

US approves pill for leukemia patients

AFP, Washington

The US Food and Drug Administration on Thursday approved a pill for treatment of chronic myeloid leukemia (CML), a rare life-threatening form of cancer, calling it "an important breakthrough drug."

Gleevec substantially reduces the level of cancerous cells in the bone marrow and blood of patients that take it, said an FDA statement, which cautioned, however, that it was too early to say whether the drug increases chances for survival.

"Further clinical studies are needed to evaluate whether Gleevec provides an actual clinical benefit, such as improved survival, as well as to examine its effects when used in early stage disease," said Bernard Schwetz, the FDA's acting commissioner.

The FDA approved the sale of Gleevec, also known as STI-571, in under three months, in one of its fastest drug reviews ever, said FDA

spokeswoman Susan Cruzan. She called Gleevec "an important breakthrough drug" using "a brand new mechanism to treat this kind of leukemia."

CML is a rare but fatal disease which afflicts one in 100,000 people. It generally emerges in people aged 30 to 50 years old, with initial symptoms of fatigue and weight loss. Average life expectancy after contracting the disease is four years.

Leukemia is caused by a genetic malfunction which creates an abnormal protein, which in turn causes uncontrolled proliferation of white blood cells. Gleevec blocks the function of the protein, called Bcr-Abl.

In clinical trials of the drug, 88 per cent of patients had their white blood cell count return to normal, and 49 per cent saw a reduction of disappearance of the altered chromosome at the root of the disease, Novartis, manufacturer of the drug, said.

Gulistan bldg being demolished

FROM PAGE 1

The complex also accommodates two of the oldest cinema halls in the city. The first Chinese restaurant in the city was set up there.

Meanwhile, the developer has already started selling 'possession' at the proposed complex without having Rajuk approval. When contacted over telephone, Mezbahuddin, who identified himself as a director of the Western Engineers Ltd, said a number of shops on three floors have already been 'booked.'

About Rajuk approval, he said, "We have gone a long way to get the approval and now it is only a matter of days."

But Authorised Officer of Rajuk S M Asaduzzaman, when contacted, said the question of Rajuk approval for the proposed complex does not arise at this moment as no plan has been submitted for it. "Even they

have not received 'land clearance' so far."

Despite repeated attempts, BMKT officials could not be contacted on Thursday for their comments. The official concerned at its office at the complex was not available when this correspondent went there on that day.

Sources in Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) feared that construction of such a multi storied complex so close of the largest underpass in the city might pose a threat to it. The underpass with more than a 100 shops built at a cost of about Tk five crore developed cracks in its structure last year. DCC however insisted that it was not in danger of caving in.

Earlier, eminent citizens have appealed to the authorities to preserve the Gulistan cinema hall for its links with the history of the city.

Khaleda to address rally at Langolkot today

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition leader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will address a public meeting at Langolkot High School ground in Comilla at 3 pm today.

Central and local leaders of BNP and its front organisations will address the meeting.

Langolkot thana BNP organised the meeting demanding resignation of the government and protesting border incidents, said a press release.

BSF man caught by BDR, handed over after flag meeting

UNB, Meherpur

A soldier of Indian border security force (BSF) intruded into Bangladesh territory yesterday and was caught by BDR personnel.

Officials said Sre Beenny Singh carrying an SLR and a binocular entered Anandabas area of Mujibnagar upazila at about 2:30 pm.

He was arrested by BDR jawans of Anandabas border outpost.

A flag meeting of BDR and BSF at company commander level was held near Mujibnagar border outpost at 6:30 pm where the Indian soldier was handed over to BSF.

Seeking votes much ahead

FROM PAGE 12

one election and starts preparing a manifesto for the next one and asks its aspirants to reach the pledges to voters much before the polling, none can stop it from doing so," he said.

Asked whether laws allow the PM or the Opposition leader to introduce a person as candidate, he replied in the affirmative saying that all come under election code of conduct only after announcement of the schedule.

"The RPO talked about macro level electioneering that cannot be launched begun three weeks before the polling. And this is effective only after announcement of the election schedule," he said.

