

Poor sanitation halves longevity

by Ahsan Kabir

Expectation of life in many poor countries like Bangladesh is barely half of what most of the people enjoy in the rich industrial world.

A significant number of such deaths can easily be attributed to poor sanitary condition that prevail normally in these regions, according to a recent survey accomplished by UNICEF and WHO.

Research on statistical data about the availability of sanitation facilities in less developed countries goes on forever.

Health surveys conducted in different regions of the developing countries like Bangladesh show that about two-third of the whole population's mortality and morbidity among the rural population can be attributed to the direct or indirect effects of poor environmental conditions in the villages.

Lack of protected water supplies and indiscriminate defecation are the two most important causative factors. Safe water supply and excreta disposal are therefore primary requirements improving rural health.

From the public health point of view, it is necessary that all water supplies must be invariably free from all types of impurities whether suspended or dissolved in water and no untoward risk should occur to the health of the public as a result of any water contamination.

Recently a country-wide survey was made throughout Bangladesh covering water usage and sanitary habits, diarrhoeal morbidity and related

factors. The purpose of this study was to assess whether there have been any health benefits from the rural water supply construction projects which have been undertaken in Bangladesh with UNICEF and WHO assistance. The total population covered by the survey was 68,155 people living in 11,489 households in 120 randomly-selected villages.

A great majority of people — about 79 per cent — were found to be obtaining drinking water supplies from groundwater sources. Over half (52 per cent) of the households surveyed used tubewells with hand-pumps as the source of drinking water and 27 per cent used dug wells. The remainder used surface water. Now-a-days though the situation has been improved a while but not as much as the population increased.

In another survey conducted recently showed that house using groundwater had a diarrhoeal attack rate 48 per cent lower than the surface water drinkers (3.9 as against 7.5 per cent).

It is quite obvious that water supply and waste water disposal system should be constructed separately.

Different organisations in Bangladesh after administer such type of construction but no co-ordination is attempted. This leads to poor environmental conditions where water supply has been provided without drainage, and sometimes, the health of the population affected is put at risk. Even where this does not happen, the full advantage of a complete sanitation service is not gained if the water supply component of the package is separated from the waste disposal component.

Excreta disposal covers the large portion of sanitation. It is obvious that the authorities in Bangladesh have disregarded the problem of excreta disposal. Few urban areas are seweraged, and domestic wastes are handled in a variety of ways, depending on local conditions, and on the way unofficial practices have developed to suit social and cultural preferences. In some few locations, night soil collection systems are operated, either

by the authorities or privately, but more generally, on-site disposal is adopted. Septic tanks and cess pits or seepage pits are widely used, even where ground conditions are unsuitable and, inevitably pollution of groundwater and surface water results. Sometimes these systems are connected

still largely depend on surface water for their potable supply. There are very many infestations which depend for their persistence on passing from the excreta of one person to the mouth of other. All of these are likely to be affected by excreta disposal methods. All of them are likely to decrease,



Open latrine in a village near Savar. —Star photo

into surface drainage, creating foul conditions in streets subject to flooding and generally contributing to surface water pollution.

Increasing urbanization has overloaded the natural assimilative capacity of the environment in most large cities in Bangladesh, and the presence of black-coloured, odorous surface water is but one offensive manifestation of the absence of effective sanitation. Squatter or shanty settlements in major cities create particular problems because water supply and sanitation facilities are non-existent and health hazards are high.

In rural areas, population densities are lower and natural assimilation of human wastes has been less damaging in physical terms, but lack of sanitation may have a greater impact on health than in the urban content because people

often greatly, with the installation of a conventional sewerage system and an adequate water supply.

The hazards to health associated with inadequate human excreta disposals are effectively due to infective disease. Even if the different numbered types of viruses and serotypes of enterobacteria are ignored, there are still, more than 50 infections relevant to this discussion. They are usually classified according to the causative agent, or pathogen, of which there are four main kinds, termed as viruses, bacteria, helminths and protozoa. Environmental engineers of Bangladesh prescribe that new approach should be based on a consideration of four variables, two relating to the pathogen — its persistence and latency — and two to the human body and its responses — age and immunity.

