

DOWN TO EARTH

City-Based Movement Against Cancer

No reliable figures for cancer patients are available for Bangladesh. On the basis of figures available from neighbouring countries, it is estimated that 100 cases of cancer for 100,000 population would be reasonable extrapolation. For a population of 110 million, this would give a cancer incidence of 110,000 new cases per year. Out of a total estimated 8 lakh cancer cases in the country at present, 1 lakh 50 thousand die every year. This gives an idea of the magnitude of the cancer problem of the country.

The common forms of cancer are those of the mouth and pharynx in the two sexes added together. Cancers of the lungs, larynx and oesophagus are the other more frequent ones in the male and those of the cervix uteri and the breast in females. Most victims do not even know they have cancer until it reaches its last stage. Lack of proper facilities and ignorance lead to incorrect diagnosis, late detection and thousands of avoidable deaths.

In the backdrop of these depressing facts, the Bangladesh Cancer Society has been making extensive efforts to improve the situation. Formed in 1984 and registered in 1988, the society headed by Dr Sayyid Fazlul Huq, a cancer specialist as its president, consists of cancer specialists, including radio therapists, surgeons and physicians. As explained by Dr Huq, one of the main objectives of the society is to create awareness among the public about cancer. This means making available statistical information regarding the incidence, mortality and curability of cancer and the conditions under which cancer occurs in the country. This is the first step. The second is to control the disease itself. This means facilitating activities towards prevention, early detection and proper treatment. A part of its plan is to establish a cancer home in Dhaka, which would be a non-profit voluntary organisation. Lately, the society has been promised allotment of 1.57 acres of government land on Dargah Salam Road, Mirpur, for the establishment of the cancer home. The allotment is at present understood to be under process in the concerned ministry. The proposed cancer home will provide accommodation, investigation and possible treatment for cancer patients to start

By A S M Nurunnabi

with. In the near future, it is to be developed into a full-fledged cancer treatment centre. The objectives of the society will not be to confine its activities to Dhaka only. It plans to establish its branches in all the districts according to its constitution and make the people conscious about the problem and to create a strong country-wide movement.

The most common type of cancer in Bangladesh is that of the lung, throat and mouth. Eighty-five per cent of lung cancer is said to be due to smoking. Cancer specialists believe that just by not smoking and chewing tobacco, 40 per cent of cancer in Bangladesh can be prevented. Thus health education and information in regard to smoking cessation, when carried out effectively, can prevent these cancers. Similarly, the common cancers of the female — those of cervix uteri and the breast — when detected early can be controlled.

It can be very frustrating when lack of facilities prevents early detection and prompt treatment at an early stage. In this respect, the picture of current facilities available is pathetic. At present, availability of expertise in cancer surgery, radiation and cancer chemotherapy is limited. As an example, for a population of 110 million, there is one cobalt unit (a radiation machine) at the Dhaka Medical College and that too about 30 years old. Other machines such as deep X-ray machines used for cancer treatment are either outdated or obsolete. Even the pathological departments of the different medical colleges are so poorly equipped that they are practically of no use for cancer diagnosis.

There are prospects of some improvement in the existing situation. It was learnt that out of a relief grant of 20 crore, 7 cobalt units are due to be procured by government shortly. From another available fund, 2 more cobalt units are expected. If procurement of these cobalt units materialises, there may be a definite improvement in the facilities for cancer treatment. Each of the existing medical colleges can then be equipped with at least one cobalt unit. Mere availability of cobalt units will not, however, solve our problems. First, there is the question of building appropriate thick

walls at the site for accommodating a cobalt unit as per specification for ensuring full protection to the operators of the unit in the treatment room. Next, to operate the units, we will be needing trained doctors/physicians/technicians of which there is at present a chronic dearth in our country. In this perspective, planners in this line suggest that a crash programme should be undertaken well ahead in time to train adequate manpower to man the expected cobalt units. In this respect, the Bangladesh Cancer Society can play a helpful role.

