

Free pads to tackle 'period-shame' school skipping in Bangladesh

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Girls in rural villages will get free sanitary pads to stop them skipping school during their periods as a result of social taboos around menstruation, a Bangladesh minister said Monday.

So-called "period shame" in the highly conservative nation of 168 million people has caused more than 40 percent of Bangladesh schoolgirls to stay at home during menstruation, researchers say.

"This is very alarming. We cannot put their future at stake," Junior Information Minister Murad Hasan told AFP.

Hasan said the "unavailability of menstrual pads" and "cost of [hygiene](#) products" were mostly to blame for the absences in village schools where some 63 percent of the population lives.

"Poor parents often prefer their girls to stay at home during their [menstrual period](#) rather than buying them hygiene products," he added.

Hasan, a doctor and former junior health minister, said the government planned to roll out the scheme by early next year in some 90,000 villages.

Dhaka, together with aid agencies, has been trying to raise awareness about menstruation among parents and schoolgirls.

Only six percent of schools in the South Asian nation include menstrual

hygiene in their curriculum, according to a recent World Bank report.

Leading women's rights activist Maleka Banu welcomed the move.

"We have been demanding it for a long time. It's a positive thing that such initiatives are seeing the light tackling this [social stigma](#)," Banu, the general secretary of the female advocacy group Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, told AFP.

"This initiative will surely help the dropout rate to go down."

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