

71PC VACCINATION COVERAGE

EPI saves 4m children from premature death a year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) achieved 71 percent vaccination coverage in 2006.

This was revealed at a dissemination function on EPI Coverage Evaluation Survey (CES) '06 at a city hotel yesterday.

Speaking as chief guest at the function, Health and Family Welfare Adviser Major General (ret'd) Dr ASM Matiuir Rahman said the children will be given a package of vaccines very soon to prevent 10 diseases.

"We have already started the programme of Hepatitis B vaccine. It will be followed by HIB very soon to prevent pneumonia. Our sincere efforts will be to ensure vaccines

for meningitis too," he said.

The CES shows 71 percent of 12-23 months' old children were fully immunised with valid doses of all antigens.

In rural areas, the valid full immunisation rate was the highest in Khulna division and lowest in Sylhet division, while in urban areas the valid fully immunisation rate was the highest in Khulna City Corporation and the lowest in Rajshahi City Corporation.

Of the fully vaccinated children, 98 percent got BCG, 97 percent DPT1, 95 percent for DPT2, 84 percent DPT3, 97 percent oral polio vaccine (OPV), 96 percent OPV2 and 92 percent OPV3.

Aiming at reducing child mortality and morbidity from Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPDs), the

government started EPI in 1979.

Currently, children are being given vaccines for diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, tuberculosis, polio, measles and jaundice.

From two percent vaccination coverage in 1971, now Bangladesh has ensured 71 percent with the vision to fulfil the Millennium Development Goal of reducing the child and maternal mortality rate, said the speakers.

They said the programme is saving 4 million children from premature death and disabilities annually.

The survey, conducted by ACNielsen Bangladesh in collaboration with EPI, WHO and UNICEF, was carried out in all the 64 districts and six city corporations between

July and September 2006.

Civil surgeons of Sathkira, Feni, Naogaon, Tangail, Bogra, Shariatpur were awarded in the best performing district category while the Civil surgeons of Khulna and Rajshahi were given awards in the city corporation category for the maximum coverage.

Presided over by Health and Family Welfare Secretary Ehsan-Ul-Fattah, the function was also addressed by Director General of Health Services Dr Md Shahjahan Biswas, Managing Director of ACNielsen Dr Khalid Mahmud, acting country representative of WHO Khalid Hasan, UNICEF Representative Louis Georgs Arsenault and Director Dr Md Sukuruddin Mridha.

Former generals hail upgrading ranks of three chiefs

UNB, Dhaka

Former military top brasses, including ex-army chief Lt Gen (Ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman yesterday hailed the elevation of ranks of the three chiefs of the Armed Forces.

The government upgraded the ranks of the army chief to four-star general from lieutenant general, the naval chief to vice-admiral from rear admiral, and the air chief to air marshal from air vice-marshal.

"The decision should have been taken much earlier. This will not only enhance image of our armed forces abroad, but also encourage them to further improve their professional excellence," Mahbubur Rahman said.

Rahman, a military-turned politician, who was chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on Defence Ministry, said they had recommended upgrading the ranks of the three chiefs.

He said although smaller military forces in some neighbouring countries, including Nepal, have four-star generals, Bangladesh having an expanding force and contribution to UN peacekeeping missions with reputation had no full general earlier.

Even the strength of the British Army is less than that of Bangladesh, but they have several full Generals, he said.

He mentioned that Ziaur Rahman was made the army chief with rank of lieutenant general in 1979 and since then there had not been any upgrading to the rank of army chief in last 27 years.

He said the strength of Bangladesh Army was about 50,000 in 1979, which has now expanded three times in both strength and dimension.

Lt Gen (Ret'd) Mir Showkat Ali termed the upgrading of the ranks of the three chiefs of the armed forces "a step in the right direction."

Echoing similar views, Major General (Ret'd) M Subid Ali Bhuiyan said the decision is a milestone in the Bangladesh Army, which would boost their moral strength and enhance their image abroad.



Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed, Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam and Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman pay a courtesy call on President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Iajuddin Ahmed after being adorned with new rank at Armed Forces Division in the city yesterday.

