

UNICEF survey says

# Total eradication of polio now close to reality

Total eradication of polio is extremely close to becoming a reality, says UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy, reports UNB.

Polio was once a scourge that killed or crippled half a million people a year, many of them children.

Introducing the report, the Progress of Nations 1999, at a July 22 press conference at the UNICEF headquarters in New York, Bellamy said that in 1990, when the international community vowed to eradicate polio by the end of the year 2000, there were 35,000 confirmed cases of the disease.

"Last year, there were only about 6,000 cases, according to the World Health Organisation... nearly all of them were concentrated in 13 countries mostly in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East," she said.

"The Progress of Nations" is UNICEF's annual survey of progress toward child rights and women's rights.

Bellamy called it a "report card or status report" on where countries stand in terms of pursuing the goals of the 1990 World Summit for Children such as education, especially the education of girls; elimination of malnutrition; availability of clean water, and the reduction of iodine deficiency diseases.

The 1999 report focused on the eradication of polio as a "call to action" to mobilise efforts finish the job in the remaining 527 days until the end

of the year 2000, she said.

The only disease that has been totally eradicated is smallpox, which was wiped out more than two decades ago.

"Sometime this year, if not already, the world's population will reach the six billion mark," Bellamy said.

"As UNICEF reports in The Progress of Nations a massive final push is needed if that six billion child is to grow in a world free of polio, much less cope with the overwhelming likelihood that he or she will be born into a life marked by malnutrition, inadequate or no schooling, poor sanitation and unsafe drinking water."

Polio, which has no cure, has been preventable since the development of a vaccine more than 40 years ago. Nevertheless, between 10 million and 20 million people around the world are currently paralyzed by the disease, UNICEF says.

Bellamy said that since 1988, the number of polio cases has decreased by 86 percent as the result of the use of oral polio vaccine and a combination of routine immunisations and national immunisation days.

During the national immunisation days, thousands of health volunteers fan out across regions or even entire countries to deliver the oral vaccine to all children under five years of age regardless of how remote or isolated their villages may be.

US Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Sha-

lala said: "Beating polio worldwide isn't just a humanitarian gesture, but an investment in the health of our own children."

"Thanks to massive immunisation efforts, we've entirely eradicated polio from the western Hemisphere, East Asia, and the Pacific Basin. More than 150 countries around the world are polio-free today," she said.

But the Secretary stressed that the numbers are "no good enough" because "the bottom line is that infectious diseases know no borders."

"So as long as polio exists anywhere, it poses a threat to children everywhere," Shala said.

The US Agency for International Development and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are providing over \$90 million in 1999 alone for vaccines and technical support to combat polio around the world, she added.

Bellamy said the polio eradication effort is being carried out in collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO), Rotary International, CDC and other government and private agencies. It will cost US \$1,250 million to finish the job, but \$750 million has already been pledged.

UNICEF said the countries, which will be focused on in the battle against polio, are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, India, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola and Nigeria.

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury said here yesterday that tolerance and rationalism should be upheld for promoting democracy in social and personal life, reports BSS.

He said, everything should be made acceptable through argument and not by force.

The City Mayor said this while addressing the concluding function of inter-school parliamentary debate competition held at Nasirabad Government Girls' High School auditorium here under the auspices of debate organisation 'Dristi'. "Unreasonable arguments instead of constructive debate has been prevailing in our society and such a practice is pushing us towards anarchy and unrest, the mayor observed adding, if the future generation could be developed through rational debate the society would be rid of muscle power."

On the concluding day of the competition, Nasirabad Girls High School and Cantonment Public High School participated in the debate competition.

Commending Dristi's efforts for developing debating among boys and girls, the city mayor assured that he would extend all-out cooperation in this respect.

CCC Mayor stresses tolerance to promote democracy

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360 receive old age allowance in Rangamati

RANGAMATI, July 27: Some 360 elderly men and women of four unions in Kaukhali thana of the district received old age allowance on Monday, reports UNB.

Dipankar Talukder, Chairman of CHT Refugee Affairs Taskforce, officially inaugurated the old age allowance programme at a simple ceremony here on the day.

Speaking on the occasion, he urged all to work together to implement the development programmes undertaken by the government for the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

British Council music programme August 5

British Council will host a music and dance extravaganza at its auditorium here on August 5, reports UNB.

The cultural event will highlight some of the features of the July '99 Bangladesh Festival in UK, organised by Arts Worldwide.

Artists Nilufar Yasmeen, Fareda Parveen, Bidit Lal Das and palagan troupe from Kishoreganj, bauls from Kushtia, mrong tribal dancers and Chittagong drummers will participate in the programme, said a press release yesterday.

