

40pc fertilisers adulterated

Says SRDI survey

BSS, Dhaka

About 40 per cent urea and non-urea fertilisers available in the market is adulterated and contains highest level of heavy metal that can cause serious health hazards to the people and affect food production and soil fertility in the long run.

Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI) revealed this in a recent sample analysis of different kinds of fertiliser.

The SRDI analysed 3780 samples received from different sources like the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Bangladesh Agricultural Research Corporation (BARC), private importers and entrepreneurs, dealers, law enforcement agencies and NGOs. Of the samples, 1516 were found adulterated.

The samples, received from July 2009 to May 2010, also contain highest 72 per cent adulteration in mixed fertiliser like NPKS and zinc sulfate, said the SRDI survey report.

Adulteration at the rate of 64 per cent has been detected in other fertilisers while in Single Super Phosphate (SSP) it is at 55 per cent, Organic fertiliser at 51 per cent, Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) at 39 per cent, Gypsum at 36 per cent, Boron fertiliser at 35

percent, Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) at 20 per cent, Muriate of Potash (MOP) at 19 per cent and magnesium sulfate at 9 per cent, the survey said.

The nature and degree of adulteration of fertiliser were different and deficit of nutrient contents than the approved specific limit were found to be used in adulteration, it said, adding that some organic fertilisers are made from soil mixing with a little bit urea and granulated with burned mobile for black color.

Besides, locally produced zinc fertiliser sulfate available in the local market are highly contaminated with cadmium or lead, said the report, adding that 40,258 ppm (parts per million) cadmium has been found in zinc fertiliser which is 4024 times greater than allowable limit like 10 ppm maximum approved by the government.

The use of highly heavy metal contaminated zinc sulfate fertilisers may cause health hazard through food chain, the report mentioned.

Application of such adulterated fertilisers because of their low nutrient contents may induce rapid depletion of nutrients from the soil and thereby reduces crop yields, said Dr Zainal Abedin, senior scientific officer of the central laboratory of the SRDI.

Char people suffer from malnourishment

MAHBUBA ZANNAT, back from Shibchar, Madaripur

Noorjahan, on her way to buy a soap, caught our eyes. Mother of five, she is 33 years old but her devastated health gave her a look as if she was no younger than 45.

On our visit to her house, her children, aged between five and 15, were found taking their lunch around 3:00pm -- rice and dal and curry of some green leaves she had collected from a nearby field.

Thanks to the acute poverty and ignorance, a malnourished generation is growing up in the country's char (island) areas where government's nutrition programme has yet to reach and make an impact.

Around one lakh people living in Char Nasirpur, Diara Narikelbaria, Bandarkhola, Char Janajat, Kathalbari and Matbarer Char in Madaripur district are living a subhuman, if not inhuman, life deprived of food, education, medical and nutrition support.

"This is our everyday menu; we can rarely afford egg, milk or meat," Noorjahan said offering a pale smile when asked why her children were taking such low nutrient food.

Many in the area rear hens and cows but the eggs and milk are sold off to earn money, she said as she released a deep, long sigh.

Noorjahan and her five malnourished children represent the women and children of the char areas where every mother gives birth to five to

eight children. Most of these mothers and their children are underweight and there is nobody to educate them on nutrition.

Some two million children

aged between six months and five years are suffering from acute malnutrition in the country, a nationwide survey conducted between November 2008 and January

2009 by the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF and Institute of Public Health Nutrition (IPHN) revealed.

Experts say around two percent of the country's total

surface area is char where some 50 lakh people are living. But unfortunately, these people are marginalised and while the percentage of underweight children under

five is 43 in the country, the rate is 55 in char areas, said Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, who is a senior scientist and head of Nutrition Programme of ICDDR,B.

Contacted, National Nutrition Programme (NNP) authority said they were able to reach to 6.5 crore people of 172 upazilas in last 15 years.

"Following the WFP poverty map, we are running our programme that includes education on nutrition awareness raising, counselling and supplementary feeding in 172 upazilas of the country's 42 districts," said Dr Tahmina Hossain Talukder, assistant director of NNP.

She also said they are covering Madaripur sadar upazila but not Shibchar upazila, where Noorjahan lives.

Reaching the people living in char and hilly areas needs different planning. Those areas will be included in the NNP gradually, Tahmina said.