The following is the second part of speech of Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at the inaugural session of the fifth Parliament in Dhaka on Friday.

About a thousand allegations came up against the former Ministers and officials associated with them. I constituted a three-member Enquiry Commission headed by a Supreme Court Judge to examine the papers regarding those allegations minutely. The Enquiry Commission submitted its primary report four days back. Side by side the Bureau of Anti-Corruption has filed cases directly on the basis of such complaints which are supported by clear evidences. The accused persons in these cases also include the former President.

11. In the last week of December the prisoners, initially those of the Dhaka Central Jail and later other jails across the country, created extreme discipline raising demands of diverse natures. This incident was dubbed as jail-revolt by newspapers. An Enquiry Committee, headed by a District Judge, was constituted for a probe. Senior officials of the government examined the various allegations and demands of the prisoners and expressed themselves in favour of accepting some of them. Among others, there was a demand that the period of internment of under trial prisoners should be deleted from the period of their imprisonment while the court awards punishment. Clause 35 of the Criminal Procedure Code has been amended to provide that the court would consider the period of internment of under trial prisoners at the time of giving punishment. Another demand of the prisoners was that the time span, specified by Clause 339 of the Criminal Procedure Code in which to complete a trial, should be observed in all cases and that this period should not be counted from the beginning again once a case has been transferred from one court to another. This demand was accepted as it was logical and just and the relevant provision of law has been appropriately amended. But the foremost demand of the prisoners was that all those of them convicted during the previous regime should be set free; the reason behind, they argued, the country was liberated again and freed from the clutches of autocracy. My interim government rejected this demand outright. However, arrangement has been made for prisoners convicted before December 6 to be released in phases on completion of half of their respective term. A sympathetic and prompt review of cases of persons detained on flimsy grounds has been also ensured. The jail problem was tackled in this manner.

12. A ten-member Press Committee, headed by a Supreme Court Judge, was formed to help guarantee the freedom of the press, as enunciated in the Constitution. Provision has been made for constituting a Press Appeal Board on amendment of the Printing Press and Publications (Declaration and Registration) Act, as per the recommendation of the Committee. The district Magistrate issues order regarding the granting or cancellation of newspaper declaration. Appeals against his decision will now be heard by the Press Appeal Board. The Special Powers Act has been amended rescinding the provision for closure of newspa-

Text of Acting President's speech 'Judiciary independence shattered in last few yrs'

per. A journalist will henceforth be tried under the ordinary law for any specific allegation. The press freedom has thus been ensured. I am hopeful that it would inspire greater responsibility among the journalists.

13. My foremost task was to hold the parliamentary elections in a free, fair and neutral manner. The Election Commission was re-constituted



with three sitting Judges of the Supreme Court for the purpose. An ordinance was promulgated giving absolute power to the Election Commission for the purpose of holding elections. There is no precedent of any other Election Commission in the Sub-continent being conferred so much power. The Election Commission worked completely independently. The Arms Act was amended to check the use of illegal arms in the elections and the punishment for possessing such arms was extended to life-sentence. Concurrently, the election law was amended to preclude the influence of black money in the election. Severe punishment was provided for election offences. Several special steps were taken to maintain peace and order in all election centres. The Municipalities and Union Parishads were jointly given the task of maintaining peace in polling centres within their jurisdiction and it was so provided that the Union Parishad or Municipality concerned would be dissolved in the event of any breach of peace in any polling centre within its area. One ordinance was promulgated for this purpose. Security team for each polling centre was formed with armed Police and Ansar and for those in the cities with BDR. Above all, mobile units of armed forces were deployed in each Upazila, and each of these units was accompanied by a Magistrate. Students also came forward to help maintain peace in the polling centres. It was for the sincere efforts of them all that this election could be held in a neutral and peaceful manner and earned the admiration of the whole world.