'Tata's revised proposal export-oriented'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the Indian conglomerate Tata's revised three-billion-dollar investment proposal 'export-oriented', speakers at a seminar yesterday once again warned that the proposal is surely a threat to the country's energy security.

They said while the country is in the risk of running out of gas and coal by 2016, how the government intends to sell gas or oil to the Indian company at a fixed price for a certain period.

They were speaking at the seminar on 'Political Economy of Tata's Investment and Bangladesh' organised by Dhaka University unit of Oil-Gas, Mineral Resources and Power-Port Protection National Committee in the capital.

Addressing the function, MM Akash, professor of economics at Dhaka University, said the reserved gas and coal will have to be used only for the country's own purposes.

Echoing him, Sheikh Mohammad Shahidullah, convener of the protection committee, said Tata's proposal can only be rejected on the ground of energy security.

Among others, Mokaddem Hossain, professor of Dhaka University, spoke at the function.

'Protect coastal areas from adverse impacts of climate change'

BSS, Dhaka

The Coastal Association for Social Transformation Trust yesterday called for taking immediate mitigation and adaptation measures to protect coastal areas of the country from the jaws of adverse impacts of climate change including rising sea-level.

Addressing a press conference at the National Press Club in the city, Coast Trust Director Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and study team members Mahmud Selim, Atiqul Islam Chowdhury and Shamsuzoha made this call.

They pointed out that 32 percent of the territories is coastal area with about 2400km coastline which will be worst hit by the sea-level rise as well as other impacts of the climate changes making millions of people climate refugees by permanently inundating 10 to 17 percent of the landmass and intrusion of salinity into the mainland.

They warned that the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove

forest and a World Heritage site, will be lost to the sea, if not taken any protective measures like afforestation along the coast and building of coastal embankment and cross dams, river training and halting erosions and planting of cyclonic wind-resistant trees like coconut, palm and bamboos.

The study team of the Coast Trust in their presentations also cited how Bhola, Kutubdia and a number of other off-shore islands along the coast are facing enormous erosion since 1960's and said they are now at risk because of the possible adverse impacts of the sea-level rise.

They suggested actions for sharpening of climate diplomacy in the international negotiation table.

They underscored the need for initiating climate change related research and massive campaign for raising awareness among the people including farmers, fishermen and community across coastal Bangladesh.



Children are engrossed in painting pictures at a drawing competition at Shishu Academy in the city yesterday. Toi Tumbur organised the event to mark the Mother's Day.

Comprehensive policy a must for rehabilitation of the poor

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday urged the government to formulate a comprehensive policy for the rehabilitation of urban and rural poor who contribute to national economy mostly through informal sector.

They underscored the need for allocating a chunk of money from the national exchequer to ensure better education, healthcare services and housing facilities for the poor who constitute majority of the urban population.

The seminar tilted 'Informal economy and urban poverty' was organised by Bangladesh Grameen

O Nagar Daridra Federation (BGND) and Nagarik Uddog at the National Press Club in the city.

Dr Rita Afsar of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies presented a keynote paper at the programme.

Citing a World Bank Study she said 54 percent of poor male and female of the capital are engaged in informal sector that includes construction, transport and communication, domestic services and petty business.

She suggested training for the people engaged in informal sector to improve their skill, management and marketing capacity.

There should also be provisions for easy bank loans for them, she added.

Dr Rita said there should be specific locations for hawkers and vendors in the city where they can gather and sell their products freely without undue interruptions and hassles from any quarter.

Under the social safety net there might be provisions for health insurance or pension insurance for the poor people who would pay Tk 10 per month for the scheme, she observed.

Khushi Kabir, chief coordinator of Nijera Kori, said poverty level in the cities is worsening day by day as

poorer section of villages are rushing to the cities.

If steps are not taken right now, things would get worse in future, she cautioned.

Labour leader Nurul Islam lamented that successive governments did not take any step for the development of people from lower strata of the society.

BGND President MA Zaman chaired the programme where its General Secretary Abul Hossain, Executive Director of Nagarik Uddog Zakir Hossain and Syed Sultan Ahmed of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies also spoke.



Laid-off workers of Sportswear Garments Ltd stage a demonstration in front of the factory building at Tejgaon in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR