

Workshop at Rajshahi reveals

# TB claims 70,000 lives every yr in Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

More than three lakh people are attacked by the fatal disease tuberculosis every year in the country.

Out of the total, about 70,000 people face death. The frightening information was disclosed at a daylong workshop on "Management of Tuberculosis Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course" held recently at the conference room of the Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi.

Experts said that the higher rate of incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis in the country was a matter of grave concern.

Out of the total number of tuberculosis patients, only 30 per cent are now detected and 80 per cent of the detected cases are cured.

In 1991 the rates of detection and cure were 10 per cent and 40 per cent respectively.

The rates have increased mentionably after introduction of Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course (DOTS) programme in 1993, experts said. The aim of the DOTS programme is to detect at least 70 per cent of tuberculosis (TB) patients and cure 85 per cent of the detected cases by 2003.

DOTS is a brand name of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) strategy for TB control. It indicates a policy package of five elements: (i) detection of TB cases by sputum smear microscopy examination, (ii) standardised short-course chemotherapy under close supervision of preferably a health personnel or a trained and supervised community member, (iii) regular supply of anti-TB drugs, (iv) monitoring through recording and reporting system and (v) financial and political support.

The experts informed that cure rate of DOTS was 95 per cent, death rate only two per cent and only three per cent patients grew chronically.

In the traditional Non-DOTS system, 60 per cent patients are cured, 10 per cent die and 30 per cent become chronic. An interesting matter is that, the experts said, 25 per cent patients are cured and 25 per cent become chronic in case the patients take no treatment. Inadequate and incomplete treatment is the main course of chronicity, the experts said. "No treatment is better than inadequate and in complete treatment in case of TB," the experts said and emphasised on taking DOTS.

The experts said that DOTS service was available in all of the four TB Hospitals, 44 chest Diseases Clinics and 460 Upazila Health Complexes.

DOTS was also recently introduced in Chittagong and Khulna City Corporation areas. It will be introduced in Rajshahi City Corporation by June

this year and in Dhaka City Corporation by the end of this year, they said.

Facilities of diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis under the DOTS programme are available free of cost, the workshop was informed. The experts urged the physicians and health workers to refer the suspected TB patients to the nearby centres for DOTS.

The experts said, any patient suffering from cough for three weeks or more with or without other symptoms like fever, weight loss, flood with sputum end so on should be considered as a suspected case of pulmonary tuberculosis. Three sputum samples collected within two days are tested for Acid Fast Bacilli (Mycobacterium tuberculosis) by Zeihl-Neelsen method under microscopy. If two or three samples are found positive of AFB then it is diagnosed as a case of pulmonary TB. If one sample is found positive or all the three samples are found negative chest X-rays and clinical evaluation are done for diagnosis.

Elaborating survey-reports, the experts observed that most TB patients did not take adequate and complete course of treatment, if treated under private practitioners or conventional non-DOTS method. For that reason, relapse, acquired resistance and multi-drug resistance (MDR) are alarmingly increasing, they said.

To prevent infection by M tuberculosis, they also suggest to give Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine to new born babies within three days of birth.

National TB Control Programme in Bangladesh adopted the DOTS strategy and started its field implementation in November 1993 with an aim to reduce TB mortality, morbidity and transmission and prevent the development of drug resistance.

Jointly organised by the office of the Civil Surgeon (CS), Rajshahi and Damien Bangladesh, the workshop was presided over by the CS of Rajshahi Dr Shukur Uddin Miridha.

The key notes were presented in the scientific sessions by Dr Anwara Khatun, Deputy Programme Manager (TB) of Directorate of Health and Dr Wasim Hossain, Junior Consultant of Rajshahi Chest Diseases Clinic.

The workshop was also addressed by Dr Jainab Begum, Director-in-Charge of Rajshahi Divisional office of the Directorate of Health, former principal of Rajshahi Medical College Prof Dr SAA Bari, Dr Sultan Ahmed, Dr SMA Mannan, Dr Rezaul Karim and others.

# Fertiliser is dear in five districts

UNB, *Kurigram*

Cultivation of IRRI-Boro is being hampered due to sudden price hike of fertiliser in five districts of greater Rangpur.

The price increase, attributed to the illegal hoarding by a section of dealers, will hit the overall production of IRRI-Boro in next harvesting season.

The price of fertiliser marked a rise by Tk 50 to Tk 60 per bag in a week.

A bag of 50kg TSP fertiliser is being sold at Tk 660 to Tk 670 against the previous price of Tk 600 while a bag of 50 kg SSP sold at Tk 320 to Tk 330 in place of previous price of Tk 250.

The farmers of Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat have prepared their lands for cultivating IRRI-Boro but the high price of TSP and SSP is discouraging them from the move. The Department of Agriculture

Extension set a target to bring 3.49 lakh hectares of land under local variety and high yielding variety this year.

