

DOWN TO EARTH

AIDS stalking the unwary

By Khalilur Rahman

Bangladesh is now extremely vulnerable to an outbreak of deadly AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). One person has already died of this disease and six other active carriers of Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) are under constant surveillance of the National AIDS Committee. Country's fragile health system is utterly inadequate to contain the spread of AIDS once it breaks out in an epidemic form, a noted expert on AIDS told The Daily Star.

Physicians say that there is virtually no difference between a carrier of HIV and an AIDS patient. The HIV causes AIDS and a person infected with the virus is bound to suffer from the incurable disease during his or her life span. Till death from the sickness, a carrier of HIV is a potent source of infection to healthier people, particularly the susceptible persons, through a variety of ways.

The medical profession has listed some of the important factors responsible for causing AIDS in a human being. The factors are: sexual transmission, blood transfusion, use of infected syringe, needle, surgical, dental and skin piercing equipment, etc. A child in the womb of an infected mother can also contract the disease very easily.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has come forward in a bigger way to help Bangladesh adopt sufficient precautionary measures to prevent this dreadful disease. The WHO assistance, as part of its global policy of the management and control of AIDS, has been extended in the form of reagents, equipment and consultancy. The WHO operates in close cooperation with the National AIDS Committee in Bangladesh.

The National AIDS Committee is merely an advisory

body which puts forward proposals to the government in respect of measures to be taken for screening, research, control and creating mass awareness about AIDS. The 10-member National AIDS Committee was formed on October 26, 1985 with National Professor (Dr) Nurul Islam as its chairman. The screening of people for AIDS began in the country from July 1987. But the recommendations made from time to time by the committee to the concerned authorities during the last half a decade have hardly been taken seriously. The committee's specific proposals were simply ignored, a member of the committee resented. The assistance rendered to Bangladesh by WHO is well up to the mark but we lack in our determination to face the challenge posed by AIDS to our nation despite the generous help from the world body, he added.

Despite repeated urgings by the National AIDS Committee to conduct thorough test of blood available for transfusion at the country's blood bank, both in public and private sectors, no action has been taken in this regard as yet. Blood transfusion is one of the most vital causes of transmitting AIDS in human beings. Similarly, reckless use of syringe, needle, surgical, dental and skin piercing equipment could not be stopped exposing the users to serious hazards, another member of the committee said. It is a pity that though the resources were available with us negligence or simply lack of initiative stands in the way of undertaking a concerted effort to prevent the impending danger, he stated.

Talking to The Daily Star, Professor Mohammad Nazrul Islam, Head of the Department of Virology of the Institute of Post-Graduate Medicine and

Research and General Secretary of the National AIDS Committee said that Bangladesh was no longer an AIDS-free country and there should not be any waste of time in taking adequate measures to prevent the disease. AIDS has spread in our neighbouring country—India and it is high time that we act swiftly to face the crisis, Prof Islam asserted. The National AIDS Committee has been reconstituted with Major General (Retd) M R Chowdhury as its chairman and specific proposals have been made to the government to take the districts and even upazilas phase-wise for the prevention of AIDS, he informed.

An expert on AIDS, Professor Islam said that there was no dearth of materials or equipment for diagnosis of AIDS in Bangladesh. For this purpose five laboratories in the public sector have been set up which are equipped with trained manpower and other materials. But he admitted that there were some organisational defects. Till now about 12,000 people have been screened for AIDS in these laboratories. The laboratories are located at CMH, IPGMR, two in Chittagong and one in Sylhet. Of these five, one is a reference laboratory. Machines for carrying out screening tests are available in all the five laboratories but the equipment for making confirmatory test is available only in the two laboratories in Dhaka.

Prof Nazrul Islam stressed the need for greater participation of private medical facilities in the diagnosis and control of AIDS in the country. Otherwise the burden on the government would be too heavy, he stated. At present two pathological laboratories—IBN Sina and Al-Razee—in private sector are doing AIDS test. Of these, the performance of IBN Sina is quite satisfactory, Prof Islam pointed out.



