

## Parliamentary body on AIDS prevention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seventeen lawmakers belonging to ruling BNP and Jamaat and the opposition Awami League and Jatiya Party have formed a parliamentary caucus styled as 'Bangladesh Parliamentary Support Group on Prevention of HIV/AIDS and Trafficking' to launch social movement against the deadly scourge, said a press release.

Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui heads the caucus while 16 others were made vice-chairs with Abdu Shahid, the chief whip of the opposition, as the first among them.

Other members of the parliamentary group are Ashraf Hossain, ANM Ehsanul Haq Milon, Zahiruddin Swapan, Dr Mohammad Ali, Esrat Sulatana Elen Bhutto, Rashiduzzaman Millat and M Illius Ali of BNP, Lt Col (Retd) Faruk Khan, Dr Mohammad Abdur Razzak, Hamida Banu Shova, Advocate Promode Mankin, Syed Ashraf Islam and Tanzim Ahmed (Sohel Taj) of the opposition AL, Golam Mohammad Quader of Jatiya Party, and Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus of Jamaat-e-Islami.

"We are unanimous irrespective of our parties on the cause of fighting the deadly HIV virus and the barbarous trade in human trafficking," said a statement signed by the lawmakers on September 17 and released yesterday.

The lawmakers observed that it was their bounden responsibility to make the people, who voted them to

the House, aware of the deadliness of the scourge of AIDS and the bane of human trafficking.

According to the government data, the country has at present only 248 HIV-infected people, but the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNAIDS say the number of HIV-infected people is not less than 13,000 in Bangladesh.

Twenty-six people have reportedly died of HIV infection so far in Bangladesh since the first case was identified in 1989.

Human trafficking has been further adding to the risk of HIV as the trafficked women and children are usually sexually abused and traded.

The parliamentary group also appointed a coordinator, three policy advisors, and one technical consultant to support its activities.

Media for People (MFP), a development research organisation, was made the coordinator while Assistant Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Dr Nazmus Sahar Sadiq, Executive Director of the People's Empowerment Trust (PET) Shishir Shil and Regional Coordinator of the ActionAid TIM Zahid Hossain, the policy advisors and Dr Nazrul Islam, head of Virology Department, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), the technical consultant.

## 3.94 lakh polybags seized

BSS, Chittagong

Police recovered 3.94 lakh pieces of polythene bags worth about Tk 3.50 lakh from a Cox's Bazar-bound passenger bus at Lohagara upazila headquarters yesterday

and arrested two persons.

The arrested are bus driver Abu Hanif and helper Shahidul Islam. Police, however, could not identify the real owner. The bus was also seized.