At present the main cancer detection unit is that at the Cancer Institute and Research Hospital at Mohakhali. Here facilities for the clinical examination of cancer patients, cytologic examination, minor surgery for biopsies are available. However, the unit suffers from the serious handicap of having no facilities yet for radiotherapy. Since radiotherapy is not available, this hospital cannot yet provide the total care of cancer patients. This institution has been providing chemotherapy on a day-care basis.

Cytologic examinations are presently carried out by pathologists to a limited extent. Such services for the early diagnosis are available at a limited number of private laboratories in Dhaka. These services are lacking in most medical colleges.

In course of their practice, histopathologists come across many cases of cancer. Most pathologists who handle many surgical specimens, are exposed to a variety of cases of cancer. In fact, the burden of proof of cancer rests with the histopathologists.

In the opinion of cancer experts, we have the basic resources of physicians, specialists and an infrastructure of health care facilities. What is now urgently needed is a comprehensive cancer control plan for expeditious implementation to provide opportunities for these human resources to be appropriately developed, for the health facilities to be adequately equipped and for the effective operation of an effective and curative programme. According to the president of the Bangladesh Cancer Society, a helpful role may be played by the society in the attainment of these objectives.



While other rickshaw-pullers were making a few quick bucks ferrying people across submerged city roads yesterday, this one wasn't perhaps, so lucky with a traffic policeman for a passenger!

NGO's to campaign against 'anti-development' activities'

By Masud Hasan Khan

Some 600 private voluntary development organisations, better known as the NGOs, are planning to launch a nationwide campaign against those engaged in burning schools, uprooting saplings and other anti-NGO activities in various parts of the country.

NGO leaders said they were also planning to hold rallies all over the country to offset what they said "anti-development activities by vested quarters."

"We shall also collect signatures to mobilise the people against such attacks," said Rasheda K Chowdhury, Executive Director of the Association for Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB).

In an interview with The Daily Star, she alleged that an "identified reactionary force" was out to foil the on-going development projects initiated by the NGOs.

A well-concerted campaign has recently been launched against the NGO activities by a section of rural community leaders and religious fundamentalists in Bogra, Chittagong, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar and some other areas of the country.

NGO leaders also accused a section of rural money lenders and state-run primary school and madrasah teachers of working against the NGOs.

"It is not simply a campaign against the NGOs," she said. "The focus of the campaign is the development works."

The vested interest groups were not only hampering the implementation of the projects, Chowdhury said without naming anyone, they were also working against the democratisation process.

The Executive Director of ADAB, the apex body of the NGOs, however, observed that timely intervention by the Prime Minister's Office as well as the NGO Bureau and authorities at the local levels had helped a lot to improve the situation.

In recent months, more than one hundred non-formal primary education schools run by the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) have been set afire, some one million saplings uprooted and development workers either socially ostracised or physically manhandled.

The full extent of damage to the development projects because of the spate of violence was yet to be assessed.

According to the NGO leaders, some 1.5 crore people of the country, mostly poor and destitute women, benefit directly from various development programmes adopted by them.

Rasheda Chowdhury pointed out that the ADAB in its recent annual general meeting had expressed its grave concern over the violence on the development workers at the grassroots level and had demanded immediate arrest of those involved in the incident.

The ADAB AGM had also decided that the NGOs would work closely at the local level and mobilise the people against the attacks. "We are still continuing our project. In the long run the people will stand against such violent acts ... And we hope the government will play its due role in this regard," she added.

Rains

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much below the danger level.

The Surma, of the Meghna basin, registered a rise at Sylhet and Sunamganj and the Kushiara at Amalshid. The Manu marked a rise of 40cm at the Manu railway bridge and 18cm at Maulavibazar.

