

Pregnant women most vulnerable during floods Study reveals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pregnant women and lactating mothers are the most vulnerable during the emergency situation like floods and a study revealed that five percent of expecting mothers were unattended and had to deliver their children in open place or on boats during floods in 2007.

The study, conducted by UNFPA Bangladesh and Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) on May last, also revealed that only 27 percent cases of delivery were attended by medically competent personnel while 68 percent by unskilled attendants.

The study was conducted on 95 women in six flood-affected districts following the floods from July to September 2007.

The study titled 'Delivering babies in emergency situations: Where and under which circumstances' was conducted to analyse what had happened to approximately 60,000 pregnant and lactating mothers in six out of 12 flood-affected districts that received UNFPA support.

The study revealed that in all the flood shelters, myriad problems made life miserable for the helpless people particularly children, pregnant women and old people.

There was dearth of skilled personnel to assist delivery of babies, and delivery at the shelters was relatively less with only six percent while deliveries in open spaces was 12 percent, said Prof Abul Barkat while presenting the research findings at the IDB Bhaban.

"It was found that 80 percent of upazila health complexes (UHCs) were using delivery kits for normal

delivery. But the Caesarean kits were not used at the UHCs, because of shortage of skilled health professionals," he said.

Even the pregnant and lactating mothers had to wait for a long time on the queues for receiving flood relief and none of these women received any relief related to reproductive care, he said.

The study recommended for special schemes for distribution of emergency cash to distressed pregnant women for reproductive healthcare and to augment flood-time support to rural pregnant mothers, especially during the third trimesters.

The recommendations also included introducing medical services for pregnant women and lactating mothers along with the victims of diarrhoea and other common diseases during floods,

transportation arrangements for them to go to healthcare centres for safe delivery.

At the same time, upazila nirbahi officers, UP chairmen and members and local NGOs should be involved in optimal use of the kits to deliver babies during the disasters.

Dr Mohammad Moyez Uddin, additional director general of DGHS was present at the dissemination seminar as chief guest while Arthur Erken, UNFPA representative in Bangladesh, chaired the session.

Tabera Ahmed, assistant representative of UNFPA, Dr Jahangir Hossain, Dr Parveen Haq Chowdhury and officials from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Directorate General of Health Services, development partners and NGO representatives were also present.



Police scuffle with the employees of Jiban Bima Corporation while they were trying to stage a demonstration in front of Jiban Bima Bhaban in the city yesterday to press home their demands.

116 affected with arsenic in Goalanda

UNB, Goalanda

Some 116 arsenic-affected people have been detected in the upazila in a recent survey.

Upazila Health Complex sources said a 10-day government survey from March 29 to April 12 detected them in the upazila with symptoms of arsenicosis and most of them hailed from Chhoto Bhakola union.

But only six arsenic-affected people took treatment from the upazila health complex from 2005-2008.

Upazila Public Health Engineering Department sources said in a survey in 2003, some 716 tubewells out of 9,912 were found contaminated with arsenic.

No test was conducted to detect arsenic in tubewells in the last five years here, local people said.

Upazila DPHE engineer Mehedi Millat said tubewells could not be examined for long for lack of sufficient manpower and necessary chemicals.

Relax immigration facilities for LDCs Speakers urge Saarc countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Equitybd recommended some structural changes for Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and also some climate change issues for the government to work on in the upcoming 15th Saarc Summit.

Members of Equitybd (Equity and Justice Working Group) said the recently held Saarc ministerial meeting on climate change would not be effective due to the structural weakness of the regional forum.

They said this at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday.

Equitybd, a forum of grassroots level NGOs, works for advocacy in national and international issues related with national interest.

The forum identified non-participation of the civil society in any kind of Saarc meetings and dealings and ineligibility of issues as subject matters due to its structural weakness.

While presenting a keynote paper, Equitybd Convener Rezaul Karim Chowdhury said Saarc members should discuss on how they can address the food crisis by their surplus food in this region so that no member country of this organisation can take the opportunity of food crisis of another country.