Terminating the current malnutrition situation a silent disaster, Dr Tahmeed of ICDDR,B said only 20 to 30 percent of the population is now getting comprehensive nutrition support under various government and non-government programmes but it will make no progress if at least 70 percent people are not covered.

"It needs coordination from the highest level of the government to address the issue. The NNP alone cannot do much. It needs coordination between the ministries of food, health and education," he told us.



Anwara along with her children poses for photograph at her village home at Char Bhumihin in Madaripur.

PHOTO: STAR



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina goes through the first copy of "Beautiful Bangladesh", a publication of the Lumix Click to Fame pictorial compilations at Gono Bhaban in the city on July 17. Masaru Maruo, associate director of Corporate Management Division for Asia and Oceania Panasonic Corporation, Japan, handed over the first copy of Panasonic Lumix Click to Fame publication, "Beautiful Bangladesh" to Hasina.

Digital population census in Mar

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh is going to use digital enumeration maps and a unique geo-coding system for the first time in holding the 5th Population and Housing Census in the country.

Preparation is going on in full swing to hold the census in five days in March next year, said the chief of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

Digital enumeration maps and the computerised geo-coding system will be used to collect the data and disseminate results simultaneously in hard and soft formats as well as on the web page, BBS Director General Md Shahjahan Ali Mollah said yesterday.

He said over 70,000 maps, made by aerial photographs, containing each mouja and union across the country would be used in conducting the census.

To conduct the census, Bangladesh will be divided into 3,30,000 enumeration areas, each with about 120 households, the BBS chief said, adding that it will engage 2,700 zonal officers, 530 upazila or thana coordinators, 120 district, 35 regional and 10 divisional coordinators.

There will be 60,000 supervisors to be selected from the local educated youths to work across the country. One supervisor will be engaged for six to seven enumerators in data collection.

The census will be conducted in three phases. The first one will be the main census for collecting basic characteristics of all households and population of the country.

In the second phase, post-enumeration quality check will be conducted to determine the coverage and content error of the main census.

Thirdly, a sample census-collection of data from about one percent household with a long questionnaire on detailed socio-economic characteristics will be done to supplement the main census.

Bangladesh has a long history of census. The first one was conducted in this territory in 1872. Since then censuses have been conducted in every 10 years.

The present government has taken a number of steps to strengthen the capacity of the state-run BBS to conduct the population and housing census.

The Statistics Division has been geared up to produce and provide better data, the DG said. "Everybody will have their photographs, fingerprints in digital format to promote digital Bangladesh by 2021."

According to the election pledge of the government, he said, the prime minister is keen to establish a national population register (NPR) and citizens' database for everyone of the country.

Ensuring reliable data, he said, the US

Census Bureau is providing modern software and scanner while the European Union (EU) and UNFPA are giving financial assistance side by side with the government.

Of the total funding for conducting the population and housing census-2011, Mollah said the government is providing about Tk 145 crore while the EU and UNFPA Tk 102 crore.

The amount is enough for holding the census-2011, not for NPR activities, he said.

The director general said census is considered a vital mechanism for providing an adequate data set on the population at all levels of the administrative units as it provides the basis for sound and informed policy making.

"Quality data is essential to improve people's lives," he said, adding that it would provide population size, growth, composition and distribution for the projection of food, education, infrastructure, employment, healthcare and assessment of various other basic requirements as well as analysis of past, present and future growth of population.

The BBS chief said all types of print and electronic media will be used for census like television tell-off, radio jingle, newspaper supplement, discussion, census film, poster and banner and it will continue for six months starting from October 2010.

RU girl sexually harassed

Expulsion of culprit demanded

UNB, Rajshahi

Female students of Mannujan residential hall of Rajshahi University have blamed a student for sexually harassing a girl and demanding his expulsion.

Over 100 students yesterday submitted a four point demand to the vice-chancellor demanding expulsion of Asaduzzaman and punishment to others involved in such activities.

Asaduzzaman, student of Economics Department and inmate of Shamim Mess, was handed over to the police on Saturday. He was sent to jail when produced before the court.

Assistant Proctor Prof Mushtaque told the news agency that they came to know the incident only after the mother of the victim complained.

He said the demands submitted by the female students will be taken up at the next syndicate meeting.