People from different parts of the country waiting in a long queue braving rains Thursday in front of Sugandha to have an appointment with the Prime Minister. Yesterday was the first day of her meet-the-people programme. —Star photo

PM has many things to hear, people have many things to say

By Nazmul Ashraf

Several hundred visitors from the capital as well as the far flung areas of the country thronged the 'Sugandha' office of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia seeking appointments on the first day of the PM's meeting the members of the public Thursday.

People mostly of the middle and lower middle classes started queuing at the Sugandha gate since early morning on the day to enlist their names with the Private Secretary of the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister took a decision to meet members of the public between 6 pm to 7.30 pm every Thursday on October 27.

The following day, press reports were published stating that the appointments with the PM would be allowed on a first come first serve basis and calling upon the interested persons to get their names enlisted from 10 am to 12 noon on every Thursday.

In her person-to-person contact programme the Prime Minister met 100 visitors on Thursday and heard their grievances.

On the first day, several hundred persons turned up at the Sugandha office. Of them, 250 were enlisted for appointments till December 12.

The rest were refused as the PM started meeting the visitors from about 6 pm. She had to stay at the Sugandha till 10.30 at night.

The Private Secretary of the Prime Minister issued appointments to 250 persons, 50 persons for every alternate Thursday, except next Thursday (November 7) when the PM will be outside the country.

Due to mismanagement, the appointment-seekers had to suffer a lot. They had to wait in a long queue in incessant rains. Policemen on duty misbe-

haved with the visitors when they got angry and quarrelled among themselves.

Police also beat and later picked one such visitor who made some remarks being disappointed at the mismanagement. On visiting the Sugandha office, this correspondent found people waiting defying the rains. Some of them were also moving about aimlessly falling to stand in the line which ended within the Sugandha compound.

Mostly poor people from outside the city turned up to inform the PM of their problems and grievances with a hope to having them solved. Moazzem Hossain, working in a consultancy firm in the city, told the Daily Star that he wanted to make some proposals to the PM on rehabilitation of beggars who he said were creating problems in public life.

Motaleb, a teacher of Bhaluka Senior Madrasa came to make the PM aware of deforestation in the Kadhighar forest range allegedly by the forest officials.

Mouvi Shafiuddin, aged 60, came to the city one week ago from Patuakhali to beg a donation from the PM, for giving his three daughters in marriage.

Similar was the case of Hafiz Mohammad Sirajul Haq from Bhola unable to give his three daughters in marriage. Siraj also carried an application strongly recommended by the State Minister for Water Resources and Flood Control Mosharrar Hossain.

The old Siraj came to Dhaka 13 days ago and learnt about the provisions of meeting the PM a few days ago.

Abdur Razzak Choudhury who lost his house and property in the April 29 devastating cyclone came from Barguna for economic assistance to re-

build his houses.

Razzak who lost his parents had to leave his studies in a local madrasa after the cyclone and now pulls a rickshaw in the city to maintain his family of eight.

Md Abdul Hye of Kishoreganj sought an appointment with the PM to have a better job. Hye said that his present occupation of carpentry was not enough to meet his family expenses. He would also request the PM to create more scope for employment in the country, he added.

Md Ali Zia, a student of the Dhaka Technical Institute, was found in a waiting room with his old father M A Salam, a retired Upper Division Assistant in the Education Department.

Salam's land was allegedly forcibly occupied by a retired army official. Residing at his Manikdi residence in the Dhaka cantonment area, Salam wished the PM's intervention in the affair.

SM Azad who passed the degree examination in 1986 came from Brahmanbaria to complain that he was never issued in most cases any interview card despite his applying for jobs at least 40 times since 1986.

Anwar Hossain who owns a motor spare parts shop came from Tejgaon to complain to the Prime Minister that the Labour Court employees were harassing him for bribes. He also alleged being forced to pay excess income taxes beyond his capacity.

