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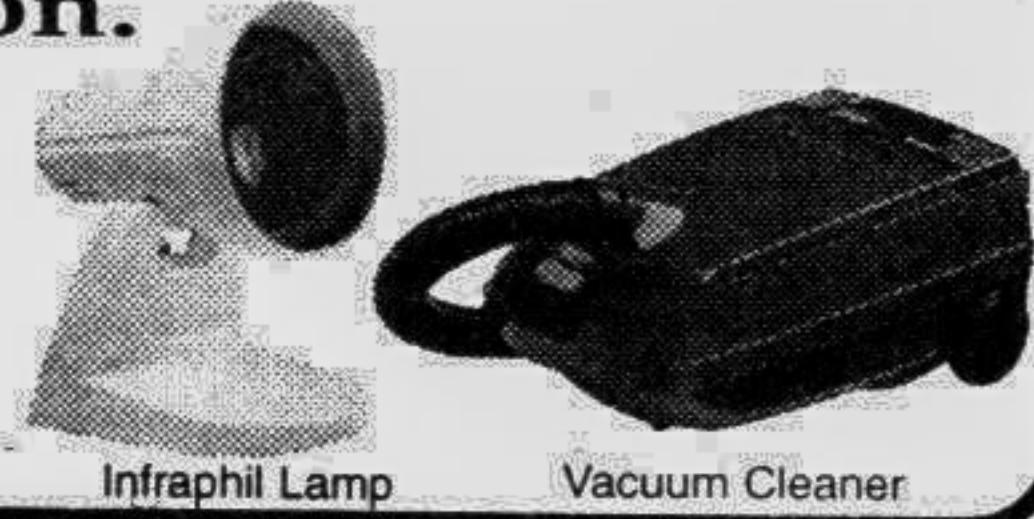
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Most rural mothers know least about proper breastfeeding

By Naimul Haq

Despite efforts for protection and promotion of breastfeeding, knowledge about 'proper' breastfeeding is still poor in rural Bangladesh due to various factors, a study said.

More than 90 per cent of the mothers interviewed during the study did not know that colostrum (milk secreted soon after childbirth), should be the 'first and only food' for the newborn.

The ICDDR,B (Centre for Health and Population Research) carried out the study recently to assess the knowledge and practice of rural mothers concerning breastfeeding and the factors affecting it.

The study showed that mothers' knowledge about proper breastfeeding is poor in the rural areas of Bangladesh. 'Breastfeeding initiation is delayed and the prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding is extremely low.'

Only about one-fourth of the mothers know that breastfeeding should be initiated immediately after childbirth, it said.

The study covered households in four rural thanas. A total of 2105 women who gave live birth were interviewed.

In Bangladesh, 94 per cent of the children under five suffer from various degrees of malnutrition and 47 per cent of the children aged 6-71 months suffer from moderate malnutrition, it said.

Dr Shameem Ahmed, an expert on breastfeeding, said, 'Breast milk is the best and safest food for infants for the first six months of life. It provides nutrition for infants and lays the foundation for their

healthy psychological development. Besides, it immunises the child against common infections.'

Dr Shamim who works at the ICDDR,B pointed out that in Bangladesh where infant mortality is high, artificially fed infants are at least 14 times likely to die from diarrhoea than are breastfed infants.

'In communities with high prevalence of malnutrition, breastfeeding may substantially enhance child survival up to three years of age. In addition to its direct nutritional value for the infant and young child, breastfeeding contributes to women's health by reducing the risk of premenopausal breast cancer,' she added.

A recent national survey said that 55 per cent of the newborns were given breast milk on the second day or later due to the common belief that breast milk does not come down before the third day.

Majority of the mothers who do not feed colostrum believe that it causes diarrhoea or stomach upset, the ICDDR,B study said.

'Giving sweet pre-lacteals like honey is associated with the belief that these will ensure a pleasant personality. More than four-fifths of the mothers said that the baby's first food should be honey, sugar, water and mustard oil.'

The study pointed out that Mothers' knowledge and practice regarding the duration of exclusive breastfeeding were poor. Only 43 per cent of infants were exclusively breastfed when they were one month and

only 15 per cent when they were five months.

An interesting observation in the study is that the more educated the mothers are, the less likely they are to breastfeed their infants exclusively for the first five months.

Also, education was related to the use of artificial milk for babies.

Those who were more educated used those more.

The study said, 'The breastfeeding programmes have concentrated their activities more in the urban hospitals, training doctors and nurses. Involvement of grassroots workers at the community level is important and that national programmes should be strengthened to address the needs of the community, especially in the rural areas of the country.'

