

Indigenous children most vulnerable in world

New Unicef report released from Madrid says

BSS, Dhaka

Indigenous children are among the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in the world and global action is urgently needed to protect their survival and their rights, a new Unicef report released from Madrid yesterday said.

Published by the Unicef Innocent Research Centre in Florence, the report concluded that improving the lives of indigenous children is crucial not only for their own health and well-being but for the future of indigenous people's and their unique place in the human family.

"When indigenous children are allowed to live in peace and security and free from discrimination, they have an enormous potential to contribute not only to their own communities but to national and global society," said Unicef

Executive Director Carol Bellamy. "If we are to achieve goals such as poverty reduction, education for all and an end to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, we must put all children-especially the most vulnerable children such as those in indigenous communities-at the centre of our efforts."

The report said, there are an estimated 300 million indigenous people worldwide. They inhabit every region of the globe, originating in some 70 countries and speaking three quarters of the world's 6,000 languages. About half of the global indigenous population lives in Asia: the second-largest population lives in Latin America.

Compared to non-indigenous children, indigenous children generally have lower vaccination rates and higher mortality rates, lower rates of school enrolment, higher rates of grade repetition and school

dropout, and inadequate protection in formal justice systems.

In income-rich and income-poor countries alike, infant, child and maternal mortality rates are higher among indigenous groups. Birth registration, the first step to a legal identity and the claims of citizenship, is often substantially lower among indigenous groups. Birth registration, the first step to a legal identity and the claims of citizenship, is often substantially lower among indigenous groups.

The report details how the rights of indigenous children in both rural and urban areas are often compromised or denied. Specific areas of concern include the rights of indigenous children to survival and development, to good health, to education that respects their cultural identity protection from abuse, violence and exploitation, and participation in decision-making

processes relevant to their lives.

The report said that governments must devote resources and enact legislation, policies and services to supporting indigenous families.

Indigenous communities often live under severe cultural and social stress the report pointed out saying lack of opportunity, cultural discrimination, inadequate social support, loss of land or difficulty integrating into the dominant culture contribute to low self-esteem and loss of identity that can give rise to depression, alcohol and substance abuse, and suicide.

The report said indigenous children are also at risk for human trafficking, sexual, and labour exploitation, and the impact of armed conflict and civil unrest.

Govt okays marketing of anti-arsenic technologies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday approved four technologies to remove arsenic from contaminated water for commercial use.

Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) yesterday certified three household as well as chemical and one non-chemical arsenic removal plants that can filter arsenic.

The BCSIR with the technical assistance of a Canadian NGO (non-government organisation) -- the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement -- has been evaluating five technologies for the last two years.

Of those, Alcan, Sidko, READ-F and Sono, validated in the field tests, achieved the BCSIR authorisation.

"We have temporarily okayed the technologies with some pre-conditions," said BCSIR Chairman Prof Md Amzad Hossain, who presented provisional verification certificates to the owners of the technologies at the BCSIR yesterday evening.

Earlier on July 20 in 2002, the government issued a gazette notification stating, "All chemical-based arsenic filters or removal plants must obtain certification from the BCSIR for being on the open market."

Following an agreement between the BCSIR and Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project (BAMWSP), the BCSIR asked the latter in January 2002 to submit the first phase of technologies for Environmental Technology Verification -- Arsenic Mitigation (ETV-AM).

The BCSIR received 17 technologies for evaluation on March 9, 2002, of which it primarily selected five and observed the field tests in Chapainawabganj, Manikganj, Hajiganj, Bera in Pabna and Kolaroa in Satkhira.

Clash in Bahubal Tension runs still high

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Tension still ran high yesterday in the Bahubal upazila where Section 144 was imposed and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) deployed following a violent clash between two groups of villagers Tuesday, leaving two persons killed and at least 300 injured.

The upazila administration pulled out the BDR but kept the Section 144 in effect.

Mashuk Miah of Barauri village and Darbesh Ali of Daulatpur village filed murder cases against each other. Besides, Sub Inspector Luthfur Rahman of Bahubal police opened another case, alleging assault on police.

