

Home, community-based strategies can reduce neonatal mortality

Says study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a press conference yesterday said home and community-based strategies can significantly reduce neonatal mortality by improving newborn care, including identification and management of newborn illnesses outside of a healthcare facility.

They said this at a press conference on 'A study dissemination' at the Sasakawa auditorium of International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B).

The study was conducted by Projahnmo, a community-based newborn care intervention research project, a joint venture of Johns Hopkins University, the government of Bangladesh and a

non-government organisation Shimantik.

The study showed that home-based care strategy reduces neonatal mortality by 34 percent. The study was conducted at three upazilas of Sylhet district with in the time frame of 30 months starting from 2003.

This district was chosen due to highest mortality rate among Bangladesh's six divisions with poor access of health care. The project intervention was implemented dividing the three upazilas with 24 clusters on five lakh people. Population worker ratio was one for four thousand people.

The study intervention was designed into home care, community care and comparison arms. In the home care arm, the female

community health workers identified pregnant women and made two antenatal home visits to promote birth and newborn care preparedness, made potential home visits to assess newborns on the first, third and seventh days of birth and referred or treated sick neonates.

In the community care arm, birth and newborn care preparedness and care, seeking from qualified providers, were promoted solely through group sessions held by female and male community mobilisers.

In the last six months of the 30 months' interventions, neonatal mortality rates were 29.2, 45.2 and 43.5 per thousand in the home care, community care and comparison arms respectively said,

Associate Prof of Johns Hopkins University Dr Abdullah H. Baqui while presenting his study findings at the conference.

Welcoming this intervention, Director of Primary Health Care and Line Director-ESD, DGHS Dr Saleh Md Rafiq said this type of public-private partnership project would be very helpful for the government where it is failing to reach.

The government is yet to finalise a neonatal strategy, he said, adding "More than 80 percent delivery still takes place in the community."

Dr Ishtiaque A Zaman and Dr Shams El Arifeen of ICDDR,B and Programme Manager (CA and SS), DGFP and Member Secretary of TRC Dr Md Ashraf Ali also addressed the press conference.



Participants pose for photograph with former captain of the national football team Alfaz Ahmed and media personality Bonya Mirza at the second round of the competition titled 'Ek Chumukei Pepsi Star' in the port city yesterday.

2nd round of 'Ek Chumukei Pepsi Star' contest held in Chittagong

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The second round of the competition titled 'Ek Chumukei Pepsi Star' was held in the port city yesterday amid much enthusiasm among the youngsters.

Pepsi, one of the most popular soft drink brands in the country, organised the competition at a local restaurant aiming to draw the attention of the youths to games and sports.

Seven lucky winners selected from across the country through the campaign would get a chance to feature in a TV commercial starring international football icons like Beckham, Messi, Ronaldinho, Fabregas, Thierry Henry and Frank Lampard, said the organisers.

One lucky winner would also get a chance to travel to Barcelona to meet star Thierry Henry, they added.

A total of 39 contestants, who won the unique codes from scratch cards distributed earlier in Chittagong, participated in different types of games and activities related to football where they demonstrated their skills.

The participants competed in a range of fun games, including a 60-second show of skill with a football, commentary and others.

Former captain of the national football team Alfaz Ahmed and media personality Bonya Mirza were in the panel of judges who evaluated the footballing skills, expertise and sportsmanship of the participants.

A total of 30 contestants will be chosen from across the country through the second round events out of 600 ones who won the scratch cards distributed during the first round campaign.

Transcom Beverages Ltd Territory Development Manager Iftekhar Aziz said the selection of the second round competition will be announced later.

Matra awards winners of SMS contest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Matra, an advertising agency, yesterday awarded the ten winners of its SMS competition, held to create awareness about HIV/AIDS among the youths.

Popular writer Imdadul Haque Milon distributed the prizes among the winners at a ceremony at Dhaka Reporters' Unity as the chief guest.

The competition was held during the last Pahela Baishakh (April 14 to April 20).