When future historians would judge the short administration of my interim government, they will see in hindsight that this administration was neutral and free of all flaws. For this success, I am grateful to all who have helped me including my former Advisers.

14. I intended to carry out the needed reforms in the judiciary of the country during my short tenure; but the shortage of time has limited my progress in this direction. According to the Constitution, the judiciary and the Judges are independent and the country should be administered as per the law. The undemocratic

government of the last few years has shattered the judiciary. The lawyers fought for long eight years to help retain the existence of the Supreme Court. The Appellate Division gave a verdict in a writ petition on the 8th Amendment last year observing that the government had violated the Constitution by having set up in reality seven High Court Divisions in the name of High Court Division Benches. The government accepted the verdict. Consequently, Article 100 of the Constitution came into force again and according to this Article the Chief Justice can order if necessary, session of the High Court Division outside Dhaka. But the 4th Amendment which, snatched away that power of the Supreme Court still exists. The government still retains the control over all lower courts and tribunals including district courts. The Judges of the Supreme Court are being appointed without consulting the Chief Justice. The law officers of the government, i.e. government pleaders and public prosecutors, are being appointed without seeking the opinion of the concerned District Judge. The government itself and the poor people involved in litigations are being adversely affected by it.

15. 460 Munsiff Courts (at present Asst. Judge) were set up in place of 120 Munsiff Courts across the country while decentralising the administration. Similarly, Crimi-

nal Courts were set up in each Upazila or Sub-District. It is stated in the annual report of the District Courts that the number of civil and criminal cases in the Upazila Court at the District Headquarters were more than the total number of cases in the courts of other Upazilas of the district. The average number of cases in the court of a outlying Upazila is 50 to 150. Whereas, the number of cases of the Upazila at the district headquarters ranges from two thousand to five thousand. It is hard to carry on judicial proceedings in these courts for want of experienced lawyers and other logistics. (Incomplete)

Khulna varsity teachers greet A R Biswas

KHULNA, April 6 : The teachers of Khulna University in a statement Saturday congratulated Abdur Rahman Biswas and Shafiq Razzak Ali on their elected as Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the fifth Jatiya Sangsad, reports BSS.

The signatories to the statement included Mozammel Huq Azad Khan, Associate Professor of Computer Science and Engineering Department, Rezaul Karim, Nazrul Islam, Bijan Behari Sharma, ABM Mahbubul Malik and Mian Azmul Huq Siddique, all Associate Professors of the university.

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A. NIV Polyethylene Container, Quantity 1,00,000 Nos

2. Tender schedule with detailed specification will be available on payment of Taka 40.00 (Forty) (not refundable) from 08 April '91 to 06 May '91 on any working day between 0800 hours and 1200 hours. The tender will be opened on 08 May '91 at 1000 hours in presence of all present tenderers.

ISPR -37 (Misc) 91/387 Major
DFP (G) 3730-2/4 for Director General
G-48

Discussion on CHT issues in JS urged

CHITTAGONG, Apr 6: Leaders of Chittagong Hill Tract Hill Peoples Council (CHTHPC) today called for discussion on the Hill Tract issue in the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) in view of its urgency and importance, reports BSS.

In a statement here, Subodh Bikash Chakma and Otin Dewan, the President and the General Secretary respectively, stressed for continued peace and order to ensure implementation of socio-economic development programme for improving the lot of tribals with this end in view, they said, the government should take initiative to start talks with the Jana Sanghati Samiti of the Hill Tract.

They also called upon members of the Jatiya Sang-

sad, professional and intellectual groups of the country and all hill people's organisation to extend their cooperation to finding a solution to the Hill Tract problem.

They demanded formation of a national committee to deal with those problems.

Tk 5,000 cheque handed over to destitute

State Minister for Social Welfare and Womens Affairs Tariqul Islam handed over a cheque of Taka 5,000 to Ekramul Huq, father of wounded day labour Kamrul Huq Ripon at the Bangladesh Secretariat in Dhaka Saturday, reports BSS.

