

Make healthcare a constitutional right

Activists, civil society urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists and civil society members have called for including healthcare as a fundamental right in the country's constitution, making it a legal obligation of the state to protect peoples' right to healthcare.

The coronavirus pandemic brought to light the weaknesses of the country's health systems where corruption and profit mongering tendencies are rampant, they said yesterday.

The observations came at a virtual seminar titled "Better Health: Stand Up for Human Rights" organised by BDCSOP, a forum of 700 civil society and non-government organisations in collaboration with COAST Trust. The event was organised marking Begum Rokeya Day yesterday and Human Rights Day today.

Speakers expressed concerns that the principles of the country's liberation war -- democracy, socialism, secularism and nationalism -- are yet to be achieved fully.

Addressing the seminar as chair, Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam said it is shameful that she is being abused to grab the land of indigenous people when this nation

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PHOTO: RASHED SHUJON

Last year around this time, the price of onion shot up beyond the purchasing power of many, forcing them to resort to open-market sales by the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh. This year, with high import volumes, prices are low in the market and the interest in TCB trucks is low. Salespersons at a truck in the capital's Khamarbari said they are having to stay open late into the night to sell onions at Tk 25 per kg. Customers, meanwhile, said the TCB staff were "push-selling" onions to those who came to buy just edible oil or lentils.

'They targeted the elderly affluent'

Police busts gang for stealing personal info, extortion, embezzlement

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Police yesterday claimed to have arrested members of a gang that used to steal personal information of elderly affluent people and blackmail them to pay anywhere between Tk 5 to 50 lakh.

The information was revealed after police arrested four people, including two sisters, following drives in the capital's Mohammadpur, Hatirjheel and Badda areas from Thursday to Sunday, said Harun-Ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner (DC), Tejgaon Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The arrestees are Parvin Akhter Nupur (28), her sister Shefali Begum (40), Rubel Mahmud Anik (27), customer service staffer of a telecom operator, and Shamsuddoha Khan Babu (40), a travel agent.

Isa, another gang member who introduced himself as a lawyer, is still absconding, police said.

The Tejgaon DC said it is an organised gang of five to six members that target mostly high-ranking service holders, rich businesspeople and industrialists who are over 60 years old.

"We have information about 20-25 victims. A staffer of a telecom operator was helping the gang by giving away personal information, which is provided during SIM registration. If it is so, then how will our personal information remain secure?" he said.

The officer said Shamsuddoha works at a travel agency in Motijheel, where financially solvent people come regularly for travel purposes. He used to collect their phone numbers and give them to Parvin.

Parvin then collected personal information of those people through the customer centre staffer using the numbers.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, GIRLS

Mental health of men, boys must get attention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a webinar yesterday said in order to prevent violence against women and girl children, the issue of mental health of men and boys must be given due attention.

The webinar, titled "Mental Health of Men and Boys: What we should do", was organised by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum, and supported by Educo Bangladesh, as part of its "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" campaign.

"We give some wrong message to our children from their childhood," said Psychotherapist Prof Shanjida Shahria at the programme, for example, boys shouldn't cry or be afraid of anything.

"But the basic human emotions are joy, sorrow, fear and anger. If they are refrained from showing their fears and sorrows, they are only having two emotions, joy and

anger. When they are angry, they express it with anger, even if they are sad or afraid, they will express it through anger. These make men violent from their childhood," she explained.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, global vice president and country director of The Hunger Project Bangladesh, said the National Girl Child and Advocacy Forum was formed to create equal opportunities for girls and end inequality. "The vast majority of men who abuse women suffer from a variety of mental health problems. We usually discuss women's issues widely, but the mental health issues of men are not discussed equally," he said.

Human rights activist Sheeba Hafiza also expressed a similar concern, saying men are kept out of the loop while discussing gender-based violence.

"We have to bring reforms in our education system. The mentality of men

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Rein in the limitless greed: ACC chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pointing out that corruption took place even during the pandemic, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairperson Iqbal Mahmood yesterday called upon people to rein in their limitless greed.

