

Govt still producing obsolete anti-rabies vaccine

Continues to ignore WHO warnings

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Despite repeated warnings from World Health Organisation (WHO), Institute of Public Health (IPH) is still producing obsolete anti-rabies vaccine through the nerve tissue culture process by spending Tk 1 crore every year.

WHO recommended stopping production of nerve tissue vaccine in 2003, 2006 and again in 2009 and suggested to use cell culture vaccine. No country except Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan produces this vaccine in the world.

"The cell culture vaccine is more effective and its reaction is comparatively low. So, WHO suggested to use this vaccine," said Joint Secretary to Public Health and World Health Syed Umar Khyyam.

Using the nerve tissue vaccine also has some reactions like fever, vomiting, diarrhoea and allergy. Even there is no any standard to justify the efficacy of the vaccine in the country, say the experts at IPH.

There is no recognised laboratory for diagnosis of rabies in the country. So, most of the people take the vaccine without knowing whether they need it or not.

"People get rabies only from the bite of infected dogs. But in most cases, they get panicked and take the vaccine," said Habibur Rahman, former deputy director of IPH. "So, often the vaccine proves effective for them and that is why it still has huge demand among the poor."

Every day on an average 180 people come to take the vaccine as it cost only Tk 40.25. There are other

anti-rabies vaccines imported by different pharmaceutical companies with brand names like Rabipur and Verorab. These cost between Tk 1,500 and 2,700, which the poor people cannot afford, said IPH sources.

IPH has been producing the nerve tissue vaccine since 1956. But every year on an average about 2,000 persons die of rabies in the country, according to WHO. Fifty-six percent of these deaths are caused to children less than 15 years of age. Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH) record shows the number of clinically diagnosed rabies cases has increased in the last few years.

In 2001 some 147 people were clinically diagnosed with rabies, which increased to 167 in 2006 and 177 in 2008.

It needs to go for long 14 painful courses if one wants to take the nerve tissue vaccine.

But, the fact is still a huge number of poor people through IPH to take the vaccine every day.

"I don't know anything about its being obsolete. I have just heard from the local people that I can get the vaccine from IPH at Mahakhali. So, I've come here from Tangail to take the vaccine," said Monir Hossain whose son was bitten by a dog six days ago.

When asked, Monir, a truck driver, said, "Perhaps it was a mad dog. Otherwise, it would have not bitten a man."

"Until providing a better option for the poor patients, we cannot stop producing the nerve tissue vaccine just now. Because, around 52,000

patients are treated with the vaccine every year," said Director of IPH Nurul Islam Prohdan.

If the government takes steps to provide the latest tissue culture vaccine like Rabipur and Verorab at a subsidised cost, it will need a separate laboratory, importing of bulk tissue and trained manpower, he said.

"The government has decided to come out from the nerve tissue vaccine and not to investment further in this project. But, as the cost of the tissue culture vaccine is higher, it is taking some time," he said.

The government is thinking of establishing a standard laboratory for producing vaccines and already sought cooperation from WHO, he added.

Hasina sent poisoned food to Khaleda

Suspects Shawkat Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adviser to BNP Chairperson Shawkat Mahmud yesterday said he suspected that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina might have sent poisoned food to Khaleda Zia.

"Sheikh Hasina said the caretaker government served poisoned food to her and she sent food to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. As she [PM] did not take action against those who tried to kill her, there is a suspicion that she might have sent poisoned food to Khaleda."

Shawkat, also president of the National Press Club, said this at a discussion, which was organised to launch a signature campaign to ensure the repatriating of Tarique, who is now undergoing treatment in London.

A newly launched platform 'Tarique Rahman Swadesh Pratyabartan Sangram Parishad' launched the cam-

paign with a target of collecting one crore signatures.

Former Dhaka University vice chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed asked the BNP leaders and activists to refrain from flattering Senior Vice Chairman of BNP Tarique Rahman exaggeratedly, saying it would harm his image.

"We should not cross the limit of admiring Tarique excessively. It would harm his image and his enemies might increase," he added.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir alleged that the Awami League government is carrying out silent killings like they did during 1972-75.

Presided over by Prof Mahub Ullah of Dhaka University, the discussion was also addressed by BNP standing committee members Moudud Ahmed and Rafiqul Islam Mia and Vice Chairman Abdullah Al Noman.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina offers munajat after unveiling the plaque of Bijoy Sarani-Tejgaon Link Road and Tejgaon railway overpass in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Construction of \$2.4b Padma bridge begins in December

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain yesterday said construction of the \$2.4 billion Padma multi-purpose bridge would begin in December this year with a target of finishing the work by 2013.

