

# 'Situation worse in rural health complexes'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Country's healthcare services are being hampered as many posts of doctors are lying vacant in hospitals and health complexes, said a study.

It said the situation is particularly worse in rural health complexes at union and upazila levels.

The study was conducted by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine of the United Kingdom in 14 districts of the country.

The study report was presented at a national workshop on Research Findings Dissemination of the Health System Development Programme (HSDP) yesterday.

The Health Economics Unit of the health and family welfare ministry organised the workshop.

According to the study, 55 per cent post of doctors at upazila health complexes (UHC) and 30 per cent in district hospitals are lying vacant.

Absence of doctors at family welfare centres at union level is depriving the poor people of health facilities.

Although the infrastructure facilities in health sector are well developed in comparison to that of many other developing countries, the utilisation of these facilities is very low, according to a study on 'the situation analysis of the maternal health care delivery system in Bangladesh'.

In another study on 'enhancing health system performance using procurement and supply of goods', Charles Normand, professor of London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said the health ministry provides 40 to 50 per cent of the total demands for different medical and surgical requisites (MSR).

The lowest proportion (34.7 per cent) of demands is met in case of community clinics, he said.

While conducting the survey on 1,211 patients, it was found that 91 per cent of them do not know what medicines are available in the hospitals, he added.

The study showed that 75.5 per cent of the patients bought medi-

cines from outside for their treatment in hospitals.

This figure was lowest in case of upazila health complex (64 per cent) and highest for district hospitals (78.1 per cent).

They were forced to buy medicines from outside the hospitals because the service providers asked them to do so.

Regarding the qualification of the staff in logistics management of the health sector he said 15 per cent of the staff acquired post graduation degree, 27 per cent MBBS degree, 45 per cent below graduation. The staff lack training and also experience.

On the other hand, the procurement period is very lengthy in Bangladesh, he added.

Barbara McPake, head of Health Policy Unit of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, made a presentation on the international perspective of HSDP and future plan in Bangladesh.

Health Secretary M Fazlur Rahman, World Health Organisation Representative Suniti Acharya, Senior Health Advisor and First Secretary of DFID Neil Squires, and Additional Health Secretary Md Lutfor Rahman Chowdhury were present at the inaugural session of the workshop.

## Reunion

UNB, Dhaka

A reunion of 92 batch (honours 1988-89) of Dhaka University Mass Communications and Journalism Department will be held here on September 26.

All interested students of the batch have been requested to contact Robayet Ferdous Mukti, assistant professor, Journalism Department, room 1014, Arts Building, Dhaka University, according to a press release.

Telephone numbers Robayet (9661920-59, ext 4408, 0171-616972, Chapal (0171-679809), Masrur Ronie (0171-173262), Mishu (018-132727) and Shahriar Ronie (0171-536323).



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil addressing a meeting in front of the AL central office in the city yesterday protesting arrests and police action on its women leaders and activists during hartal hours on Saturday.

# Resist WTO move to patent life forms

## Speakers tell SAARC Peoples' Forum

REAZ AHMAD, Back From Tangail

Pro-environmental activists and farming groups from South and Southeast Asia yesterday urged the least developed countries (LDCs) to resist the move of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to patent life forms including plants, animals and biological inventions.

The call came at the concluding plenary session of a three-day meeting of the 3rd SAARC Peoples' Forum at Delduar in Tangail. Over 150 participants from 10 Asian countries as well as farmers' representatives from Europe took part in the meeting.

They urged Bangladesh, the leader of LDC countries, to keep agriculture out of the trade agreements under the WTO.

Co-organised by several regional networks of non-government organisations and hosted by UBINIG, a local development organisation, the forum was aimed at articulating common concerns towards WTO ministerial meeting in Cancun next month.

In response to the recommendations of the forum, State Minister for Agriculture Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir assured them of airing their concerns to the government.

"Globalisation is deepening the economic crisis of least developed countries and our government is aware of the dangers of WTO regulations including the hazards of genetic modified organisms", he added.

Alamgir said he would try to initiate a dialogue between the activists and the commerce minister before the latter leaves Dhaka for joining the Cancun meeting.

The state minister said piracy of "our genetic resources and indigenous knowledge have to be stopped and we're drafting laws in that direction."

Handing over a memorandum to the state minister, Farhad Mazhar of UBINIG said "the situation will deteriorate if Bangladesh views 'trade' only as an issue of traders and businessmen

and represent commercial interests rather than peoples' interest in WTO negotiations."