"To correct a society, a family needs to be rectified first. Children need to know the source of their parents' income," he said.

The ACC chairperson said this at a virtual discussion organised to mark International Anti-Corruption Day. This year, the theme of the day was "Recover with Integrity".

He expressed his satisfaction over 63 percent punishment rate in graft cases. "We need to know why we could not ensure punishment for 37 percent of the cases," he added.

ACC Commissioner Dr Mozammel Haque Khan said all kinds of corruption need to be given emphasis equally. "We need to show zero tolerance against corruption," he added.

ACC Commissioner AFM Aminul Islam said corruption is a social disease. "Without social awareness and commitment, it is not possible to prevent corruption." "We need to work with integrity to recover from whatever damages the pandemic has caused," he added.

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Mobilise the youth against corruption

Speakers tell TIB discussion on Anti-Corruption Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's youths have to be mobilised against corruption to eliminate the menace from the society, said speakers during a virtual discussion yesterday.

They said educating children about morality should start from family and school to fight corruption effectively.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) organised the discussion on "Youth in Anti-Corruption Social Movement: Cartoon and Art", marking International Anti-Corruption Day.

Yesterday, TIB also announced the names of six youths as winners of the Anti-Corruption Cartoon Competition Awards-2020.

There is no alternative but to rely on the youths for the country's progress, said TIB Trustee Board Chairperson Prof Perween Hasan.

Sadly, youths are often subject to

newspaper headlines now because of involvement in unethical practices which is a contrast to the past when best students would get involved in student politics, she said.

She stressed that the Anti-Corruption Commission has to be functional effectively.

If the ACC was functional effectively then there might be no need for a graft watchdog like TIB, she added.

Eminent author and TIB Ombudsperson Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam said different graft allegations regarding health sector support and services started to surface amid the coronavirus pandemic.

However, such incidents reduced and when youths took the responsibility to unearthen those, he said.

Children's morality teaching is supposed to start from family and school, said Abul

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Bir Shreshtha Ruhul Amin's martyrdom anniversary today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Today is the 49th martyrdom anniversary of Bir Shreshtha Ruhul Amin.

Only 6 days before the victory in 1971, while fighting in a naval ship, he was killed in bombing by Pakistan Army in Rupsha River, Khulna.

During the 1971 movement, he was Engine Room Artificer-1 in the gunboat PNS Comilla under Bakhtiar Naval Base in Chattogram.

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Lone cath lab in M'singh not ready after 9 months

MD AMINUL ISLAM, M'singh

When the first-ever catheterisation laboratory (cath lab) in Mymensingh was set up at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) this year, it brought optimism to the district's cardiac patients.

However, nine months on, it is yet to be operational, gradually becoming a cause for concern for all involved.

Cath lab is an examination room in a hospital or clinic with diagnostic imaging equipment used to visualise arteries and chambers of the heart and treat any stenosis or abnormality found. Dr Laxmi Narayan, deputy director of MMCH, says this is due to the unavailability of an interventional cardiologist, needed to run the lab.

"We sent two letters to Ministry of Health so far, asking for an interventional cardiologist. The process has been delayed due to the coronavirus pandemic," he said.

The cath lab was set up to support patients admitted to the 1,000-bed hospital. It was inaugurated on February 15 this year.

The hospital is visited by patients from the greater Mymensingh region (Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Netrakona, Kishoreganj and Tangail), as well as from Sylhet, Sunamganj, Gazipur, Gaibandha, and

Kurigram districts, said Dr Narayan.

The demand for its service is so high, that it often gets patients more than three times its capacity. Normally, around 200 remain admitted to the cardiology department.

But despite its goodwill, the hospital cannot serve patients that require stenting. A stent is a tiny tube that doctors can insert into a blocked passageway to keep it open.

Stents restore flow of blood or other fluids, depending on where it's placed, said sources from the cardiology department.