The forum members said the developed members of Saarc are creating different environmental problems by their industrial development. So, these countries should provide relaxed immigration facility for the people of the least developed countries (LDCs), compensation for environmental debt and turn Saarc development fund into Saarc Development Bank.

Bangladesh should hold its stance against 'climate fund' of World Bank, because such kind of fund will be harmful for the country's economy and Saarc members should go for critical engagement with the international financial institutions instead of going for loyal engagement.

Interest of the LDCs should be given priority by the Saarc members while dealing with the groups of developed countries.

Equitybd members Mostofa Kamal Akand, AHM Bazlur Rahman, Shahadat Islam Chowdhury and Sharmin Islam also addressed the press conference.

BCL to launch countrywide tour to realise demands

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday decided to launch a countrywide visit programme to realise their six-point demands including permanent release of AL chief Sheikh Hasina, says a press release.

The decision was taken at an urgent general meeting of BCL held at its central office with its president Mahmud Hasan Ripon in the chair.

The meeting decided that a total of 20 teams of BCL would visit countrywide from July 15 to 19 to press home their six-point demands that includes unconditional release of detained BCL General Secretary Mahfujul Haider Chowdhury Rotan, lifting of the state of emergency, trial of war criminals and curbing price hike of essentials.

Workshop on food policy begins today

METRO DESK

A two-day workshop on 'Research in support of the national food policy: Review of preliminary findings' will begin at Biam Foundation in the city today.

The workshop will present the preliminary findings of research studies conducted under Research Grant Initiative of the National Food Policy Capacity Strengthening Programme and jointly implemented by Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management.

The purpose of the workshop is to share the findings of the research studies with policy makers, media and interest groups, to facilitate dialogue among the researchers and between the researchers and policy makers and highlight implications of the studies in core areas of the National Food Policy 2006.

AKM Abdul Awal Mazumder, additional secretary, Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, will attend the workshop as the chief guest in the inaugural session while Ad Spijkers, FAO Representative in Bangladesh, will attend as special guest.

Stefan Frowein, ambassador and head of the EC delegation, Carey N Gordon, acting mission director, USAID, will attend as guests of honour.

Representatives from government, university, research institutions, NGOs and civil society will attend the workshop.



Participants at a memorial meeting observe one minute's silence to show respect to Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, chief of Indian army during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday.

Prof Yunus, Rabi Sankar honoured at FOBANA conference

BSS, New York

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, Oscar award winner Nafiz, Pandit Rabi Sankar, George Harrison and Osman Chowdhury and other eminent Bangladeshis were awarded in the 22nd conference of Federation of Bangladesh Associations in North America (FOBANA) here.

The FOBANA conference began at Hilton Hotel in New York on July 3. American Chamber of Commerce has organised the conference.

Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Prof Dr SMA Faiz and former adviser to the caretaker government Shafi Sami gave away the awards on the second day of the conference on Saturday.

To mark the conference important seminars on national and international issues and trade fair of various Bangladeshi and foreign commodities were held in front of the ballroom of the Hilton Hotel.

Manekshaw's contribution to liberation war recalled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial for Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw yesterday paid rich tributes to the former chief of Indian army and said his contribution to the liberation war of Bangladesh cannot be forgotten.

The country wins freedom within a short span of time for his outstanding strategy, they added.

They said this at a discussion on Manekshaw who led the Bangladesh-India Joint Forces during the liberation war in 1971.

Liberation War Museum organised the memorial discussion at its auditorium in the city where the speakers recalled the leading role Manekshaw played in achieving the country's independence.

Addressing as the chief guest, deputy chief of the liberation war Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker termed Manekshaw as a highly qualified, intelligent and smart military official.

"We won our independence for his excellent war strategy," said AK Khandker, also president of the Sector Commanders' Forum.

Maj (ret'd) ASM Shamsul Arefin said it would reflect our smallness if we do not express our gratitude to

those Indians who sacrificed their lives and helped us during the liberation war in 1971.

Manekshaw was a humble man and had never asked for any credit for his role during the war, he added.

Liberation War Museum Trustee Aly Zaker said liberation war of Bangladesh and Manekshaw's name are related with one another.

