

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE

Schools flounder in dealing with drug problem among students

Mohiuddin Alamgir

WHILE most secondary and higher secondary educational institutions in the country deal with varying degrees of drug problem in relation to their students, 11,000 of 32,000 such institutions are yet to form anti-narcotic awareness committees, while the remaining ones mostly have ineffective and dormant committees.

Teachers said drug addiction leads to problems of poor attendance, falling grades and a generally nefarious environment at educational institutions.

Against this backdrop, Bangladesh observes the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking today with the theme 'Listen First: Listening to children and youth is the first step to help them grow healthy and safe.'

At a government school

head teachers' conference in capital on May 19, a majority of 335 head teachers attending the conference admitted they were dealing with varying degrees of drug addiction problem among their students.

The Department of Narcotics Control Bangladesh took an initiative to form anti narcotic committees at schools in 2009 and Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education joined the initiative in November 2015 and so far 21,000 schools, colleges and madrasahs out of 32,000 formed such committees, according to the officials.

A number of DNCB and DSHE officials said that most of the anti narcotic committees are not functioning properly.

'A lack of monitoring is holding back proper implementation of the committees,' DNCB preventive education deputy director

Robiul Islam said.

DSHE director administration SM Wahiduzzaman said monitoring 'is not adequate and we will take more steps to improve it'.

Such committees are headed by the head teacher of each educational institution and comprise of four other members - two teachers, a guardian and a student.

A committee is supposed to hold a meeting once a month, host two awareness meetings with all students to discuss the negative consequences of drug abuse, distribute posters, leaflets, souvenirs, bulletins, brochures and booklets among students.

'Most schools do not hold any meetings,' said a DNCB official.

There is no official statistic on drug addiction rate among students and the total population, the latest Annual Drug Report

however estimated that there are around 5 million drug abusers in the country.

The report prepared by DNCB published in June 2015 also said that 65 per cent of drug abusers are aged 15 to 30 years.

The report said that 68 per cent take drugs influenced by friends and 25 per cent take drugs out of curiosity.

DNCB officials said many students also take drugs driven by issues related to being a student including competition, stress, frustration, dissatisfaction, and unhealthy expectations.

School can play a vital role in stopping abuse of drugs as they can be informed of the fallouts of narcotics through awareness programmes during the early days of their life, said Wahiduzzaman and Robiul.