The winners are Jahid Al Hasan of Noakhali, Abdul Hannan of Tangail, Harun-ur-Rashid of East Nakhla para in Dhaka, Sujit Ray of Fultala in Khulna, Mostak Alam of Sena Kalyan Bhaban in Dhaka, Mahbubur Rahman, a student of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, Rusho, a student of International University of Technology, Shah Alam of Brahmanbaria, Ananda, a SSC student and Ashikur Rahman, a student of BBA.

"We received 37,579 SMSs, of which 32,809 SMSs were correct," said popular actor Afzal Hossain.

There are many established media in the world to create awareness among the people, said Afzal adding that SMS is a recent medium to make people aware of certain things.

Creating awareness is the only way to eliminate HIV/AIDS, said Milon.

The winners received a cellphone set each.



King Kanak's Palace at Parer Kabra village under Sharsha upazila in Jessore.

PHOTO: MOHSIN MILON

Kanak's Palace on verge of destruction

MOHSIN MILON, Benapole

Lack of renovation and preservation has pushed the 500-year-old King Kanak's Palace on the verge of destruction.

Standing on 500 bighas of land at Parer Kabra village under Sharsha upazila, the palace could be a place of historic interest if it is preserved properly.

The three-storey building, constructed with lime and brick-

bats, has 100 rooms including drawing and courtrooms on the ground floor, 25 rooms including playing room for women on the first floor and three big bedrooms on the second floor.

The condition of the palace is deteriorating day by day as the plasters of walls and roofs are falling off due to lack of proper maintenance.

Five ponds situated within the compound of the palace also

attract the visitors who come to see it everyday.

After the death of King Kanak, his descendants went to India exchanging their properties with one Golam Rasul Mollah of West Bengal.

The families of Mollah are now living in the palace.

Swapan Pare, a relative of King Kanak, said they are still living on 25 decimals of land near the palace.

He said to save the historic

palace from destruction immediate renovation is needed.

Mujibar Rahman, assistant commissioner of Sharsha upazila, said the palace could be a place of historic interest and they will give all kinds of assistance if the government wants to renovate it.

Villagers and visitors have demanded the renovation of the palace making it a tourist spot.

Cirdap ministerial meet begins in Delhi tomorrow

The government of India and Cirdap are jointly organising a ministerial meeting followed by a ministerial retreat of rural development ministers of 14 countries of the Asia-Pacific region to be held from June 24-26 in New Delhi, says a press release.

The ministerial meeting, which is a special meeting of the Cirdap Governing Council (GC), will be held on June 24 at the Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi and the ministerial retreat to be held from June 25-26 at the same venue.

The programme will be inaugurated by Vice President of India Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari, while Rural Development Minister Dr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh will preside over the ministerial retreat.

Ministers and/or their representatives from all of the 14 Cirdap member countries (CMCs) will participate in both the programmes. The CMCs include Afghanistan, Bangladesh (host country), India, Indonesia, Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Anwarul Iqbal will represent Bangladesh at the meeting.

The special GC meeting will finalise Cirdap's actions and preparations for the high-profile ministerial meeting on rural development to be held in Bangladesh in 2009. It will also discuss the activities of the centre.

Discussions in the ministerial retreat will be focused on 'Sustainable Livelihoods,

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Empowerment of Women'. These sectors' progress in India will be showcased in some of the sessions during the programme. At the end of the retreat, the ministers are expected to adopt a declaration on rural development.

The CMCs have a total population of 2.02 billion people and around 58 percent of them live in rural areas. The region is also home to nearly two thirds of estimated 1.2 billion extreme poor of the world.

In spite of the notable strides made in economic growth in most of the CMCs, vast majority of the people are still not able to meet their basic needs despite their primary role in the development process. There is an urgent need to reassess and address the constraints and the measures to be taken to improve the lives of the rural poor in this region. The meetings and the retreat will try to address some of these issues.

The current food crisis due to rising cost of food sparked riots across many countries. FAO Director General Jacques Diouf warned of a civil war in some countries because of the global food shortage and called for a revamp of the international food system.

The Indian finance minister called ethanol production "a crime against humanity" (Washington Post, April 20, 2008). Thus, attaining the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving the number of undernourished by 2015 has become a nightmare. It is evident that

sustainable agriculture and rural development absorbs a wide range of economic, socio-cultural and environmental issues, the release added.

