



With Eid drawing nearer, women and girls throng different shopping centres in the city to buy earrings and bangles matching their dresses. The picture was taken from Eastern Plaza yesterday.

HIV prevention programme to be extended

BSS, Dhaka

The ongoing HIV/AIDS Prevention Programme (HAPP) under the health ministry will be extended for another 18 months to focus on expanding interventions for high-risk groups and ensuring safe blood transfusion.

Since 2001, the government, supported by the World Bank (WB) and the UK's Department of International Development (DFID), has been implementing the programme, which was scheduled to end in December this year, the WB sources said yesterday.

During the extended period, the sources said, HAPP would particularly focus on expansion of interventions of high-risk groups, including injected drug users (IDU), with a more focused approach for the safe blood transfusion component.

"The extended HAPP would also strengthen the leadership and management capacity of the government staff leading the project, the sources said.

A recent WB and DFID review of the project said considerable progress was recorded and some areas were identified for future action, including the need to provide uninterrupted services in the field and strengthen management, the WB sources said.

The source also underscored the need for the development of a coherent, consolidated and detailed plan for awareness raising activities for the next two years based on the government's National Communication Strategy.

Another recent research has shown that HIV prevalence among the injected drug users in central Dhaka is continuing to grow. Among sex workers, another high-risk group, HIV prevalence remains low at below one per cent, the sources said.

UNDER-TRIAL PRISONERS '1028 not brought to court in last 2 years'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About two-thirds of prisoners in the country are under-trial prisoners and 1028 of them were not brought to court in the last two years to prove the charges against them, said Law Minister Moudud Ahmed at a roundtable yesterday.

"The jails in the country have the capacity for 27 thousand prisoners, but over 72 thousand prisoners are already there," he added.

Moudud was speaking at the roundtable titled "The government legal aid programme: Perspective 2006" organised by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in the city.

He said the legal aid services act was formulated to ensure equal access to law as guaranteed under the constitution, and to this end 44 thousand people, mostly poor and women, were benefited.

BLAST Vice-chairman Justice Naimuddin Ahmed said there is still miles to go before feeling self-content.

"How can you be satisfied while the officer-in-charge becomes subjected to union parishad chairman?" he posed the question, adding that since the UP chairman

works for the local MP, the ruling party manipulates the pace of judicial activities in the rural areas.

Apart from explaining the legal aid services act from different perspectives, Soma Islam, deputy director of BLAST, in her key-point presentation drew the attention of the minister to a few limitations of the act.

She said the national legal aid services organisation should be turned into an autonomous body with full time management and staff and awareness among people from all strata.

"Unrealistic income limit for eligibility to get legal aid which now stands at Tk 3000 per annum and unwillingness of the District Judges to sit with the bar and making decision are among other factors that impede the progress of the implementation of the act," she added.

Taslimur Rahman, executive director of BLAST, moderated the programme.

Nasreen Begum, director of national aid services organisation, and Francois Ramsay, resident director of Bangladesh Legal Reform Project Part B, (A CIDA-Canada project) also spoke on the occasion.

Abducted Ctg trader yet to be rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The fate of the businessman abducted a week ago couldn't be known as of yesterday.

Relatives said the abductors had demanded Tk 1 crore as ransom but didn't make any contact since Saturday night.

Sources said Abul Kalam Azad, 42, a dealer of Sena Kalyan Sangstha and proprietor of Al Amin Store of Chaktai, went out of his home at around 3:30pm on October 11 to go to the Sangstha factory (Fouzi Flour Mill) at Jalalabad near Oxygen and has been missing since then.

Kalam called his wife Sahanara Begum in the early hours of Thursday and informed her that he could not return home for some reasons, sources said.

But afterwards his mobile was found switched off and on Saturday night the alleged kidnapers called Kalam's younger brother Md Abul Hashem and demanded the family members should be ready with the ransom. Since then, the kidnapers made no contact till yesterday.

An abduction case was filed with the concerned Bakalia Police Station on Monday night. Police was investigating into the incident, sources said.

Janajuddho cadre killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party, (PBCP)-Red Flag, one of the factions of PBCP-ML, killed one of their rivals at Amtoli village in Gangni, Meherpur, on Monday night.

The dead was identified as Azizul Islam, 22, son of Misarat Ali of the village, an alleged cadre of outlawed Janajuddho, another faction of PBCP-ML.

According to police, a gang of

PBCP-Red Flag swooped on Azizul when he was returning home from a local market at about 11:30pm.

The outlawed cadres dragged Azizul to a nearby Amtoli field at gunpoint and slaughtered him.

Later, one Selim introducing him as a chief of the command of armed forces of Red Flag phoned journalists and claimed responsibility of the killing terming Azizul an extortionist and derailed revolutionary.