

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 Schatz, the FDA's acting commissioner.

The FDA approved the sale of Gleevec, also known as ST1-571, in under three months, in one of its fastest drug reviews ever, said FDA said.

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.

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.

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 Sri Beenu 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 level was held near Mujibnagar border outpost at 6:30 pm where the Indian soldier was handed over to BSF.

Khaleda to address rally at Langolok today

UNB, Dhaka

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

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

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

Seeking votes much ahead

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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

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, we will be ousted from the organisation," Azim said.

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



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

DMCH

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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 ayas at the hospital have links with the shop owners who reportedly buy medicines stolen from patients.

Certified copies

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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 Faruqr Rahman, Lt. Col. (rtd) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Major (rtd) Bazlul Huda and Lt. Col. (rtd) Mohiuddin Ahmed.

The others were tried in absentia and are absconding.

3 murdered

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of an unidentified young man from 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.

A case was filed with Kafrul thana in this regard.

BNP activists

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its strategies about the anti-government agitation and unity of the opposition party, 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

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

Five BSF personnel were killed in a clash in August 1999. The BSF also opened fire 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 DGL 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

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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 39,500 pounds (63,900 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.

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 of 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.

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

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PM arrives

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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 Muazzam Ali.

Landowners

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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, Purakair, Abdullapur, Ranabandhu and Bailejuri by DIT and Rajuk earlier for residential projects.

Replies to a question, he said RUKS 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

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

Our Rajshahi Correspondent adds: One minor boy was killed and hundreds of kutchha 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 Hug of Piroldanga village under Dhamirhatupur 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.