

29m people exposed to arsenic

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 29 million people of the country are exposed to arsenic and 60 percent of the exposed population are yet to have access to safe water, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

Though people of 61 districts across the country have been drinking highly arsenic contaminated water and arsenicosis is found in almost 40,000 people, pace of mitigation is too slow compared to the magnitude of the problem in the country, observed the speakers.

Mailman School of Public Health and Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory of Columbia University, USA and Department of Geology of Dhaka University, Bangladesh jointly organised the seminar at a city hotel titled 'Concerning the health effects and geochemistry of arsenic' to disseminate the findings of a research.

The new findings include pregnant women pass arsenic to the fetus during pregnancy and babies are born with the same blood arsenic levels as their mothers, deficiency in dietary Folate and A vitamin is extremely common in



UNICEF Country Representative Louis Georges Arsenault speaks at a seminar at Hotel Sheraton in the city yesterday.

Bangladesh that causes a diminished ability to eliminate arsenic.

The study also revealed that folic acid supplementation to deficient adults actually facilitates the metabolism and elimination of arsenic and leads to a significant lowering of blood arsenic concentrations.

Addressing the seminar as the chief guest, Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof SMA Faiz said both the geologists and officials of health department should work together to solve the arsenic-related problems in the country.

Associate Dean of Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University Professor Joseph H Graziano and Country Representative of UNICEF Louis Georges Arsenault also spoke at the inaugural session.

Later, papers on 'Sources and health impacts of arsenic exposure and mitigation strategies were presented by Prof Kazi Matin Ahmed of Dhaka University, Dr Habibul Ahsan, Dr Joseph H Graziano, Dr Alexander van Geen, Dr Mahfuzur Rahman and Dr Martin State of Columbia University, Dr Feroze Ahmed of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) and Dr Salamat Khandaker of World Health Organisation (WHO) from different perspectives.

Prof AKM Nurul Anwar, Prof Ainun Nishat, Prof AMR Mushtaque Chowdhury and SM Ihtisamul Haque moderated different sessions.



PHOTO: STAR
A garbage truck crosses Bijoy Sarani in the city yesterday although movement of such garbage containers during daytime is strictly prohibited.



Dr Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmad, chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, presents the 'Education Watch Report-2006' at a press briefing at CIRDAP auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Kazi Fazlur Rahman and Rasheda K Choudhury and on his right is Dr Kazi Saleh Ahmed.

SHORTAGE OF GOVT FUNDS HOLDS BACK QUALITY EDN

Students forced to depend on private coaching

Says Education Watch Report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students at the primary and secondary education levels are forced to depend on private coaching as the schools could not provide quality education due to shortage of government funds, according to a survey report released yesterday.

Some 88 percent of students at government high schools and 78 percent of students at non-government high schools arrange private coaching while 31 to 83 percent students at the primary level have to manage private coaching to continue their study, said the Education Watch Report-2006.

The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) conducted the survey.

The report said that around half of the primary students drop out before completing class five and 80 percent of students at secondary level drop out before completing the class because of poverty.

"Only 2.2 percent of the national income is allocated for education in the country while India allocates 3.3 percent and Nepal 3.4 percent for their education sectors. However, it should increase to six percent according to

Dakar Framework of Action," said Dr Qazi Khaliquzzaman Ahmad, chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad, while presenting the key findings of the report at a press briefing in the city.

He also said that the government funds for schools are not properly distributed, which is one of the major reasons behind the fall in the quality of education.

"At the primary level, the government spends annually Tk 1766 on a student of government primary school, Tk 957 on a student of madrasa, Tk 706 on a student of registered non-government primary school, Tk 574 on a student of community primary school and Tk 55 on a student of non-regulated primary school. On the other hand, the government spends Tk 5445 on a student of government high school, Tk 3943 on a student of madrasa and Tk 2,788 on a student of non-government high school," he added.

He also said that guardians have to bear 71 percent education expenditure in non-government high school, 67 percent in government high school and 56 percent in madrasa," he added.

Kazi Fazlur Rahman, chairman of 'Education Watch-2006', said the quality of education is not the same at all educational institutions as the government funds are too little and the allocated funds are not distributed properly.

He also said the dropout rates at primary and secondary education levels are very alarming because poor guardians cannot bear the education expenditure for their children.

He also said that guardians have to bear 59 percent education expenditure in government primary school, 65 percent in madrasa, 70 percent in community primary school, 76 percent in registered non-government primary school and 83 percent in non-

registered primary schools although the government declared that the primary education is free for all.

In secondary education, guardians have to bear 71 percent education expenditure in non-government high school, 67 percent in government high school and 56 percent in madrasa," he added.

Rasheda K Choudhury, director of CAMPE, also spoke at the press briefing.

Killing of RMG worker condemned

Different women rights organisations and garment workers' bodies yesterday condemned the atrocities of law enforcing agencies that claimed the life of a woman worker and injured of at least 50 workers during a clash at Gazipur on Sunday.

The organisations demanded proper investigation into the incident, punishment to the people responsible and immediate payment of salary and overtime allowances of the workers.

The statement also said that the incident is disappointing in the wake of a new wage law.

Bangladesh Sramajibi Nari Moitree Convener Bonniskhila Jamali in a statement said that the oppression on workers by the law enforcing agencies in support of garment owners still continues, even in the regime of a non-partisan caretaker government which is shameful.

She demanded arrest and punishment of the responsible persons, arrangement of treatment for the injured workers and compensation for the family of the murdered and injured.

Bangladesh Garment Sramik Mukti Andolon, Garment Sramik Sangram Parishad, Sramik Nirapatta Forum and Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad also condemned the incident in separate statements.

