

Call to promote food safety

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is time to promote food safety, as increasing number of people have been suffering from various diseases in recent time due to widespread use of harmful chemicals in foods, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

They said chemicals and toxicity in foods such as the recent melamine contamination issue has once again reminded us that food safety has been a generally overlooked issue in the country.

The roundtable titled 'Food safety for Bangladesh' was organised by the Department of Applied Dietetics and Food Technology (ADFT) of

Daffodil International University (DIU) at Biam auditorium in the city. Highlighting the issue of general food safety, the speakers said diseases such as cancer, ulcer, diabetes, liver and skin problems are on the rise because of toxic contamination in foods.

They called on the government to step up its monitoring and supervision on the importers and exporters of food items, and demanded that all food production facilities must have food technologists.

Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) should play a bigger role in this regard, they added. "The authorities should

guarantee that foods or raw materials for food items are free from chemicals, biological contamination and toxins," said Dr KM Formuzul Haque, former director of Bangladesh Institute of Food Science and Technology (BCSIR).

"The government should also ensure strict supervision and monitoring of food quality and safety programmes," he said.

According to data presented in the roundtable, 85 percent of consumers understand the importance of washing hands before handling foods. However, only 65 percent of them tend to follow the procedure.

Speaking as the chief guest, Industries Minister Dilip Barua said his ministry is taking initiatives to develop BSTI as a modern organisation.

The BSTI has been conducting regular drives against food adulteration since the month of Ramadan and the drive will continue as long as they are required, he added.

Md Sabur Khan, chairman of Daffodil International University presided the roundtable and Vice Chancellor Prof Aminul Islam, former BSTI director general Liakot Ali and Dean Mahoney of the Food Safety Unit, World Health Organisation also spoke.

e-health on the cards

Health minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken steps to introduce e-health or telemedicine system to increase people's awareness of healthcare and to give advice on health to people living in remote areas, Health and Family Welfare Minister AFM Ruhul Haque told the parliament yesterday.

"The civil surgeons of 64 districts have been provided with computers, internet connection and web cameras. Many of them have already started giving telemedicine services through video conference," he said while replying

to lawmakers' queries.

He said web cameras will be supplied to each hospital at upazila and district levels and other major hospitals in the current financial year so that they can provide telemedicine services to people living in remote areas through videoconference.

"Efforts are going on to introduce modern telemedicine services at eight hospitals in the current fiscal year," the health minister said.

He said computers with internet and web camera facility and mini laptops will be provided to each commu-

nity hospital in phases from the next financial year.

He also informed the House that the government has given mobile phone sets to each hospital at upazila and district levels so that local people can take medical advices round the clock by making phone calls.

The mobile phone numbers are shown at the website of the health directorate, he added.

The health minister said the government has taken necessary programmes to implement its dream of building a digital Bangladesh according to the party's electoral pledges by 2021.

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