

Flickers of hope for children



IT'S no secret that children are the worst sufferers of government and societal apathy. The number of children dying every day due to the most trivial reasons is very high.

Three hundred and forty two children die EVERYDAY of diarrhoea and other pollution-related diseases due to lack of proper sanitation. This was announced at a discussion on sanitation organised by LGRD and Co-operatives Ministry in the city.

There are more staggering statistics. Every year over 65 million incidents of diarrhoeal diseases occur among children under five. An average child suffers 3-4 incidents of diarrhoeal disease every year. About 3.23 crore people use unhygienic latrines, while 5.43 crore people don't use any latrines at all, revealed Professor Md. Mujibur Rahman of BUET. Only thirty 33 percent or 4.26 crore people have access to hygienic means of excreta disposal.

It is strange that at this point in time when the government has spent crores of taka on the so-called 'beautification' project, it has failed to provide an adequate number of latrines! Especially when something as basic as this can save so many children's lives.

But, there are other available causes of child deaths in our country. According to a national survey, 2,600

children are injured EVERYDAY and of them 80 die from their injuries.

These injuries are caused by road accidents, drowning, animal bite, fall from different places, accidental poisoning, cut by sharp objects and suffocation.

The good news is that a pilot programme to prevent child injury will be launched by the government in collaboration with UNICEF, Centre for Injury Prevention and Research Bangladesh and a US organisation called TASC. The programme will address home safety, school safety and community safety for children.

Meanwhile, there are efforts by some organisations to champion the cause of street children. Aparajeyo Bangladesh, an NGO working for poor children, organised a workshop recently to point out that many sections of society could reach out to their children. The organisers appealed to the ward commissioners, NGOs and well off citizens to support their children so that they can lead decent lives.

Efforts like these are certainly commendable. It is up to the government to prove their sincerity in making the lives of children safer, disease free and a whole lot happier than they are today.