The Halda of the south-eastern hill basin marked a sharp rise by 106 mm at Narayanhat Nad at Pachpukuria. In Bandarban, the Sanghu marked a rise of 37mm. The rest of the rivers were flowing below the danger level.

2 Bangladeshis hanged in Egypt

CAIRO, Apr 22: Ten foreigners from Africa and Asia were hanged Thursday following convictions on drug trafficking charges. Egyptian Justice Minister Farouk Seif Al-Nasar announced, reports AFP.

It is the first occasion on which so many have been executed at the same time," he said.

Both the Appeals Court and President Hosni Mubarak approved the sentences imposed on four Sudanese, two Bangladeshis, a Somali, an Indian, a Tanzanian and a Kenyan.

The execution of common law criminals is not a frequent practice in Egypt, though since October 1992 the state has put to death 32 Islamic militants who had been implicated in attacks against the state.

City's transportation system to get facelift: Saifur Star Report

The government plans to beam, through satellite, the country's development works to all parts of the globe and also to radically improve Dhaka city's transportation system in a bid to attract foreign investors.

This was disclosed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a press briefing on his return home yesterday.

"Some of the donors at the Paris Club meeting had pointed out that although Bangladesh had achieved laudable economic progress in the last few years, the country still carries a stigma of its harts and natural calamities," Saifur said.

"Before leaving for Paris, I had also asked the concerned authorities to plan for beaming at least one channel through satellite to improve this image," Saifur said, and added "The satellite telecast would cover a major portion of the world and make them aware about the good environment prevailing here." The minister, however, did not say in which languages the channel would be operated.

The minister also informed the newsmen that he had had a separate meeting with the World Bank officials in Paris about taking up a massive transportation programme for Dhaka city for creating modern facilities like fly-overs and circular railway systems.

"A World Bank team will come here soon to study the proposal," Saifur said and observed that without a modern transportation system, it would soon be impossible to dwell in Dhaka city.

Paris meet successful

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adding that they have recognised the real problems of privatisation in the country.

"We told them that we do not want privatisation in the style of the 1980s when the divested units ultimately became dynamic after privatisation and hence the delay," Saifur said.

The donors had also asked the government to improve the management of the energy sector and to reduce system loss in power, the Minister told the newsmen.

Private investment will not come if there is a shortage of power, he noted.

"We have told them that investment in the power sector cannot remain suspended because of system loss," Saifur said. "Investment should be made side by side with efforts to reduce system loss."

"We and the donors are equally convinced that wastage of resources must be plugged for their proper utilisation," he mentioned.

"They have agreed to help us in this regard."

The donors have laid special importance on poverty alleviation, human resources development and women's education.

"They have asked us to attack urban poverty since rural poverty is not yet so acute," Saifur said. "There has been a transfer of rural poverty to the urban areas and therefore, we have to take targeted programmes to combat this."

"We must enlarge our investment: GDP ratio to 18 per cent from the current 14 per cent to tackle poverty," the Minister said.

"Our poverty programmes with investment in the social sector have been highly praised by the donors who said that for the first time the investment has qualitatively matched the hopes and aspirations of the people."

IMF representative in Dhaka Salahuddin Khenissi, who also attended the Paris Club meeting, was present in the press briefing.

Termining the meeting as "extremely successful," he said there had been a lot of agreements between the government side and the donors on the reform programme.

He, however, said, there is more room to accelerate the reform process.

2 killed in city road accidents

By DMCH Correspondent

At least two persons were killed in a separate road accidents in the city yesterday.

Pedestrian Shaheed Mia, 14, died when a speeding bus ran over him near the Khilkhet bus stand under Cantonment Police Station at 5:30 in the afternoon.

Police seized the bus (Dhaka Metro Cha-6257) but its driver managed to escape, said police.

In another accident, a 50-year-old man who could not be identified immediately died on the spot when a minibus knocked him down at Kauran Bazar around 10:30 in the morning.

