

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1
were unfounded and untrue. One wonders how an esteemed newspaper like The Daily Star could print such an article without first checking its facts. That the article appeared during the first day of the semi-annual meeting of our international board of trustees, and at a time the Board is planning to begin searching for the next Executive Director is a curious coincidence. In fact, the centre is a highly respected international research institute whose results are known throughout the world and whose efforts locally save the lives of thousands in Bangladesh each year.

2. An obvious error in article states that "within the last decade over 100 major research protocols were funded by ICDDR,B but not a single report on these researches was published or made public." This statement is obviously false given the thousands of scientific papers that have been published by scientists at the Centre. This could easily have been understood if the writer had taken the time to visit any medical library or even consulted the internet. The Daily Star regularly uses information from our quarterly bulletin in its newspaper, and several articles from The Daily Star have praised the work of the Centre. My office has an entire file containing many articles from The Daily Star reporting on the findings from the ICDDR,B. Even last week, two articles written by the Bangladesh scientists at the Centre were published in two of the most prestigious international journals - the New England Journal of Medicine, and the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Each of these

articles was accompanied by an editorial highlighting the importance of the findings. In addition, the Centre publicizes important new findings quickly through a quarterly bulletin for medical professionals (the Health and Science Bulletin) and to grass roots workers through newsletters (Shayasta Sanglap). In addition, dissemination seminars are held regularly including the ASCON and ASCODD conferences, and the scientists from ICDDR,B participate regularly in seminars and symposia in other institutions. Lack of publications and dissemination is hardly an issue.

3. These publications have an impact all over the world. The development of methods for treating diarrhoeal diseases, including oral rehydration solution. Has saved the lives of over 40 million children all over the world during the last two decades. Other research efforts toward helping children pneumonia, reducing deaths in newborns, and mothers, and assisting the government in their family planning programmes are well known. These contributions were recognized by the first ever Gates Award for Global Health in 2001 and by the Independence Day Award in 2005.

4. The writer attempted to distort the work of the Centre to create the impression that Bangladesh scientists were somehow disadvantaged. In fact a majority of the scientists at ICDDR,B are from Bangladesh. They regularly develop projects and publish their results. As a result of their productivity and their contribution to health research, many of the Bangladesh scientists have now been promoted to

the international level.
5. The article also does a disservice to the more than 2000 staff members of the Centre both in Dhaka, Matlab, and other areas of Bangladesh who are literally working night and day to help the poor people of Bangladesh. Last year more than 110,000 patients sought care from our Dhaka Cholera Hospital, about 20,000 of whom had a life-threatening diarrhoeal disease. The lives of these mothers, fathers and children were saved through the efforts of our hospital staff.

6. Recruitment of all staff at the Centre is totally fair and open. For staff at the highest international levels, the international Board of Trustees must approve these selections and they take this responsibility seriously. The board has an established and transparent process for the selection. As an international institution, the ICDDR,B attempts to recruit the best and brightest individuals from around the world - including Bangladesh and including one of the Division Directors who is from Bangladesh. Recruitment for all local positions is also through a totally transparent process. We seek to find the women and men who are best qualified to fill the job.

7. Among the allegations, the writer says that there have been no reports from 1985 cholera vaccine field trial in Matlab. In fact, more than 40 publications have been published in international journals. The vaccine was found to be totally safe and based on the experience in Matlab; it was later evaluated in other countries, most recently in Mozambique where its effectiveness was again reconfirmed.

Due to the knowledge gained in Matlab and these other countries, the vaccine is now licensed in Europe and many countries and the World Health Organization now recommends its use for persons who are vulnerable to cholera epidemics. One of the Centre's activities now is to develop a formulation of the vaccine to be practical and inexpensive so that it can be made available to people in this country who choose to take it. It is important to note that all studies at the ICDDR,B involving humans are approved by our Ethical Review Committee including the 1985 study. This committee is composed primarily of Bangladeshi people outside the Centre who also take their responsibility very seriously.