Dean's Award Giving Ceremony and a fresher's reception accorded to the students of 2006-2007 sessions at Teacher-Student Centre (TSC).

Three graduates of the faculty received Dean's Award for their outstanding academic performance in Bachelor of Pharmacy examinations in 2004. They are Ahsanul Haque, Rashedul Islam and Tasnuva Haque who stood first class first, second and third respectively.

Faculty Dean Prof Abdur Rashid chaired the function. Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haider also spoke.

Prof Faiz was addressing the

Prepare yourselves as efficient pharmacists

DU VC urges pharmacy students

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) Vice-Chancellor (VC) Prof SMA Faiz yesterday called upon the students of Faculty of Pharmacy to prepare themselves as efficient pharmacists to make the country a premier medicine exporter.

Advising students to play a vital role in country's health sector through nurturing their talents, the VC said they would have to earn competency to compete in the international arena, a press release said.

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Body recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of an old woman in the city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Rezia Begum, 60, of Nayanagar Kazla at Demra.

Police found the body in a sack inside the Dhaka-Narayanganj-DND (DND) flood protection embankment in the morning.

The body was sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Morgue sources said they found marks of injury in the body.

Mamun, son of the victim, identified the body at the morgue.

He told the reporters that his mother went missing on Sunday night when she went outside for a walk.

Mamun said his mother had no enmity with anybody.

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Police filed a case yesterday against 2500 unnamed workers of Fortune Apparels Ltd in Gazipur accusing them of vandalising factories and vehicles on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and hindering the law enforcers in carrying out their duties.

Sub Inspector Naba Gopal of Gazipur Police Station filed the case in the early hours of yesterday. However, police did not mention anything regarding the death of the garment worker in the case.

A sewing section operator named Haider Ali was also arrested after filing of the case.

The factory looked deserted yesterday as neither the factory authorities nor the law enforcers went to the factory following the incident on Sunday that left one Asma Akter, 20, a sewing operator of Fortune Apparels Ltd, dead after police opened fire on agitating workers who demanded outstanding salary and arrears.

The three-member probe

committee formed after the incident started investigating into the incident yesterday and visited the factory.

Security has been beefed up in the industrial area following the incident while around 10 to 15 garment factories were announced closed yesterday fearing probable workers' unrest.

Most of the garment factories in the area, however, remained closed, as it was a weekly holiday for them.

A three-member team of Gazipur Sadar Hospital led by Dr Abdul Halim Molla conducted autopsy of the body of Asma in the early morning yesterday. The committee members said that a bullet was found in the back of the deceased and she was shot dead.

The autopsy committee also added that the report would be submitted within three days. Earlier, another team led by Additional District Magistrate Mirza Tarique Hekmat made an inquest report of the body at 5:00 am.

The body was handed over to Abdus Sattar, father of Asma, after the autopsy was conducted at 6:00 am. Her body was sent to her village home in Patuakhali under police guard.

"The family of the victim will receive Tk one lakh as compensation and the money will be reallocated from the factory owners," said Assistant Superintendent of Police of Gazipur Saiful Al Mamun.

Meanwhile, several hundred workers of Winter Garment at Mouchak in Kaliakoir observed work abstention and staged hunger-strike in front of the factory demanding unpaid salaries of the month of April. They were agitating till filing of the report at 6:00 pm.

Besides, Anupam Sweaters in Gazipur, which was closed in the wake of workers' demonstration for outstanding arrears a month ago, started disbursing salaries to the workers under police guard.

Besides, any final decision of the search committee without discussion with the teachers will be considered as government interference, the press release added.

About the Dhaka University Ordinance '73, the meeting opined that any one-sided decision to revise the ordinance will not be acceptable.

Govt waits for SC order for demolition of Rangs Bhaban
Says Geeteara

UNB, Dhaka

The government is waiting for clearance from the Supreme Court to demolish the much-talked about multistoried Rangs Bhaban in the city.

The demolition of Rangs Bhaban is waiting for a court order. After getting the order we'll start other procedures to demolish the Bhaban," said Industries Adviser Geeteara Safiya Choudhury yesterday.

She was speaking at a seminar on 'National Budget for 2007-08: What's in the basket for SMEs' at the chief guest.

On April 21, Council of Advisers gave unanimous opinion in favour of demolishing the building on Bijoy Sarani crossing.

A case on the disputed building was pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Geeteara blamed the previous governments for haphazard condition of the residential areas of the capital city where so many commercial institutions are located.

"Initially there was lack of coordination among the offices concerned," she said.

Mainul Hosein

Our staff correspondent adds: Law and Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hosein also said the government could not demolish the Rangs Bhaban due to legal complications.

The 22-storey Bhaban would be demolished after the disposal of two writs pending before the court in this regard, he told reporters at his secretariat office yesterday.

FAKE ADMISSION

Duta demands punishment to those involved

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) has demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for admission of students by fraudulent means.

Duta also demanded arrest of those people who have been temporarily suspended for their alleged involvement in fake admission process, said a press release.

Duta made the demand at a meeting of its executive committee on May 20 with Prof Sadrul Amin, president of the association, in the chair.

The meeting expressed concern over the government's proposed 'umbrella law' for 28 public universities of the country saying that it will hamper their autonomy and uniqueness if the law is implemented.

"As every public university has its own uniqueness, one umbrella law for all public universities is not desirable. Every university should be allowed to run in an environment free from government control," the press release reads.

On government's proposed 'search committee' to appoint vice-chancellors, pro-vice-chancellors and treasurers at public universities except four where '73 is effective, Duta said this should be left over for an elected government to decide.

Besides, any final decision of the search committee without discussion with the teachers will be considered as government interference, the press release added.</p