Asked whether expenditures for

campaign posters and wall graffiti for one person seeking votes before announcement of the schedule will be considered as his election expenses, he said "may be, if he finally contests the poll."

"Now we are seeing wall writings or posters for certain people. Will they all get party nominations or contest the election? If not, how can you consider those as election expenditures for an individual candidate?" he asked.

In this regard, he specifically mentioned certain campaigns for aspirants in the name of wishing people on various occasion, like Eid. Existing laws do not suggest those as election campaigns, the expert said.

Resident DU students

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier on April 2, Bashar, a first-year student of the Department of the Islamic Studies and resident of the Surya Sen Hall, was stabbed seriously for the same reason. He had to be admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Sometimes BCL activists bar students from attending classes, a resident of the Surya Sen Hall said.

While a small number of resident students actually show interest in political programmes, BCL men force the majority to participate, said a resident of the Jasimuddin Hall.

While talking to The Daily Star, provosts of some halls admitted that incidences of harassment at different dormitories were on the rise. As victims do not make any complaint to the authorities, actions cannot be taken against the culprits, they said.

"If we receive complaints, we will go for proper action against the persons who compel the students to join political programmes against their will," said Provost of the Ziaur Rahman Hall Prof AI Mahub Uddin Ahmed.

Professor Ahmed said the higher authorities of the university should be stricter in this regard. "When we take action against the culprits involved in violent activities, the top BCL leaders apply pressure on us."

Provost of the Mohsin Hall Professor Dr. M Khairul Hossain said, "Forcing general students to participate in political programmes is undoubtedly a crime. But we

haven't got any such complaint yet. Students should not hesitate to file complaints against the culprits, if there is any."

According to Dhaka University ordinances and regulations, a provost has the power to expel a resident student from the university for a period of up to six months for breach of discipline or misconduct.

"But the rules are hardly applied because of the influence of the ruling party or its students wing," said a provost requesting anonymity.

There are also allegations that BCL leaders allot seats for newcomers on condition of regular attendance at their processions and rallies. Freshmen are bound to meet the hall unit leaders on a regular basis, sources said.

A hall unit president of BCL said, "We always try to stage big processions to gain political recognition from central leaders."

Another hall unit president said, "We know this is not ethical, but we are doing this for the sake of campus politics."

However, the general secretary of BCL's DU unit, AKM Azim refuted the allegations, terming it a "propaganda" by a group he did not name.

"If any activist of BCL is found involved in such activities, he will be ousted from the organisation," Azim said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina being seen off at the Zia International Airport yesterday prior to her departure for London en route to Brussels.

PHOTO: PID

'Beijing to promote all round cooperation with Islamabad'

Chinese PM gets rousing welcome

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan have withstood the test of time and vicissitudes."

The two countries treat each other with "sincerity and trust and cooperate closely" on the basis of the principles of peaceful coexistence, he said.

"History has proven that this friendship is not only in conformity with the common aspiration and fundamental interests of the two countries and two peoples, but also conducive to peace, stability and development of the region."

Earlier, Zhu was warmly received by military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, who was flanked by senior ministers and the chiefs of the army, navy and air force, at the Chaklala air base near Islamabad airport.

Officials said the Chinese premier would hold wide-ranging talks with Musharraf later Friday and explore ways to enhance economic and technical cooperation.

"They are expected to sign a number of significant economic agreements that reflect the desire of both sides to further consolidate the exemplary bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries," Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said.

Musharraf said Thursday the visit would open "new vistas" of cooperation and collaboration between the two countries.

He said the two countries had identified several projects, including a deep sea port at Gwadar and a copper-gold mining project at Saindak in southwestern Baluchistan province.

Pakistan and China's friendship has assumed a special significance due to the global geo-strategic changes, Musharraf said, adding that the ties between the two countries were vital for peace at regional and global levels.



PHOTO: STAR

BNP activists brought out a procession in the city yesterday expressing their joy at the expulsion of Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury and Anwar Zahid from the party.

Macedonian parties agree on national unity govt

AFP, Skopje

The four leading political parties in Macedonia have reached agreement on forming a government of national unity to tackle an ethnic Albanian insurrection, the prime minister's office said Friday.

