



PHOTO: PID
Visiting United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres calls on Food and Disaster Management Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali at the latter's office in the city yesterday.

13 PERCENT STILL PRACTISE OPEN DEFECATION *Washing hands before eating food can halve diarrhoea, RTI patients*

Reveals ICDDR,B survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Health Impact Study Baseline Survey, conducted by Institute of Cholera and Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) last year, revealed that still 13 percent people are practising open defecation and the practice is most common among children and the hard core poor.

The rate of open defecation among the children and hard core poor is 20 to 50 percent, the baseline survey revealed.

UNICEF and Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) organised the survey conducted under the Sanitation, Hygiene, Education and Water Supply in Bangladesh (SHEWAB) project.

The study conducted in September-October 2007 in 120 upazilas of 31 districts revealed that around 3 crore people in those areas spend Tk 137 crore every year to get their health service. The treatment cost for Diarrhoea and Respiratory

Tract Infection (RTI) related diseases alone costs Tk 260 per child, it said.

At the dissemination meeting of the survey at the DPHE auditorium in the city Chief of Water and Environmental Sanitation Programme Paul Edward said the world is observing 2008 as International Sanitation year that aims at making people aware of hand washing.

"The number of diarrhoea and RTI patients would be halved if the practice of hand washing before preparing and eating food and after defecation could be ensured," he said.

Less than 1 percent people in SHEWAB areas were found washing hands with soap before preparing and eating food. Only 17 percent people wash hands with soap or ash after defecation.

The hard core poor households were less likely to wash hands with soap or ash than wealthier households, he experts said.

It was also found that 98 percent people in the SHEWAB area collect

drinking water from tubewells although they have heard about arsenic. About half of the wells found had been tested for arsenic while 9 percent of the households had changed their water source because of arsenic, said Dr Stephen Luby of ICDDR,B while presenting the key-note paper.

Lack of awareness about the dreadfulness of arsenic contamination might be an obstacle to take necessary steps to stop arsenic pollution, he added.

Director of SHEWAB Project Amanullah al-Mahmood, representatives of UNICEF, DPHE and ICDDR,B were also present on the occasion.

Bangladesh government and UNICEF have been jointly implementing the SHEWAB project in association with Department for International Development (DFID).

The first phase of the project will be implemented in 68 upazilas in 19 districts, including the Chittagong Hill Tract areas.

'Stop harassment of fishermen'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Small fishermen and fish traders yesterday placed an eight-point demand, including sufficient allocation in the upcoming budget for the welfare of fisherman.

They also demanded an end to harassment of fishermen and fish traders by law enforcement agencies in the name of action against the catching of Jatka and inclusion of their representatives in the committee preparing the list of fishermen, who used to catch Jatka, for their rehabilitation.

Placing the demands at a press conference in the city, Bangladesh Khudra Matsayajibi Jelej Samity, an association of the fishermen, called

on the government to meet the demands by June 10.

Otherwise they would organise various programmes to mobilise public opinion in their favour. Finally they would be forced to take a decision to stop fishing and marketing of fishes in Narayanganj, Chandpur, Luxmipur, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Pirojpur, Jhalakathi, Bagerhat and Barisal on July 26, the association leaders said.

Other demands include providing easy loan for fishermen and fish exporters; training for at least 10 fishermen in each union and giving them two jalmahals; and steps to rehabilitate the families of fishermen killed or injured in the cyclone Sidr.

General Secretary of the association

Anwar Hossain Shikdar said the fishermen are not using current nets in 11 districts identified as 'Jatka districts', but law enforcement agency personnel are harassing and assaulting them in the name of drive against such nets.

He said the government should rehabilitate the affected fishermen during the Jatka preservation period, but in practice it is not the case.

He also said the association had submitted a list of Sidr-affected fishermen to the fisheries department, but no steps have been taken so far to rehabilitate their families.

Vice-President of the association Shahjahan Kabir Zahir, Shah Alam, Abdul Barel Shikdar, Bachhu Haj, Abdul Jalil, Md Babul Hawlader and Babu Chinta Ram Das also spoke.

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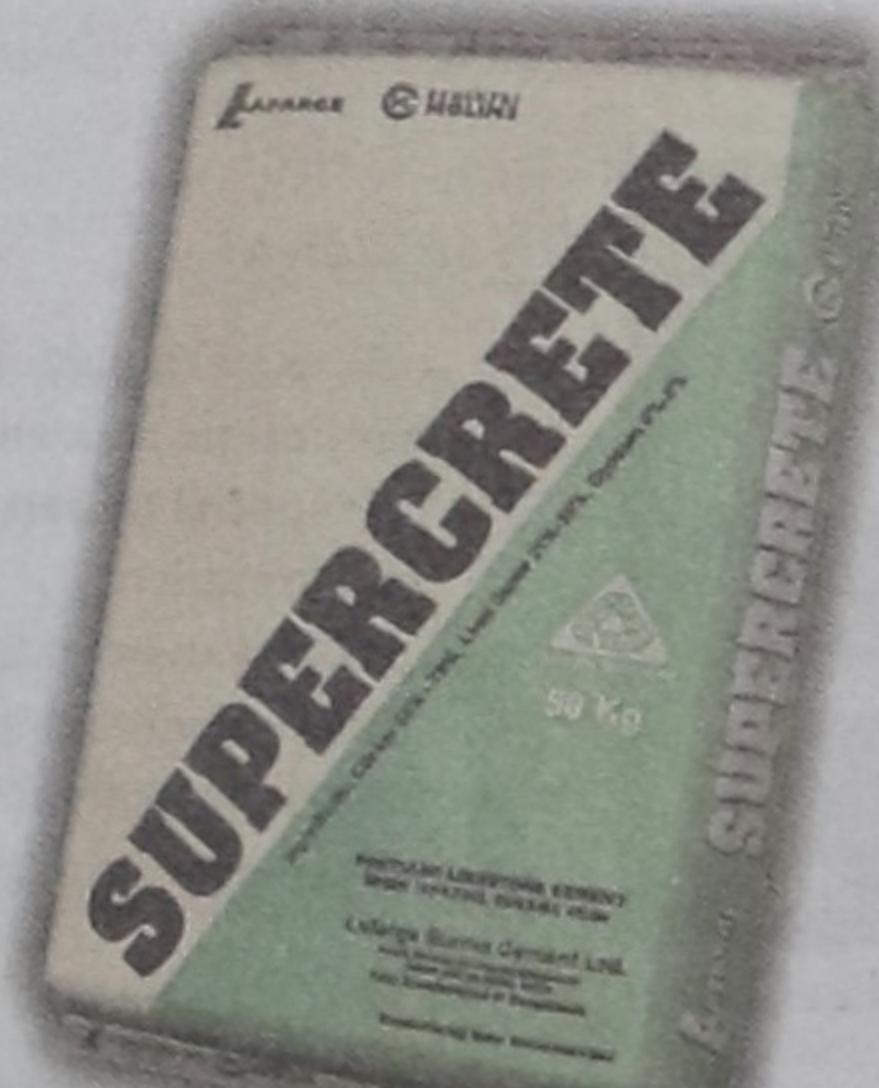
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