Among the appointment-seekers, only a few females were found out of the queue. The poor and illiterate women were vigorously looking for any suitable person to help them enlist their names after they failed to fight their male visitors in the long line.



Visiting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ms Teresita C Schaffer called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at her office on Thursday. —PID photo

Private members

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should reach a consensus for saving the jute growers and the jute industry. Opposition MPs Abdur Razzak, Rashed Khan Menon, Kazi Abdur Rashid, Rashed Mosharrar and others supported the resolutions.

Opposing the resolution, Jute Minister A S M Hananun Sbah said that government was quite alert to protect the interest of the jute growers but fixation of its minimum price at 500 taka would be unrealistic ignoring the commercial aspect. He said that the government prefers to buy jute at the market price.

Another resolution for allocating funds for upazilas on the basis of population was moved by AI, MP Rahmat Ali. He said that system of funds allocation on the basis of population would ensure parity for the upazilas.

Deputy Minister for Local Government Abdul Hye opposed the resolution saying this might disrupt the population control programme.

Electoral roll

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respective jurisdictions.

An enlisted may apply in prescribed form to the Registration Officer concerned for deletion of the name of any person who has in the meantime died or has become ineligible to remain a voter.

If the name or any other information relating to a voter is wrongly printed in the electoral rolls, he may apply to the Registration Officer for correction of his name or the wrongly printed information relating to him.

A copy of the electoral rolls of each union and pourashava has been kept reserved in the offices of respective union parishad and pourashava for inspection of the members of the public. These rolls may be consulted if necessary for verification.

There are separate prescribed forms for inclusion or deletion of names and correction of names or any other information.

Thursday meet

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land acquisition, etc. Putul, a 14-year-old girl told the Prime Minister that her husband had deserted her because she could not pay dowry. Begum Zia felt concerned about Putul and said she would look into the problem.

Abdul Jabbar Khan, a Masters degree holder, came to Begum Zia for a job in a high school. The eldest son of the five-children family, Jabbar said he would be happy with a job of a teacher since his father was a teacher too. "I want to teach whatever I have learnt", he said.

Sultan Jahan Bithi narrated her plight to Begum Zia and wanted justice from the government since her in-laws did not look after her 14-month-old daughter following the death of her husband.

Jahanara Hossain, 65, wanted a job for her eldest son Mahub Alam Ripon who is a science graduate. "If you provide him with a job, our family will be saved", she told Begum Zia.

The Midnight File

SAARC working body meets to finalise recommendations

COLOMBO, Oct 31 : The SAARC programming committee met formally in session at Bandaranaike Memorial Hall here today. Nihal Rodrigo, DG (SAARC), Sri Lanka, was unanimously elected chairman. A working group was set up in the meeting for finalising recommendations to Foreign Secretaries Standing Committee under integrated programme of activities for 1992. Working group will also examine Secretariat budget proposals, reports ISS.

NATO should be more political : Gorbachev

SOUSTONS, Oct 31 : Soviet leader Mikhail S Gorbachev said Thursday that NATO should become a more political, less military organisation to reflect profound changes in Eastern Europe. Joined by French President Francois Mitterrand, Gorbachev stressed the need to maintain a central power within the Soviet Union. He also underscored the need for food aid for his country as winter approaches. Gorbachev spoke at a joint news conference after an overnight visit at Mitterrand's country home in southwest France. Gorbachev and his wife Raisa boarded a plane for Moscow after the news conference, reports AP.

Palestinian state

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Jewish claims to the holy land rooted in biblical history.

US Secretary of State James A Baker chaired the talks and introduced each speaker but made no statement in closing the second day's conference which is to resume on Friday. The United States and the Soviet Union set up the sessions, the first attempt at broad Arab-Israeli peace talks in a generation.

Both Arabs and Palestinians speaking at the conference demanded an end to Israeli settlement building and a return of captured Arab lands.

Syria on Thursday said Israel's "intransigence" has placed the Middle East on the brink of war for decades and accused the Jewish state of mistreating Palestinians in the occupied lands.