"The main goal of the government will be securing the stability of the country and continuing with intensive political dialogue and organising fair early elections," the statement said.

Prime Minister Ljubco Georgievski's VMRO-DPMNE party will remain the largest group in the government, and will be joined by former coalition parties, the ethnic Albanian DPA, the main Slav opposition SDSM and the ethnic Albanian PDP.

Parliament will meet on Sunday to ratify the new government, whose first task will be to develop a strategy to beat the self-styled National Liberation Army, an ethnic Albanian guerrilla group which has seized a dozen villages north of the capital.

Georgievski, who has been under pressure from the international community to form a broader coalition to isolate the rebels, first announced the new government on Tuesday, but the PDP backed away from the deal in protest at the army's continuing bombardment of rebel-held villages.

But the PDP (Party for Democratic Prosperity) changed its

mind again early Friday after the prime minister warned he was ready to go ahead and form the government without them.

Half-brother of Laden granted Swiss nationality

AFP, Geneva

The millionaire half-brother of the alleged Saudi Arabian terrorist Ossama bin Laden has been granted Swiss nationality, officials said on yesterday.

The Geneva cantonal parliament decided late Thursday to grant Yeslam bin Laden's request for Swiss nationality, flying in the face of an earlier decision by the canton's government to refuse it.

Yeslam bin Laden said in a written statement Friday that he was very grateful to the Geneva parliament for rejecting the "unjustified rumours" about him.

Last December the president of Geneva's cantonal government, Carlo Lamprecht, refused permission for an exhibition in the area because it was financed by Yeslam bin Laden.

His half-brother Ossama bin Laden, believed to be in hiding in Afghanistan under the protection of the ruling Taliban militia, is wanted by the United States in connection with the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in East Africa.

DMCH

FROM PAGE 12

excessive and varying prices from patients and many of them are exploited by brokers of these shops, particularly at night. All this prompted the hospital authorities to take initiative for a fair price shop.

However, some sources said a section of ward boys and aiyas at the hospital have links with the shop owners who reportedly buy medicines stolen from patients.

Certified copies

FROM PAGE 1

If the Appellate Division turns down the leave to appeal, the accused will have a chance to submit a review petition. After that, there would be only one chance for the accused to avoid the gallows through an appeal for mercy before the President. If the President turns down the mercy petition, the execution by hanging would take place within seven days.

The Third Court after hearing the split verdict gave its judgement on April 30, confirming death sentences of 12 accused and acquitted three others.

All the 15 were found guilty by a trial court on November 8, 1998 and given capital punishment for murdering President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members at his residence on August 15, 1975.

Four of the accused are in death row of the Dhaka Central Jail. They are Lt. Col (dismissed) Syed Faruq Rahman, Lt. Col (rt) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Major (rt) Bazul Huda and Lt. Col (rt) Mohiuddin Ahmed.

The others were tried in absentia and are absconding.

3 murdered

FROM PAGE 1

of an unidentified young man from near old airport in the city's Tejgaon area yesterday afternoon.

There were marks of injury in his throat, police suspected that miscreants strangled the youth the previous night and dumped there.

Police recovered the body at about 4.30 pm and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Acase was filed with Kafrul thana in this regard.

BNP activists

FROM PAGE 1

its strategies about the anti-government agitation and unity of the opposition parties, and preparations for the upcoming general election.

The processionists chanted slogans against the two expelled leaders and in favour of the moderate ones. However, no leader of the party's central or city unit participated in the procession that marched around the BNP's central office at Naya Paltan.

A few city leaders were seen watching the celebration.

UNB adds: Expelled BNP leader Anwar Zahid yesterday said that BNP has made a sharp departure from its basic philosophy of Bangladeshi nationalism and Islamic values expounded by late President Ziaur Rahman.

"They've not expelled me, rather expelled its own politics expounded by Ziaur Rahman," he told UNB commenting on his expulsion by the BNP Thursday night. "This expulsion is nothing but to appease New Delhi," he said.

Refuting the charges that also cancelled his primary membership of BNP, Zahid said although major charges like working against party interests were brought against him, those charges were not specific and he was not given the chance to defend himself against the sweeping charges.