Of the total, 68,500 hectares of land will be cultivated in Kurigram, 38,200 hectares in Lalmonirhat, 60,200 hectares in Nilphamari, 90,000 hectares in Gaibandha and 92,300 hectares in Rangpur district.

Farmers said foreign-made fertilisers are available in the market, but they prefer the local ones for their good quality.

Production from the lone TSP fertiliser factory of the country in Chittagong is inadequate to meet the demand of the farmers

In January, 1,476 mts of TSP was allocated for Rangpur, 604 mts for Kurigram, 524 mts for Lalmonirhat, 1,196 mts in Nilphamari and 1,116 mts in Gaibandha district. The quantity is too small against the demand.

# Sharp fall in water level hits navigation in N dists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Navigation has seriously been affected in the northern districts, including Sirajganj, due to abnormal fall in water level and emergence of numerous shoals in rivers.

According to officials sources, with advent of winter major rivers in the region have marked abnormal fall, endangering navigation.

The Jamuna at Sirajganj point has almost dried up. Big shoals have appeared in the riverbed, hampering navigation. The Brahmaputra has also marked sharp fall in Sirajganj, Bogra, Kurigram and Gaibandha districts.

The river has been divided into several channels at many points

because of the emergence of about 1,500 small and big shoals, which have made navigation risky.

The Teesta has now only two channels following unilateral withdrawal of water in upper stream by India.

The Padma has also dried up in most points from Chapainawabganj to Pabna districts.

Besides, the Dudhkumar in Kurigram, the Atrai in Naogaon have also marked drastic fall.

Moreover, about 30 minor rivers and tributaries have almost dried up. Local people said light rainfalls in the last year is also one of the reasons for sharp fall in water level this year.

# Poor quality batteries flood Chapainawabganj markets

UNB, *Chapainawabganj*

Local markets have been flooded with poor quality dry-cell battery smuggled into Chapainawabganj district from India.

Dishonest traders are smuggling low-grade battery into the district through different border points and supplying those to the shopkeepers in various local markets, apart from different parts of the country.

Not only that some of the dishonest traders in connivance with the law enforcers are smuggling batteries and marketing those at lower prices after sticking labels of quality batteries, locals alleged.

As a result, customers are showing growing interests to buy these batteries due to its cheap price depriving the government of huge revenue.

Despite having superior quality batteries like Chanda, Haq, Olympic and Sunlight, Bangladeshi batteries are losing its markets due to higher prices compared to the smuggled Indian batteries.

With a view to earning windfall profit, shopkeepers are also interested to sell these substandard batteries to the customers.

The markets where smuggled and fake batteries are sold included Tahabazar, Natunhat, Baroghoria and Haripur of Sadar upazila, Ranihat, Manakasha, Binodpur, and Kansat of Shibganj, Rahanpur, Adda, Radhanagar, Parbatipur of Gomastapur and Malikipur and Sonaichandihat of Nachole upazilas.

# Bagerhat jail crammed with prisoners

UNB, *Bagerhat*

Bagerhat District Jail has been crammed with the prisoners groaning in anguish.

There are now 822 prisoners in the jail, which can accommodate up to 130 people, including nine women.

Of the total prisoners, 222 are convicts while 491 under trial prisoners and 109 Indian nationals, whose tenure of punishment was expired long ago.

Apart from this, there are three little boys, aged about 4, 5 and 11, kept in the jail as undertrial prisoners and an 11-year-old girl, who fell victims of rape, in the safe custody.

Although the sub-jail has been upgraded to the district jail in 1998, the capacity of the jail and facility for the prisoners has not been

increased due to reasons unknown. Some 797 male prisoners are there in seven rooms and two tinshed houses while 25 female prisoners in one room and one tinshed house.

The misery of the prisoners knows no bound when the number of prisoners increases sometime due to arrest of foreign fishermen.

Now there are 326 Thai, Myanmar and Indian prisoners in the district jail.

Construction work on the district jail on 10 acres of land started in the court area in the town in 1997 to accommodate 400 prisoners.

However, the construction work is going on at a snail's pace due to reasons unknown. Nobody knows when the work would be completed.

# Because of her inability to bring dowry

UNB, *Narayanganj*

A young housewife along with a one-month baby has been forced to leave her husband's house in Narayanganj for her inability to bring dowry.

Narrating her sufferings at a press conference at Narayanganj Press Club on Tuesday, Shikha Begum, daughter of Sheikh Ayub Ali of 2, Baburail, said she married Sumon of Garmora in Bandar thana on February 18 last year.

But Sumon, at the instance of his father, started putting pressure on her soon after the marriage to bring Tk 100,000 as dowry, she alleged.

