

DOWN TO EARTH

Pathological indifference to pathology

By A S M Nurunnabi

Pathology occupies a very vital position in the field of medical science. Proper diagnosis, monitoring of treatment, research in the medical field, etc depend largely on genuine pathological reports. Hence pathological laboratories constitute an essential adjunct to a country's medical system.

According to informed sources, there are 119 registered pathological laboratories of which about 91 are in the Dhaka city. Besides these, it is estimated that there are more than 300 unregistered ones. Knowledgeable sources said these laboratories may be divided into three categories: the first category is operated by specialist pathologists, the second category by ordinary doctors doing pathological work, and the third category entirely by non-professionals. The second and the third categories are alleged to be mainly responsible for sub-standard and unreliable performance.

The directorate of health services is the competent authority to grant registration on an annual basis to such bodies. Before granting registration, the directorate needs to inspect the accommodation, equipment and personnel manning the laboratories, but it is understood that such inspection, if done, is mostly perfunctory or non-existent.

In the case of renewal of such registration also, no inspection is generally held. There are also at present no rules regulating the various aspects of administration and control of these labs. In 1982, the Medical Practice and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance was promulgated, prescribing charges for different kinds of tests. Though the ordinance is still in force, the prescribed charges have since been increased manifold as the owners of the labs decide. At present, there is no control on such arbitrary increase in charges. It is learnt that, again sometime in 1988, an attempt was made through appointment of a committee to frame

appropriate rules for such purposes. The attempt ultimately bore no result.

Because of the existence of a large number of incompetent and ill-qualified personnel in many laboratories without proper equipment, the quality of pathological tests conducted by these laboratories leaves much scope for doubt. In the opinion of some conscientious and dedicated pathologists, the state of affairs in the field of practice of pathology is far from the ideal in terms of ethics. They feel that lack of assurance of quality tests, splitting of fees and unnecessary investigations are some of the examples of unethical practices. As a result, public suffering and cost of medical care are multiplying.

In course of my recent discussion with a leading pathologist of the city about the existing problems and scope for improvement in this field, certain important points were made by him.

According to him, it will not be unwise to accept the fact that doubts in the public mind about pathology reports have some basis. The root of these doubts may be traced to the fact that non-doctor laboratory technicians are taken to be as good as properly qualified technicians. What is necessary for these quacks is to have a microscope only. This group of people forms the majority who are providing pathological service to the country. The adverse criticism encountered so often is based in most cases on the reports given by these non-pathologists or technicians passing for pathologists.

A delicate matter was also mentioned. Very often it is heard that pathologists in collusion with practising physicians perform pathology tests on commission basis, that is, doing trade blatantly on human tragedy, leaving aside medical ethics. According to him, it cannot be altogether denied that the assumption may be partially true. In some cases some under-hand arrangements may exist between pathologists and clinician physicians. In his opinion, re-

assistance to such malpractices may be possible if patients themselves take some initiative. The proper thing should be to identify honest, competent, and dedicated pathologists, and entrust them with the responsibility of pathological investigation, if needed. If their physicians insist otherwise, they should protest. Here it is alleged that the patients face problems. If the tests as indicated by the physicians are conducted at places other than those recommended by the physicians, such pathological reports are often not entertained by them and the patients are forced to go to the recommended labs. The splitting of fees in such cases is alleged, but the patients, being the weaker party, have no option but to surrender.

There is also another aspect. Some labs claim that the tests made by them are done through computer mechanism. It is understood that such computerised tests are rarely done, and, in most cases, the usual chromometrical procedure is followed.

Even if the pathologists are competent enough and other factors are right, it is felt that there may appear some difference in the results of two or more labs. If the difference is not more than five percent, it is generally accepted. It is understood that in advanced countries there are reference labs for review of cases where discrepancies are wide. Such facility does not exist in our country.

