

'EPI saves 72000 children a yr'

Resident Representative of the UNICEF Rolf C. Carriere yesterday praised the success of the Expanded Immunisation Programme (EPI) in Bangladesh, saying it saves the lives of 72,000 young children of the country every year, reports BSS.

The EPI also prevents 4.2 million bouts of illness and wards off 6,400 cases of paralytic polio annually, Carriere said while addressing a press briefing on the Second International Colloquium of Mayors — Defenders of Children, held in Mexico City last month.

The UNICEF representative said the success examples in Bangladesh also include family planning, water supply, essential drugs and rural credit programme and added 'This country has shown what can be done when the power of ideas is harnessed and political will and commitment is acted upon.'

The mayors of Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi, who attended the colloquium held under the aegis of the UNICEF and hosted by the Mayor of Mexico City on July 5-6 last, also addressed the press briefing.

Some 66 Mayors and municipal leaders from over 45 countries attended the colloquium and adopted a declaration and plan of action in the light of the declaration of the World Summit on Children and respective national plans of action to ensure survival, protection and development of children.

Carriere said the Mayors from Bangladesh, who had carried with them plans of action for children for their respective corporations, took active part in the deliberations of the colloquium.

the country. This is a staggering figure when one considers about the severe shortage of land and the acute lack of water and sanitation, education and other facilities, he added.

Carriere said, 'The inhumanity of life in the slum is well-known, but it needs to be underlined that the worse victim of it is the child.'

He observed that the problems which plagued the urban poor were an intensified version of those which faced the entire nation. He said in slum communities, the infant mortality rate could be as high as 180 per 1000, much higher than the national average of 110 per 1000 — which is already alarmingly high.

The UNICEF representative said 60 per cent of the young children in urban slums were chronically malnourished and about 30 per cent of families were on the borderline of starvation.

Sixty per cent of slum dwelling families lack access to safe drinking water, only 40 per cent of them use sanitary latrines and approximately 80 per cent of slum dwelling school-age children are out of school, he said.

Carriere said Bangladesh alone was not facing these difficulties and this nation was a part of a global acceleration so far urbanisation was concerned.



Michael Jackson performs during the opening concert of the Asian leg of his 'Dangerous' world tour in National Stadium in Bangkok on Monday. Jackson performs two concerts here on Monday and Tuesday.

Probe against Michael Jackson for child abuse begins

LOS ANGELES, Aug 25: The child sex-abuse investigation of Michael Jackson began after a 13-year-old told a therapist his pop star fondled him, a source said, reports AP.

Jackson, in Thailand for the latest leg of a world tour Tuesday, denied any wrongdoing. He cancelled Wednesday's concert there, and his doctor said he was suffering from dehydration.

Police have refused to comment on the case except to say that an investigation of the 34-year-old singer began Aug 17. Investigators with the county Department of Children's Services also refused to comment.

But the source who saw confidential police documents told the Associated Press that the investigation began after the son of a Beverly Hills dentist told his therapist that Jackson sexually abused him.

The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also said police seized photos and videotapes in a search over the weekend of Jackson's Century City condominium and Nevada ranch.

Anthony Pellicano, Jackson's security consultant, said the allegations followed a failed attempt to blackmail the singer for 20 million dollars.

'I am confident the department will conduct a fair and thorough investigation and its results will demonstrate that there was no wrongdoing on my part,' Jackson said in a statement read by his lawyer, Howard Weitzman.

In another development, KCAL-TV reported that court documents show the boy's father, who is divorced from the mother and locked in a battle for custody, sought a court order to prevent the mother from allowing Jackson to see or communicate with the boy.

Michael Freeman, attorney for the boy's mother, said the woman knew nothing of the abuse allegations until police launched their investigation.

'She was shocked at what the allegations are,' said Freeman, who would not identify his client. 'Obviously she had no idea whatsoever that anything was going on of that nature or she would have stopped it.'

Freeman also denied the woman was part of an extortion attempt. The lawyer would not say how the boy came to meet Jackson.

A lawyer for the boy's father refused to comment, and no one answered the door at the family's home.

Jackson's personal life has long been fodder for tabloids, which have portrayed him as a strange loner, a man-child obsessed with plastic surgery, children and exotic animals.

During a TV interview in February with Oprah Winfrey, Jackson said he surrounds himself with children to make up for a friendless, workaholic childhood as a member of The Jackson Five.

He counts Elizabeth Taylor as a close friend, and child actors Emmanuel Lewis and Macaulay Culkin are frequent companions.

Jackson played to a sold-out crowd in Bangkok, Thailand, on Tuesday, but postponed Wednesday's concert there until Thursday.