8. I especially object to the photo of the students who are shown working in the immunology laboratory of the Centre. At present, 27 M.Sc. students from different universities in Bangladesh are working diligently toward their degree, and they are using the facilities of the ICDDR,B to help them achieve this goal. The scientists at the ICDDR,B coordinate with faculty supervisors at these universities to facilitate the training experience of these students. The caption under the photo belittles the efforts of these students who are contributing to the scientific output from Bangladesh while at the same time, preparing for a future career in health research.

9. In summary, the article by Mr. Khan was most unfortunate. The fact that the Daily Star chose to print the article with so many obvious misstatements was doubly unfortunate. The ICDDR,B is the only such international health research

institute in a developing country. Other international centres have headquarters in Geneva or New York, but we are proud to claim that the headquarters for this international centre is in Dhaka. Under the direction of a distinguished international Board of Trustees, we work for the people of Bangladesh in partnership with the ministry, provide opportunities for Bangladeshi health professionals, and build the knowledge for life saving solutions that benefit poor people all over the world.

Our Reply:
We generally do not publish full text of such big rejoinders, especially when they fail to respond to points we have raised. We are doing so to show before the public how David A Sack's rejoinder avoids answering the main questions we have raised. We address his rejoinder in detail and provide our response below.

In paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 David A Sack details international publications of ICDDR,B's research works but fails to elaborate as to how Bangladeshi medical science and especially medical practitioners have benefited from those. His rejoinder mentions some international publications but does not mention how these research works were made available to Bangladeshi people or professionals. He refers to some The Daily Star articles that referred to ICDDR,B works or events but this cannot be taken as substitute for research publication that were made available internationally, but not, to our knowledge, nationally.

In paragraph 4 and 5 Sack says that majority of scientists in the centre are Bangladeshi and that they are not

disadvantaged. He fails to answer our question about salary discrepancies of Bangladeshi staff in violation of the ICDDR,B Ordinance. There is also no response from Sack about Bangladeshi scientists receiving research grants from project fund only, while foreign scientists receiving the grants from a special fund. Instead, he tries to play on emotion by saying how thousands of Bangladeshi workers are working day and night. This is precisely our point. When Bangladeshis are working so hard, day and night, then why pay them a discriminatory salary?

In Paragraph 6, the Executive Director makes general comments about the openness in recruitment policy. In our report we made two specific allegations. Firstly, appointment of the Human Resources Director, who was head of after school extracurricular activities at an international school prior to joining the post. Secondly, we raised questions about the appointment of former auditor of the centre as a Finance Director. This is clearly a case of conflict of interest. Questions naturally arise when an auditor is offered a job in the same organisation whose financial propriety he is supposed to be investigating.

The Executive Director clearly avoids answering these two specific issues.

In Paragraph 7 he mentions about the cholera vaccine, experiment of which was conducted in Matlab, being available in Mozambique and many other countries. This is precisely the

point we made in our article. The vaccine for which our people were experimented upon, is now licensed in Europe and sold in many other countries except ours. We did not even know about these experimental developments. Is it fair that Bangladeshi people should not benefit from a medicine, in the discovery of which we were experimented upon?

In conclusion we reiterate the fact that we made allegations or discrepancies in salaries, discrepancies in fund allocation for research, recruitment and management but Sack has failed to address any of the questions raised. A Mushtaque Chowdhury's letter and our reply

We also received a letter from A Mushtaque R Chowdhury, Dean of James P Grant School of Public Health, who denied having told The Daily Star correspondent that BRAC was planning to take over the International Training Division of the ICDDR,B. He said that he was misunderstood by the correspondent. The BRAC School of Public Health is a joint collaboration between BRAC and ICDDR,B. At the moment the BRAC school students spend half of the time at ICDDR,B utilising their facilities including the library, classrooms, laboratories, filed sites and more importantly the researchers most of whom also teach at the school.

Our reply: We are further investigating this point, and reserve our response at this point.

