

**Tk 2.12 cr grant provided to Prabin Sangha**

State Minister for Social Welfare, Women and Children's Affairs Dr. Mozammel Hossain yesterday said that the government has already provided a grant of Tk 2.12 crore to the Bangladesh Prabin Hitoishi Sangha and Jarabigyan Prasthan for its development and expansion, reports BSS.

He said another Tk one crore allocation was earmarked for it under the current year's Annual Development Programme.

The state minister was addressing a joint programme organised by the Social Welfare Ministry and Prabin Hitoishi Sangha on the occasion of International Elders Day at Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city.

Educationist Professor Dr. Neelima Ibrahim, Shaikat Osman, Social Welfare Secretary Md. Abdul Hakim, Prabin Hitoishi Sangha president Justice Abdul Wadud, general secretary Dr. M. A. Wahid and Social Welfare Director General Md. Nizamuddin also spoke.

The state minister said the elderly constitute six per cent of the Bangladeshi population now and would rise to seven per cent by the year 2000.

At the function, Abdur Rouf and Nurun Nahar were handed over awards for their services to the elderly.

**PM urged to take steps against arsenic pollution**

Executives of five non-governmental development agencies and forums have appealed to the Prime Minister to investigate and take necessary steps against arsenic contamination of tubewell water in different parts of the country, reports BSS.

The agencies and forums also suggested to constitute a commission with scientists, health and water experts, government officials and NGO representatives and leading citizens to investigate arsenic contamination and take remedial measures, according to a press release on Monday.

They said press reports suggested that presence of arsenic in tubewell waters in at least 15 districts had increased to an alarming level and claimed 50 lives and nearly ten lakh people were affected.

They said that confusions were there about the cause of arsenic contamination as various reports have attributed to various reasons behind the contamination. Consequently people are being scared of it.

Under such a situation, the NGO associations and forums have suggested certain measures including determining the sources of contamination, analysis of arsenic presence

and constitution of commission to find out the real cause of it and suggest measures to get rid of the deadly problem.

They also called for taking necessary measures for treatment and rehabilitation of the affected persons. They underscored the need for ascertaining whether people had died of arsenic contamination and if so, the affected families should be given compensation.

They also suggested alternative measures for providing pure drinking water in the affected areas. They also suggested massive campaign through radio and television and other mass media to make the people aware of the problem.

The signatories of the appeal included Dr. Quazi Faruque Ahmed, Chairperson, ADAB and Executive Director of Proshika, Kushi Kabir, Chairperson of the Coalition of Environmental NGOs (CEN), Mahabubul Karim, Chief of Institute for Development Policy Analysis and Advocacy (IDPAA) and Director (programme) Proshika, Dr. Mohiuddin Faruque, Secretary General of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) and Dr. S. M. A. Rashid, Director, NGO Forum for Drinking Water Supply and Assistance.

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