Shari Finkelstein, tour physician, said in a statement that Jackson was getting liquid intravenously because of acute dehydration. 'Michael expends so much effort and energy because his performance is so important to him,' he said.

After his Thailand appearances, Jackson was to travel to Singapore, Taiwan, Japan, Moscow, Israel, Turkey and the Canary Islands. In his statement on the investigation, he vowed to continue the tour.

'I am grateful for the overwhelming support of my fans throughout the world. I love you all. Thank you, Michael,' he said.

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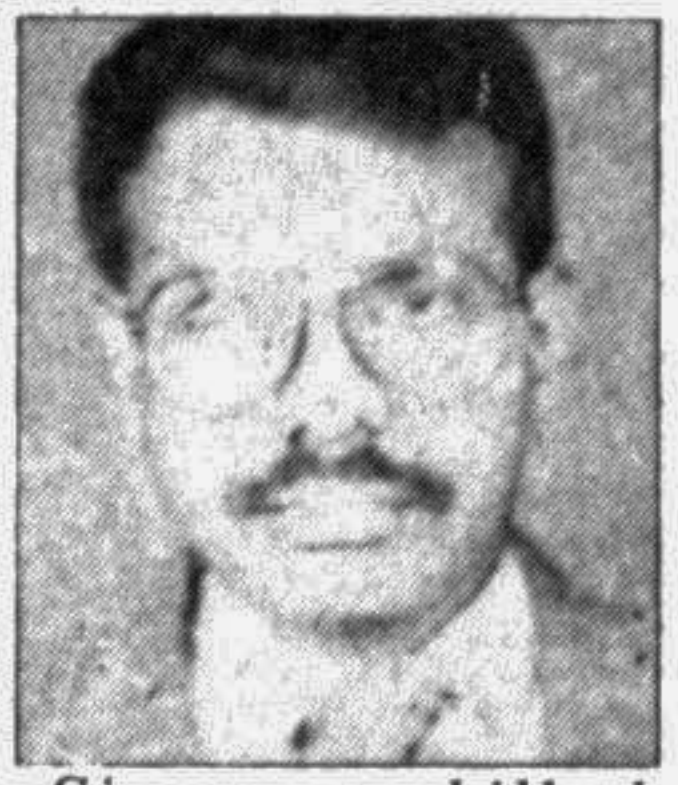
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5 killed as police fire on Nepali flood victims

KATHMANDU, Aug 25: Police fired on starving flood victims in a village in Nepal's Sarlahi district southeast of Kathmandu on Monday, killing five people and injuring 12, a Communist Party source said today, reports AFP.

A Home Ministry spokesman confirmed only two deaths and eight injuries and said five policemen and a police inspector were among the injured in the melee.

The main political opposition in Parliament, the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-URL) Wednesday demanded the government to constitute an investigation commission to probe the circumstances leading to police firing and to punish the guilty, a parliamentary source told AFP.



Sivarasan killed Rajiv 'on orders of Prabhakaran'

MADRAS, Aug 25: The on-eyed Sivarasan had planned and executed the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi at the instance of LTTE leader Prabhakaran, reports PTI.

This was told by Sivarasan himself to one of the accused, Dhanasekharan, the prosecution told the trial court here yesterday.

Arguing on the involvement of Dhanasekharan, a Mettur based fleet owner, in the case, the counsel A T Dante told the presiding judge SM Siddick that Dhanasekharan who was responsible for transporting Sivarasan to Bangalore concealing him in a tanker lorry, asked Sivarasan why he had killed Rajiv Gandhi.

Sivarasan was quoted as saying that the killing was done on the orders of the leader (Prabhakaran). Dhanasekharan, in his statement under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) also reported to have asked Sivarasan why Sobha was brought. For this Sivarasan replied that she was brought as a substitute to Dhenu.

The LTTE had made a be-nami investment of Rs 10 lakh, a year before the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi and purchased six Maruti Gypsy jeeps which provided quick mobility to Sivarasan and other cadres when they were closely pursued by the special investigation team (SIT), the prosecution said.

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The Midnight File

UN aid convoy reach Mostar

MOSTAR (Bosnia), Aug 25: A UN emergency aid convoy reached the embattled Bosnian city of Mostar tonight and began unloading food and medical supplies, a UN relief spokesman said. The 27-truck relief column pulled into the Croat-held central sector of Mostar at 1800 GMT after being blocked for hours on access roads to the city by Croat civilian protesters, UN refugee agency spokeswoman Alemka Lisinski said, reports Reuter.