It may be mentioned that a national campaign for the protection and promotion of breastfeeding (CPPB) was launched in 1989. In November, 1991, the President, the Prime Minister and Health Minister signed the 'Dhaka Declaration' pledging to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

Next year, the Unicef launched the 'baby friendly friendly hospital initiative' (BFHI). A CPB sub-committee was formed to take responsibility of the BFHI and to cooperate with the health ministry in implementing its initiatives.

The 'Innocent Declaration' recommended for Bangladesh

'Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, continued up to 2 years or more with the addition of home cooked food'.

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crore as royalty.

She said under the proposal Bangladesh transport will carry Indian goods within the Bangladesh territory. 'But the BNP government had agreed to allow Indian trucks to carry its goods over the Bangladesh territory,' she said. This will also employ huge Bangladeshi labourers, she added.

The Prime Minister criticised the BNP for misleading the people by making false statements. She said the BNP government of Begum Khaleda Zia had endorsed the transit by signing the SAPTA agreement in 1993. She said the SAPTA agreement clearly indicates that commodities can be carried through Bangladesh.

Referring to the obligations of the International treaties, Sheikh Hasina said it was obligatory for any government to honour international agreements of the previous government.

'Remember, public administration is not without the members of the public. So, you will have to give due respect to their views and aspirations.'

The President referred to recommendations by previous commissions and regretted that some of the good ideas were not implemented.

The existing commission set up two years ago has put forward some good suggestions that are under consideration. The government is considering reintroduction of six working days a week, from 10 am to 5 pm, he said.

The function was presided over by Dr Kazi Faruque Ahmed, Chairman, Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB), while Dr Atiur Rahman presented the keynote paper.

A T M Shamsul Haque, Chairman of the Public Administration Reforms Commission and Shamsul Huda, Director of ADAB, also spoke at the inaugural function held at CIRDAP.

Dr Atiur Rahman in his paper pointed out some problems of public administration as revealed in a study conducted by ADAB at the grass roots level.

The problems include lack of transparency and accountability, inefficiency, corruption, excess manpower and absence of monitoring and people's participation.

Referring to another study, he said people think that the service of the judiciary and the police are the worst in this country.

The public administration is very much centralised, non-responsive, not accountable, suffers from indecision and wastage,' he said.

Khaleda

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instead of waiting for creation of vacancies in normal way.

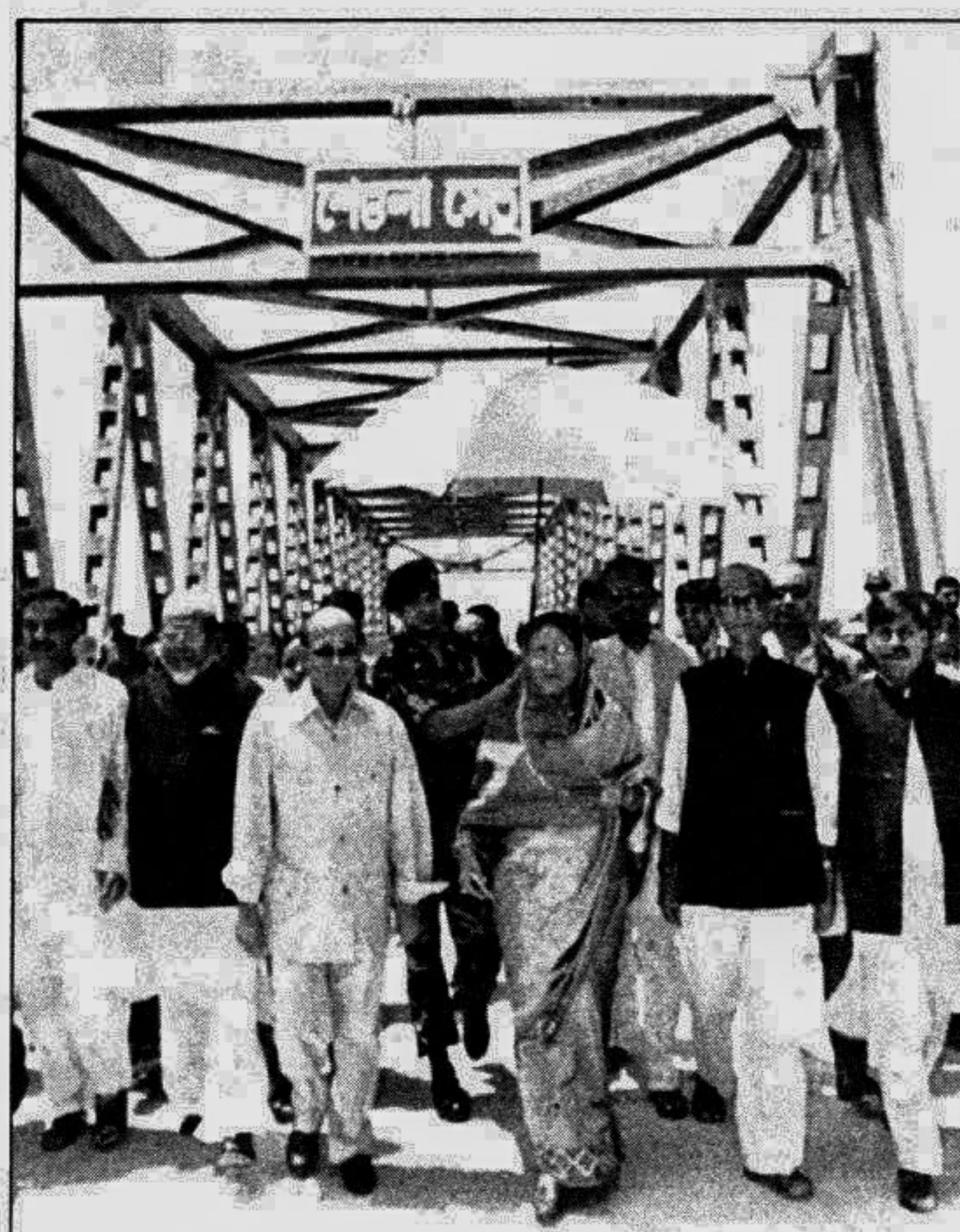
The meeting, held at the commerce ministry, was Chaired by Mohammad Shahjahan Mia, Convenor of the Forum, a press release said yesterday.