Field Marshal Manekshaw was respectful to democratic norms though he was the supreme commander of the Bangladesh-India Joint Forces, he added.

Dr Sarwar Ali, another trustee of the museum, said it is unfortunate that we did not recognise the role of the joint forces during our liberation war.

Freedom fighters Habibur Alam and Mamtaz Begum also spoke at the discussion.

In another memorial discussion, Bangladesh Muktijoddha Ainjibi Parishad proposed that government should name three roads of the country, honouring Indira Gandhi, the then prime minister of India, Field Marshal Manekshaw and General Jagjit Singh Arora who played a leading role in achieving our freedom.

Nasim's condition unstable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The physical condition of ailing Awami League (AL) leader Mohammad Nasim did not improve since the last 15 days, said a physician at LabAid Hospital in the city yesterday.

"His condition has not clinically deteriorated further, but the improvement that should take place by this time is yet to be seen," said Dr Baren Chakraborty, one of the medical board members formed for the AL leader.

The physicians also said the left side of his body is totally paralysed now which might take a long period to recover, but he would have to live with some residual disabilities.

At a press briefing on Nasim's health condition, Medical Services Director of LabAid AKM Mahbul Haque said physiotherapy has been stopped due to the second time haemorrhage.

Nasim was admitted to LabAid Hospital on June 24.



New WFP representative takes charge

METRO DESK

John Aylieff assumed the responsibility as the World Food Programme (WFP) Representative in Bangladesh, says a press release.

Aylieff has experience in handling a number of international emergency operations throughout his career. He joined the WFP in Ethiopia in 1992 and worked in Africa, Asia and Europe in different capacities.

"I am delighted to have been appointed to serve in Bangladesh," he said on his appointment as the WFP Representative in Bangladesh.

"Bangladesh is one of the key partners for WFP. With the 3rd largest number of poor and hungry people in the country, our work here has a great implication for achieving the global MDGs," he added.

Obituary

METRO DESK

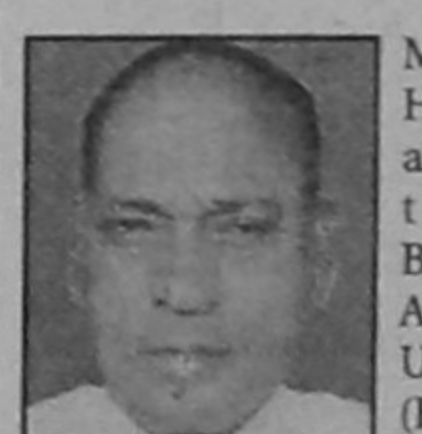


Dr Mohammed Rabiul Hasan, senior consultant of Prince Saud Bin Jalawi Hospital, Dammam, KSA, passed away due to cardiopulmonary arrest on June 4 at the age 55, says a press release.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Eskaton Garden Mosque after Asar Prayer today on arrival from KSA.

He will be buried at Banani graveyard in the city.

Md Abdul Hamid Khan



Md Abdul Hamid Khan, assistant director of Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) Research System, died of cardiac arrest at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital on Saturday at the age of 56, says a press release.

The deceased left behind his wife, three daughters, a host of relatives, colleagues, friends and admirers to mourn his death.

BAU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Md Akhtar Hossain condoled his death and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul. The VC also expressed his deep sympathy to the members of bereaved family.

Atima Maula



Atima Maula, wife of Enayet Maula, a freedom fighter and writer, passed away due to brain hemorrhage at Dallas in the USA on July 1 at the age of 75, says a press release.

She left behind her husband, son, daughter-in-law and grand children to mourn her death.

She trained the women freedom fighters during the Liberation War. Hunters' Association of USA recently conferred her 'The Iron Lady' award.

'Free education from coaching'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Noted educationalist Prof Muniruzaman Miah yesterday said coaching centres are sliding down the quality of entire education system in many ways.

"Including question leakage, coaching centres create a number of complicated problems in the education system. That's why we made a recommendation to remove coaching centres in our education commission report," said Prof Miah, also the former chairman of National Education Commission, while replying to a question at a press conference at the National Press Council in the city.