Terrence H Hull's letter and our reply
Terrence H Hull, the Chair Board of

Trustees, ICDDR,B in a letter claims, "The Board is responsible for reviewing senior appointments made at ICDDR,B and can affirm that there are no anomalies in the appointment procedures or selections as asserted by our article. Those assertions contained neither evidence nor attribution to a source that could have possibly had any knowledge of the matter..."

Our reply: Like Sack, Terrence H Hull also gives a general reply and does not answer the point we raised about two specific senior level appointments, which should have been reviewed by the Board of Trustees. We specifically ask Hull, "did the Board review the appointment of the Human Resources Director? What qualified a former instructor of after school program of an international school to qualify for such a senior post? As for the director finance, doesn't the Chair of the Trustee Board find anything curious in the appointment of an auditor during an audit, as its finance director?"

Our readers would be well served and we may even stand corrected if the Chair of the Board of Trustees is so kind enough to let us know how the Board discharged responsibilities in appointing these two directors. For the sake of transparency and accountability, we will welcome any information by the Chair other than affirmation that "...that there are no anomalies in the appointment procedures or selections as asserted by our article."

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Interested candidates are requested to send their application with CV by 30/06/2006 to the Human Resources Manager.

Nandan Kanon Housing Ltd.
House-3, (3rd Floor), Shaista Khan Avenue, Sector-4, Uttara, Dhaka-1230

Proposal for providing pot plants, photocopy/reproduction, electrical maintenance & courier services

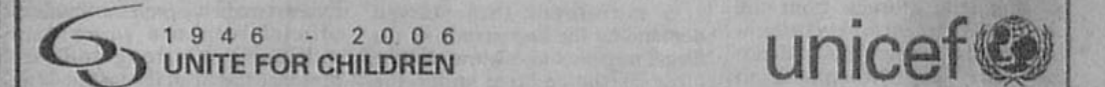
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Interested organization must submit 3 (three) copies of technical proposal and 2 (two) copies of financial proposals in separate sealed envelope, addressed to the Supply & Procurement Section, UNICEF-BCO, BSL Office Complex, 1 Minto Road, Dhaka-1000. Cost should not appear in the technical proposal.

The proposal package must be dropped at or before 15:00 hours on July 10, 2006 (Monday) in the Bid Box No. 2 (for Service Contracts) located at UNICEF Reception Area, Third Floor, Right Wing, BSL Office Complex (Dhaka Sheraton Hotel Annex Building), 1 Minto Road, Dhaka-1000.



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES
684-686 Bara Maghbazar
Dhaka 1217

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The bidder(s) will have to deposit 2.5% of the value of the consignment as Earnest Money (refundable**) in the form of a demand draft from the schedule bank in favour of International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies at the time of submission of bids. The successful bidder (s) will have to deposit additional 5% of the value of the consignment as Security Money (refundable**) at the time of signing the purchase contract.

The International Federation reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever and is not bound to accept the lowest bid.

Head of Delegation
International Federation of
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Date: 23 June 2006

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Principal

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| 03. Invitation Ref No. | : TB/ SE/ Rent-13/ 2005-2006/01 |
| 04. Date | : 14th June 2006 |
| 05. Procurement Method | : Open National Tender |
| 06. Source of Fund | : Own fund |
| 07. Tender Package No. | : LP/ Proj/ 04 : Rent |
| 08. Offer Closing Date | : 06th July 2006 |
| 09. Description | : Long-term Rent/ Lease of Floor Space (around 10,000 sqft) for installation of equipment and offices of Teletalk in the general area of Gulshan, Banani or Baridhara |
| 10. Official Inviting Tender | : General Manager, System Engineering Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd. |
| 11. Address of Inviting Office | : Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd. House # 41, Road # 27, Block A Banani, Dhaka 1213 Tel : 8851060 Extn : 204 Fax : 9882828 |

Teletalk reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason therefor.

General Manager
System Engineering
for Managing Director
Teletalk Bangladesh Ltd.

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