He placed a detailed schedule on the construction plan of the bridge at a joint press conference with the donors at a city hotel.

Ellen Goldstein, country director of World Bank, said donors desired speedy implementation of the bridge but they would not compromise with the work quality.

Abul Hossain said pre-qualification tender document for the main bridge has been approved in concurrence with the development partners by April 10.

Tender notice for pre-qualification of bidders has been published in the newspapers and they have been asked to submit their proposals by June 8, he said, adding that the date will not be extended further.

According to the plan, the government would appoint the contractor for main bridge construction by October 2010 after finalising pre-qualification of the bidders.

Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Abdul Karim, Communications Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, ADB Country Director Paul J Heyetns and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Representative Takao Toda participated in the programme.

Five short-listed consulting firms will submit their proposals on supervision work by May 13 and their appointment is likely to be finalised by August.

The minister told the press that the government started handing over cheques to first-phase project-hit people by recruiting some NGOs for smooth implementation of the resettlement.

According to the ministry proposal, the bridge, which will be 6.15km in length, will connect 19 districts of the south-western part of the country with the eastern part, including the capital, and it will be linked with the Asian Highway.

Of the \$2.4 billion financing, different development partners have agreed to co-finance about \$2.2 billion, of which the WB will provide \$1.2 billion, Asian Development Bank \$615 million, Islamic Development Bank \$130 million and JICA \$300 million.

Speaker Hamid meets UN secy general

UNB, Dhaka

Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate met UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at his office at the UN Headquarters in New York yesterday.

He was accompanied by lawmakers Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Momin Talukder and Israfil Alam and Permanent Representative to UNAK Abdul Momen, according to a message of the Bangladesh Mission in New York.

The meeting was going on till the filing of the report.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Dr Fokhrul Islam, vice-president of the Sylhet chapter of Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB) and assistant director of Health Directorate, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at a hospital in the capital on Monday at the age of 56.

He left behind his wife, a son and a daughter to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard yesterday after namaz-e-janaza at Fenchuganj upazila headquarters and at his village at Koula of Kulaura upazila in Moulvibazar district yesterday.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Surendra Nath Halder, father of Chaitanya Chandra Halder, court correspondent of The Daily Star, says a press release.

On the occasion, recitation from the Geeta, Kirtan, discussion and a prayer session will be held at his village home at Nayakandi Bajitpur under Rajoir upazila in Madaripur district.

Shraddha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shraddha of noted academician Narendra Nath Gosh will be held at his village home at Pathandda under Kalihati upazila in Tangail today, says a press release.

He passed away on April 7 at his residence.

He left behind his wife, one son and six daughters to mourn his death, said a press release.

Qulkhawani

METRO DESK

Qulkhawani of Tanzim Fahim Jumma Ovi, eldest son of Alhaj Sajjatuz Jumma, founder chairman of Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd, will be held at Lalmatia C-Block Jame Mosque in the city after Asr prayers on Friday, says a press release.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the Qulkhawani.

He will be laid to rest in Banani graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Lalmatia C-Block Jame Mosque after Esha Prayer today.

Ovi passed away in the USA on 13 April at the age of 29.

Work on Kuril

FROM PAGE 16

and Khilgaon flyover--have already started functioning.

The work of Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover, which has remained suspended for the last several years, will also resume this month, said an official of Dhaka City Corporation.

The cabinet purchase committee chaired by Finance Minister AMA Muhiith on March 1 approved the tender proposal for constructing the Kuril flyover at a cost of around Tk 153 crore.

The two firms--Project Builders Limited of Bangladesh and Major Bridge Eng Company (China) JV--will implement the project, said an official of Rajuk.

The flyover is scheduled to be completed within two years since beginning of the work, he said.

On December 17, 2008, the foundation stone of the flyover was laid at the connecting point of the Airport Road and Pragati Sarani to start its work in March 2009.

It will be constructed from the fund of Purbachal New Town Project of Rajuk on about 12.68 acres of land. Of the land, about 10 acres belong to Bangladesh Railway and the remaining is privately owned.

The land acquisition for the flyover has already been completed, said the official.

Three local consulting firms -- Development Design Consultants Limited, The Consulting House and Divine Associates Limited--assigned to conduct the feasibility study, had submitted their final report earlier.

