

One dose of vitamin A can save 20,000 infants a year

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 20,000 lives of infants can be saved every year in the country if all newborns are provided with a dose of oral vitamin A each shortly after their birth, experts at a seminar said yesterday.

Following a study conducted by Jivita Project under the auspices of the ministry of health and family welfare revealed that giving a single dose of vitamin A of 50,000 International Unit (IU) within two days of life reduced 15 percent mortality rate of the children under six months of age, they added.

The experts said this at the seminar titled 'Newborn Vitamin A Supplementation Reduces Infant Mortality in Rural Bangladesh' organised at the ICDDR,B auditorium in the city with DGHS Director General Prof MA Faiz in the chair. Health Secretary AKM Zafar Ullah Khan was present at the seminar as the chief guest.

The study was conducted among 16,000 newborns in Gaibandha and Rangpur districts from 2004 to 2007 with the techni-

cal assistance of Johns Hopkins University, USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Sight and Life Research Institute funded it.

The experts said infants are born with low stores of vitamin A, sufficient only for the first few weeks of life. Vitamin A supplementation strengthens host resistance to severe infection and the infants provided with vitamin A experienced reduced fatality of diarrhoea, febrile illness and to a lesser extent, lower respiratory infection.

The 50,000 IU oral dose of vitamin A for the newborns is safe and it costs only Tk 2 of a dose of vitamin A (50,000 IU), they added.

The study conducted by Johns Hopkins University also in India and Indonesia showed reduced infant mortality by 23 percent and 64 percent respectively.

These findings confirm those of two other studies in Asia -- making newborn vitamin A delivery a promising new intervention to reduce infant mortality across South Asia where overall average reduction

may be closer to 20 percent," said Prof Keith P West, prof of infant and child nutrition, department of International Health, Johns Hopkins University, USA.

But the major challenge for Bangladesh is to find the best ways to administer the vitamin within the first two days of life to 4 million babies born each year. Because more than 90 percent of the babies are born at home in rural areas where skilled healthcare providers deliver vitamin to fewer than 15 percent of infants, experts said.

Dr Rolf DW Klemm of Johns Hopkins University, Dr Saleh Mohammad Rafique of DGHS, Biman Kumar Saha of National Nutrition Programme, Prof Fatima Parveen Chowdhury of Institute of Public Health Nutrition, Dr Zeba Mahmud of Micronutrient Initiative, Asia were also present.

The seminar was jointly organised by the DGHS, ministry of health and family welfare, Micronutrient Initiative, Jivita/Johns Hopkins University, USAID A2Z Project, Brac and Helen Keller International.

Contraband drugs seized in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) seized huge quantity of contraband medicine in the port city yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of police seized three sacks of vitamin capsules from a truck in a raid at Asadganj.

Police suspected the medicine - Vita-M, were smuggled from Myanmar to sell in the country.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Kotwali zone Babul Akhter said, "We have information that the capsule is being sold at Tk 60 per packet containing 10 capsules illegally at different pharmacies in the city."

A syndicate has been involved in smuggling the medicine from Myanmar to different parts of the country, he said.



Dhaka University (DU) teachers form a human chain at the foot of Aparajeyo Bangla on the university campus yesterday protesting the assault on a freedom fighter by Shibir cadres. (Story on Page 3)

BARD annual planning confce begins

METRO DESK

The 42nd annual planning conference of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD), Comilla began at its auditorium yesterday, says a press release.

BARD Director General M Khairul Kabir presided over the inaugural session.

A total of 125 participants from government and non-government organisations, autonomous bodies, universities and international organisations are taking part in the conference.

Khairul in his speech said BARD as a national institute for rural development has been performing its duties considering the priorities of rural development and poverty reduction programmes of the government through its research, training and project activities.

He also urged the participants to provide suggests on policy guidelines to finalise the next year plan.

BBC SANGLAP ON RCC POLLS

Mayor hopefuls vow to solve water crisis, remain graft-free

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The two-day BBC dialogue on Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) election at Rajshahi Medical College auditorium has created enthusiasm among the electorates.

All the 15 mayoral candidates answered to the questions from around 500 electorates in two shifts on Monday and Tuesday nights providing scopes for voters to choose the right person in election.

BBC Bangla organised the dialogue in association with the Election Commission. Both the sessions of the dialogue were aired live on Bangladesh Television (BTV), BTV World and Bangladesh Betar.

Kamal Ahmed, senior producer of BBC Bangla Service, moderated the dialogues while Waliur Rahman Miraz, producer of BBC Sanglap series, produced the event.

While answering to a query on water crisis, acting Rajshahi mayor Rejaunabi Duda, also a mayor aspirant, said subscribers are not available even after creating water pipelines in many areas.

Asked why water lines were taken to areas where there is no demand and when 40 percent people are reeling from water crisis, Duda felt embarrassed and said the lines were created to provide services in disadvantaged areas.

Mayor hopeful Forman Ali

expressed optimism that he wants to be an RCC mayor in order to work for people's welfare. Ali, however, vowed to remain incorruptible.

Siddikur Rahman unfolded his plan of collecting water from the Padma to meet the city's water crisis. If the Padma carries sand, he said he would preserve rainwater.

Ruhul Kuddus Tunu said he would arrange two water lines -- one for consumption and another for using household activities.

Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul, Masudul Haque Dulu, Rayhanur Rahman, AHM Khairuzaman Lito, Abdul Matin Khan, Durul Huda, Akhtaruzzaman Babul, Nasir Ahmed Biddut, Abdul Khaleque and Enamul Haque also answered to different questions of the voters at the dialogue sessions.

The mayor aspirants promised to ensure accountability and people's participation in all development activities if they are elected.

A BBC survey revealed that inefficiency is responsible for the present poor civic services and the mayor aspirants pledged for running the local government body in an efficient manner.

BBC Bangla is producing the Sanglap in four city corporations consecutively. After Sylhet and Rajshahi dialogues, the BBC Sanglap will be held at Khulna and Barisal ahead of the city corporation polls to be held on August 4.

US commander meets navy, air chiefs

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting US Pacific Marine Force Commander Lt General Richard C Zilmer passed a busy day yesterday by participating in different programmes.

Lt General Zilmer called on Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam at Naval Headquarters and Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman at Air Headquarters.

During the meeting, he exchanged greetings and discussed matters of professional interest and views about bilateral issues.

Earlier, he made a courtesy call on Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Lt General M Abdul Mubeen at AFD.



Visiting US Pacific Marine Force Commander Lt General Richard C Zilmer calls on Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam at Naval Headquarters yesterday.

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President of Bangladesh Photographic Association Akkas Mahmud speaks at the 23rd annual general meeting of the association at a city hotel recently.

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