

'Health services for street children not adequate'

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The government is not doing enough to ensure health services for the street children who are suffering from various diseases, in particular sexually transmitted diseases, according to surveys carried out by different NGOs.

The street children are also vulnerable to HIV/Aids, although no children were found HIV positive during a survey in Dhaka from December 2002 to March 2004.

The Aporajeo Bangladesh, a non-government organisation, conducted the survey on 3,989 street children and found that 55 of them are suffering from sexually transmitted diseases. Among them, nine had the symptoms of syphilis and 22 of gonorrhoea while nine others had genital sores.

A baseline survey conducted by the World Vision Bangladesh in 2000 revealed that the street children are not aware of HIV/Aids.

Its workers spoke to 247 children and found that 168 had no idea about the disease. Only a few of them have heard of it from television campaigns, relatives and friends. Some of them also know about it from posters.

The survey also found that many of

them were suffering from fever, diarrhoea, chicken pox, measles, jaundice, scabies, asthma and gastric pains.

According to a BIDS survey conducted in 11 districts of the country in 2004, there are a total of 6,74,178 children living on the streets. It also said that the number would increase three-fold in the next 10 to 20 years.

The Social Welfare Department is working with nine NGOs to provide direct service for the street children under a pilot project funded by the UNDP.

But a budget shortage is hampering the project activities, said Senior Deputy Director and Coordinator Mizanur Rahman.

Two years ago, the Appropriate Resources for Improving Street Children's Environment (Arise), the UNDP-funded project, suggested to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to formulate a separate policy for the street children, but the ministry appears to have no interest in it, he said.

Different NGOs are working for the welfare of street children, providing health services, educational facilities and legal aid for them. Two paramedics from each NGO are engaged in healthcare service.

But in most cases the quality of their

service is not up to the mark, said Mizanur Rahman.

However, the cases of STD are declining as the number of slums in the city has declined, he added.

Project sources mentioned some obstacles to carrying out activities for the welfare of the street children, such as poor budgetary allocation for shelter home, food, health services, recreational activities and vocational training. The absence of female paramedics is also a hindrance.

The Padakkhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra, a drop-in centre in the city, conducted a survey among 6,275 boys and 3,380 girls who came to the centre during the period between March 2001 and June 2005. It found that a total of 1749 boys and 683 girls have scabies.

Scabies is the most common disease among the street children. The other prevalent diseases included diarrhoea, fever, vitamin deficiency, gastric pain, ENT problems, accident injury, common cold and infection, said Syeda Samia Sultana, an official of Padakkhep.

Meanwhile, the tenure of UNDP-funded project has been extended for five more years in its second phase to help the ill-fated street children.

Zia Charitable Trust Bhaban foundation laid

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Charitable Trust Bhaban in the city yesterday, marking the 27th founding anniversary of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) founded by late President Ziaur Rahman.

She unveiled the plaque of the four-storied Bhaban near the Scout Bhaban at Paltan in the city in the afternoon.

Khaleda is chairperson of the trust.

Transcom distributors' meet held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Light and Electrical Products Distributors' Meet-2005 of Transcom Group, a leading electronics supplier in the country, was held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday.

A total of 102 Transcom's distributors from different parts of the country attended the programme. Transcom Group has awarded 98 distributors for their outstanding performance in 2004.

The company has awarded 74 dealers in the highest sales turnover category for the year 2004. Another three distributors have been awarded in Special Philips GLS category, 17 in tube light selling and four in blast selling categories.

Latifur Rahman, chairman and managing director of the Transcom Group, handed over the prizes to the successful distributors and dealers at the function.

Speaking at the function, the Transcom chairman said, "Our business is increasing day by day. From the year 2000 to 2005, Transcom posted a significant sales growth."

He thanked the distributors for their satisfactory selling performances in 2004 and asked them to continue their efforts.

"Transcom always tries to maintain its quality and world class standard. This is why, the products of the company have become popular among the customers," said Arshad Huq, general manager (Sales and Marketing) of Transcom Electronics.

He said the sales of Transcom electronics products have surged 20 percent in the year 2004 compared to those of 2003.

The company's sales in the year 2005 will be more than those of 2004, he hoped.

Transcom Group directors Shahnaz Rahman, Saifur Rahman, Atiqur Rahman and Obaidur Rahman Khan and Transcom Electronics Ltd National Sales Manager A Kader Khan were present at the function.

PM seeks more investment from UAE

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to invest more in Bangladesh, taking the advantage of cheap labour and attractive incentive package.

She also requested the UAE government to take more manpower from Bangladesh and import Bangladeshi goods including medicines, leather and leather products, and jute and jute goods.

Khaleda's call came when visiting UAE Education Minister and Dhabi Group Chairman Shaikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan made a courtesy call on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in the afternoon.

Responding to the prime minister, Shaikh Nahayan showed keen interest to invest in Bangladesh.

According to an official, Dhabi Group currently wants to invest \$2 billion in Bangladesh in various sectors, including telecommunication, tourism and pharmaceuticals.

At present, nearly 400,000 Bangladeshis of various professions are working in the UAE.

Appreciating Bangladesh's development and progress in a number of sectors, particularly in women education and empowerment, health and other social sectors, Shaikh Nahayan said they want to become a partner of development and progress in Bangladesh.

He praised the leadership of Prime Minister Khaleda, saying that the culture of change and development under her able leadership in Bangladesh has been



PHOTO: PID

UAE Education Minister and Dhabi Group Chairman Shaikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan makes a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office in the city yesterday.

encouraging to the foreign investors to invest here.

Both the prime minister and the UAE education minister expressed firm determination to renew the "historical" relations between the two countries and stressed on exchange of top level visits.

They also expressed identical

views on investment in both private and public sectors between the two countries.

The prime minister invited the UAE president to visit Bangladesh and conveyed her best wishes through the education minister.

UAE Ambassador in Dhaka Sayed Mohammad Sultan Al-Zaabi

and Dhabi Group Chief Executive Officer Bashir M Tahir accompanied the Dhabi Group chairman. Advisor to the Energy and Mineral Resources Division and Executive Chairman of Bol Mahmudur Rahman was also present at the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

Latifur Rahman, chairman and managing director of Transcom Group, speaks at the Light and Electrical Products Distributors' Meet-2005 of the company at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel yesterday. z

Death threat to Menon

Islamist militant groups and armed terrorists have issued death threat to Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon and his family, said a press release of the party yesterday.

The militants also warned the Menon's family that they were conducting exercises in the city's Gulshan and Topkhana areas to kill Menon.

Workers' Party General Secretary Bimal Biswas sought security for Menon from the home ministry a year ago in this connection, but the government remains indifferent to the concern, the press release added.