Shikha said that to meet the demand, she brought Tk 50,000 from her parents and handed the amount to her husband recently. But Sumon forced her to leave the house with her daughter for failure to bring rest of the amount, she added.

The young mother said that at present, she was passing through great hardship with her newborn child. She further alleged that some hoodlums, hired by Sumon, were

threatening her for the money. The Home Minister directed the Police Super here to take necessary action when he was informed of the matter, Shikha said.

But, she said, for reasons unknown the Bandar thana police has not yet taken any step regarding the matter although the SP had asked them to take immediate necessary action.

# Obituary

UNB, *Khulna*

Former assistant information officer of Press Information Department (PID) Nizam Uddin Ahmed died of cancer at his residence at Mohammadpur in Magura district on Monday. He was 60.

Nizam left behind his wife, one son and one daughter and a host of relatives.

# NEWS SNAPS

## Two killed in Joypurhat road mishap

UNB, *Joypurhat*

Two motorcyclists including a newspaper hawkker were killed in a traffic mishap near Shimultali Bazar on Fulbari-Joypurhat highway in Joypurhat district Wednesday. The deceased were identified as hawkker Matur Rahman Putul, 22, son of late Sharif Uddin, and college student Khurram, 25, son of Sarwar Hossain of the town. Witnesses said the victims died on the spot when a Dhaka-bound night coach knocked them down on their way back home from Panchbibi upazila in a motorcycle.

The office-bearers of the hawkkers union conveyed their deep sympathy to the bereaved family members of Matur Rahman Putul and Khurram at their tragic death. Another report adds: A young man along with six bottles of Indian phensidyl was nabbed from Relghumti area near Banglahilli on Feb 5. He was sent to jail hajat and a case was filed against him. Meanwhile, BDR jawans chased some drug traffickers and recovered 125 bottles of Indian phensidyl from West Ramchandrapur area of Panchbibi upazila on Feb 4.

## Labourer succumbs to injuries

UNB, *Manikganj*

A day-labourer was kled as a big chunk of soil fell on him at a brickfield in Zoka area in Gheor upazila under Manikganj district Friday. Witnesses said Lal Mia, 32, was seriously injured while he was cutting soil at the brickfield.

He was first admitted to Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on the same day.

## Man gets life term for possessing arms

UNB, *Joypurhat*

A court in Joypurhat on Sunday convicted a man and sentenced him to life term imprisonment in an arms case. The convict Faraj Uddin Chowdhury, 41, son of Kayem Uddin Chowdhury of Haendra Chowdhury para in Panchbibi upazila was arrested with a revolver and seven rounds of bullet in September 1999.

A case was filed and after investigation police submitted charge sheet against him. Assistant Sessions Judge Hasanuzzaman after examining the records and witnesses handed down the punishment.

## Little girl raped

UNB, *Barguna*

A little girl was raped allegedly by a youth at Gourichanna Baroghur village in Sadar upazila under Barguna district on Thursday. Police said Ripon, of the same village, picked up the girl, a class V student of Gourichanna Government Primary School, on her way to school and raped her in a nearby jungle.

On hearing the hue and cry of the girl local people rushed to the spot and rescued her. Family members of the rapist attacked the local Muktiyoddha Commander Jahangir Kabir when he went to Ripon's house to catch him, local people alleged. A case was filed.

## Six injured as building collapses

UNB, *Bagerhat*

At least six day-labourers were injured, one critically, in an old school building collapse in Sadar upazila under Bagerhat district on Saturday. The injured Humaun Kabir, 23, Kamal, 22, Badsha, 20, Kabir, 27, Ali, 26, and Mohammad Ali, 37 were admitted to Sadar hospital. Of them, the condition of Humaun Kabir was stated to be critical.

Witnesses said the old building of Badamtala Government Primary School suddenly collapsed when the labourers were breaking it in the morning.

## Tk 129.31cr outstanding farm loan

UNB, *Sherpur*

The outstanding farm loan of four commercial banks and Bangladesh Rural Development Broad in Sherpur district stood at over Tk 129.31 crore including Tk 92.05 crore default loans. The four commercial banks are Bangladesh Krishi Bank, Sonali Bank, Janata Bank and Agrani Bank.

The banks have realised Tk 10.07 crore outstanding loans in the first six months (January-December) of the current fiscal year. Bank wise break-up of the outstanding loans: Bangladesh Krishi Bank Tk 71.08 crore including default loan Tk 44.68 crore, Sonali Bank Tk 39.31 crore including default loan Tk 32.32 crore, Agrani Bank Tk 6.46 crore including default loan Tk 3.05 crore, Janata Bank Tk 5.80 crore including default loan Tk 5.34 crore and BRDB default loan Tk 6.64 crore.

