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Report

# Launch nationwide school feeding programme

## Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday underscored the need to launch nationwide school feeding programme in order to reduce dropout rate among primary level students.

Such programmes would help meet the nutrition needs of children, make their school-hours more interesting and create income-generating opportunities at the grassroots level, they added.

They also suggested strengthening coordinated efforts of the government and non-government organisations and local government bodies in rural areas to make the school feeding programme a success.

The Coastal Association for Social Transformation (Coast) Trust organised the seminar titled 'Implementation of School Feeding Programme for Primary Level

Students and Reality of PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper)' at the National Press Club in the city.

Assistant Director of Coast Trust Md Aminur Rasul said the dropout rate among primary school students is around 10 to 30 percent. During the school hours, students of coastal areas or monga (near famine situation)-ridden areas usually remain engaged in different kinds of jobs that ensure a meal for them, he said.

If the students are provided with tiffin, it would help meet their nutrition needs as 56 percent of students suffer from malnutrition, he added.

Besides, if food is given to students, they would attend classes with much enthusiasm and the dropout rate would decline eventually, he said.

The meal at schools would not be their main meal of the day. Rather, it would be their supplementary meal of the day, he added.

If such programmes are initiated at the local level, employment opportunities would also be created for the local people, said the Coast Trust official.

Involvement of local community, especially through Union Parishad, NGOs working in the respective areas and the government agencies, would ensure the non-profit character of such venture, he said.

Although the PRSP contains outline of the programme, no such programme has been taken up so far, he said, adding that such programme should be launched in the coastal and monga-affected areas immediately and then across the country in phases.

Former lawmakers Nurul Islam and Li Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman also spoke at the seminar moderated by Prof Tofail Ahmed of Chittagong University.