

BSTI tests well below par

The sole quality control authority not equipped to detect antibiotics, pesticides in food; tests milk against only a few parameters

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The country's lone quality control authority for food has no mechanism to detect harmful agents like antibiotics and pesticides in any food items.

Besides, its safety parameters set 17 years ago for testing milk are below the standards in developed countries.

Experts say Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) tests milk only against nine parameters when developed nations do that against 23-30 parameters.

All developed countries now examine heavy metals, antibiotics and pesticides in milk, said an official of the Institute of Public Health under the health ministry.

India, for example, tests milk against 23 quality and chemical parameters and 18 chemical adulterants. It can detect up to 300 pesticides in food items. Singapore can detect 500 pesticides, said the official.

Indiscriminate use of antibiotics and fertilisers are the major sources of antibiotics and heavy metals in food items. Farmers apply excessive fertilisers

and antibiotics often without knowing the proper dose.

Against this reality, BSTI's examination should be more stringent to ensure safe food, the experts added.

Its role as the quality controller came under the scanner after the Institute of Public Health found antibiotics, pesticides and heavy metals in packaged milk available in the market.

Only weeks later on June 25, Dhaka University's Pharmacy Faculty and Biomedical Research Centre released their research findings, saying they detected detergent and antibiotics meant for humans in packaged milk marketed by all the top brands.

On the same day, the BSTI submitted a report to the High Court, claiming they did not find anything harmful in the milk samples it examined.

However, it did not check the presence of antibiotics and pesticides. Among other things, the BSTI tested the level of protein, fat, lactic acid, coliform and density.

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Vehicles make bow waves at Subhanbagh on Mirpur Road yesterday afternoon and a biker struggles to make headway in the over knee-deep water. Heavy rain inundated many streets of the capital causing many to suffer at the weekend.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

POVERTY REDUCTION

Bangladesh makes significant stride

Saw fastest reduction in 2004-2014, says UN report; 19m got out of poverty in the period

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh got about 19.3 million people out of poverty between 2004 and 2014, the fastest reduction in UNDP's poverty index during that period.

The 2019 global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), released on Thursday, said the population in multidimensional poverty in Bangladesh had dropped to 74.4 million in 2014 from 93.7 million in 2004.

This year, the index covered 101 countries -- 31 low income, 68 middle income, and 2 high income. The countries have 5.2 billion of the earth's 5.7 billion people.

The index used 10 indicators -- nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets -- to determine different dimensions of poverty.

Across the studied countries, 1.3 billion people or 23.1 percent are multidimensionally poor. Two-thirds of them live in middle-income countries, the report said.

This year's spotlight on child poverty in South Asia revealed considerable diversity, it said. Half of the poor are children under 18 and a third are under 10.

The report analysed 10 countries with a combined population of about 2 billion to illustrate different patterns of reduction in MPI values. It covered every developing region and spanned three income categories: upper middle (Peru), lower middle (Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Vietnam), and low (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Haiti).

The 10 countries made overall progress towards Sustainable Development

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Heavy rain disrupts life in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Heavy rain turned many parts of the capital into swamps yesterday, paralysing normal life and creating a traffic chaos.

Thoroughfares, lanes and bylanes were partially or fully submerged in those areas. At places, human waste and dirt came out of sewers.

The Met office said the rain, caused by active monsoon, started Thursday noon and continued with intervals. It is likely to rain in the city in the 48 hours.

The office recorded 114mm rain between 6:00am Thursday and 6:00pm yesterday in Dhaka, said meteorologist Abdur Rahman.

City planners say it is the inadequate storm-water drainage system, not the rain, that caused the waterlogging.

Yesterday was a weekend and those who went out of their homes for various works found themselves in deep trouble.

Some of them were seen waiting for public transport in rain while others were wading through ankle-deep or knee-deep filthy waters.

The Daily Star correspondents found roads in Rajarbagh, Paltan, Nayapaltan, Motijheel, Karwan Bazar, Mirpur Road, Tejturi Bazar, Manipuri Para, Kazipara, Senpara, Indra Rood areas and many alleys in old Dhaka inundated. In some

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Hunger pangs go, schools now fun

WFP-funded feeding programme brings joy to primary school students in Barguna's Bamna upazila

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR back from Bamna, Barguna

Abdur Rahman does not want to miss school for a single day. Playing with his friends and taking meals together during tiffin period are all he enjoys a lot.

"Eating with friends is fun. I love to go to school," said the class-V student of Ruhita Government Primary School in Bamna upazila of Barguna.

Rahman is not the only student who has such a feeling. Almost all the students of the institution said school has become their favourite place since the meal programme began there.

Funded by the World Food Programme since 2013, this is a pilot project implemented by Local NGO Shushilan and supervised by teachers and locals of the poverty-stricken area.

Because of poverty, many guardians in rural Bangladesh cannot arrange a moderate food for their children. It becomes difficult for kids with empty and half-empty stomachs to pay attention in class and eventually they lose interest in school.

Under the pilot project, students get

khichuri prepared with micronutrient fortified rice, lentil and vegetables sourced from local women growers to meet the need for nutrition.

Bamna of Barguna and Islampur upazila of Jamalpur district were picked up for the pilot project keeping in mind the poverty in the areas.

The goals of the project were to increase school enrolment and attendance, reduce repetition and dropout rates and improve attention and learning capacity of students by reducing hunger.

"Providing hot meal has proved to be really a good step to ensure attendance," said Ibrahim Khalil, head teacher of the school.

"Students are more attentive now as they do not have to remain hungry in class," he said recently.

Ibrahim said the attendance rate was 72 percent in 2013, and now it has risen to 92 percent. "None dropped out from my school last year."

KM Enamul Hoque, deputy director of Campaign for Popular Education, said, "School meal is a good approach to

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'England must block out the noise'

AFP, London

England head coach Trevor Bayliss knows his side must shut out the noise of an expectant nation as they prepare for a first World Cup final in 27 years.

The host nation produced an inspired display to complete an eight-wicket victory over Australia at Edgbaston on Thursday and will meet New Zealand at Lord's tomorrow.

With the showpiece event also being broadcast on a free-to-air platform following an agreement between rights holders Sky and Channel 4, expectations will be elevated even further.

Australian Bayliss, though, has called for calm as England look to go one better than they did in their last World Cup

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Friends of physically challenged Feroz take him to school on Dhanmondi Road-6 recently. Feroz, son of a rickshaw puller, was writing his name on a notebook at a park near Dhanmondi Lake, inset, on March 30, 2018. After the photo was published by this paper, a local NGO-run school enrolled him and bought him a wheelchair so that he could go to school.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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