It said all posts of the Joint Secretary should be filled up by deputy secretaries on the basis of seniority and merit, doing away with the cadre-based quota system because the posts of Deputy Secretary were filled up from all cadres of civil service through quota-based promotion. 'This is one of the reasons for disruption in the chain of command,' it said.

It urged the government to implement the Prime Minister's order of December 9, 1996 to raise the pay scale of deputy secretaries to Tk 7100-8700 from Tk 6300-8050 as per the National Pay Scale. Some senior scale assistant secretaries are getting more than deputy secretaries following upgradation of their scale to Tk 6300-8050, it noted.

The envoy thought that people of this region would be benefited if the 'transhipment or transit' is multilateral. 'It will be better for the people if the SAARC countries made arrangement for transit on multilateral basis,' he said.

'But that doesn't mean that we should not utilise these two months to prepare for dialogue, to see the contours, to discuss various things because these dialogues for the last 10 years have seen so many govern-



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina walking over the newly-built 'Sheola Bridge' at Beanibazar in Sylhet yesterday.

—PID photo

PM: BNP approved

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Beanibazar Gas Field inaugurated

BEANIBAZAR, Sylhet, July 31: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today inaugurated the Beanibazar Gas Field saying that the gas will be used for meeting the domestic demand, reports UNB.

'We have huge demand of gas and we can use this valuable natural resource by setting up gas-based industries,' she said while addressing the inaugural function of the gas field in Jhaldbazar area.

'There is increasing pressure for exporting gas, but the local demand is still strong. I suggest the entrepreneurs to invest in gas-based industries,' she said. 'We may consider gas export if found surplus after meeting domestic demand,' the Prime Minister added.

From the two wells of Beanibazar Gas Field Petrobangla will extract 40 million cubic feet of gas and 640 barrels of condensate every day. Reserve of gas in the field is estimated at 114 billion cubic feet and condensate 1.82 billion barrels, officials said.

Sylhet Gas Field Company Limited, a subsidiary of Petrobangla, is extracting the gas from Beanibazar field using the local technology and expertise.

Incident at Sectt
2 leaders of Class Four employees arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested two leaders of Class Four employees yesterday on charges of vandalism at the Secretariat in which at least 30 people, including policemen, were injured on Thursday.

The arrested were Mizanur Rahman, an MLLS of Establishment Ministry and Alaudin, an office assistant of LGRD Ministry, police said.

A case was filed with Ramna on Thursday night accusing a number of Class Four employees of the Secretariat, including the arrested two, on charges of attacking police, vandalism and unlawful gathering inside the Secretariat, police said.

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