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Participants at a roundtable on 'The Nursing Profession in Bangladesh: Challenges and Opportunities' held at Sonargaon Hotel in the city yesterday, organised by American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) in association with The Daily Star, Research, Training and Management International and Katalyst. The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the roundtable.

ROUNDTABLE ON NURSING PROFESSION

'Upgrade nursing education to improve national healthcare'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While there is a huge demand for qualified and skilled nurses both at home and abroad, the government has no specific policy or guidelines to upgrade nursing education to meet international standards, experts at a roundtable said yesterday.

There is also no provision enabling the universities and medical colleges to easily start graduate nursing programme and no nursing curricula of international standard have been developed for such programme, they said.

American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) in association with The Daily Star, Research, Training and Management (RTM) International and a technology-related advisory firm Katalyst organised the roundtable titled 'The Nursing Profession in Bangladesh:

Challenges and Opportunities' at Sonargaon Hotel in the city.

"There is a shortage of qualified and skilled nursing workforce in the global market, including the UK, USA and Middle East, which is estimated to continue up to 2015. If Bangladesh can quickly start international standard nursing programme, it can capture a large portion of this potential market," said Dr Carmen Z Lamagna, vice-chancellor of AIUB.

Dr Ahmed Al Kabir, chief executive officer of RTM International, said the private sector will need 5,000 skilled nurses in the next five years, but the country is unable to produce adequate number of qualified nurses. "If the private sector finds no skilled nurses in the country, it will be forced to bring them from outside," he said, adding that some hospitals, including Apollo, have already been hiring nurses from abroad.

Presently, the country has 38

nursing institutes offering four-year diploma courses and only one nursing college offering a two-year BSc course. Twelve more nursing institutes are under construction, according to the directorate of nursing services.

Bangladesh and Pakistan do not have enough institutes for graduate programme in nursing while such programmes are widely available and recognised in India and Sri Lanka, Dr Carmen said, adding that the rest of the world focuses on graduate programme.

The government is yet to finalise a certification process for private sector applicants for BSc programme while the institutes lack adequate number of teaching staffs, she said.

She also said there is no centre for Commission on Graduate Foreign Nursing Scheme in the country through which a nurse can qualify to work abroad. The country has also no policy to send skilled nurses abroad, she added.

Leading professionals also observed that the nurses in the country are not recognised financially and socially.

Nurses receive only Tk 1975 to 3920 per month, as against Tk 134,000 in developed countries, they said. Nurses also do not enjoy social or hazard benefits, as is usual in the developed world, they noted.

Nursing education in the country is also not mainstreamed, causing a problem of image building for nurses, Rahima Zamal, a lecturer of College of Nursing, said and urged the government to formulate a policy to mainstream the nursing education in universities.

The media highlights only the role of doctors in healthcare and forgets that the nurses also play a significant role, she observed. On the other hand, the ratio of doctor to nurse in the country is only 3:1 while it should be 1:3.

Bangladesh Nursing Council's Registrar Shamsunnahar said the nursing institutes lack adequate facilities for proper training for nurses and there is no-one to guide nurses when they join a hospital.

"Lack of equipment and facilities in the hospitals is also an obstacle to improving their quality," she pointed out. Absence of a nursing teachers' training institute is also responsible for the shortage of qualified teachers in the nursing institutes, she noted.

According to the directorate of nursing services, 40 per cent of nursing posts in the country are vacant due to lack of suitable candidates.

Nursing College teacher Mafiz Ullah said the employees in the nursing sector are not given due incentives. Rather, they are kept in the same position for a long time, he added.

Expressing concern over shortage of nurses, Dr Jafar Ahmad Hakim, director in-charge of directorate general of family planning, said the posts at upazila and union-level health complexes should be increased.

Rubayat Sarwar of Katalyst said most private hospitals and clinics do not employ as many nurses as required only to maximise their profits.

Mafruha Sultana, deputy secretary of health ministry, told the roundtable that the government is drafting a policy on graduate programme on nursing.

Moderating the roundtable, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said that if the professional bodies cooperate, his paper would be willing to introduce awards such as the 'Best Nurse of the Year' to recognise the services of nurses in healthcare and also to promote the public profile of this profession.