Both the bodies were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

South Korean PM resigns

SEOUL, Apr 22: South Korean Prime Minister Lee Hoi-Chang resigned today and his resignation was accepted by President Kim Young-Sam who immediately appointed a replacement, a presidential spokesman said, reports AFP.

"President Kim Young-Sam accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Lee Hoi-Chang and named unification Minister Lee Yung-Duc as his replacement."

The Midnight File

Clinton welcomes NATO ultimatum

WASHINGTON, Apr 22: US President Bill Clinton welcomed today the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's ultimatum to Bosnian Serbs besieging Gorazde to stop fighting immediately or face NATO airstrikes. "This decision provides NATO forces with greater authority to respond to Bosnian Serb attacks. The Bosnian Serb authorities should not doubt NATO's willingness to act," Clinton said at a White House press conference, reports AFP.

Talks on Black Sea Fleet fail

SEVASTOPOL, Ukraine, Apr 22: Negotiations between Ukraine and Russia on dividing the Black Sea Fleet ended in failure today, with the Russian delegation storming out of talks, Ukraine's Defence Ministry said. Spokesman Olexander Kluban said the talks foundered on the issue of where to base the two sides' naval forces. He said Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev tore up an agreement on splitting the fleet's ships reached earlier in the day and left the hall without saying good bye to his Ukrainian hosts, reports Reuters.

Banglabazar editor granted one-day bail

By Staff Correspondent

Matiur Rahman Chowdhury, editor of the daily Banglabazar Patrika, was granted bail for a day yesterday.

Rahman will have to appear before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, to seek a fresh bail.

The editor of the Bengali daily was arrested after the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate had issued a warrant of arrest against him and the paper's publisher for carrying a defamatory report.

M Morshed Khan, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister, lodged a case with the CMM, Dhaka for publishing a report under the headline 'Chairman and Vice Chairman of IFIC Bank suspended.'

Tejgaon police arrested Rahman and produced him before magistrate Abdur Rahman in the Dhaka Magistrate yesterday where he was granted bail for a day. Rahman's solicitors A N M Yusuf and M Sajawar moved the bail petition.

As guarantors for the defendant, the two lawyers put up a bond of Tk 25,000 for the one-day bail.

Hasina: Bosnia

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In Gorazde was enacted in the full view of the UN and NATO who failed to take any effective action against the Serbian aggressors.

She said that the tragedy of Bosnia has entered a new phase with the collapse of resistance at Gorazde. The ineffective and futile gestures by the western powers have not convinced anybody about their sincerity, Hasina added.

Except for a few air strikes, they did not respond to the cries of innocent men, women and children trapped in that besieged town, she said.

Hasina, however, welcomed US President Clinton's latest initiative to press the Serb aggressors toward a negotiated peace. "But time is running out," she cautioned, pointing out that innocent people were dying while plans were being discussed and debated.

Housewife robbed in N'ganj

NARAYANGANJ, Apr 22: A young woman was robbed of her gold ornaments in the town on Thursday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said two young men carrying firearms and knives snatched ear rings, a necklace, three rings and Tk 500 from Promila Devnath in front of Preparatory Kindergarten at Chashara while she was going to a nearby school with her kid in the morning.

Bosnian Serbs

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Serbs did not stop shelling Muslim safe havens.

The United Nations has set six such areas: Gorazde, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Srebrenica, Zepa and Bihać, which is on the other side of the country near the Croatia border.

One senior NATO diplomat said it would take a long time for the alliance to finalise its entire programme because no two safe areas were alike.

NATO's military committee met on Friday morning to finalise their assessments of the latest situation on the ground in Bosnia before handing options for wider air strikes to their political masters.

The Security Council resolution early on Friday demanded that Bosnian Serb forces pull back from Gorazde and called for an immediate ceasefire agreement covering the enclave and the rest of Bosnia.

