director of SC-USA, said Bangladesh has achieved success in primary school enrolment and in reducing the child mortality rate, but now the challenge is to check drop-outs and reduce morbidity rate.

According to a baseline survey of the SC-USA, 97 percent of children now enrol in primary schools, but only 67 percent of them completes primary education.

"The total environment of schools and community should be improved for a healthy and equitable education system to take full advantage of schooling," Anuradha noted.

Presenting a keynote paper, Dr Nizam Uddin Ahmed, director of Health, Population and Nutrition (HPN), SC-USA, said 56 percent of about two crore primary schoolchildren suffer from some degree of anaemia, while only 10 percent of the sick children seek medical care from qualified healthcare providers.

Quoting the SC-USA survey conducted in Nasirnagar of Brahmanbaria, he said 87 percent of students in primary schools are found infested with intestinal worms while 63 percent of them defecate in the open field and only 8 percent had access to a sanitary latrine at home.

Dr Nizam Uddin suggested classroom-based health education, de-worming at least twice a year, micronutrient supplementation including iron and iodine, vision screening, first aid facilities at schools and provision of safe water and sanitation to help improve children's health.

Stressing the need for water and sanitation facilities, Dr Mahbubur Rahman, director of Primary Health Care, said the authorities should also focus on awareness at the community level. "If you need complete education, you need good health. Today's one taka will save ten take in future."

Qumrun Nahar, project officer of United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), called for considering the special health needs of the adolescent girls, small kids and disabled to ensure their education.

Md Habibur Rahman, director of Education Sector, SC-USA, suggested inclusion of health and

nutrition as a separate subject in the primary and secondary school curriculum and creation of health-related data bank to facilitate the health workers and the policymakers.

Referring to the ratio of teacher to student in primary school, which stands at 1: 63, Mahe Jabin Masud, head of School Feeding Programme of the World Food Program (WFP), said it is difficult for the teachers to create awareness among the students.

Stressing the need for social mobilisation, Dr Faruk Ahmed, director of HPN of BRAC, said lack of teachers' training on healthcare of the children is a major obstacle to improving the health status.

MA Rashed, executive director of NGO Forum for Water Supply and Sanitation, said school management committees should ensure that the students are careful about personal hygiene.

Dr ABM Jahangir Alam of World Health Organisation, Dr Sukumar Sarkar of Health and Nutrition Section of USAID, Zillur Rahman of Channel-i, MA Sabur, country director of Water Aid, Dr Ashok Kumar Roy of GlaxoSmith Kline and Zahurul Islam of WFP, also spoke.

PHOTO: STAR

# Intensify struggle for democracy to make nation prosperous

## Khaleda tells Independence Award giving ceremony

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday called for intensifying the present struggle for strengthening the foundation of democracy and making the nation prosperous.

"The struggle for independence is a long-drawn process and it has now been passed onto another dimension and level. Today's struggle is against illiteracy, malnutrition, ill health and poverty," she said.

Khaleda was addressing a function on the occasion of distribution of Independence Award 2006 at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

She said the present struggle is a struggle for establishing social justice and the rule of law to ensure social security and peace by defeating all kinds of terrorism.

"We have to continue this struggle to face the challenges of the new century, overcoming all problems and backwardness," she said.

She called for maintaining national unity to carry forward the nation-building activities and development efforts.

"We have to forge national unity, burying all differences of opinion, to march together on the path of development to attain the targeted goals of national progress," she said.

"Though we successfully passed a stage in 1971 with the independence war, the final victory and the success of the struggle of national emancipation have not been achieved yet," she said.

Bangladesh Betar (independence) and Rapid Action Battalion (public service) received the Independence Award 2006 for their extraordinary contributions in the liberation war and public services respectively.

The prime minister distributed the awards among the representatives of the two institutions.



Winners of Independence Award 2006 pose with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at the award giving ceremony at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the city yesterday.

DG of Bangladesh Betar AFM Matur Rahman and Rab DG Abdul Aziz Sarker received the awards on behalf of their institutions.

The award carries a gold medal, Tk one lakh and a citation.

Ministers, diplomats, MPs, eminent personalities of different professions and senior officials attended the function.

Khaleda said each individual and group need to be committed to attaining a national consensus on maintaining peace and national security. "In the changed perspective, I think this is the key message of the independence," she said.

She lamented that the country went backward for various reasons like exploitation, repression and deprivation. "But one day we had wealth and affluence."

"Splendid cities like Islamabad, Kolkata, Delhi and London were built by the labour, sweat and wealth of our people. We don't claim any share of those fortunes, but just want international support and cooperation in our efforts for development," Khaleda said, adding that such expectation and demand are logical and rightful.

She paid respect to the memories of Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul

Huq, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman terming them national leaders.

She also paid tributes to late President Ziaur Rahman describing him as the proclaimer of the nation's independence, a hero freedom fighter and architect of modern Bangladesh.

The prime minister recalled with great respect the sacrifices of the martyrs, liberation heroes and repressed women during the War of Liberation.

PHOTO: PID

# Reunite to uphold dignity of national flag

## Speakers urge pro-liberation forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All pro-liberation and progressive forces have to be reunited to uphold the dignity of the national flag by resisting the anti-liberation elements, said the speakers at a unique flag rally in the capital yesterday.

The rally was organised under the banner of Bikkhubdha Deshbasi (aggrieved countrymen) comprising journalists, educationists, women leaders, human rights activists and NGO workers at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Addressing the rally as main speaker noted journalist Kamal Lohani said, "We are being reunited to resist the vipers who have put their claws on our national flag."