## Mass grave discovered

UNB, *Panchagarh*

A mass grave of 1971 Liberation War was discovered at Mahanpara village in Sadar upazila under Panchagarh district recently. At least seven people, shot and killed by the Pakistani occupation army, were buried in the mass grave, survivors of the massacre said.

The survivors, Azizul and Afazul Islam, who managed to escape from the clutches of Pakistan Army and their local collaborators, identified the place. They said the seven victims were Umer Ali, Bhutto, Bhankura Muhammad, Gunda Khawa, Afaru, Aziruddin and Ibrahim of the same village. Azizul and Afazul were also injured in the shooting, but managed to escape.

## Art exhibition begins

UNB, *Thakurgaon*

A six-day long fine art exhibition began at the local Nuruddin Smriti Pathagar in Thakurgaon Friday. Eminent artist Hashem Khan, Professor of Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University, inaugurated the exhibition.

Various paintings of 58 renowned artists have been put on display in the exhibition and documentary films on fine arts have also been screening at the local press club premises.

## 3,489 children under mass edn scheme

UNB, *Joypurhat*

Some 3,489 children and elderly people of Joypurhat district completed their courses under mosque-based children and mass education programme last year conducted by Islamic Foundation Bangladesh. Deputy director of the foundation disclosed this recently at a function while distributing prizes among the best teachers, learners and librarians.

Mosque-based children and mass education programme was launched in the district in the month of January last year with 125 centres in Sadar, Khetlal and Kalai upazilas. There were 3,720 students under the programme during the period. Of them, some 239 children and elderly people deserted the centre. The certificates and prizes were distributed among the 11 best teachers, 375 best learners and a librarian.

## IPM system gains popularity

UNB, *Netrakona*

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) system, introduced by Agriculture Extension Department, is gaining popularity among the farmers in 10 upazilas of the district.

Farmers of the district said after introducing IPM system in the district 1996, dependency on pesticides has been reduced to a great extent. The AED set up 80 farmer field schools, 25-IPM clubs and student field schools in 10 upazilas of the district till December last year. A large number of farmers have been imparted training on IPM in the rural areas to create awareness about the harmful effects of using pesticide in the field.

# They could not cast vote for 43 years !

UNB, *Jhenidah*

When male adults in Surat union in Jhenidah had gone to voting centres to cast their votes during various elections in the past, their female counterparts stayed back home.

Women in 12 villages of the union could not exercise their franchise for the last 43 years as village headmen forced them to refrain from voting.

According to elderly villagers, the restriction on voting by women of the villages came when a devastating cyclone on a polling day in 1958 trapped overnight a good number of women when they went out to cast their votes. A little boy was also killed in the storm.

Now the restriction has gone and the women of the villages will be able to exercise their franchise from the coming general election.

The villages are Laudia, Ratanhat, Chutlia, Teghori, Bagdaiga, Purbakrishnapur, Kalyanpur,

Hudasurat, Baniabahu, Hamdordanga, South Kastasagra and Surat.

Following a press report that over 4,000 female voters of the villages were being barred from casting their votes due to a fatwa, the Election Commission on January 8 ordered urgent inquiry into the allegations.

After necessary investigation into the allegation, Deputy Election Commissioner of Khulna division AKM Shahidul Islam and the DC of Jhenidah submitted their reports.

Then the local UP chairman at the directive of the Election Commission organised a motivation meeting at Surat UP office on Tuesday.

A cross-section of people, including 105 public representatives, teachers, imams, village headmen and social workers from 12 villages attended the meeting.

The Deputy Election Commissioner of Khulna division and district election officer Amjad Hossain were present in the three-hour meeting.

After a marathon discussion, the meeting took a written resolution that from now on the female voters of the villages would cast their votes in all elections.

Expressing regrets for their wrong decision, the village headmen agreed to allow the women to cast their votes and demanded a polling station in each village.

In response, Local UP chairman Abdur Rashid told the meeting that there are presently 10 polling centres in 12 villages.

Election officer Amjad Hossain told that at the meeting the village headmen said there was no fatwa against voting of their female voters. They said women of the villages used to exercise their franchise before 1958.

After the 1996 general election, different NGOs, including Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA), launched a motivation programme in the union to create awareness among the female voters about their right to voting.

# Sweeter side of Jhenidah

Photo feature: *Delwar Kabir*



Jhenidah district is famous for date juice. The winter season brings joy and happiness for the people here because of its delicious date juice. The people like this juice not only for drinking, but also for making different traditional palatable cakes. Date juice is also used for producing molasses which has a great demand all over. A juice collector (top left) is seen scaling a date tree to extract juice at village Kodalia under Sadar upazila, (top right) another juice collector returns home after collecting date juice at village Kabirpur under Saikupa upazila, (bottom left) preparation of date molasses underway at village Bijulia under Saikupa upazila, (bottom right) date molasses on sale at a Jhenidah market.