Polluters fined in Ctg

UNB, Chittagong

Environment department yesterday launched a drive against pollution in the port city and fined polluters.

A team led by Director (Monitoring and Enforcement) Mohammad Munir Chowdhury conducted a drive in the Export Processing Zone and fined a Korean owned dyeing factory, Young

International (Bangladesh) Tk 9,18,400 for environment pollution. Of the fine, Tk 2.5 lakh was realised on the spot.

The team unearthed faults and irregularities in the effluent treatment plant system of the factory.

They found that the red categorised factory has been draining its liquid down the Bay along with a mixture of chemicals and unrefined dust, heavily polluting the water and environment.

3 killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

At least three people, including a child, were killed in separate road accidents in Chapainawabganj, Natore and Nilphamari yesterday and on Sunday.

Our correspondent from Chapainawabganj reports: A minor boy was killed in a road accident in Arambag area on the Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid highway in Chapainawabganj yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdur Rahman, 6, son of Abdur Rahim of Arambag.

Officer-in-charge of Sadar police station said Ahsanul Haque said, the accident occurred at around 9:30am when a Sonamasjid-bound speeding truck hit and critically injured Abdur Rahman while he was crossing the road. The child succumbed to his injuries on the way to Sadar Hospital.

A correspondent from Natore adds: A truck owner was killed by another speeding truck in Banpara on the Natore-Pabna highway of Baraigram upazila of the district.

The deceased was identified as Jahidur Rahman, 45, son of Ahammad Ali of Sarolpur village of Bogra.

Witnesses said the accident took place when a Bogra-bound speeding truck hit a Jessore-bound standing truck near the Banpara Police Investigation Centre in the upazila.

Our correspondent from Nilphamari says: An old man was killed and four others injured when a shallow-machine-run vehicle overturned due to overloading and fell in a ditch at Balagram Choupothi point of the Jaldhaka-Dalia road on Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Jamiar Rahman, 65, of Golmunda Maodhdhapa village of the upazila.

The injured Mashiar Rahman, 42, Parvin Akhter, 35, Rafikul, 70, and Saedul Islam, 40 were admitted to Jaldhaka upazila health complex in critical condition.

One Jahangir Alam was illegally driving the shallow-machine-run vehicle locally known as "bhotbhoti".

Ecneec may okay 3 dev projects today

UNB, Dhaka

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) sits today to consider three development projects including upgrading a road into a regional highway.

Ecneec Chairperson and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will preside over the 3rd Ecneec meeting of the current fiscal year at the NEC conference room.

The projects including upgrading the Signboard-Morelganj-Rayenda-Sharankhola-Bagi road into a regional highway under the communications ministry at a cost of Tk 90 crore.

The other two projects are Pagla-Jagannathpur-Raniganj-Auskandi road construction project (revised), also under the Communications Ministry involving Tk 52 crore, and the intermediary emergency sewerage line construction and rehabilitation project-2 under the Local Government and Rural Development Ministry at a cost of Tk 84 crore.

The meeting will also review the ADP implementation progress of the LGRD Ministry from July 2009 to June 2010 and also approved projects from March 3-31 this year.

Defence ministry starts tree plantation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ministry of Defence inaugurated tree plantation programme yesterday, says an ISPR release.

Defence Secretary Khandaker M Asaduzzaman inaugurated the programme by planting a Rose-apple tree on the ministry premises.

All the departments and organisations under the Ministry of Defence chalked out an elaborate programme of tree plantation.

The programme includes planting of herbal, fruit bearing, shade giving and other varieties of trees having timber value.

Joint Secretary Brig Gen Mohammad Towfiqul Anam and Joint Secretary Khaleda Parvin were present.



Defence Secretary Khandaker M Asaduzzaman inaugurates a tree plantation programme by planting a Rose-apple tree on the ministry premises on Sunday.

PHOTO: ISPR

Korean envoy meets DU VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

Taiyoung Cho, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea in Dhaka called on Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof. AAMS Arefin Siddique at the latter's office yesterday.

They discussed the issues of mutual interests, especially, the possibilities of enhancing the joint collaborative programmes between DU and Korean universities, says a press release.

They also discussed possibilities of increasing the facilities of studying Korean language course at the Institute of Modern Languages.

Director of the Institute of Modern Languages Prof. Abdur Rahim was present at the meeting.

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