It is generally agreed that the present unfortunate state of laboratory affairs cannot be remedied at one stroke. Nonetheless, a sustained effort in the right direction is considered to be essential. In this context, it is felt that in certain areas government intervention is urgently called for: (a) Strict measures to discourage the splitting of fees between the clinician and pathologist; (b) Elimination of shabby laboratories with doubtful personnel and equipment; and (c) Easy availability of chemicals, equipment and spares.



Pitha Festival organised by the Shishu Academy for the children in the Academy premises yesterday.

Action plan for nutrition

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of vulnerable groups, distribution of foods consumed mainly by the poor and concentration on areas where poor communities lived. This was suggested to ensure proper utilization of food subsidies and public distribution systems.

As regards acute food shortages resulting from man-made and natural disasters, the regional meeting stressed the need for strengthening the food production capacity of man-made or natural disaster-prone countries to cope with such emergencies.

Effective early warning system, strategically located and effectively stored food security reserve and a pre-determined contingency plan of action were also suggested in the report.

The final report of the meeting said that the international community had an important role in helping the countries prevent and cope with such emergencies.

For increasing employment opportunities, the regional meeting stressed that the private sector had a crucial role.

The production-growth oriented policies in agriculture would create new opportunities for employment in input supply and produce marketing, storage, transportation and processing in which private sector initiatives were necessary," the report said.

The final report of the meeting identified the infants and small children as the most important nutritionally vulnerable group, but added that the elderly, the disabled, the adolescent girls, school children, refugees and members of marginal families were also important. The report also stressed the importance of recognising the needs of women.

The closing session of the regional meeting was presided over by its chairperson Dr Chen Chunming of China.

A five-member Bangladesh delegation led by Secretary of Agriculture Ministry K M Rabbani attended the Bangkok conference on nutrition.

Earlier, on the fourth day of the conference, speakers spoke for continuing food subsidies in the developing countries.

The speakers observed that the food subsidy is essential to ensure minimum nutritional needs of the vulnerable section of the society.

Senior officials of the FAO and WHO, joint sponsors of the meeting, also seemed to share the view of the participants. However, they cautioned against an indefinite perpetuation of food subsidies which, according to them, might prove counter-productive in the long run, as past experience with free food aid showed.

The speakers also said that though the food subsidies are burdensome for the governments, there were no options and so it should be continued for the benefit of the poor.

They, however, noted that the benefit of the food subsidies had been largely enjoyed by the relatively well-to-do sections of society, both in urban and rural areas. They urged for necessary actions by the government to ensure benefit of subsidies for the poor only.

Participating in the discussions, members of the Bangladesh delegation mentioned that the government was continuing its food subsidy programme for the benefit of the poor, particularly in the rural areas of Bangladesh.

Dhaka-Delhi

From Page 1 Col 2

Indian Water Resources Secretary Dr. M A Chitale will reach Dhaka today to lead his country at the sixth meeting of the Indo-Bangladesh Secretaries Committee on the sharing of waters of common rivers.

During his stay, Chitale will call on Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development Minister Major Gen (Rtd) Majidul Haq.

The technical session will begin Sunday at 11 am at Hotel Sonargaon.

Talking to newsmen at the meeting venue, senior FAO and WHO officials said that they believed the food subsidies should remain limited among the poor. The main task, according to them, is to identify the really needy.

"If there is a political will, it would be possible to limit the benefits of food subsidy to the real target groups without antagonising the well-to-do, mainly in the urban areas," they said.

Dr B P Dutta, an expert from FAO headquarters said that this was possible by the verification of the need of the people.

He suggested that the subsidy might be extended to low quality food consumed by the poorer people. "Alternatively, the governments can keep the public distribution system in the areas only where there is a heavy concentration of poor people," Dr Dutta added.

Saudi Eye Specialists in city

By Staff Correspondent

A 15-member eye specialist team from Al-Ibrahim Foundation of Saudi Arabia arrived in Dhaka Friday.

The team headed by the Chairman of the Foundation, Fahad Al-Yahya was received by the Director of Rabita al-Islami Mir Kashem Ali and some local eye specialists.

The team in collaboration with Islamia Eye Hospital and Rabat will hold two eye camps at Cox's Bazar and Daudkandi.

