

Mobile swimming pool in city school

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DHAKA, APR 20: A portable swimming pool was introduced in a city school on Wednesday, as observational studies found that urban children are becoming more vulnerable to drowning, the leading cause of deaths of all children aged 1-18 years. Set up on an area of three kathas, the 12-metre long, five-metre wide and one-metre deep pool is expected to cater to the need of swimming training for 5,000 school children in the next five years, providers of the makeshift facility said on Wednesday.

Students of Agragati Shikkha Niketan as well as other schools in Agargaon area will have the chance to get training on swimming free of cost for six hours every day, five days a week. The imported rubber pool, costing nearly Tk 500,000 in total, will require 75,000 litres of water that will keep clean and maintain water quality through the use of chemicals and washing machines.

Australian high commissioner to Bangladesh, Justin Lee, at the inauguration said his government has donated an amount of 600,000 dollars to set up an international drowning research centre in Bangladesh and save thousands of young lives from drowning.

“Over 18,000 children lose lives in Bangladesh every year, but much of the deaths can be prevented through simple interventions-teaching children on how to swim and little precautions,” the envoy said, adding experiences from Australia can be shared in Bangladesh as it is done in Thailand and Vietnam.

“Swimming is a vaccine to protecting your children and preventing their premature deaths,” added executive director of the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh (CIPRB) Dr AKM Fazlur Rahman. This is for the first time, he said, a school-based swimming pool has been introduced in the country with Australian help.

“The new pool will not only teach children swimming but also equip them to rescue peers during drowning,” Rahman said, urging the government to facilitate spaces to set up more low-cost mobile pools in the capital, home to 140 million people, 40 per cent of who belong to child group.

Director of CIPRB Dr Aminur Rahman said the number of children with swimming expertise has been dwindling in the cities due to lack of swimming facilities in urban areas. He said there are only 31 swimming pools under public ownership across Bangladesh, while only few others are with big private hotels.

“None of these pools are easily accessible for general masses,” he said, hoping high for success of his new initiative - - mobile swimming pool-in Dhaka. Trainers have been hired to train school children — 10 every hour-to educate urban children about swimming and protecting their lives, he added.

Preliminary indications from death records of drowning in Cox’s Bazar seashore show that the lives lost in the sea were mostly young adults and with urban background. Almost none of them knew how to swim.

According to private Yasir Life Guard, which conducts rescue operations at Cox’s Bazar Laboni point only, said 60 people died in 12 years-mostly students in Cox’s Bazar, Inani, Teknaf and Saint Martin’s Island. Family histories show the victims were generally from urban areas, especially from Dhaka, and do lack of swimming skills. “The swimming situation in big cities is alarming, but guardians are least bothered about it unless their children are in danger,” opined master trainer Amirul Islam. BSS