Another report says Russia may consider pulling its peacekeepers out of Bosnia if NATO launches air strikes against the Serbs. Interfax news agency quoted a senior diplomat as saying today.

The unnamed diplomat told the agency that air strikes would enrage the Serbs and incite them to take violent action against UN peacekeepers. The Foreign Ministry said it had no immediate comment on the report.

Salam says Opposition

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legations of rigging in the by-elections, he said the reality was that out of sixteen by-elections held in the country after the BNP came to power eight seats were won by the Opposition. BNP candidates got defeated in many of the union parishad and municipal elections. Opposition nominees won victories in two city corporation elections out of four, he added.

Talukder said the fact remains that the Election Commission had been able to conduct elections independently and impartially during the present government.

Referring to the Opposition allegations of rigging in the Magura two by-election, he said the Opposition could have

WASA clarification

The Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (WASA) has contradicted a PROBE news agency item headlined 'Syedabadi water plant uncertain' published in The Daily Star on April 19, saying that the statements made in the report were not true.

The rejoinder said there was no difference of opinions of the WASA officials and engineers. There is also no vested quarter in the institution, it added.

The decision of launching the project was taken at its Board meeting and the work order was issued through tender, the rejoinder said, adding that the WASA officials have been working fast to implement the project.

US may ask UNSC for sanctions on North Korea

TOKYO, Apr 22: The United States will ask the UN Security Council to impose economic sanctions against North Korea if Pyongyang refuses to let IAEA inspectors oversee an upcoming full operation at a controversial nuclear site, US Defence Secretary William Perry said today, reports AFP.

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HC refers to CJ

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before the Chief Justice for necessary orders.

The case relates to the acquiring, through wrongful means, of a Rajuk plot at Shahbagh in the city for the construction of the Holiday Inn Hotel.

Just before the HC bench was about to take up hearing of Ershad's petition, his defence lawyer Moudud Ahmed told the court that he had something to say. Moudud submitted that he had received instructions from his client to tell the court that he (Ershad) had "developed a reasonable apprehension that he would not receive a fair trial before this division bench."

At this, Attorney General Aminul Huq, appearing for the State, raised serious objections, saying that the defence counsel's submission was merely a ploy to delay the trial, pending before the Special Judge's Court. The hearing in that court were earlier stayed by the High Court.

A visibly agitated Attorney General told the court that counsel Moudud Ahmed's statements were without any basis. "In the 32 years of my legal practice, I've never heard such revolting, repulsive and repulsive submissions in a court of law," Aminul Huq declared.

Mainul Haq, the counsel for Abul Khair Litu, though originally talking in Moudud Ahmed's vein, later changed his position and told the court that it could hear the petition of his client who, he said, had full confidence in this court.

The Attorney General was assisted by Deputy Attorney General AFM Shahid and Assistant Attorney Generals Motiul Islam Montu and Mir Hasmat Ali.

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Nixon's condition unchanged

NEW YORK, Apr 22: Former President Richard Nixon remained in a deep coma and near death today after suffering a major stroke and reports said he had previously told doctors not to use a respirator to keep him alive, reports Reuters.

The 81-year-old former president's condition was described as 'grave' by his office. His two daughters were at his bedside at New York Hospital.

Nixon suffered the stroke Monday and first reports were optimistic about his chances for recovery. But late Tuesday afternoon he was readmitted to the hospital's intensive care unit after a cat-scan revealed swelling of the brain.

The swelling was treated with drugs but at Nixon's own request, one made several years ago, no respirator can be used to prolong his life, according to news reports.

The former president also asked that doctors not attempt to resuscitate him, the reports added.

Khilgaon killing: One arrested

By Staff Correspondent

Police arrested one Taslim, 24, and sent him to the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday in connection with armed violence in the city's Bagicha area which left one person killed Thursday night.

Motihel police arrested Taslim from the same area late Thursday night and produced him before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court, Dhaka, yesterday from where he was sent to jail.