The 14 villagers picked up after the clashes were sent to jail hajat after their bail prayers were rejected by court.

At least eight to 10 thousand people of 13 villages equipped with arms fought the four-hour fight, which reportedly sprang from previous enmity between two youths of Karimpur and Daulatpur villages.

Kuwait envoy hosts reception

UNB, Dhaka

The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait Abdullah Masoud Abdullah, hosted a reception at Sonargaon Hotel yesterday on the occasion of the 43rd National Day and 13th Liberation Day of the State of Kuwait.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad speaks at a public meeting at Muktangan in the city yesterday.

Rangpur DC office besieged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A cross-section of people laid siege to the office of the deputy commissioner in Rangpur and observed a four-hour token hunger strike yesterday to press home their demand for a separate education board for the people of five northern districts.

Similar programmes were also observed in all 36 upazilas of greater Rangpur district under the banner of Rangpur Education Board Implementation Committee.

The committee has also warned that it would enforce a 48-hour hartal on March 28 and 29 if the government ignores their demand.

Presided over by Advocate Gazi Rahman, the meeting was addressed by Advocate Shamsuzzaman, Rangpur Pourasava Chairman Kazi Junnun, President of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and industry Mostafa Azad, former pourasava chairman Mohammad Afzal, Awami League leader Elias Ahmed, JSD leader Ekramul Hossain and Press Club Joint Secretary Manik Sarker.

Mob gouges out eyes of two PBCP men

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A mob at Rahimnagar in Khulna gouged out eyes of two alleged operatives of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (Janajuddho) yesterday.

According to police, locals caught alleged PBCP activists Haroon Khan of Rahimnagar in Rupsha and Azim Hossain of Shib Bari in Sonadanga at around midnight and bashed them before gouging out their eyes.

They were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital in critical condition, sources said.

Meanwhile, joint forces recovered a sawed-off gun and four cartridges of bullet from Azim who is a wanted criminal in several criminal cases including that of murder, police added.

'Most children with cancer deprived of treatment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Existing medical facilities and support system in Bangladesh can cure one third of childhood cancer in the country, but higher expenses appear to be depriving almost half of the 6000 children, diagnosed with cancer every year in Bangladesh, of proper treatment.

Leading cancer specialists from home and abroad said this at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday on the eve of the 3rd International Society of Paediatric Oncology (SIOP) Asia Conference in Dhaka.

"There is a cure and effective therapy for childhood cancer. If most

of the people developing cancer are able to detect their illness early and avail treatment they can survive. This is the message we are trying to give to parents although we know cancer treatment is expensive and often involves high tech," said Professor Tim Eden, president-elect, SIOP.

About 300 experts including 80 foreign cancer specialists will take part in the three-day conference with a view to sharing their thoughts and expertise on how to improve the existing detection and treatment protocols for approximately 250,000 children throughout the world who are diagnosed with cancer every year.

Professor Jon Pritard, a leading oncologist from Royal Hospital of

Children in the UK, said, "We are here to build partnership to find ways of improving cancer therapy and share new technologies and it is important to know that without partnership we cannot improve cancer treatment worldwide."

SIOP, launched in 1969, represents childhood cancer organisations from 120 countries and has 1200 members. The first two conferences of SIOP were held in Singapore City and New Delhi.

The press conference was also addressed by Salma Choudhury, chairperson of ASHIC Foundation for Childhood Cancer, and Professor Saiful Islam, secretary of the organising committee of 3rd SIOP Asia Conference.

Obituary



Alhaj Tafazzal Hossain Chowdhury, son of late Zamindar Alhaj Adel Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury of Utrail, Madaripur, died on February 23 at the age of 72, says a press release.

He is survived by his wife, three daughters and grandchildren.

Shahin Mahmood, chairman of Cotton Group, is his younger son-in-law.

Death anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of Moma Zahid Rahman, wife of former Awami League MP Advocate Fazlur Rahman, says a press release.

She was a member of Narayanganj 'Apwa' Women's Association.