300 more Rohingyas enter Bandarban

RANGAMATI, Jan 31: More than 300 Rohingya Muslims today entered the district of Bandarban from Arakan state of Myanmar, administrative sources said, reports UNB.

Nearly 34000 Burmese Muslims have so far taken refuge in upazilas of Ningkhlangchari and Alikadam in the district.

The Midnight File

CIS leaders see threats of disintegration

DAVOS (Switzerland), Jan 31: Leaders of the ex-Soviet republics drew a bleak picture of their countries' future today saying their newly formed Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was threatened with disintegration. Contradictory political, economic and military demands, many of them said, were likely to weigh heavily on their summit meeting scheduled to be held in Minsk on February 14, reports AFP.

Four 'Chernobyl veterans' commit suicide

MOSCOW, Jan 31: Four people who had taken part in the cleanup after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident have committed suicide, the Russian news agency said Friday. The four were among 24 people known as "Chernobyl veterans" who have died in Volodga, north of Moscow, where about 1,000 people have been receiving treatment for illnesses related to the disaster, said ITAR-Tass, the new name of the Tass agency, reports AP.

Nominations for '92 Nobel Peace Prize close

OSLO, Jan 31: Nominations for the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize closed Friday and the Oslo-based awards committee said it needs at least a week to sort through the suggestions. "There are a lot of letters but it seems like many of the same names get nominated," said Geir Lundestad, secretary of the five-member committee. "We expect Jan 31 postmarks so we expect a lot more mail next week", reports AP.

93 more tribals return home

KHAGRACHHARI, Jan 31: Ninety three tribal refugees returned today (Friday) from the Indian state of Tripura raising the figure of returnees to 1,691 since January 1 this year, reports UNB.

With this, the number of tribal refugees so far returned stood at 26,897 of 8,983 families. The tribal who stayed at Karbuk, Lebuehhar and Kathalchhari refugee camps in Tripura crossed into the country through Puzung and Lowing frontier and reported to the local administration Friday, official sources said.

The returnees complained of harassment and humiliation by the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and the tribal insurgents across the border.

Jayati (22) who served as a medical assistant at Karbuk camp in Tripura told UNB that their team comprising of 51 tribals fell prey to the harassment of BSF while crossing the Ramgarh border on January 26. BSF opened indiscriminate fire on the group killing five of them on the spot, she alleged.

According to the returnees, at least 10-12 people are dying every day at the tribal camps in Tripura due to outbreak of diseases like diarrhoea, typhoid and malaria as well as acute shortage of food and lack of medicare.

Meanwhile, the government has taken various income generating projects to rehabilitate the tribal returnees in the three hill districts.

Every month, 1672 metric tons of foodgrains worth about Tk 1.68 crore are allocated for the returnees, official sources said.



Miraj

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connection at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque after Magreb prayers today. Among others, Hafiz Maulana Rafiq Ahmed, Pesh Imam of the National Mosque, will address the Mahfil.

Hakkani Anjumman will hold a discussion on the significance of the Prophet's (SM) mission to Allah on this occasion at the Hajj Shahab Mosque near the Mazar of the three national leaders in the High Court premises at 9 am on February 2.

Special prayers will be offered after the discussion for the peace and progress of the Muslim Ummah.

BCL

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January 14 and disowned four others.

BCL also asked its supporters not to raise any slogan in favour of the expelled persons and warned that any unit or member violating this instruction would be dealt with severely.

Yeltsin's plea

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moment are highlights of a declaration, hammered out by UN ambassadors, to be read by Major at the close of the session.

It also asks Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt, who has been in office only a month, to come up with ways of halting crises before they erupt and of enhancing the UN capacity for peace-making and peace-keeping.

12000 disappeared in Sri Lanka since '83

COLOMBO, Jan 31: Sri Lanka has the highest number of missing people among more than 40 countries surveyed by a United Nations team, according to a report which blames the army, police and death squads for thousands of disappearances, reports BSS.

After visiting the Indian Ocean island last October, the UN working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances said that large-scale killings of civilians by the army, the police and death squads had resulted in the disappearances of 12,000 people since 1983.

