

Safe swimming for children

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DHAKA, APRIL 18: In a bid to teach children survival skills in water, the International Drowning research Centre-Bangladesh (IDRC-B) will launch a portable pool for urban children in the Agragaon area of the city on Wednesday. The centre is going to launch the pool as part of its SwimSafe programme, a unique initiative in Bangladesh that has already taught swimming to over 100,000 children in the rural areas.

The pool, which is 12 metres by 6.5 metres, has been set up in the Agargaon Government Colony Lions Agragati Shikha Niketon. It will work as an effective tool to prevent drowning of children in urban Dhaka. A pool has also recently been introduced in the Mirpur area of the capital.

The IDRC-B director, Dr Aminur Rahman, said contrary to common belief, a large number of children in the urban areas become victims of drowning. "Unfortunately, high rate of child-mortality is not only confined to rural areas. Urban children do not have the same opportunities as rural children to familiarize themselves with water," he added.

"The portable pool in Agargaon is the first of its kind in Bangladesh. Hundreds of children could learn water survival skills as part of our SwimSafe curriculum. Similar pools have already been set up in Thailand and Vietnam with great success. We are hopeful that the pool will attract thousands of children in Bangladesh as well," he said.

Each year, 18,000 children under the age of 18 drown and it has become the leading cause of death of children in the country.

Partners of the IDRC-B - the Royal Life Saving Society Australia, The Alliance for Safe Children and AusAID - have provided technical and financial support for the project. The Australian high commissioner to Bangladesh, Dr Justin Lee, is expected to attend the launching ceremony.