Recent developments in ICT have introduced a plethora of avenues for development, breaking barriers to human knowledge, to participate and to economic opportunities among others. Indian e-governance initiatives have resulted in improving communications infrastructure and providing service to citizens.

The Indian government's informatics support to central ministries, state governments and local administration has led to a deeper understanding of governance issues which paved way for successful designing and implementation of many e-governance projects like 'Land Records (Bhumi)', 'AGMARNET', etc.

As poverty reduction needs to be focused on particular disadvantaged groups within societies, the issue of woman empowerment, particularly in the rural areas is also an important area to be discussed.

Illiteracy and lack of formal education prevent women in the rural areas from accessing information which is also true for many countries in this region. Sharing India's experience with others will help in exploring more effective approaches and efforts to overcome the gender gaps and biases.

These achievements will be showcased and presented during the retreat to share and enhance the learning experience among the CMCs.



Winners of an SMS competition organised by Matra pose for photograph with the guests at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday. Popular writer Imdadul Haque Milon, extreme left, and noted actor Afzal Hossain, second from left, are also seen.



Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka offers prayers after unveiling the name plaque of Bir Uttam Captain Akram Ahmed Road. The road was previously known as Road No 36 at Gulshan 2 in the city.

Four muggers arrested in city

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested four muggers on Saturday night after they snatched a mobile phone set and a laptop from a man on a CNG-run three-wheeler at Easkaton in the city.

The muggers were fleeing the scene through Minto Road after they intercepted one Rashed Ibne Hasan and robbed him at 9:30pm in front of Janakantha Bhaban.

The victim immediately alerted a police patrol and the team then arrested Mehedi Hasan, 28, Mamun Khan, 26, Mamun Sheikh, 25, and Shahidul Islam, 22, along with the mugged equipment.

Police said the gang regularly uses balm mixed with inflammatory chemicals in the eyes of the victims to flee the scene safely after mugging.

Road accidents kill 2

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed and three others were injured in separate road accidents in Gaibandha and Sirajganj yesterday.

Our correspondent from Gaibandha reports: A teenager was killed and three others were injured

Indian saree worth Tk 1.5cr seized

UNB, Comilla

Bangladesh Rifles, in separate drives, seized 76 bales of Indian saree worth Tk 1.5 crore in Comilla and Brahmanbaria yesterday.

Sources said BDR personnel of 33 Battalion stopped a Dhaka-bound covered-van at Padua Bazar bypass on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Comilla at about 7:00am and seized 40 bales of sarees smuggled from India.

The BDR jawans of the same battalion, in a separate raid, seized 36 bales of Indian saree from a boat in Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria district.

GC Dev centenary July 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Philosophy Department Alumni Association has taken up a day-long programme on July 4 to celebrate the centenary of eminent philosopher and Liberation War martyr Dr GC Dev.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the alumni association on Saturday.

Former students of the department are requested to register their name to attend the programme by June 30.

in a road accident on Rangpur-Bogra highway at Ekbarpur yesterday.

The accident occurred when a speeding Dhaka-bound bus hit a bicycle, killing its rider Limon Mia, 17, on the spot.

The bus hit three other pedestrians while it was trying to flee.

Our correspondent in Sirajganj adds: A Schoolgirl was crushed under the wheels of a speeding bus on the Dhaka-Bogra highway at Soyadabad in the district yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Sureza Khatun, 12, of Soyadabad village in Sirajganj Sadar upazila and class six student of Soyadabad High School.

Police said the accident occurred at around 7:30 am when a speeding bus crushed her under its wheels while she was going to the school.

Chevron scholarships for underprivileged students

Chevron Bangladesh under its annual scholarship program distributed scholarships to 96 students from three schools in Sylhet recently, says a press release.

Thirty-two students each from Airport High School in Sylhet, Ranaping High School and Zoluria High School in Gopalganj were selected for the stipend amounting Tk 6,000 for each student.

The objective of the scholarship program is to support the underprivileged students to continue with their studies while aiming for academic excellence.

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