Following violent agitation by students, authorities declared the college closed *sine die* and asked residential students to vacate hostels on June 21 last. The students under the banner of Veterinary Chhatra Sangram Parishad had ransacked class rooms for realisation of their six-point demands including cancellation of credit system.

Under the credit system, students have to secure 32 credit hours to get promoted to the next class. This system has been in use since the starting of the college under the Chittagong University in 1996 with only 50 students.

The students body, Sangram Parishad, is now demanding immediate reopening of the college and holding of semester final in due time.

Before the current stalemate, students passed three years of their five-year course without any disturbances. It was only recently that the first batch students raised the demand for cancellation of credit system in the examinations.

Talking to this correspondent recently, the college Principal Dr Nitish Dev Nath said the college authorities would take a decision soon regarding resumption of classes. He, however, made it clear that credit system can not be cancelled at this stage.

Dr Nath said that the authorities had to close the college *sine die* to avert further damages as the students had raised their demands all of a sudden without "having any discussion with us about their problem."

CU classes resume Aug 1

From CU Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 27: Classes of Chittagong University will resume on August 1 after the one month rainy season vacation.

offices of the administrative building and all dormitories of the University are all open. Students have already started returning to their respective halls.

Ctg Govt Veterinary College yet to be reopened

From Ofiul Hasnat Ruhi CHITTAGONG, July 27: Academic activities at the Chittagong Government Veterinary College remained suspended for almost two months with the authorities taking no decision about the resumption of the classes.

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by students, authorities declared the college closed *sine die* and asked residential students to vacate hostels on June 21 last. The students under the banner of Veterinary Chhatra Sangram Parishad had ransacked class rooms for realisation of their six-point demands including cancellation of credit system.

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Dr Nath said that the authorities had to close the college *sine die* to avert further damages as the students had raised their demands all of a sudden without "having any discussion with us about their problem."

Presided over by Shibganj thana Jamaat Ameer Keramat Ali, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by party secretary general Matiur Rahman, Nizamul Shamsur Rahman, Mohammad Qamruzzaman, ATM Azharul Islam, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mujahid and Dr Shafiqur Rahman.

Referring to the haj pilgrimage of the Prime Minister, the Jamaat Ameer said she has performed haj but does not want to establish Islamic rule in the country. Rather, she has tried to destroy Islamic values and heritages, he alleged.

Ghulam Azam accused the government of politicising the administration. This government has also given corridor to India in the name of transit and tried to make the armed forces dependent on India by purchasing Ashok Leyland trucks, he alleged.

The assaultants chased him and stabbed him again in the shop. The boy died on the spot.

None was arrested in connection with the killing till last night.

First class first

From CU Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 27: Kazi Mohammad Harun-Ur-Rashid stood first class first in the masters examination of 1995 (held in 1999) in Arabic and Islamic Studies from Chittagong University.

Harun is the first son of Al-haz Kazi Nazmul Huq of Chandpur district. He is interested in pursuing MPhil on 'Arabic Newspaper and Journalism.'

Commenting on the government plan for "correction" of the sex workers, Nasima said, "It's worse than a prison. We have been forced to come and stay here. Our hands were tied with ropes while carrying us from Narayanganj in buses. And here, we are being tortured in the name of motivation."

The sex workers also announced that they would not give up their previous profession as they had obtained government authorisation for it.

Shathi's 11-month-old daughter is now suffering from skin disease as the baby is not taken care of, she claimed.

Some of them reported that night guards of the 'home' disturbed them every night through windows and propose to have sex with them.

Out of the 267 sex workers brought from Tanabazar and Nimtoli brothels, 227 have been housed at the Kashimpur 'home' and another 40 in a centre at Pubali, official sources said.

The Department of Social Services, in cooperation with Narayanganj district administration, evicted the sex workers in a pre-dawn swoop as part of a government plan "to help them return to normal life."

Shathi repeatedly requested the journalists not to publish her name in newspapers because, she feared, it would interfere with her work.

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Sheikh Badsha, 45, a resident of Wari, had an altercation with Ramjan, the helper at around 6 am while the bus was passing through the Tukatuli area at around 6 yesterday morning.

The authorities held a meeting with teachers and announced timetable for 2nd year semester examinations beginning tomorrow. The students, however, decided to boycott the examinations.

At one stage, Ramjan pushed Badsha, through the door. Badsha fell from the running bus on the road in front of Rajdhani Super Market and was subsequently run over by the bus. Police arrested Ramjan and seized the minibus.

In another incident, Shawkat along with three friends went to Sonali Bank Math at Kalyanpur Monday evening to meet Ripon, who is also his friend.

At about 7:30 pm, Ripon and his accomplices suddenly attacked Shawkat with sharp weapons. An injured Shawkat managed to escape inside a nearby shop.

The assaultants chased him and stabbed him again in the shop. The boy died on the spot.

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