"In order for a just peace to be established, no Arab land must remain under Israeli occupation, nor can the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination remain denied," said Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al-Sharaa, final speaker before the end of the conference's second day.

He said his country would not accept any compromise of UN resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from Arab land.

"Every inch of Arab territory occupied by war and force must be returned in its entirety to their legitimate owners," he said in an address to the Middle East peace conference.

Sharaa said Resolutions 242 and 338, calling for Israel's withdrawal in exchange or peace with its Arab neighbours must be implemented in all its provisions and on all fronts.

"There is no room for bargaining," he said.

Speaking of Israel, Al-Sharaa told the delegates at the Arab-Israeli peace conference: "It is no exaggeration to state that the continuing intransigence is a position which is bereft of any justification, is the one thing that places the world on the brink of incalculable dangers and prevents the region from enjoying peace."

Abdel Shaafi, a 72-year-old doctor twice deported by Israel from the Gaza Strip for nationalist activism, virtually dared the Israelis to walk out by invoking the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and its leader, Yasser Arafat.

Three persons died in separate incidents in the city on Thursday.

An unidentified passenger died on the spot when a tempo turned-turtle near the Prime Ministers' Secretariat at the Old Airport Road at around 5 pm. Two other passengers were injured in the accident.

A case was registered with Tejgaon police. The body was sent to DMCH for autopsy and the injured were admitted to the hospital.

An unidentified youngman died after being struck by a Dhaka-bound passenger train near Mohakhali rail gate at around 4.30 pm. An unnatural death (UD) case was registered with railway police and the body was sent to DMCH for autopsy.

US support

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Department who arrived here Wednesday, congratulated Begum Zia for her party's victory in a free and fair election.

The US Deputy Assistant Secretary termed the last elections and formation of a people's government as a commendable change in Bangladesh.

She wished success of the present government and hoped people's right will be established.

During the meeting, the Prime Minister thanked US President George Bush for all assistance in the rehabilitation work after the April 29 cataclysmic cyclone in Bangladesh's coastal belts.

Referring to the relentless work of the US Task Force, Begum Zia also conveyed her gratitude to General Staekpole. She said it would have been difficult to carry emergency relief to remote and hard-hit areas without the help of the international community including the US Task Force.

Mentioning about US Vice President's wife Madame Dan Quayle's visit to Bangladesh during the period Begum Zia said standing beside the distressed people is a great service to humanity.

The Prime Minister thanked President Bush and the US government for writing off Bangladesh's debt of 202 million dollars.

Begum Zia appreciated US decision to reduce its nuclear warheads for global peace and its initiative for on-going Middle East peace conference in Madrid to solve political crisis of the region.

Schaffer expressed her government's firm determination towards upholding global peace and development.

The Prime Minister assured continued support to USA's pioneering role in strengthening democracy in different countries, bringing global peace and security and increasing regional cooperation.

The US Ambassador in Dhaka William B Milam was also present during the meeting.

Enemies of democracy

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identify the reasons behind such acts.

Responding to the allegations by speakers from Opposition political parties, Chowdhury of the ruling party, admitted that the present government obviously had some failures but that the government's successes should also be highlighted.

In this regard he said that there was a lack of democratic practices in every sphere of life. "We (the politicians) are yet to get the opportunity to practise democracy properly," he remarked.

The former Education Minister of the BNP government said that the bureaucrats have not yet habituated themselves to democratic practices as they had been deprived of the opportunity under autocracy.

Badruddoza Chowdhury stressed the need for such practices by all including the politicians and the bureaucrats. The present government was ready to accept Opposition views in changing the bureaucratic administrative system, he added.

On terrorism, the BNP leader called on all concerned to be sincere in containing terrorism. "If alleged killers expelled from a party on charges of terrorism were sheltered by another, then how could we be hopeful of sincerity, he asked and called on the political leaders to be honest in their politics."

"Let us be honest, and sincere in rooting out terrorism to give out posterity a bright future, the ruling party leader said."

