

Dhaka Day by Day

Vitamin C and Zinc to the Rescue

by Fayza Haq

At a seminar on lathyrism, held recently at Alliance Francaise, Mr. Xavier Bares, Cultural, Scientific and Technical Co-ordinator, Embassy of France, said that his country was training foreign experts such as from Bangladesh and Vietnam, and concentrating on subjects such as the prevention of AIDS and famine. He informed the listeners that regular grants and scholarships were being arranged for doctors and research scientists, specially from the Third World, for '95.

Prof. Abdul Mannan, former VC of DU, during his talk at the seminar, assured that there was a close co-operation between France and Bangladesh with provision for transfer of scientific equipment and exchange of research scholars.

Dwelling on the poverty level of Bangladeshis, Prof. Mannan informed that during the last survey (81-82), it was found that the average Bangladeshi consumed only 1300 calories per day instead of the requisite 2200 calories. Dealing with topic of the seminar, he said that it was Dr. Kamaluddin Ahmed who was one of the first pioneers involved in the lathyrism research in Bangladesh, and who suggested that Vitamin C was the timely therapy. However, due to lack of funds, his expert

in cases of patients from Rajshahi and Natore, and others residing on the banks of Padma and Jamuna."

He continued that the way to diagnose lathyrism was by the study of history of consumption, lathyrism, weakness and irreversible exclusion of other similar neurological disease. He added that a recent survey of 8 lakh people, studied at 29 centres, showed that 11 people per 10,000 cases had lathyrism in Rajshahi and Natore.

He said that spasms of leg muscles, frequent bowel movements and impotence were common indicators of the disease. He reminded the listeners that environmental toxins, caused the motor neurone disease, as in the case of results of consuming *khesari chapatis* during epidemics of the disease in Bangladesh. He pointed out that deficiency of the glutamate dehydrogenase is the cause of OPDC (Olivo-Ponto-Cerebellar-Degeneration), a similar disease. The glycine and glutamate, as well as the amino acid rise, in test cases in Belgium carried out by Bangladesh doctors showed that these factors led to the rise of the disease. He placed stress on the fact that the motor and sensory nerve congestion velocity of patients should be studied.



(From left to right) Mr. Xavier Bares, Prof. Abdul Mannan and Prof. Anisul Haque.

He furthermore stated that BAPP (Beta Amino Proprio Nitryle), bone pain, and skeleton deformity of suspected cases should be studied.

The only drug, Prof. Anisul Haque added, that he knew of, to control the disease was Toliperisone, Hydrochloride but

This has to be consumed by the patients throughout their lives, in order to perform such functions as running, swimming or cycling.

Prof. Harun K M Yusuf, Director of Food and Nutritional Sciences, DU, also participating in the symposium, informed that 2000 metric tons of *khesari* were being produced in Bangladesh. He added, "Pulses remain the poor man's meat, and meantime, research is being carried out on it in areas stretching from Japan to Canada. At the Ghent University (Belgium), attempts are being made to produce the pulse seed without the 'ODAP' content, through genetic engineering."

Professor Salehin Qadri of the Dept. of Biochemistry, DU, the last speaker at the function, summed up the various previous talks in his lucid, articulate, and brief speech saying, "Lathyrism goes hand in hand with food shortage. Every member of the family does not necessarily get it. Vitamin C prevents the disease, while zinc levels of land and agricultural products have ameliorating effects on the patients. Toxins can be detoxified by boiling the pulse and throwing away the water. Treatment with lime-water improved the consumption of *khesari*. Attempts are being made to grow various varieties of peas that do not contain the harmful effect ODAP."

Although the average literate person of Bangladesh is well aware of the fact that the consumption of *khesari* leads to lathyrism, yet the information on the symptoms and possible prevention of the disease remained out of reach.

Saidul's world of masks on display from today

The second solo mask exhibition of Saidul Haque begins today at the La Galerie at Kemal Ataturk Avenue in the city.

Noted artist and puppeteer Mustafa Monwar will inaugurate the week-long exhibition at 6 pm.

Saidul's recent works and new designs will be on display. The show will run from 9 am to 8 pm everyday through December 3.

Graduated from the Institute of Fine Arts, Dhaka University, in 1985 Saidul came in the limelight when at a Bengalee new year's parade he brought out a huge tiger mask and other folk characters.

He changed the methods of making those characters with paper folding—instead of traditional bamboo frame—to make them cheaper.

His love for mask making grew from this paper sculpting.

Saidul organised his first solo exhibition in 1992. In 1993, he conducted 15 mask-making workshops in different schools in Denmark.

Gano Forum urges Opposition not to resign from JS

The Gano Forum (GF) Thursday appealed to the ruling party and the Opposition to resolve the present political impasse through dialogue, reports UNB.

The Forum also urged the ruling BNP to initiate a fresh dialogue and overcome the crisis. It called on the Opposition not to resign from Parliament.

The appeal came after the Forum's two-day Standing Committee meeting chaired by its President Dr Kamal Hossain.

In a resolution, the meeting said the people want a solution to present political crisis through dialogue and not through confrontation.