Teen-ager killed in S Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Aug 25: A teenager gunned down in township violence Wednesday became the latest victim of fighting that has claimed more than 500 black lives in seven weeks. Police said the unidentified 15-year-old boy was shot in the head with an AK-47 rifle in the strife-torn black township of Tokoza, east of Johannesburg, reports AP.

Flood action plan

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On the existing bilateral ties between the two countries, the envoy noted that the relationship is based on 'emotional and friendly ties.'

In 1971, he said, French public opinion 'very quickly' sided with Bangladesh and as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council France also helped the independence movement. Later she campaigned for Bangladesh's recognition.

The ties were strengthened by the visit to Bangladesh of French first lady Danielle Mitterrand in 1988, a visit to France by former President Ershad and a subsequent visit.

France provides about 100 million franc grant assistance along with about 20,000 tonnes of food aid annually to Bangladesh. Ambassador Lacombe noted that his country wrote off 600 million franc (Tk 440 crore) worth of debts owed by Bangladesh two years ago.

Dhaka enjoys a substantially favourable balance in its bilateral trade with France. In 1992, Bangladesh exported 116 million dollars worth of goods to France but imports totalled only 12 million dollars from the European country.

'Although France is accused of being a protectionist country, we have a huge trade deficit with Bangladesh,' he noted. 'France freely accepts Bangladeshi exports, primarily garments and textiles.'

Ambassador Lacombe noted that French trading ties with this part of the world date back to the 17th century when French traders became interested in textiles, fabrics and indigo produced in this region.

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2 Bangladeshi soldiers killed in Kuwait

KUWAIT, Aug 25: Two Bangladeshi soldiers were killed in Kuwait while trying to defuse a land mine left over from the 1991 Gulf War, a military source said today, reports Reuter.

The soldiers were in the desert segregating mines when the mine blew up tearing the two of them apart, the source, who refused to be identified, told Reuters.

He said Zakir Hossein and Shahidul Islam were killed instantly when the mine exploded on Tuesday. The bodies will be flown home before the end of the week.

The blast also injured 10 other people.

7 Sirajganj JCD leaders expelled

SIRAJGANJ, Aug 25: Seven JCD leaders, including General Secretary of Shahjadpur Government College Students Union, were expelled today on charge of terrorism, police said, reports UNB.

The expelled JCD members are GS of the college Sabuj, Sabbir, Liton, Shah Alam, Mithu, Arzu and Suruzzaman.

Police said the expulsion was announced in the thana headquarters over mlke off behalf of the Shahjadpur, thana unit of JCD.

The expulsion followed assault on TNO Emdadul Huq by a group of JCD activists on August 21. The attackers had also ransacked the TNO's office failing to win his 'favour'.



Former Iraqi ambassador to Tunisia Hamed al Jabbouri (L) and former envoy to Canada Hisham al-Shawi (R), the two Iraqi ambassadors who fled to Britain say at a press conference in London on Monday that they are defecting to join the opposition against Saddam Hussein.

Some nurses reject

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statements, denounced the Kohinoor Begum-led BDNA faction.

The statements said the strike was a collective action organised by five nurses' associations and the Kohinoor group alone could not represent all other groups.

SAF Games

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A number of other ministers, the chief of army staff and leaders of different political parties were also present.

Summing up the meeting, the Prime Minister expressed the hope that with the earlier experience, the Games should be more successful this time.

Waterlogging

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sons for waterlogging in the city. Unplanned construction of buildings, illegal occupation of the natural sewerage canals by a section of people and construction there of dumping of domestic garbage and polythene bags in the manholes of the storm sewerage lines were cited as some of the other reasons for the problem.

The construction of embankments on the western parts of the city had also blocked the sewerage system, the handout said.

ECNEC

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The approval was given at the ECNEC meeting presided over by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman here in the morning at the cabinet room of the secretariat.

The ECNEC also directed the Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation (BFIDC) to gear up rubber plantation, hand over some plots to the private sector and improve the managerial skills and maintenance of the rubber plantations.

Holiday Inn Hotel case:

HC hearing of quashment petition Nov 16
The High Court yesterday fixed November 16 for the final hearing of the petition seeking quashment by former president H M Ershad from the Holiday Inn Hotel case, reports BSS.

Former president Ershad, former vice president Moudud Ahmed and three others were charged in a corruption case involving allotment of government lands to the developers of the proposed Holiday Inn Hotel in Shabbagh area, in Dhaka.

Student stabbed

From Our Correspondent
SYLHET, Aug 25: A student of the Government M C College here was stabbed to death by a group of miscreants near the shrine of Hazrat Shah Paran (RA) in the early hours today.