"In principle, we support the LDC Trade Ministers' proposal to establish international mechanism to protect genetic resources, traditional knowledge and farmers' rights, he added.

Farhad Mazhar said this is not a trade issue but an issue of rural livelihoods and human rights. This is also an issue of upholding the rights of indigenous people and particularly of women.

"Therefore, we would not want any instrument related to these issues forming part of the WTO. We strongly support the proposal of Dhaka Declaration to ensure non-patentability of all life-forms," he added.

Participants from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Philippines, Cambodia, France and host Bangladesh urged the policy planners in LDCs to review the agreement on trade related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) and agreement on agriculture (AoA) and discuss the issues in the legislative assemblies before signing these treaties under WTO banner.

They alleged that TRIPS would give patenting rights on all life-forms thereby, peoples' rights on common natural resources and heritages and the AoA would commercialise agriculture depriving the farming community of its rights on seeds and indigenous farming knowledge.

The forum participants agreed that if the LDCs could establish farmers' rights on agriculture and attain food sovereignty, the trend of trafficking in women and children would automatically diminish.

South Asia Network on Food, Ecology and Culture (SANFEC), Resistance Network Against Trafficking in Women and Children, Genetic Resources Action Network International (GRAIN) and Pesticides Action Network, Asia Pacific (PAN-AP) jointly organised the SAARC Peoples' Forum, the third in Bangladesh followed by first one in Colombo in 1998 and second one in Kathmandu in 2000.

Talking to The Daily Star on the sideline of the SAARC Peoples' Forum, Assistant Director of the French Federation of Organic Farming Jacques Caplat said he believed both the USA and European Unions, two

major farm-subsidy providing economies, would commit cuts in farm subsidies at Cancun meeting but "in reality, they will not oblige."

Sarojini Rengam, executive director of Kuala Lumpur-based Pesticides Action Network Asia Pacific (PAN-AP), blamed multinational companies for marketing banned pesticides like Paraquat and Endosulfan in the third world countries.

She said Paraquat caused eye irritation and nose bleeding while Endosulfan caused disorders in nerves system and reproductive health.

## 8 get life term for murder in Cox's Bazar

BSS, Cox's Bazar

Eight persons including two Awami League leaders were sentenced yesterday to life for killing a person more than four years ago.

Mobinul Haque, son of late Fazlul Haque, of Sikdar Para village of Pekuya upazila, was beaten to death on April 16, 1999.

District and Sessions Judge Bhubani Prasad Singh pronounced the judgement in a jam-packed courtroom in presence of five of the convicts yesterday, court sources said. Three convicts are absconding.

The convicts were also fined Tk 5,000 each, in default, to suffer one year more rigorous imprisonment.

Of the eight convicts, five are now in jail custody. They are: Ali Ahmed, Rawshan Ali, Jasim Uddin and AL leaders Faridul Alam and Azamgir.

Those tried in absentia are: Abul Kalam, Altaf Miah and Abul Hashem.

Mobinul, a cousin of State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed, was mercilessly beaten up by the convicts with sticks and rods at around 7pm on April 16 in 1999 over previous enmity.

The judge handed down the verdict after examining 13 prosecution witnesses and a number of evidence of the murder.

## Padma-Jamuna-Meghna Bachao Andolon formed

BSS, Dhaka

Experts and environmentalists yesterday urged all to protest Indian Inter-River Basin Water Transfer mega project and said that Bangladesh would be the worst victim of such a project.

They also called upon all to participate in a series of long marches along the Padma-Jamuna-Meghna river basins for protesting the unilateral decision of the Indian government to go ahead with this disastrous project which would destroy the ecology, environment, livelihood and economy of Bangladesh.

They were addressing a meeting held at National Press Club. A 101-member Padma-Jamuna-Meghna Bachao Andolon was also formed for launching a massive movement against this devastating move of India.

Members of the newly formed national committee are chairman of editorial board of the Daily Ittefaq and New Nation Barrister Mainul Hossain, Dr Sirajul Islam Chowdhury, Daily New Age editor Enayetullah Khan, Jai Jai Din editor Shafiq Rehman, National Press Club president Reazuddin Ahmed, engineer Professor Zahiruddin Chowdhury, engineer Mahbubur Rahman, vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Jashimuddin Ahmed, International Farakka Committee convenor Atiqur Rahman Salu, CARDMA chairperson Hasna J Moudud, BCAS director Dr Atiq A Rahman, IUCN Bangladesh national committee chair Mahfuz Ullah, BELA director Syeda Rizwana Hasan, engineer Dr Si Khan and National Press Club general secretary Shaikat Mahmud.

