

INT'L CONFERENCE ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTHCARE BEGINS IN NEPAL

12 Asian countries pledge to work together

RASHIDUL HASAN from Kathmandu, Nepal

Ministers, lawmakers and government officials from 12 South and South East Asian countries have pledged to work hands in hands to address the issue of reproductive and maternity healthcare for want of which one woman dies in every minute across the world.

The pledge came at a three-day international conference which was inaugurated by President of Nepal Ram Baran Yadav in Kathmandu yesterday.

In separate speeches they stressed the need for cooperation and coordination among the countries specially at the time of present global economic meltdown to address the burning issue of reproductive and maternity healthcare.

They also stressed the need for strong political commitment and urged the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and World Health Organisation (WHO) for giving necessary assistance to address the issue.

At the conference health experts of

UNFPA and WHO disclosed that 5, 35,000 women die each year due to pregnancy and childbirth-related complications of which 99 percent die in developing countries.

They said 4.3 million newborn infants die every year across the world during the first month of life.

"We cannot remain as silent watcher of this death toll," said Ram Baran in his inaugural address.

"We must together pledge that no woman would die while giving birth to a child, a new beginning of life should not coincide with death," he added.

UNFPA's Asia-Pacific regional office has organised the conference to review the current status of the implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDG)-5, which is aimed to reduce maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015.

The conference titled 'Achieving universal access to reproductive health services and commodity security' will be concluded tomorrow with a declaration for achieving universal access for all in

reproductive health through increasing access to reproductive health commodity security (RHCS).

"Maternal mortality is the largest health inequity in the world with 99 percent of deaths occurring in developing countries," said Jagdish Upadhyay, chief of Commodity Security Branch of UNFPA, at the inaugural session.

Health and Population Minister of Nepal Khadga Bahadur Basyal Sarki, Regional Director of UNFPA in Bangkok Najib M Assifi, and UNFPA representative in Nepal Ian McFarlane also spoke on the occasion.

Delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Philippines, Mongolia, Lao PDR and Indonesia are attending the conference.

Bangladesh is being represented by a five member delegation led by former state minister and ruling Awami League lawmaker Mozammel Hossain, who is also chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on social welfare ministry.

6 more police stations in city next month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six more police stations under Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) are going to start functioning in the next month.

The new police stations are Bangshal, Rampura, Kalabagan, Lalbagh, Chalkbazar and Sher-e-Bangla Police Stations. With the new stations the number of police stations under DMP will rise to 41.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad will formally inaugurate the Rampura Police Station on August 2. Sher-e-Bangla Police Station on August 4 and Bangshal Police Station on August 6.

DMP sources said the three other police stations will start functioning in the next month, but no date has been



Taslima Akter, who had been chained up by her neck, waist and two legs for the last 12 days, shows the chains to the police in Cox's Bazar after she managed to escape from her house at East Goalia village in Ramu upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Housewife tortured in medieval style

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

An incident of medieval-style torture of a woman by her husband came to light yesterday when the victim, Taslima Akter, 20, managed to escape from their house at East Goalia village in Ramu upazila and narrated her agonising ordeals to the authorities.

For the last 12 days, Taslima had been chained up by her neck, waist and legs. She was chained to a tree outside her house during daytime and to a pole inside the house at night.

Taslima, however, managed to escape yesterday morning as her husband Abu Syed, who chained her daily, forgot to tie her to the tree. With chains locked around her neck, waist and legs, she came to the Cox's Bazar court building with the help of neighbours and narrated the incident of her torture to Advocate Faridul Alam who earlier had settled a feud between Taslima and her husband.

Advocate Farid then took her to the police superintendent and informed the police official who then ordered the officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station to arrest her husband Abu Syed and file a case against him under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Taslima has now been taken under the shelter of Mukti Nari, an NGO.

The police and witnesses said Taslima, daughter of Syed Alam of Inani village in Ukha, was married to Abu Syed on June 14 in 2007.

After seven months of their marriage, Taslima came to know that Abu Syed married twice earlier. His first wife has died, but he still maintained relations with his second wife Goltaz Begum who stayed elsewhere. Whenever Taslima protested this, her husband beat her up.

Few months later, Abu Syed brought Goltaz to his house and started living with his two wives. Since then, both Syed and Goltaz together had tortured Taslima.

A despondent Taslima finally filed a case against Abu Syed with a Cox's Bazar court last month. However, her lawyer advocate Faridul Alam and others settled the feud between them out of court and sent Taslima to his house on July 15.

But Abu Syed could not tolerate such behaviour from Taslima. At night, he and Goltaz put chains around her neck, waist and legs and locked them. Since then, Taslima had remained in chains.

She has an 11-month-old son, but his father or Goltaz did not take care of him, Taslima told the police.