Kamrul Huq Ripon is now under treatment at the Mahakhali TB Hospital.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh
Office of the Director
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Zia International Airport, Kurmitola, Dhaka.
No.CEMSU/LP/2-4(Kha)/Stores/564-1 Dated: 27-03-1991.

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Earnest money @ Tk. 2% (two and a half percent) of the quoted amount (refundable) must be submitted along with the tender in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order drawn on any scheduled Bank of Bangladesh in favour of Director, CEMSU, CAAB, Kurmitola, Dhaka.

Tender papers along with terms and conditions may be had from the office of the Director, CEMSU & Accounts Section of H.Q. during office hours on all working days on payment of Tk.750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty) only (non-refundable). The intending tenderers must apply in their letter heads along with Licence issued from T&T Board, Agency/Dealership Certificate or past experience certificate for supply of communication equipment in Government/Semi Government/Autonomous Organization to the Director (Communication) or Director, CEMSU to get permission for purchasing tender documents. No tender paper will be issued on the date fixed for opening of the tender.

The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders or part thereof without assigning any reason.

For:
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Dhaka-1206.

DFP(G)3810-3/4
G-52

Dateline Chittagong

Fish, aquatic species on verge of extinction in Bay of Bengal

CHITTAGONG, Apr 6 : Fish and other aquatic species are on the verge of extinction in the Bay of Bengal along Anwar-Mirsaral coastal line because of environmental pollution, a recent Publication of Department of Environment said, reports BSS.

A study conducted by environmental experts revealed that the sea along the coastal line was highly polluted for various reasons including indiscriminate discharge of oils, chemicals, bilge water garbage, debris and other rejected substances mainly from ships and industrial units.

Mangrove forest, fish and other sea products are also threatened along the entire coast line of Bangladesh on account of unabated pollution which had caused destruction to 16 lakh cubic meter of sundari timber worth nearly Taka 400 crore since 1976 while the vast fish resources of the Bay have become scarce along the coast line in last decade, the river months including Karnaphuli estuary which were full of fish till later part of the seventies are now almost without fish and the fishermen now have to ply fishing boats to deep seas for commercial fishing, the survey revealed.

The rate of pollution in the Bay of Bengal was so fast that it is not checked in time the situation might turn serious like that of Baltic Sea where water contains no oxygen causing total extinction of fish, it pointed out.

The Department of Environment identified eight causes for pollution of the Bay of Bengal and the rivers where industrial refuses are discharged regularly. These are discharge of oil, ballast water, bilge water, garbage of ships, dismantling of ships, chemicals industrial and domestic garbage and black smoke.

Nearly 1200 ships, including 80 oil tankers, are handled at Chittagong Port and 600 ships at Mongla Port annually while thousands of other mechanised crafts ply through the port channels throughout the year discharging oil into water intentionally or unintentionally, during taking fuel and also during charge and discharge of oil from oil tankers at oil terminals.

About 60,000 metric tons of oil is spilled into water of Chittagong Port channel from ships, heavy petroleum and other industries located around the port. Ballast water of oil tankers are also dis-

charged into the channel here, the survey further revealed.

Ship garbage and bilge water from ship engine room also cause severe pollution dismantling of ships at Chittagong and Khulna coasts also cause pollution as the ship breakers directly throw oil, grease etc. of scrap ships into the sea.

Chemical items and garbage from industries cause destruction of oxygen in water resulting in the death of aquatic living beings. Polluted air, when it comes in contact with water, also causes water pollution.

Department of Environment observes said that such pollution could be averted by setting up treatment plants for treating the discharges.

Cultural function

A cultural function organised by Khagrachhari Hill District local government was held at the Town Hall to mark the Independence and National Day.

Different socio-cultural organisations including Khagrachhari Pharmadhara, Shiphakala Parishad and Kanchi Kanchar Melia participated in the function. Both tribal and non-tribal artists presented songs and dances.

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