Chairman of Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) Quamrul Islam Chowdhury was elected as the member secretary while BSS chief news editor (Bangla) Golam Mohiuddin Khan will act as coordinator.

The meeting decided to launch a nationwide campaign about the adverse impacts of the Indian mega project, create public opinion, conduct study and collect data and chalk-out strategy.

The proposed Indian project would increase the saline intrusion in the southern Bangladesh leaving a devastating impact on ecology and environment.

## Qulkhwani

The qulkhwani of Surjaban Begum, mother of Md. Shirajul Islam Mollah, director of Bengal Tiger Cement Ind. Ltd. (Taiheiy Cement) will be held at Danga of Narsingdi today, says a press release.

She died at her village home on August 9.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and milad mahfil will be held on the factory premises at Danga, Narsingdi after Johr prayers today.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Photo exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of BPS-BINU National Photo Contest and Exhibition 2003, organised by Bangladesh Photographic Society, will be held with President Iajuddin Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Shilpakala Academy auditorium. Time: 10.30am.

### Painting exhibition

The opening ceremony of the sixth solo painting exhibition of Farida Shilpi will be held with Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin as chief guest. Venue: Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.30pm. The exhibition will remain open till August 22 from 3.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

### Art exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of a solo art exhibition of Mostafa Kamal will be held. Venue: Alliance Francaise gallery, Mirpur Road. Time: 6.00pm. The exhibition will remain open till August 29 from 9.00am to 12.00 noon and from 5.00pm to 8.00pm daily.

### Film show

Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Mackenna's Gold'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

### Arsenic seminar

A seminar on 'Arsenic problem of the areas on the bank of Ganges, Meghna and Brahmaputra', organised by Dhaka Community Hospital, will be held with Dr Dipankar Chakravarty of Jadavpur University, Kolkata as guest speaker. Venue: Hospital auditorium, Boro Moghbazar. Time: 10.00am.

### Workshop

A workshop on 'Injection Safety' will be held with Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 10.00am.

### Youth conference

The inaugural session of a two-day National Youth Conference, organised by the Youth Against Hunger, will be held. Venue: Poet Sufia Kamal auditorium, National Museum. Time: 11.00am.

### Seminar

A seminar on 'Problems of old Dhaka' will be held with city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: Nagar Bhaban auditorium. Time: 4.00pm.

### DU seminar

A seminar on 'Islam and the contemporary world', organised by world religions department of Dhaka University, will be held. Venue: Room 5009 of Arts Building. Time: 11.00am.

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### BRAC seminar

A seminar on 'Globalisation: Forces, prospects and challenges', organised by BRAC University, will be held. Venue: Seminar room 104 of the university, Mohakhali. Time: 3.00pm.

### JSD roundtable

A roundtable on 'National programme to solve national problems', organised by the central committee of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, will be held with party President Hasanul Haq Inu in the chair. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10.00am.

### Publication ceremony

The publication ceremony of two books titled 'Nirbachito Kabita' and 'Amar Bangladesh Amar Bhabna' authored by Alamgir Kabir, will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.

### Blood donation

A voluntary blood donation camp, organised by the Independent University, Bangladesh will be held. Venue: University campus, Baridhara. Time: 10.00am to 4.00pm.

## DHAKA TOMORROW

### Film show

Academy Film Society will screen a film titled 'Jean de Florette'. Venue: 21/C, Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

### Women seminar

On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Hazrat Fatema Zahra (AS) and Women Day, Iranian Cultural Centre organises a seminar on 'Women and Development'. Venue: Auditorium of the cultural centre, Dhanmondi. Time: 5.00pm.

### BCF council

The inaugural session of the two-day sixth Council of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation (BCF), Dhaka University unit will be held. Venue: Aparajeo Bnagladesh. Time: 11.00am.



PHOTO: STAR

Owners and workers of the brick fields form human chain at Mohammadpur in the city yesterday protesting the killing of businessman Mohammad Barkat Ullah who was succumbed to his bullet injuries at DMCH yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Jatiyatobadi Jubo Dal president Barkatullah Bulu addressing the meeting of the central executive committee in the city yesterday.