"We have no control over the entire education system. But, without ensuring quality education this country has no future in the era of globalisation," he added.

He said besides natural and socio-economics problems, globalisation is also a problem for a country like Bangladesh.

"Basically, we are involved in an economical competition. Without converting country's huge population into human resources through quality education it is impossible to march ahead," Prof Miah added.

Bangladesh Principal Council (BPC) and Bangladesh College Teachers' Association (BCTA) jointly organised the conference where teachers' leaders demanded assurance of an edu-

cation-friendly campus in all educational institutes in the country.

"We want campuses free from terrorism, nepotism, drug, ill-motivated politics. We want to ensure that campuses are only for quality education and research works," said Prof Mohammad Mazaharul Hannan, president of BPC, at the press conference.

Prof Hannan said they would hold conferences in all divisions

in the country to add momentum to the movement 'Campuses are only for education'.

Leaders also demanded formulation of an 'Education Service Commission' to appoint competent teachers in the educational institutes.

Prof M Shariful Islam, Principal Harun-or-Rashid Pathan, Liakat Ali and Principal Abdul Halim Patwari were present at the conference.



Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner M Akbar Ali plants a coconut sapling at a tree plantation programme in Chittagong yesterday where Potenga Sea Coast Police Camp will be set up. British American Tobacco Bangladesh Company Ltd organised the tree plantation programme.

SEAT CRISIS IN CTG CITY COLLEGES

14000 students to be deprived of admission this year

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR, Ctg

Around 14,000 students who passed the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examination under Chittagong Board this year would not be able to get admitted in the colleges of the port city for lack of sufficient seats.

Sources said a total of 39,944 students out of 55,002 passed out successfully in the SSC examination under the board this year with a percentage of 72.62, which broke all previous records.

Among the successful students, 4,316 secured highest Grade Point Average (GPA) 5 against the 3,313 of the previous year (2007). A total of 3,305 students achieved GPA 5 from the science group this year while 972 from the business studies group and 39 from the humanities group.

Five government colleges Chittagong Government College, Government Haji Muhammad Mohsin College, Government City College, Government Commerce College and Nasirabad Government Women College top the wish list of the students.

Among the 3,305 GPA 5 achievers from the science group, around 50 percent would not get the chance to get admitted in the

five government colleges as these colleges have only 1,650 seats for the students from science group.

But, the GPA 5 achievers from the business studies and humanities group are in a relaxed mood since there are 1800 and 1350 seats in the five colleges for them respectively.

Sources said these five colleges can only accommodate 4,800 students under these three groups. Of them, Chittagong Government College has 450 seats for science group and 300 seats for humanities group while Haji Mohsin College has 450 seats for science group, 300 seats for humanities group and 450 seats for business administration.

City College has 450 seats for science group, 450 for humanities and 600 for business studies group while Nasirabad Women's College has 300 seats for science group, 300 for humanities and 150 for business studies.

There are only 600 seats for business studies group in Commerce College.

Besides, there are only 26,000 seats for the science, humanities and commerce groups in the 42 colleges including the five government colleges in the port city. As a result, around 14,000 students will have to get admission

in the colleges outside the city.

Principal of Chittagong College Prof Syed Mohammad Shahidullah said that due to lack of infrastructure facilities and sufficient teachers they cannot increase seats for admitting additional students.

He said they have only 80 teachers against the 104 posts for 16,000 students of the college where they provide education in 17 subjects in honours and eight subjects in the masters.

He urged the government to increase the number of colleges and develop its infrastructure and appoint sufficient teachers in the existing colleges so that more students can be admitted.

Principal of Haji Mohsin College Prof Nurul Huda Sikder echoed Prof Shahidullah and informed that they increased 50 seats in the humanities department.

In this regard, Chittagong Education Board Chairman Professor Mohammad Yusuf said he informed the current situation to the government.

"We are trying to ensure quality education at some of the new colleges where the students can continue their studies if they don't get chance at the renowned colleges," he said.