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# UN: Bangladesh launches new children's vaccine

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**Ap** Associated Press

updated 9:05 a.m. ET, Thurs., Jan. 15, 2009

DHAKA, Bangladesh - Bangladesh began immunizing children with a new combination vaccine Thursday that will protect against some severe forms of pneumonia, meningitis and four other deadly diseases, the United Nations said.

The vaccine is being provided under the South Asian country's routine immunization campaign for the nearly four million children born every year, the U. N. Children's Fund said in a statement.

Health workers began vaccinating children Thursday in the southwestern district of Khulna, 85 miles (136 kilometers) southwest of the capital, Dhaka, UNICEF said.

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The agency said the vaccine could save the lives of an estimated 20,000 Bangladeshi children under five each year from deadly bacterial pneumonia and meningitis alone.

The 5-in-1 vaccine — given three times to children in their first year — also guards against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and hepatitis B, the agency said.

The combination vaccine was deployed last year in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

UNICEF said they expect that almost every child will receive the vaccine, based on previous immunization campaigns in Bangladesh that have covered 90 percent of children.

Bangladesh has earned praise in recent years from the U.N. and the World Health Organization for curbing child mortality rates through immunizations.

"This lifesaving vaccine represents an important step forward in

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preventing childhood diseases in Bangladesh," the statement quoted A.M.M. Nasir Uddin, Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, as saying.

The Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization — a partnership with UNICEF, WHO and the Hib Initiative — funded and initiated the \$95 million vaccine's deployment in Bangladesh. They will produce more than 27 million doses over the next two years.

Bangladesh — a nation of 150 million people — is also investing \$5.6 million in the project.

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On the Net:

The United Nations Children's Fund: <http://www.unicef.org>

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