

# IT to minimise rich-poor gap

Dr Moyeen Khan tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proper use of information technology (IT) can turn the digital divide into digital dividend, said Science and ICT Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan at a seminar yesterday.

He said IT is the most hi-tech, but it is also the cheapest and most accessible to poor people, which is why it minimises the disparity between the rich and the poor nations of the world.

The seminar on 'Convergent media: the impact of new media technology on society' was organised by Eastern University at Russian Cultural Centre in the city.

Presently 80 percent resources of the world are possessed by 20 percent people of the West, which was possible due to money-dependent industrial revolution in Europe, the minister said, adding the poor nations can also take the advantage of IT which is user-

friendly and cheap.  
"We the people in third world may be poor, but we have talent. So, using the most hi-tech but the cheap technology we can develop faster than that of the developed world," he said referring that one in every 15 people in Bangladesh has mobile phone.

Pro Golam Rahman of Dhaka University however expressed his concern saying that the information technology is still limited to a sec-

tion of people of the society, which runs the risk of creating a digital divide.

"There is no doubt that the new media technologies have tremendously increased the quality and style of life and Broadband will reach 50 crore people globally by 2009, but what about the other 550 crore people?" he posed a question.

This divide will lead to complications in livelihood, he said, adding, "We have to think of strategies on how to minimise the digital divide."

Presenting the keynote paper Dr Serajul I Bhuiyan, professor and director of mass communication and journalism department of Lincoln University, USA, said access to new and interactive media technology ensures free speech and free flow of information that strengthens democracy.

"Convergent journalism in the era of new technologies is more powerful because it reaches more people at more levels in more ways. So, it depends on how we can properly use it," he said.

Eastern University Vice-chancellor Dr Rahim B Talukder said there are good and bad impacts of new information and media technologies and the young people have to choose what they will accept and reject.

DU Professor Dr Sakhawat Ali Khan, daily Khabarpatra Editor Gias Kamal Chowdhury, ATN Bangla Advisor Saiful Bari, Eastern University Foundation Chairman Abul Quasem Haider and Eastern University Pro-Vc Dr Abdur Rab also spoke.



Science and ICT Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan speaks at a seminar at Russian Cultural Centre in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Dr Serajul I Bhuiyan, Dr Abdur Rab, Saiful Bari and Dr Rahim B Talukder.



Roads passing through Paltan area remain closed to traffic during a rally of the ruling four-party alliance on a street in the city's busy Paltan area yesterday.

## Afghan FM calls on Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Afghan Foreign Minister Dr Rangin Dadfar Spanta made a courtesy call on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at her Sudha Sadan residence yesterday and discussed various issues, including ways to combat terrorism.

During the hour-long meeting, Hasina, also Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, and Afghan minister also discussed regional issues like poverty alleviation.

AL Foreign Affairs Secretary Syed Abul Hossain MP, who was present at the meeting, told the journalists that Dr Rangin Dadfar reiterated his country's stance against terrorism and emphasised the need for developing bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Quoting the visiting minister, he said Dr Spanta told Hasina that he was a student during Bangladesh's War of Liberation in 1971 and he was a fan of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP and former Ambassador Ziauddin were also present at the meeting.

## Four commit suicide in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people, including two domestic helps and two youths, allegedly committed suicide in separate incidents in the city yesterday.

They are Nargis Akhter, 15, Tara Moni, 16, Maksududdin Shubha, 25, and Mohammad Alam, 20.

Nargis, a domestic help at Haji Abdur Razzak's apartment in Ramna, committed suicide by hanging herself from the ceiling of a verandah at around 3:00am.

Police said Nargis had been working there for several years where she had been treated like a daughter by her employer.

Tara Moni took her life by hanging herself from a fan of the drawing room in the early hours after being allegedly scolded by her employer in Tejgaon.

Shubha was found hanging from a fan by his family members at his residence in Sutrapur at around 2:00pm.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

Mohammad Alam took his life after hanging himself from the branch of a tree in Khilgaon in the early hours.

Sources said domestic feud might be the cause of his death.

All the four bodies have been sent to DMC morgue for autopsy.

# High price of newsprints a major barrier

Editors tell minister about 'knowledge industry'

BSS, Dhaka

Editors of the newspapers and news agencies yesterday said high price of newsprints due to high import duty and cost of locally produced ones a major barrier to the entire 'knowledge industry' including newspapers and books.

They said this at a luncheon at the state guesthouse Padma hosted by Information Minister M Shamsul Islam.

They said the local newsprint industry was being given 'undue' protection imposing heavy duty on newsprints from abroad as the minister referred to a general government policy to promote local industries.

"Let the local newsprint industries face the competition for improving their quality and ensuring the price competitiveness," Rezaul Karim Ahmed, editor of the News Today, told the meeting.

Meanwhile, Shamsul Islam urged

the editors to ensure 'objectivity' in covering news while exercising the freedom of press to establish the industry in a stronger footing.

"We have nothing to say about the existing press freedom as we always want the newspapers to be established on a stronger footing as institutions," he told the editors.

"The government just expect you to publish news in an objective manner," he said.

He said relations between the government and the press are far better than many western countries where, he said, the two institutions have witnessed a strained relation in recent time. "Yet they (western newspapers) largely maintain objectivity in covering their governments."