Textile employees go on strike tomorrow

The Textile Worker Employees' Federation of Bangladesh has called a 24-hour strike tomorrow in all textile mills demanding implementation of wage commission in private mills, reports UNB.

The federation also demanded the opening of all closed and laid-off mills, stoppage of the denationalisation of 12 textile mills, supply of raw materials and capital to the unofficially closed mills and payment of arrears to the workers.

Leaders of the federation in a statement Thursday urged all workers to make the strike successful.



Visitors at the 12-day painting exhibition by Ibrahim which began at the Gallery Tone in the city yesterday.

Fair polls depend on honest intention of political leaders: CEC

Chief Election Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf has said that holding of free and fair polls in the country depended to a large extent on the honest intention of the political leaders and workers, reports BSS.

Enlistment of eligible voters correctly also mattered in ensuring fair polls, he emphasised.

In a telephonic interview with German radio (Deutsche Welle) Tuesday, the Chief Election Commissioner underlined the need for developing harmony among political leaders in the election process and involving them in conducting it.

Replying to a question, he said it was not possible to bring about any qualitative change in the election process by mere imposing it on the politicians and hurling abuse at them.

Referring to the steps for enlistment of voters correctly, Justice Rouf said henceforth each voter would be supplied with a form for writing his name, religion, date of birth, identification mark on the body, if any, and address from which he wants to cast his vote in the Sangsad election. After determining all these matters, a voter would be given a number.

On the basis of this area based number and polling centre, a voter would be identified with this particular number so long as he lives, he added.

He believed that if the voters were given identity cards in this manner and if database was prepared through computer it would be possible to hold fair elections with the united endeavours of all.

When asked whether he had any recommendations to strengthen the Election Commission, Justice Rouf said that a Bill to this effect has been brought in the Parliament.

He hoped that lacunas in the 1972 Election Act would be removed by the legislators to give wide legal powers to the Election Commission in respect of counting of votes, announcement of election results and other relevant issues.

Replying to a question about the powers of the Chief Election Commissioner of India, Justice Abdur Rouf said the framework of election evolved and developed in that country was not so in Bangladesh for different reasons.

In this context, he pointed out the Election Commission of Bangladesh was very respectful to the political leaders and it (commission) hoped that a harmony would be developed among the politicians in the election process.

101 arrested

Police rounded up 101 people, including 30 wanted criminals, from different parts of the city in last 24 hours, reports UNB.

The arrested, who also included three held under the Arms Act, four accused of dacoity and four of stealing, were produced before the court.

Urs

The 29th three-day urs mubarak of Shah Sufi Moulana Hafez Mohammad Hashmatullah Shah, Chisti; Saberi Iftakhari Qaddaslahu Sirrahul Aziz began yesterday at the Mazar Sharif, 94/1, Senpara Parbata near section No. 10, says a press release.

Doctors urged to render selfless service

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday called upon the orthopaedic surgeons to develop "selfless service motive" to mitigate the sufferings of the people as best as possible, reports BSS.

The scope of orthopaedic surgery is increasing with the development of road transportation and modernisation and use of machinery in the fields and factories", President Biswas said while inaugurating the second international conference of the Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society (BOS) at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday.

President Biswas observed that the services to the people could be expedited and losses minimised through efficient management by trained orthopaedic surgeons at well-equipped trauma centre and accident units.

Chaired by Prof. KM Serajul Islam, president of the society, the function was also addressed by Deputy Minister for Health and Family Welfare, M Sirajul Hoque, secretary general of the society Dr F R Aolad, secretary of the organising committee Dr AFM Ruhul Haque and an American missionary surgeon Prof. Ronald J Garst.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas referred to the scientific developments in the developed countries and said "many of these are beyond the reach of many developing countries."

He said even the development of human resources and training and teaching facilities need to be developed. He said the surgeons and scientists must take up the challenges of the new century. They are to be fully equipped and engage their mite for the services of the people," he said.

President Biswas said the government was determined to improve the quality of life of

the people through sustainable development.

He said government had given top priority to health and population control sector and was committed to reach health facilities to the people in the far-flung rural areas by the year 2000.

President Biswas noted that apart from setting up of new medical colleges and hospitals, the existing hospitals in the districts and thanas were being expanded and developed. He said the fourth population and health project of the World Bank, the largest project in the third world country, costing more than Taka 2,500 crores had been under implementation in the country since 1992.

"We have already achieved laudable success in population control and Extended Programme for Immunisation (EPI) of children against six fatal diseases," he said.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas expressed his happiness at the rapid development of this branch of medical science and said at the time of independence there were only two units of orthopaedic surgery and a few surgeons working in them. "Now there are about 120 orthopaedic specialists working in the country," he said adding "all the medical college hospitals have orthopaedic units and most of the districts are being provided with orthopaedic surgeon with an ultimate aim of putting one in each thana health complex by the end of this century."

President Biswas lauded the selfless and dedicated services of Ronald J Garst, who had helped establish the rehabilitation institute and hospital for disabled popularly known as Pongu hospital with active support of some foreign agencies and friendly countries.