He urged all to come forward to resist the militants who are killing innocent people across the country.

"Taking the flag in hand we will fight terrorism and militancy," Lohani added.

Elderly women leader Hena Das, who presided over the rally, said it is high time to be united as there is no other alternative to protect the prestige of the national flag.

We have to snatch away the flag from the car of Nizam, she said.

Rokeya Rafiq Baby, a cultural

activist, read out a declaration which included various demands including a ban on communal politics, restoration of four basic principles of 1972 Constitution, giving exemplary punishment to war criminals and trial of all involved in militancy.

The speakers urged all to groom up their children with the spirit of the liberation war and work as a pressure group to sign a national agreement among the political parties on the above demands.

The next programmes of the forum are flag rally in all divisions and districts, and a conference of the central representatives in Dhaka.

General Secretary of Udichi Shilpi Gosthi Sanwar Hossain Bhuiyan, who was injured in a bomb attack at Netrokona, shared his experience and demanded death punishment of Abdur Rahman, Bangla Bhai and patrons of the militants.

Prof Abul Barakat, Prof M Samad, Sultana Kamal, Khushi Kabir, AMA Muhi, Quaiyum Chowdhury, Prof Sadeka Halim, and Shaheen Reza Noor were present on the occasion.

People from different districts including relatives of the bomb-injured persons attended the rally.

Later, a national flag procession was brought out from the Shaheed Minar that paraded Doel Chatter and TSC of Dhaka University.

The girl might have been raped before killing, suspect morgue sources.

## Girl killed after rape in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of a teenage girl, believed to have been raped before killing, was recovered in the city yesterday.

The identity of the girl, aged around 17, could not be known immediately.

Police recovered the body near the boundary wall of a house at Mirpur at 3:00pm.

The neck was tied with the salwar that the girl was wearing and the body had some minor injury marks, said police.

The body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

The girl might have been raped before killing, suspect morgue sources.



Left-leaning parties begin a road march from Muktangan in the city yesterday towards Phulbari demanding scrapping of the contract with Asia Energy Corporation on coal extraction from Phulbari coalmine.

## Khulna shrimp exporter held on charge of car lifting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested frozen shrimp exporter Abul Kalam Azad alias Biku Kazi on Wednesday night for his alleged involvement in theft of cars.

Three stolen cars were recovered from his possession at Natun Bazar area under Khulna Police Station.

Members of an organised gang of car lifters arrested in Dhaka recently named Biku Kazi as their ringleader during interrogation, Rab said.

The arrested shrimp exporter was taken to Dhaka yesterday for interrogation in connection with car liftings.

Biku Kazi, also a member of executive committee of Khulna City Awami League and director of Chabi Fish Company, which exports frozen shrimps worth over Tk 50 crore a year.

## 70 prisoners to be freed on Independence Day

BSS, Dhaka

The government has decided to release 70 under-trial prisoners, who are detained for committing minor offences, from various jails in the country on the occasion of the Independence and National Day-2006, an officials handout said.

The government hoped that the acquitted persons would lead life as good citizens and play proper role in the socio-economic development of the country.

# Unified grading system at DU from current session

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) is going to introduce unified grading system for all faculties and institutions from the current academic session (2005-2006).

The decision came at a meeting of the academic council on Tuesday.

However, results of the previous sessions would be published under the existing systems.

With the introduction of the unified grading system, disparities in justifying results would be removed, sources said.

The system would be finalised by the end of the month.

A decision to introduce a unified grading system in all public and private universities across the country was taken at a meeting of the university vice-chancellors with University Grants Commission (UGC) on December 24 last year.

A total of 75 vice-chancellors from different public and private universities attended the meeting.

The UGC at the meeting proposed a uniform grading system with nine grades for both public and private universities.

Under the grades, a student would have to secure above 90 marks for grade A or grade point average (GPA) of 4.0, above 85 for grade A- or GPA 3.75, above 80 for grade B+ or GPA 3.5, above 75 for grade B or GPA 3.25, above 70 for grade B- or GPA 3.0, above 65 for grade C+ or GPA 2.5, above 60 for grade C or GPA 2.0, above 55 for grade C- or GPA 1.5 and above 50 for grade D or GPA 1.0.

The grading system of DU however differs with those of UGC.

After the December 24 meeting, the DU VC said it is really not clear how a student deserves the lowest grade D or GPA 1.0 despite securing above 50 marks.

As per the decision of DU academic council, a student would have to secure 80 or above marks for grade A or grade point average (GPA) of 4.0, above 75 to 80 for grade A or GPA 3.75, above 70 to 75 for grade A- or GPA 3.5, above 65 to 70 for grade B+ or GPA

3.25, above 60 to 65 for grade B or GPA 3.0, above 55 to 60 for grade B- or GPA 2.75, above 50 to 55 for grade C+ or GPA 2.5, above 45 to 50 for grade C or GPA 2.25, and above 40 to 45 for grade D or GPA 2.0.

If a student acquires below 40 marks, he or she would be given grade F and a student must acquire grade D to achieve a degree.

UGC Chairman Prof Dr Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star that with a view to eliminating present imbalance created by independent grading systems in private as well as public universities, the UGC proposed a common grading system for all.

"It does not matter that Dhaka University is going to introduce a grading system for its own that differs a bit with the UGC proposal, as I said earlier the recommendations of UGC is not final, many changes may come as per the views of different universities," he added.



Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, civil society members and leaders of different organisations line up in front of the Institute of Engineers in the city yesterday as part of the 'Blue for Peace' programme demanding fair trial of Kibria killing case.

PHOTO: STAR