

April 09, 2019

Meet nutrition demand of adolescents

Speakers urge govt

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Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged the government to emphasise on meeting nutrition demand of adolescents, particularly the poor who drop out of school, to ensure a healthy and productive Bangladesh.

Addressing child marriage as one of the major causes of malnutrition among women, they also demanded its elimination from society for good.

Brac University and Shornokishoree Network Foundation, a non-government organisation, in association with Unicef, World Bank and Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, organised the discussion on adolescent nutrition at Cirdap auditorium in Dhaka.

“Adolescent girls who drop out of school mostly fall victims to child marriage and become mother at an early age. Adolescent pregnancy makes both the mother and her children malnourished,” said Prof Nazma Shaheen of Dhaka University.

“Such process of malnutrition continues in a vicious circle, affecting the adolescent mothers generation after generation. We have to stop it,” said the professor of nutrition and food science.

She also suggested that government focus on school feeding programme -- providing students a mid-day meal, which will help reduce malnutrition as well as school drop-outs.

Speaking as chief guest, Abul Kalam Azad, principal coordinator for SDG Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, said families, particularly mothers, have a big role to play in ensuring nutritious food for children.

“Nutrition can be ensured with low cost food, as it is mostly dependent on the cooking process and food habit,” said Azad.

He urged youngsters to engage in physical exercise and sports, along with taking nutritious foods.

Prof Shamsul Alam, senior secretary of the Planning Commission; Sheepa Hafiza, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra; Nizam Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Shornokishoree Foundation; and Malay Kanti Mridha, a director of Brac James P Grant School of Public Health, also spoke at the programme, among others.