



UNFPA official to visit Dhaka on May 14

UNB, Dhaka

Thoraya A Obaid, executive director of the UNFPA and under secretary general of the United Nations, is scheduled to visit Bangladesh from May 14 to 16.

This will be her first visit to Bangladesh since she took the office in 2001.

During her visit, she will meet ministers, senior officials, NGO officials and representatives of development partners to share views on matters of mutual interest and UNFPA collaboration.

Bangladesh Minority Sangram Parishad forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday protesting price hike of essentials and repression on minorities.

Unclean fuels kill 15 lakh people a year: UN

REUTERS, Geneva

Half the world's population burns wood, coal, dung and other solid fuels to cook food and heat their homes, exposing them to dangerous smoke that kills 15 lakh people a year, the UN health agency said on Thursday.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said women and children in Africa and Asia were especially vulnerable to indoor air pollution from open fires and poorly ventilated stoves.

Children make up 8,00,000 of the 15 lakh people who die each year

from polluting household fuels, women account for 5,00,000 deaths and the remaining 2,00,000 are men.

"Day in day out, and for hours at a time, women and their small children breathe in amounts of smoke equivalent to consuming two packs of cigarettes per day," the WHO said.

Yet in a report entitled 'Fuel For Life: Household Energy and Health', the Geneva-based agency said it could cost as little as \$6 per family to install better-insulated and fuel efficient stoves in developing countries.

"Making cleaner fuels and improved stoves available to millions of poor people in developing countries will reduce child mortality and improve women's health," WHO Director General Lee Jong-wook said.

Inhaling indoor smoke doubles a child's risk of pneumonia and makes adults three times as likely to suffer chronic pulmonary disease than those who cook with electricity, gas and other clean-burning fuels, it said.

Halving the 3 billion people worldwide cooking with solid fuels by 2015 would cost between \$13

billion to \$43 billion a year depending on the new energy source used, WHO said. Using liquefied petroleum gas would be cheaper than ethanol.

But it would save up to \$91 billion a year over 10 years due to health care savings, less illness, fewer deaths, and higher productivity due to less time-intensive fuel collection and cooking.

"With more time available, children would do better at school, while their mothers could engage in child care, agriculture or other income-generating activities," it said.

Making better-ventilated stoves available to half of those currently using inefficient cookers could save \$34 billion in fuel expenditure each year, it said.