If the cath lab becomes operational, patients, especially the ones with heart diseases, will be able to avail better treatment from this lab.

Otherwise, many may have to travel to Dhaka to get the same services, said Dr Ganapati Aditya, head of cardiology department at MMCH.

Once operational, a patient will have to pay around Tk 6,000 for angiogram and related tests at the hospital, which is around Tk 25,000 in private hospitals, said Dr Aditya. The doctors also said the lab will need more than one interventional cardiologists and a specialised "Cardiac Surgery Unit" to handle the huge rush of heart patients at the hospital everyday.



With the sun hiding behind the clouds for a large portion of the day in the capital yesterday, the air was nippy. While the adults are still not cold enough yet to break out the big sweaters, young ones sure are feeling the chill. The photo was taken from Hatirjheel.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

United Hospital's 2021 calendar marks 50 years of Bangladesh

CITY DESK

United Hospital has unveiled its 2021 calendar at an informal programme held at the hospital's seminar hall yesterday. As 2021 marks 50 years of Bangladesh's independence, the hospital has published the calendar as a tribute to the occasion.

The calendar is designed to honour the essence of independence and to live and find the meaning of this independence. It features pictures taken by internationally

acclaimed and photographer Dr Rashid Un Nabi, also a senior consultant, at the hospital, said a press release.

Present during the unveiling were Moinuddin Hasan Rashid, chairperson and managing director of United Group; Mohammad Faizur Rahman, managing director and CEO of United Hospital; department directors; consultants; doctors; nurses and higher officials of the hospital.



Officials of the hospital hold up the new calendar.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PKSF working for poverty alleviation

Kholiuzzaman tells webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) is working to diversify people's choices and come out of poverty, said PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiuzzaman Ahmad yesterday.

He was speaking at a webinar organised to share the progress of a programme, titled "Pathways to Prosperity for Extremely Poor People", being implemented by PKSF with joint funding from UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and European Union, said a press release.

Abdur Rouf Talukder, senior secretary, Finance Division, Ministry of Finance, spoke at the webinar as chief guest while Financial Institutions Division Additional Secretary Arijit Chowdhury, FCDO Development Director Judith Herbertson and EU Head of Delegation to Bangladesh Maurizio Cian were special guests.

Popularly known as 'Prosperity', the six-year programme is working to lift 10 lakh people belonging to 2.5 lakh households out of extreme poverty by 2025.

The programme, launched in April 2019, is covering nearly 200 unions of 43 upazilas under 15 districts across the country.

People living in these districts face present and future climate shocks that threaten their lives and livelihoods. During the first year of the prosperity programme, more

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Develop information platform for people with special needs

Speakers tell webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Alongside government-initiated projects, various private initiatives are also in place to serve the needs of the differently-abled members of society. Nevertheless, deficiency in information dissemination and awareness often deprive them of the facilities available for them, speakers said at a webinar yesterday.

As a response to this urgency, authorities concerned have emphasised on establishing an integrated initiative to develop an easy and accessible platform to collectively drive the welfare of people overcoming disabilities, the speakers added.

On the occasion of 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities', Prerona Foundation, The Daily Samakal and The Daily Star jointly organised the special webinar titled 'Integrated Initiatives for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities'. Experts from the government, private, and development sectors participated in it.

Mubina Asaf, Director of Prerona Foundation, said, "It is essential to secure long-term employment for differently-skilled individuals, and also to ensure their engagement into the mainstream economy."

Talking about the plan to launch their online based platform "Aragatir Anuprerna", she said the portal is being created with the aim of building a collective database to ensure availability and easy accessibility of information.

Apart from this, people with special needs will also be able to share stories about their journey and experiences on the platform. If this collective database is established, it will also enable authorities concerned to address and rectify the hurdles faced while working to promote the noble cause, she said.

Zuena Aziz, Chief Coordinator for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office, said, development sectors participated in it.

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