Golam Sarwar of the Jugantor, Anwar Hossain Monju of the Ittefaq, Mahbubul Alam of the Independent, Gaziul Hasan Khan of national news

agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), Gias Kamal Chowdhury of Khabarpatra, Shaifiq Rehman of Jai Jai Din, Motiur Rahman of Prothom Alo, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury of the Bangladesh Observer, Alamgir Mohiuddin of the Naya Diganta, AMM Bahauddin Ahmed of the Inquilab, Abul Asad of the Sangram, Abed Khan of the Samokal, Ferdous Ahmed Quarishi of the Desh Bangla, Kazi Sirajuddin Ahmed of the Dinkal, Kazi Shahed Ahmed of Ajker Kagoj, Raushanuzzaman of United News of Bangladesh (UNB), Mohammad Zakaria Khan of the Banglabazar, Mostafa Kamal Majumdar of the New Nation, Nurul Kabir of the New Age and Shyamol Datta of Bhorer Kagoj joined the luncheon.

## Names of JCD, Shibir men proposed for BCL body?

JU CORRESPONDENT

The alleged inclusion of some Jatayatadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) men in the proposed full-fledged committee of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Jahangirnagar University (JU) unit has created a rift among the party activists.

The rift in JU BCL, student front of Awami League, surfaced when its incumbent President Sohail Parvez denied taking any action against Bony who along with some JCD men beatup Shaifin, a BCL activist, on July 29.

Ignoring repeated demands from senior party leaders, Sohail continued to favour Bony and proposed the names of some JCD and ICS activists for inclusion in the full-fledged committee, BCL sources said.

Names of Zakir and Kazol, two JCD activists of Meer Musharraf Hossain hall, were proposed for inclusion in the list.

Azibor, whom the BCL activists suspect as ICS, is also trying to be included in the proposed committee with the blessing of the president.

Dedicated BCL activists were not given any priority in the list, but the names of new comers and 'opportunists', who did not take part in any agitation against the BNP government, were included in the list, alleged a party leader.

"The president is trying to form his own group by collecting activists from JCD and ICS," said a senior leader of BCL on condition of anonymity.

"But we cannot let our party infested with ICS, JCD and some opportunists," he added.

After the formation of the incumbent committee about six months back, the central committee of BCL asked it to form a full-fledged committee of 101 members within a week.

But the proposed committee could not be formed till July 31 due to protest by senior BCL leaders over the inclusion of the names of JCD and ICS activists in it.

Refusing the allegations Sohail said, "I protested inclusion of the name of Shamyia, a JCD activist at Kamal Uddin hall, in the list as proposed by General Secretary Mahmud Naser Jony."

But Jony also refuted the allegation saying that there is no grouping in BCL and no JCD or ICS activists will be enlisted in the full-fledged committee.

## Israeli attacks on Lebanon condemned

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) yesterday condemned the Israeli invasion on Lebanon.

Duta leaders also expressed deep shock and resentment over the apathy showed by the United Nations (UN) and Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

At a meeting on Tuesday, they demanded immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from Lebanon, putting an end to the ongoing Israeli atrocities.

Presided over by Duta President Prof Sharif Ullah Bhuiyan, the meeting was conducted by its General Secretary Prof Makhtaruzzaman.

Duta will take out a silent procession from Arts Building on August 6.

## CONTAMINATED WATER 200 fall sick at CEPZ garment factory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Around 200 workers fell sick after drinking contaminated water at a garment factory in Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) yesterday.

Around 150 workers were admitted to the EPZ hospital. However, all of them were released before evening, hospital sources said.

Around 200 workers of sewing section of JSM Garment, a US-Bangladesh joint venture factory at sector no. 6 of EPZ, fell sick at around 11:00am due to drinking the water provided by the garment authority and began to feel severe abdominal pain, EPZ sources said.

Around ten of them were provided saline and others received first aid at the EPZ hospital.

EPZ General Manager Ataul Hoque told the Daily Star that the workers were supplied water from the garment's internal line, not from the EPZ line.

However EPZ authority formed a three-member probe committee led by EPZ Industrial Relation Manager Md Mahmud Hasan to investigate the incident.

## New Thai chancery opens Aug 6

BSS, Dhaka

The Royal Thai Embassy will open its new chancery at Baridhara in the city on August 6.

Thai Foreign Minister Dr Kantathi Suphamongkhon and his Bangladesh counterpart M Morshed Khan will attend the opening ceremony at 7:00 pm.

The construction of the Embassy's new Chancery and Residence was started in April 2004 and completed in July 2006 at a cost of about 120 million baht (Tk 226.4 million).

## Burnt maid succumbs to injuries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A maid succumbed to her burn injuries yesterday after fighting for life for five days.

Hasina Akhter, 15, who worked at the residence of Dr Shahidul Islam, former principal of Dhaka Medical College (DMC), was admitted to DMCH in critical condition with burn injuries at around 8:30pm on July 28.

Sub Inspector (SI) Hazrat Ali, also the Investigation Officer (IO) of this case, told The Daily Star that Hasina might have caught fire while working in the kitchen.

Police is yet to be sure whether it was an accident or a deliberate action.

An unnatural death case has been filed with New Market Police Station in this connection.

Hasina's father Wajed Ali said that her daughter had been working in that house for the last two years.



Students of Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Dhaka University, form a human chain in front of the Arts Building on the campus yesterday to protest Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

PHOTO: STAR