The figure is by far the highest number recorded by the working group for any single country," it said in a report.

Azeri soldiers attack main Karabakh town

MOSCOW, Jan 31: Azerbaijani troops launched a major offensive today against the main town in the Armenian majority enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, Russian television and local correspondents said.

The television said the Azerbaijani military launched a "massive offensive backed by armoured vehicles" at about noon Moscow time (0900 GMT) from the town of Agdam, several kilometers (miles) outside the enclave.

port, an advance copy of which was obtained by Reuters late on Thursday.

"Testimony seems to suggest that there are still many more," it added.

Government officials were not immediately available for comment on the report which has not yet been published.

The report said the UN team was officially invited by the Sri Lankan government and met leading figures.

Arms recovered: Seven held

Demra Thana police recovered one revolver and two cocktails from near Saidabad truck stand on Thursday night and arrested seven persons in this connection. Police said the arrested persons were planning to commit dacoity at that time, reports ISS.

Rain

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Office reading, Tangail yesterday Friday recorded the highest 27 mm rain, followed by Jessore 11 mm, Dhaka 10, Faridpur 9, Rangpur 8, Khulna 7, Ishurdi and Dinajpur 5 mm each.

BSS adds: The Met Office recorded 10 mm rainfall between 7-32 pm and 7-41 pm. The late winter rains freshened the air and lowered the temperature a bit. The Met Office predicted further drop in night temperature.



Visitors at the job fair that opened at the Bangladesh Computer Centre Training Facility at Babar Road, Mohammadpur yesterday.

Bangladesh Shilpa Bank
Head Office : Dhaka
Assets Disposal Department

Sale Notice

Mortgaged Assets of M/S. Weights & Measures International Ltd., Feni

Various Weight of K. G. Measuring Scale, Measuring Tap & Liquid Measures.

Mortgaged land, building and machinery of M/s. Weights & Measures International Ltd will be sold by the Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSB) on cash payment and on "as is where is basis" for realising BSB's arrears loan and dues of Tk. 3,91,15,487/- as on 30-09-1991 plus additional interest and other expenses until realisation of this amount from the above company and its directors as per Article 34 of BSB Order, 1972 (P. O No. 129/72) read with BSB (Direct Sale of Mortgaged Property) Rules, 1980.

2. The following persons are the directors of the company:

- (a) Mr. Md. Basirullah.
- (b) Mrs. Akhtari Noor.
- (c) Mrs. Amatun Noor.

3. Schedule of Property:

Dist : Feni, P. S. Feni, Plot No. A-III at BSCIC Industrial Estate, Feni, measuring 15000 sqft. of land including all structures machinery and electrical equipment situated on it.

4. Tender schedule containing the details of the assets and properties (along with the list of machinery) may be obtained from the Assets Disposal Department BSB, Head Office, Dhaka on cash payment of Tk 250/- (Take two hundred fifty) only (Non-refundable).

5. Intending tenders/buyers may drop their tenders/offers in sealed cover along with Earnest Money (refundable) 5% of the quoted value in Bank Draft/Pay- Order in favour of Bangladesh Shilpa Bank in the Tender Box kept at the BSB Head Office on 01-03-1992 at 12-00 Noon.

6. On acceptance of offer, the successful bidders/tenders shall have to deposit 50% of the bid or tendered money within 7 (seven) days and the balance within 30 (thirty) days from the date of acceptance of tender. In case of failure in making payment of the bid amount within stipulated time, the Earnest Money or the tender money (as the case may be) shall be forfeited and the mortgaged property may be resold. The project assets will be handed over to the successful bidder (s) by the bank on fulfillment of the conditions.

7. Tenders will be opened on 01-03-1992 at 12-30 P. M. at the Assets Disposal Department, BSB, Head Office in presence of the tenderers (if any) For further information, if any, the undersigned may be contacted. Bidders may purchase the above mentioned movable and immovable property in a lot or separately.

8. The BSB reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender/offer without showing any reason.

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