

Night blindness among children reduced from 3.53pc to 0.67 pc

Seminar lauds success of innovative programmes in overcoming Vitamin-A deficiency

Night blindness prevalence among children in Bangladesh was sharply reduced from 3.53 per cent in 1982-83 to 0.67 per cent in 1997-98 under the impact of intense programmes implemented over the years, reports BSS.

Speakers revealed this at the inaugural session of a day-long seminar on 'Review and Perspective — Vitamin-A Programme in Bangladesh Beyond 2000'.

The Institute of Public Health Nutrition under the Directorate of Health Services organised the seminar in cooperation with the UNICEF which since its inception has been supporting the efforts of Vitamin-A supplementation in Bangladesh to reduce night blindness and other diseases caused by Vitamin-A deficiency.

Minister for Health and Family Welfare Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim in his opening speech advocated for upholding the hitherto achievement in this field saying this success was already recorded by his ministry as one of the fruitful outcomes in the health sector of the country.

"We must work to uphold this tremendous success by mobilising all social leaders and local government bodies to encourage rural people for growing green leafy vegetables, which provides Vitamin-A, as a nutrient against night blindness and other diseases," he said.

The function was also addressed, among others, by State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr M Amanullah, Deputy Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Health Secretary Sayed Alauddin Faruque Chowdhury and the

Tuition
BUET student, ex-Notre Dame Std/III to 'O', 'A' level & Bangla medium.
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UNICEF resident representative Shahida Azfar, Director General of the Health Services Prof ABM Ahsan Ullah was in the chair.

The Health Minister recalled the time back to 1970 when Vitamin-A deficiency was identified as one of the reasons for night blindness victimising children all over the world including some 30,000 in this part of the globe.

"Bangladesh government started a programme in 1973 against this curse in cooperation with different global bodies which came out with a success of over 90 per cent coverage of children by the Vitamin-A supplementation programme all over the country," he said.

Deputy Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury stressing upon awareness and motivation side by side disseminating correct information about health affairs said local government institutions will play their due role in resolving all problems including night blindness and diseases caused by Vitamin-A deficiency.

"The local government bodies in the past were under the control of central authority, but now they are free to take part in any development work in the rural areas," he said, adding that side by side the rural development programmes is as Urban Multi-Purpose Project in cities against all problems including those in the health sectors also being implemented.

According to a presentation at the inaugural function, the strategies to solve Vitamin-A deficiencies include supplementation, fortification and food-based approach which are being regarded as very effective investments by the government for human development in Bangladesh.

Perspectives to overcome Vitamin-A deficiency beyond the year 2000 are: improvement in Vitamin-A supplementation in

urban slums, strengthening coordination with the EPI operation and all related activities of the ministry, maintaining current high coverage for children under five years, increase in the coverage for children under one year and institutionalising Vitamin-A supplementation for postpartum women in the country.

The UNICEF Representative Shahida Azfar, quoting some studies, said Vitamin-A reduces death tolls among young children from diarrhoea and measles which continue to be major killers in developing countries like Bangladesh.

She lauded Bangladesh's innovative ideas and actions in the health sector and said, "Bangladesh is the first country in the world to integrate Vitamin-A supplementation for children of 12-59 months into National Immunisation Days."

Bangladesh was also the first country in the world to establish a National Vitamin-A Week to conduct another annual round of supplementation in the early spring. Furthermore, Vitamin-A supplementation for children under one year was systematically integrated into the regular outreach immunisation activities nationwide.

Azfar said the innovative measures in Vitamin-A supplementation vastly improved coverage from around 50 per cent in 1995 to 85 per cent or more in the recent years. "This is really an impressive achievement," she observed saying the prevalence of night blindness at 0.67 per cent was no more a public health problem as per the WHO cutoff level.

She assured of UNICEF's continued support towards elimination of maternal and child malnutrition from the urban as well as rural areas in Bangladesh.

Minister for Health and Family Welfare Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim speaking at a seminar on "Review and Perspective: Vitamin A Programme in Bangladesh Beyond 2000" held at Hotel Sheraton yesterday. The seminar was organised by Institute of Public Health Nutrition, MOH and FW and UNICEF.

Malaysian envoy makes farewell call on Rob

The outgoing Malaysian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Dato Juklify AB Rahman, made a farewell call on Fisheries and Livestock Minister ASM Abdur Rob at the latter's office yesterday, reports BSS.

An official handout said the high commissioner stayed with the minister for some time and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Rotary News

Weekly meeting

The regular weekly meeting of Rotary Club of Dhamanpur Dhaka will be held today at 5.30 pm at Dhaka Club, Upstairs Family Lounge, says a press release.

All members have been requested to attend on time.

3-week fine arts show begins at IFA tomorrow

The 13th fine arts and crafts exhibition of the budding artists of the country begins in the capital tomorrow amid enthusiasm, reports BSS.

Chief Justice Latifur Rahaman will formally inaugurate the three-week colourful exhibition at "Bakulatal" of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University at 5:30 pm while noted artist Gayyam Chowdhury will attend the function as special guest.

A total of 227 piece art works of 183 artists will be displayed in the exhibition to be organised by Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy.

A 5-member panel of judges has been selected the pieces from among 1000 arts works to be displayed at the "Zainul Gallery" of the institute simultaneously.

While talking to BSS, Director (Fine Arts) of Bangladesh Shilpkala Academy Sabir Chowdhury said yesterday that

JP (Ershad) PP meeting June 4

Hussain Muhammad Ershad, the chairman of Jatiya Party and Leader of its parliamentary party, has convened a meeting of the parliamentary party on June 4 at 4 pm at Sangsad Bhaban office of the party, a press release said yesterday, reports BSS.

Advocate N K Alam Chowdhury, whip of the parliamentary party of the JP, has requested all MPs to attend the meeting on time, the press release said.

The programme will include social and cultural events.

All ex-students of DMC have been requested to contact any of the following for details:

Principal, Dhaka Medical College (Tel No-9669340.

61011, Prof K M Iqbal (Tel No 8619115 (Off) 8829645 (R), Dr.

Khaldur Rahman. (Tel 507910 (Off) 8317235 (R).

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