BSF

FROM PAGE 1

BDR and BSF exchanged shots at least 19 times in Belonia border over the disputed Muhurichar since 1974, other BDR sources said.

Five BSF personnel were killed in a clash in august 1997. The BSF also opened fired on BDR on August 22 last year. BDR replied with fire and this continued up to August 24, they said.

The clash stopped after a DG-level meeting between BDR and BSF. Another meeting was scheduled for January last year, but since then no meeting was held.

Bangladesh and Indian have dispute over demarcation of land borders at various points.

BIMSTEC

FROM PAGE 1

Delhi in July last year.

Besides, in February this year, a meeting of commerce ministers was held in Yangon. Discussions centred on the possibility of creating a preferential trading arrangement among the five member countries. Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil led the Bangladesh delegation.

The forthcoming meet may also take up issues like formulation of standard customs procedure.

BIMSTEC is being increasingly considered a bridge between the SAARC and the ASEAN.

To give it a more institutional shape, ambassadors of its member countries in Bangkok have started holding informal consultations every week.

The last meeting in Delhi launched the BIMSTEC Economic Forum to promote private sector trade, investment and tourism.

Rare photo of Charles Dickens sold

AFP, London

A rare photograph of Charles Dickens showing the 19th century British writer sporting a moustache rather than his trademark beard has been sold for 39,950 pounds (63,920 euros), auctioneer Christie's said Friday.

The daguerreotype image, an early form of photograph on glass, had been expected to sell for between 20,000 and 25,000 pounds as it went under the hammer in London.

The portrait, thought to show the author during the 1850s when he wrote such classics as "Bleak House" and "A Tale of Two Cities", went to an anonymous phone bidder.

It was discovered by a valuation team from Christie's and is the work of leading US photographers John Jabez and Edwin Mayall.

Alleged terrorist held at Barisal

UNB, Barisal

Police arrested an alleged terrorist when he went to local police station to set free an accused on Thursday night.

The arrested was identified as Mahbulul Alam Chhakku, younger brother of Jubo League leader Panama Farooque.

Chhakku was wanted in a number of cases, police said.

Expelled examinee set fire to exam centre in Feni

BSS, Feni

An HSC examinee, angered by his expulsion from the examination on Thursday, set the exam centre at Bakhtermunshi under Sonagazi upazila of the district, on fire last night, police said.

They said Saifuddin Masud, 18, a student of Sonagazi Government College, allegedly set afire the building of Bakhtermunshi Sheikh Shahidul Islam College.

Masud was caught by the night guard of the college after the arson attack and handed over to police.

In a separate incident at Feni Girls School Centre, a policeman was suspended as he allegedly supplied pages from books to some examinees of the centre.

Constable Abul Kalam is facing departmental actions, an official of Feni police said.

Local NGO forms committee to fight dengue

UNB, Dhaka

A local NGO has formed an 11-member convening committee to help resist spread of dengue fever.

Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Society (PHAS) at a meeting yesterday formed the committee called Committee to Resist Dengu (CRD) with its chief advisor Ali Neyamet as convener.

The meeting also decided to form a high-powered advisory council with National Professor Dr Nurul Islam, Vice-chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Dr Mahmood Hassan, UNB Chairman Amanullah Khan, Dr Ahsanul Haq, Dr AHM Rawshan, Dr Kaniz Mawla and Dr M A Wahab Khan.

Committee to Resist Dengue (CRD) has already started preparing a list of those persons, who would voluntarily donate blood to save the lives of dengue patients, said a press release.

Interested persons have been requested to contact CRD, Ka 29/2, Kuril, Progati Sarani, Dhaka.

Khulna lawyers

FROM PAGE 12

and nepotism. They went on strike on April 22 when their demand made two weeks earlier was ignored.

Joint Secretary to the ministry of Law and Parliamentary Affairs Sheikh Rezwana Ali spent two days in Khulna on May 2 and May 3, inquiring into allegations against Judge Aminul Islam. Fifty lawyers described the corrupt practices of the judge and produced some documents as evidence in this regard.

Meanwhile, at least 400 cases have been awaiting trial in the Special Court since the strike began, sources said. The judge has only been shifting their hearing dates and doing nothing else, striking lawyers said.