Bangladesh to get share of US aid for food security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will get a share of the \$700 million, declared as assistance to ensure food security worldwide by the US President Barack Obama, a US delegation in Dhaka said yesterday.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Dr Abdur Razzaque informed the delegation that the government has to downsize allocation in development sectors due to increase in the amount of food distribution under various social safety programs.

The delegation of US Government Accountability Office was led by Denis Rollins, USAID mission director in Bangladesh.

The government's food aid is 26 lakh tonnes in the current year where it was 21 lakh tonnes last year.

The Minister said around 40 percent of the country live under poverty line, but the international organizations in the recent years have decreased food aid to Bangladesh.

The delegation said food security is now a regional and international issue after the worldwide food crisis in 2007 and 2008, and assured him that they would augment food aid to Bangladesh.

The delegation members said they are visiting Bangladesh to know exactly how the country would use the money provided by the US.

RUBBER CULTIVATION

Call to revise decision to cancel lease of CHT land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Bangladesh Rubber Garden Owners' Association have urged the government to reconsider the decision to cancel the lease of 35,000 acres of land for rubber cultivation in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

The parliamentary standing committee on CHT affairs at its meeting on July 20 took the decision to cancel the lease.

At a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday, SM Haroon-Ur-Rashid, secretary general of the organisation, said, "We restarted rubber cultivation in 1989 with huge investment as per the lease contract of 1980. We will be hit hard due to sudden cancellation of the lease."

"Every year we save at least Tk 50 crore as the government would have to import rubber of such amount from abroad. We hope it will rise up to Tk 200 crore by 2020 if the government helps us," he added.

He also placed other demands including allocation of sufficient money for infrastructure development of rubber gardens and security.

Senior Vice President ATM Jafrul Alam, former president Mirza Anwar Hossain, and Adviser Advocate Syed Rezaur Rahman were present at the press conference.



Guests hold a copy of the book 'Abhijhan: Studies in South Asian Archaeology and Art History of Artifacts' edited by Dr Shahhaj Husne Jahan at its launching ceremony at Asiatic Society of Bangladesh auditorium in the city yesterday. From left are Prof AKM Zakariah, Prof Rafiqul Islam, Prof Sharifuddin Ahmed, Prof Mahfuza Khanam and the writer.

Deal with China to build bridge over Arialkha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

China signed an agreement with the visiting Bangladesh delegation in Beijing yesterday to construct the seventh Bangladesh-China friendship bridge over the Arialkha in Madaripur.

"All the costs of the friendship bridge will be supplied by the Chinese government and we want to complete construction of the bridge during our tenure," Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain said reporters at a discussion in the city yesterday.

During the discussion styled 'The Chinese economy in the 21st century: Lessons for Bangladesh', he also said all the procedures regarding the bridge will begin as soon as possible.

A seven-member delega-

tion headed by Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan is now holding a Bangladesh-China Joint Economic Commission (JEC) meeting in Beijing.

The delegation is expected to seek around \$4.68 billion in assistance from the Chinese government to implement 28 projects.

At the discussion organised by Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), the minister also sought increased Chinese help and support for the country's prosperity.

Speaking at the function, Centre for Policy Dialogue Chairman Prof Rehman Sobhan said China now boasts as a leading economic superpower of the world thanks to its remarkable progress in last few decades spurred by different reform works.

Bangladesh has many things to learn, but it should not follow all the Chinese models blindly rather interpret it to its own way, he added.

Former adviser to a caretaker government AB Mirza Azizul Islam said though China has made remarkable progress in last few decades, still there is a huge income gap among people and a huge number of people earn below \$1 a day.

BEI President Farooq Sobhan chaired the function where Lauren Kahea Moriarty, former US envoy in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), said at the beginning China had followed Soviet model of development.

Later, it undertook different tariff reforms and market liberalisation paving the way to economic development, she mentioned.

Proposal to decentralise NU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The high-powered committee for redistribution of colleges under the National University (NU) is likely to recommend the proposal for decentralisation of NU by making six regional centres and attaching the affiliated colleges under the respective centres, said the committee head.

At a meeting yesterday at the University Grants Commission (UGC), the committee members also discussed other alternative proposals.

The committee would submit their final recommendations to the government after consulting with the National Education Policy Formulation Committee, said Prof Nazrul Islam, chairman of UGC and head of the committee.

"We have not sent our final recommendations as we are still at the stage of discussion. But analysing the reality we are giving priority to proposal to establish regional centres and bring the affiliated colleges under the respective centres," he told The Daily Star in the evening.

The main centre would be in Gazipur, he said, adding

that the Quadrat-e-Khuda Education Commission and Shamsul Haque Education Committee had also given this proposal.

"We are taking some more time and we would sit with the National Education Policy Formulation Committee soon to finalise the recommendation," said Prof Nazrul.

He said they will also

recommend for upgrading the traditional colleges which have proper manpower and infrastructure to universities.