Commenting on the dominance of imperialist forces in national politics, raised by his fellow speakers on the occasion, Chowdhury viewed, they could not work unless their local agents collaborated with them.

Referring to criticism on the existence of the black laws, he said "We must see whether those (the black laws) are misused or not. The present government has not used the laws as yet."

Chaired by the JSD (Inu) presidium member Kazi Aref Ahmed, the meeting was also addressed by the CPB President Safuddin Ahmed Khan, noted economist Dr Akhlakur Rahman, Lawyer Shamsul Haq Chowdhury, JSD (Inu) General Secretary Hasanul Haq Inu, and Five-

Party leaders including Nirmol Sen and Sharif Nurul Ambia.

Safuddin Manik said that the partners in the anti-autocracy movement must share the failures of the present democratically elected government.

Citing different problems left behind by the autocratic rulers, Manik viewed that no single party was able to resolve all of them. He reiterated his party's call for a consensus on national issues without which he said national progress and institutionalisation of democracy could not be ensured.

The country was now passing through a very crucial period, the CPB leader remarked and made a fervent call to work unitedly to remove the debris left by the autocratic rulers.

He also urged the Opposition to abandon the path of taking opportunity of government failures and cooperate in putting democracy on a firm footing.

Shamsul Haq Chowdhury speaking on the occasion accused the two major political parties of breaking the pre-election pledges made in the Joint Declaration due to which, he said, the people were still deprived of the fruits of democracy.

He also held the parties responsible for promoting terrorism in the campuses.

Nirmol Sen in his impassioned speech made frontal at-

tacks on both the BNP and the Awami League for ignoring the causes of the people. "We are not having confidence in any of the two parties even after the fall of autocracy," he said and added frustration has gripped national life due to a lack of cordiality of the two parties in institutionalising democracy, freeing the Constitution of undemocratic characteristics, and resolving national problems including the spread of violence.

Other speakers accused the BNP and the AL of forgetting the commitments made in the Joint Declaration of the three political alliances during the anti-autocracy movement. They also called upon the ruling party to fully materialise the joint declaration.

Earlier, the JSD (Inu) Joint Secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia opened the talks and read out the key note paper where he identified six enemies of democracy. Those are: Evil forces who capture power illegally and their collaborators in the guise of politicians, undemocratic clauses and black laws in the Constitution, bureaucratic administrative system and the state structure, economy of loot and plunder of national wealth and owners of black money, communalism and the communalist forces' armed activity, and autocracy and their patrons in the imperialist circle.

BCL files case accusing 35 JCD activists of killing Mizan

By DU Correspondent

Awami League's student front Chhatra League (S-A) filed a murder case with Ramna thana Thursday accusing more than 35 activists of BNP-backed Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) of their involvement in the killing of its activist Mizanur Rahman Mizan.

Complaint of the case was Mozammel Hug, Joint Secretary of BCL (S-A) Central Committee.

The accused included Elias Ali, Ali Akkas Nadim, Shamim, Patu, Mir Sharafat Ali Shafu, Nawaj, Ayub Hossain Rana, Osman Gani, Quamruzzaman Lal, Abdul Khaleq, Tito, Chhoto Sobel, Helal and Chhoto Alam.

Jute workers

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if bonus voucher was counted. Jute industry enjoyed about 50 per cent bonus voucher in the then Pakistan period and in India it still enjoys 35 per cent subsidy, he claimed. But our government withdrew the subsidy following independence, he said.

There were some problems in the jute sector he said and blamed government policy for those.

"Adamjee jute mills have only two days raw materials. The supplies are so poor that most of the looms remained inoperative. We are workers. Supply us raw materials, we would raise production", he said.

Bashar said it was possible to make the mills profitable by formulating a proper policy. They could earn profit even if allowed to run by workers co-operatives, he asserted.

Other demands of the Parisad include implementation of pay commission and wage commission reports, 60 per cent dearness allowance, removal of discrepancy among the corporations in house rent allowance, conveyance, medical and maternity, provision of provident fund and fulfilment of all vacant posts.

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