The one-way flyover with four loops (two Y loops and two U Loops) will be 6.7 to 9.7 metre wide and 48 feet high, said the official.

The exit points of the flyover have been proposed to be constructed at Banani and on Airport Road, Pragati Sarani and Purbachal road, he said.

A 13 km long and 300 feet wide road is also being developed as part of the Purbachal project.

The official said the link road would connect Kuril on the Airport Road, which is already serving as a major gateway for northern districts to the city after the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge was made open to the public in 1997.

The objectives of the flyover project are to improve traffic on Kuril intersection, Airport Road, deal with extra traffic generated from construction of the proposed Purbachal link road, reduce vehicle operation and maintenance cost and travel time as well as improve road safety situation.



The wife of Sub-Inspector Goutam Roy, who was shot dead at Dholaihal, breaks down in tears yesterday when Home Minister Sahara Khatun visited the body at Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

30 injured as train derails

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The incident took place when a Khulna-bound passenger train from Chapainawabganj derailed at Darshana junction around 3:00pm.

Railway sources said when the train was taking a turn at Darshana crossing, it got into a trouble and five out of eight coaches derailed from the track, leaving at least 30 people injured.

The two trains -- one is bound for Rajshahi and the other is for Khulna -- remain stranded on both sides of the track.

Shahidul Islam, operation officer of south-western railway zone, told The Daily Star that it will take seven to nine hours to remove the damaged coaches from the track.

Commuter trains to link Dhaka

FROM PAGE 16

concerned to take proper steps to save all the water bodies in the city, she said most of the water bodies and canals here have already been filled up.

The city has now become a slum of concrete and residential areas have turned into commercial areas thanks to construction of unplanned high-rises.

High-rises were allowed during the rule of previous governments without proper planning and even without utilities services, she said, directing Rajuk to find out land for rehabilitation of slum dwellers.

"I stood briefly near the slums besides the railway when I was coming to the function. What miserable lives they are leading in our capital! But why?" she asked.

She said the poor come to Dhaka having lost their homes and property due to river erosion and many other natural disasters.

She added the last AL gov-

DHAKA TODAY

Discussion
Economic Reporters Forum will hold a discussion on 'Investment, situation and ratings'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Award giving ceremony
Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC) will give away HSBC Export Excellence Awards 2009. Venue: Radisson Water Garden Hotel. Time: 7:00pm.

BUP Discussion
Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad will hold a discussion on the eliminating poverty, the first of the millennium development goals. Venue: Bangladesh Economic Association auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Citi Discussion
Citibank NA will hold a discussion session on 'Citi Earth Week'. Venue: Citibank NA, 109 Gulshan Avenue. Time: 5:30pm.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over Sylhet division in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Severe heat wave is sweeping over the regions of Chuadanga and Rajshahi and mild to moderate heat wave over Dhaka, Faridpur, Pabna, Bogra, Khulna, Satkhira and Jessore and it may continue, Met Office said.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:22pm today and rises at 5:31am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 41.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chuadanga and lowest 21.3 degrees Celsius at Sylhet.

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	36.7	28.4	73	63
Chittagong	31.5	27.0	76	78
Rajshahi	40.5	27.0	77	52
Khulna	36.5	27.4	70	64
Barisal	34.4	28.5	74	69
Sylhet	27.8	21.3	82	92
Cox's Bazar	33.0	27.5	69	76



Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda holds a meeting with BNP candidate Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed and Awami League candidate Nurunnabi Chowdhury Shawon at Lalmohar upazila Parishad auditorium in Bhola yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Japan envoy visits SMPP

METRO DESK

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Tamotsu Shinotsuka visited Narsingdi on Monday to see the activities of the Safe Motherhood Promotion Project (SMPP).

The project is jointly implemented by the health ministry, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and CARE Bangladesh, said a press release.

The people of Narsingdi showed and explained enthusiastically to Tamotsu how they implement the activities under SMPP to improve the health status of women and newborns.

On his visit, the ambassador observed among other activities, monthly meeting of Community Support System (CmSS) in Adiabab union of Raipur upazila.

The CmSS is a mechanism for establishing enabling environment to prevent maternal and neonatal deaths in the community by the community people.

The members of CmSS stated that there were three maternal deaths in this community before they formed the group.

However, now they do not have to face such a sad incident because they are working together to ensure safe delivery for pregnant women.

The ambassador along with Civil Surgeon of Narsingdi and Senior Representative of JICA handed over matir banks to the pregnant women with the message that it is important to save money for any emergency.