The education ministry formed the high-powered 11-member committee with UGC Chairman Prof Nazrul Islam as the convener on March 24 to redistribute 1800 graduate and postgraduate colleges.



Newly appointed High Commissioner of Bangladesh to the UK Dr M Saydur Rahman Khan presents his credentials to Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace in London yesterday.

'Pre-Primary Education Curriculum' launched

DU CORRESPONDENT

With a view to building a bridge between family learning and primary school education, ActionAid Bangladesh yesterday published a book on pre-primary level education.

The book titled 'Pre-Primary Education Curriculum and Teachers Manual' written by Prof Md Delwar Hossain would help students overcome school phobia.

The book has lots of pictures, rhymes and interesting stories and directions for pre-primary level teachers about teaching children in interesting ways.

Chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on education ministry Rashed Khan Menon launched the book at its publication ceremony as the chief guest at Shishu Academy auditorium in the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Menon, also the president of Workers' Party, stressed the need to impart training for teachers to give pre-primary level education an institutional shape.

Speaking as the special

guest, HM Habibur Rahman, director (education), Save the Children, said the pre-primary level learning strengthen the base of lifetime education.

If the pre-primary level education can be ensured for children, it would help develop the standards of primary education, he added.

Rasheda K Chowdhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), also spoke at the programme moderated by Country Director of ActionAid Bangladesh Farah Kabir.

The speakers said pre-primary education is a child right, but the government spends little for the pre-primary education and the children from poorer and rural households do not have access to it.

The government should give importance to the pre-primary education for the children under six for the betterment of the poor and marginalised children, they added.

This book is being used in 400 centres run by non-government organisations across the country.

PARACETAMOL

Probe body may submit report today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The seven-member committee formed to investigate the presence of any poisonous compound in paracetamol and vitamin syrup did not submit its report yesterday as scheduled, and instead will submit it today.

"We have completed testing all the samples and the report is almost prepared. Hopefully, we will submit it tomorrow," a member of the committee said yesterday.

The committee formed on July 21 and headed by Abdul Jalil, joint secretary (hospital), has completed testing of some 300 samples drugs, he said.

While talking to The Daily Star Prof Moazzam Hossain, chairman of the department of Pediatric Nephrology of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and member of the investigation committee also said that the committee has collected samples from across the country and tested them at the Drug Testing Laboratory and three other private laboratories.

Meanwhile, the three-member committee formed by BSMMU to investigate the cause behind the death of five patients from renal failure, submitted its report to the hospital authorities.

The committee headed by Prof Shahana Akhter Rahman of the department of Pediatrics found different reasons caused the deaths from renal failure.

The committee also placed recommendations including a strong vigilance by the government on the manufacture of drugs, ensuring that no pharmacy runs without a registered pharmacist and that drugs are not sold without prescriptions.

Following the death of some 25 children from renal failure, authorities found that Rid Pharmaceutical Company Limited had been using Diethylene Glycol -- a substance used in tannery and battery industries -- instead of Propylene Glycol in some drugs.

Rid Pharmaceutical has since been sealed off and the health minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque has warned of stern action against the company.

He also said that the Drug Administration would be reformed and regular inspections would be carried out at the 187 registered pharmaceutical companies in the country to control the quality of the drugs.

Free eye camp held at Savar

METRO DESK

Sightsavers International in cooperation with Grameenphone organised a free eye camp at Savar municipality building yesterday, says a press release.

This is the 18th free eye camp arranged jointly by Grameenphone and Sightsavers International. Through these camps free eye-care services were provided to the economically disadvantaged rural people who have little or no access to quality healthcare.

The turnout of patients was quite high at the camp with more than 1,026 patients arriving for care. All patients were given routine examinations and prescriptions for refractive error were given to those who required it.

In the previous 17 camps, 26,392 patients received free eye-care support and 3,045 cataract surgeries were performed.

Health is one of the key focus areas where Grameenphone has consolidated its social investments. For this, GP is committed to work with Bangladesh government and other development agencies to make every life count and is focused on improving basic healthcare service quality, developing infrastructure and ensuring access to healthcare for all.

BOU exam schedule changed

METRO DESK

The examination of the 6th semester Philosophy-5 (BPH-6305) and Islamic Studies-5 (BIS-6305) of Bangladesh Open University will be held on August 21 instead of August 7, says a press release.

Examinees have been requested to contact with their concern Regional Resource Centre for further details.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at most places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

It said day temperature may rise 1-2 degree Celsius over the country, Met office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 7:43pm today and rises at 6:27am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 34.7 degrees Celsius was recorded at Rangpur and the lowest of 24.3 at Khepupara. Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.5	25.2	97	93
Chittagong	28.7	25.3	97	93
Rajshahi	31.0	27.4	94	83
Khulna	31.7	25.4	97	84
Barisal	30.5	25.0	98	89
Sylhet	29.0	25.5	97	92
Cox's Bazar	31.5	25.3	89	92