It was learnt that the stolen software was installed in the broker's computer in November 13, 1999. However, the DSE authorities did not have any idea of the theft till March 30 of this year when they found that the mainframe server of the bourse was hacked.

The forthcoming meet may also take up issues like formulation of standard customs procedure.

BIMSTEC is being increasingly considered a bridge between the SAARC and the ASEAN.

To give it a more institutional shape, ambassadors of its member countries in Bangkok have started holding informal consultations every week.

The last meeting in Delhi launched the BIMSTEC Economic Forum to promote private sector trade, investment and tourism.

Transport strike in Mymensingh

UNB, Mymensingh

District Transport Owners Association enforced a daylong transport strike in different routes of greater Mymensingh district yesterday.

The association called the strike demanding arrest of Poura Commissioner Abbas, who allegedly assaulted transport owner Anwarul Abedin Khan Tuhin on April 29.

2 JCD leaders jailed at Kishoreganj

UNB, Kishoreganj

A court here on Thursday sentenced two JCD leaders of Nikli upazila to seven years in prison each for attacking Awami League activists during an opposition called shutdown in 1998.

The convicts are Nikli upazila unit JCD president Mohammad Sazzad Hossain Swadhin and Treasurer Tajul Islam Shipon.

According to prosecution, the convicts from a procession during the opposition-sponsored hartal on November 9, 1998 attacked Awami League activists with sharp weapons in front the ruling party's office.

Police arrested Swadhin red-handed along with a 'ram dao' from the spot while Shipon managed to flee.

Examining the witnesses and evidences, the Sub-Judge, Akbar Hossain Mridha, handed down the verdict.

PM arrives

FROM PAGE 1

A large number of Bangladeshi expatriates living in the UK were also present at the airport to greet the Prime Minister.

Airport ceremony over, the Prime Minister was taken to Hotel Claridges in a ceremonial motorcade, where she will be staying during her UK visit.

Sheikh Hasina was accompanied by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Principal Secretary to the PM Dr S A Samad and Foreign Secretary Syed Muazzem Ali.

Landowners

FROM PAGE 1

will lay a siege to the Rajuk office tomorrow to realise their demands.

He claimed that the price offered to the affected landowners for their lands is much lower in this project than in Rajuk's other projects earlier.

Rajuk has allotted plots to only 31 of the affected landowners in the project out of 120 applicants, he said.

The percentage of affected landowners getting plots in this project is much lower than in Rajuk's other projects, he said.

In this regard he mentioned acquisition of lands in Faridabad, Purakari, Abdullahpur, Ranabohla and Bailyuri by DIT and Rajuk earlier for residential projects.

Replying to a question, he said RUKKS will move to court to realise their demands.

Rajuk has already allotted 2,678 plots even before acquisition of lands for the third phase of Rajuk's project in Uttara.

Nor'wester

FROM PAGE 1

The affected areas are Kalpani, Shimul Tair, Manmathpur, Annantapur, Sonatola and Kamalerpara.

Our Rajshahi Correspondent adds: One minor boy was killed and hundreds of kutcha houses were damaged as nor'wester hit different places under Naogaon district on Thursday night.

The boy was identified as Rezaul Haque, 9, son of Mozammel Huq of Piroldanga village under Dhamoirhat upazila in the district.

During the storm, the boy went to a local garden to collect mango and was injured seriously when a branch of a mango tree fell on him. He died on the way to hospital.

According to a report from Magura: Nor'wester lashed 15 villages of Magura sadar upazila on Thursday, uprooting trees, damaging standing crops and snapping power lines.

Magura district plunged into darkness for about 2 hours as 33 kv electric tower at Gopalpur area collapsed due to storm. Power supply in Magura was yet to be restored till filing of his report at 7.30 pm yesterday.

At least 15 people were injured as mud-walls of three houses collapsed on them during the storm at around 11 pm on Thursday.

Businessman

FROM PAGE 1

deceased's son, his nephew and two caretakers were in the house.

Ashrafur Alam was divorced from his wife. The reason behind the alleged suicide could not be known immediately.

Following autopsy done at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, the body was sent to the victim's district home in Khulna at about 12:30pm yesterday.