Special prayers will be offered at Shotodai, 13/A West Dhanmondi.

Abdul Kuddus Sadi



Today is the fourth death anniversary of Abdul Kuddus Sadi, a litterateur and former editor of now-defunct weekly Padakkhep, says a press release.

A quankhwan will be held at his Madhubagh residence on the occasion.

'Bangladesh India's largest trade partner among Saarc states'

UNB, Dhaka

India and Bangladesh need to evolve a win-win solution of each bilateral issue to the mutual satisfaction of the two next-door neighbours, said Veena Sikri, the newly appointed Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh while attending the dinner hosted by Awami League at a local restaurant in Dhaka yesterday.

The Indian diplomat said Bangladesh is India's largest trade and investment partner among SAARC countries while India is one of the largest trade and investment partners of Bangladesh among developing countries.

"People are realising the tangible benefits of greater mutual co-operation between Bangladesh and India," said the High Commissioner stressing upon taking concerted efforts by Dhaka and Delhi to develop the strong synergies that exist between the two countries.

Recalling the signing of the Ganges water-sharing treaty during the last Awami League rule in 1996, she praised Awami League's efforts in this regard. She observed that the Ganges Water Treaty helped resolve a longstanding problem to the mutual benefit of the people of these two countries.

Awami League general secretary Abdul Jalil MP and International

Affairs Secretary Syed Abdul Hossain MP made welcome speech at the dinner. Among others were present AL leaders Abdus Samad Azad, Zillur Rahman, Abdur Razzak, Suranjit Sengupta, SAMS Kibria, Sajeda Chowdhury, Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Selim, ASHK Sadiq, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, former Ambassadors Farook Chowdhury, AH Mahmud Ali and Mohammad Ziauddin.

Chinese envoy meets Moudud

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Ambassador Chai Xi called on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed at the latter's office yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed matters relating to mutual interests as well as international affairs, says an official handout.

Terming China as permanent and close friend of Bangladesh, Moudud said Bangladesh is eager for establishing friendly relationship with all Asian countries to maintain peace in the region.

Bangladesh needs to utilise the experience of China for skill development of the judiciary, he added.

DHAKA TODAY

Dance drama

Bangladesh-Korea Cultural Friendship Association will present a dance drama titled 'Nakshi Kanthar Math' (The field of embroidered quilt). Venue: Korean embassy auditorium, Baridhara. Time: 7.30pm.

Day, Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco in association with Bangladesh Shishu Academy organises a theatre and cultural programme. Venue: Shishu Academy. Time: 4.00pm.

Workshop on renewable energy

A regional workshop on 'Renewable energy: Progress and prospects' and a national exhibition on solar energy technology will be inaugurated, organised by Bangladesh Solar Energy Society and the Renewable Energy Research Centre of Dhaka University. Venue: Physics auditorium, Mukarram Bhaban, DU. Time: 11.30am.

Seminar on fair election

Bangladesh Foundation for Development Research organises a seminar on 'Fair election and effective parliament are preconditions for democracy', with Prof. Dr Nurul Islam Manzur presenting the keynote paper. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 3.30pm.

Odhikar discussion

Odhikar, a human rights organisation, will hold a discussion on Article 41 (religious freedom) of the Constitution, with Attorney General AF Hassan Arif as chief guest. Venue: Odhikar office, Gulshan. Time: 3.00pm.

Blast discussion

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (Blast) organises a discussion on 'Emerging legal rights of people living with HIV/AIDS'. Venue: Conference Hall of UTC Building, 8 Panthapath. Time: 10.30am.

Seminar

A seminar on 'Knowledge as politics' will be held, with Prof. Dr Salim Rashid of University of Illinois, as the key speaker. Venue: Presidency University conference hall, Road # 92, Tower Building, 11/A Gulshan. Time: 4.30pm.

Humayun Kabir will form a human chain to press for their demand for construction of Padma bridge at Doulatdia-Paturia point. Venue: In front of National Press Club. Time: 11.00am.

Theatre programme

As part of its fortnight-long programme in observance of International Mother Language