Prof. A F M Ruhul Haque addressing the second international conference organised by Bangladesh Orthopaedic Society at a local hotel yesterday. President Abdur Rahman Biswas, deputy minister for health Sirajul Haque, Dr Ronald J Garst, Prof. K M Serajul Islam are also seen.

UNICEF estimates say 6.2m mentally retarded for iodine deficiency

Bangladesh is losing about US\$ 525 million every year due to less productivity of mentally impaired persons, caused by deficiency of iodine, a micro-nutrient, reports UNB.

An estimated 6.2 million people in the country are mentally impaired to some degree as a direct result of iodine deficiency, and such impaired person is only 75 per cent as productive as a normal person.

If the present iodine deficiency disorder (IDD) situation is continued, the country will lose US\$ 4.7 billion in next 10 years, says UNICEF estimates.

Besides, the current prevalence of goitre, another public health problem caused by iodine deficiency, is 47.1 per cent in Bangladesh that means about 50 million people have visible goitre.

But actually, determined by urine analysis, 68.9 per cent or 80 million people of the country's 115 million population are biochemically iodine deficient, according to the National IDD Survey in Bangladesh-1993.

The highest prevalence of goitre (55.6 per cent) was found in women of child bearing age followed by girls aged 5-11 in whom the prevalence was 53 per cent.

Iodine deficiency in mothers also results in about 33,000 neo-natal deaths and 41,000 stillbirths annually in the country having IDD in hyperendemic form.

More than half of a million people are cretin, also caused by iodine deficiency. They are deformed and of very low intelligence because of disease of the thyroid gland.

According to medical experts, the IQ levels of normal children born to iodine-deficient mothers are as much as 15 per cent lower than average.

Domestic animals suffering from iodine deficiency become smaller in size and produce less meat and eggs.

Iodine deficiency in diet hampers production of thyroxine, a vital hormone synthesized by thyroid gland, and diminishes its supply to body system resulting in IDD.

Recognising IDD as a serious public health problem, the government passed the Iodine Deficiency Disease Prevention Act, 1989 for universal iodisation of salt, the commonest control measure.

Iodisation is a relatively simple procedure and the cost calculated on the basis of individual beneficiary is extremely small - Tk 40 or US dr 1 as only three to four grams of iodine are needed for 60-70 years of life-term.

The government plans to install salt iodisation plant (SIP) in the country's all 265 registered private salt crushing or refining units. So far 235 SIPs have been installed and the rest 30 will be installed by the year-end.

The country's annual requirement of edible salt for human and animal consumption is over 600,000 tons. Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has designed an appropriate high quality SIP having capacity of 8 tons per hour.

Two Bangladeshi companies are manufacturing the plants following detailed fabrication drawing produced by BUET for UNICEF. Five SIPs were also exported to Tanzania in 1993.

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Administration Manager
 Hoechst Bangladesh Limited
 133, Kakrail, New Bailey Road
 Post Box No. 534
 Dhaka

within 2nd December, 1994. All applications will be treated as strictly confidential.

Weather

Temperature may fall

Light rain is likely at one or two places over Chittagong, Barisal and Dhaka divisions during the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

The Met Office says weather may remain mainly dry over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions with partly cloudy sky over the country.

Night temperature is likely to fall by 1 to 2 degree Celsius across the country.

In its outlook for tomorrow the Met Office forecast improved weather. Giving extended outlook for another four days weathermen predicted little change.

Meantime, Teknaf experienced the highest 35 mm rain during the last 12 hours till 6 pm yesterday.

Country's highest temperature 27.6 degree Celsius was recorded at Satkhira and the lowest 13.7 degrees at Dinajpur. The sun sets today at 5:11 pm and rises tomorrow (Sunday) at 6:22 am.

The maximum and minimum temperatures and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.6	18.6	74	70
Chittagong	22.6	18.4	90	88
Rajshahi	26.5	16.0	61	73
Khulna	26.7	18.8	78	82
Barisal	26.0	18.0	90	84
Sylhet	24.6	18.3	94	77
Cox's Bazar	21.0	18.2	80	92

Mohon Mia's death anniversary today

The 23rd death anniversary of noted politician Yusuf Ali Chowdhury Mohon Mia will be observed today, says a press release.

Various socio-cultural organisations have planned programmes to observe the day.

The Yusuf Ali Chowdhury Smriti Parishad will hold a discussion meeting at the Jaiya Press Club auditorium at 3 pm today. A milad mahfil will also be held.

A discussion and Quran khwani will be held at the late leader's residence 'Moyez Manzil' in Faridpur. Faridpur Islamic Foundation has also arranged a discussion meeting.

Saturday	
4:30	Opening announcement Programme summary
4:45	Parashmoni
5:10	Sangbad
5:25	Kid songs
6:00	Programme for the youths Tarunnya Ongikar
6:30	Folk songs: Bansharee
7:00	Comedy series: Major Dad/Mr Bin
7:25	News In Bangla
8:25	Jannabhami
8:30	Maati O Manush
9:00	Anantadhara
10:00	News in English
10:30	Drama series: Dynasty
11:30	Khabar/The news
11:40	Tomorrow's programme summary
	closing announcement
11:45	Close down

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