Former director of the directorate of nursing services Khadiza Begum, nurses from different institutes and medical professionals also spoke.

Sainik League calls hartal in Sylhet Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet district unit of Bangabandhu Sainik League called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the district on Sunday to protest attack its rally by the JCD men in the city Wednesday. Sainik League also called for withdrawal of finance minister's 'unwanted comments' about the people of Sylhet.

Jatyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), students' wing of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) foiled a Sainik League rally at the court point area in the city Wednesday.

BNP city unit also called a rally protesting 'vandalism and anarchy' in the capital and other places in the country.

About 40 JCD activists on motor-bikes in a procession from Central Shaheed Minar ransacked the rally venue. They damaged the chairs, benches and the loudspeaker and foiled the rally.

Non-govt pry teachers to observe fast unto death from May 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Once again, the non-government primary school teachers are going to observe fast unto death from May 28 to press home their one-point demand for job nationalisation.

Before starting the fast at 4:00pm, they will hold a rally at Mukhtangan in the city at 1:00pm.

After the rally, they will march towards the prime minister's office (PMO) with plate in their hand to submit a memorandum to the prime minister at 2:00pm.

The fresh programmes were announced by the leaders of Bangladesh Non-government Primary School Teachers' Association, a platform of 80 thousand non-government primary school teachers working at 23,000 registered primary schools across the country, at a press conference at its Tophkana office yesterday.

Speaking about their grievances, association President Mohammad Shamsul Alam said their salary ranges from Tk 2375 to 3000 with no annual increment, time scale, bonus or pension.

But they are to comply with all service regulations like government primary school teachers, he added.

In an emotion-choked voice Shamsul Alam said despite its repeated promise the government is doing nothing substantial to materialise their demands.

Association Secretary General Mrigendra Mohan Saha, Senior Vice-president Shahidul Islam Khan, Swapan Kumar Roy, Joint General Secretary Kazi Mozammel and other leaders were present at the conference.

US embassy closed May 28

UNB, Dhaka

The American Embassy offices, including The American Centre, Archer K Blood American Centre Library and the student counselling service, will remain closed on May 28 in observance of Memorial Day, a national holiday of the United States.

People might go for mass upsurge any moment

Duta leaders tell rally

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) yesterday said people might go for a mass upsurge any moment against the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government as they are now fed up with its misrule.

Addressing a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar, they said people are now annoyed with this government for its failure in all sectors.

The speakers said the government has failed to contain unabated price hike of essentials and damage of national resources, institutions and industries.

They said the government has no moral right to remain in power as it virtually failed to ensure security of life to teachers, students, workers, farmers and general people.

Addressing the rally, Duta

President Prof Sharif Ullah Bhuiyan said the government has been hatching conspiracies to remain in power through poll rigging in next parliamentary election.

He said it is a matter of deep regret that irregularities, corruptions, politicisation, and nepotism have pervaded country's all educational institutions during the regime the present government.

Duta General Secretary Prof Dr Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman, former Duta president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former DU Vice-chancellor Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, former DU Proctor Prof Dr AKM Nur-un-nabi and some other teachers were present at the rally.

Earlier, Duta brought out a procession from DU Arts Building that ended at the Central Shaheed Minar.

DEATH OF NASREEN Proper probe demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meeting yesterday demanded proper investigation into the death of Nasreen Pervin Huq, country director of ActionAid.

Nasreen died following an accident at the car park of her residence at Dhanmondi on April 24.

Nasreen Huq Memorial Committee organised the meeting at the Naripakkha office in the city.

The speakers said the real cause of the car accident should be established in order to facilitate the investigation.

They called on the investigators to look into some issues such as delay in filing the case in this regard.

Maheen Sultan, convener of the committee, said the committee has exchanged letters with ActionAid Bangladesh and ActionAid International Board to know about the progress of the investigation.

She said the ActionAid should form a separate probe committee to help the law enforcement agencies find out who is responsible for the accident.

Representatives of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Ubining and Naripakkha and lawyers, human rights activists and researchers were present at the meeting.



PHOTO: STAR

The 14-party opposition combine stages a demonstration at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday demanding resignation of the chief election commissioner and cancellation of the draft voter list.