

Studies sow doubt over hormone therapy gains

REUTERS, Boston

Two medical studies released on Wednesday provided more damning evidence that giving female hormones to older women does little to improve their health and may in fact harm it.

The studies found that the treatments do not protect women from heart disease, as doctors once believed, and one of the studies found that giving hormones to women actually increases their risk of heart attack.

Both studies appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine, which published a separate piece of research earlier this year suggesting the health risks of estrogen and progestin treatments for older women outweigh the benefits.

In one study in this week's Journal, a research team led by JoAnn Manson of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston found that women taking estrogen and progestin increase their risk of a heart attack by 81 percent in the first year.

The study was the final report of a major government look at long-term use of combined estrogen-progestin treatments.

Preliminary findings released last summer showed that women taking the treatment had an increased risk of breast cancer, heart attacks and stroke after five years of use. The study of 16,608 women was ended early once the dangers of hormone treatment became apparent.

Researchers said the latest findings mean that most women who are taking the hormones should stop, and those who have reached menopause should not start.

"Overall, the risk of treatment outweighed the benefits during 5.6 years of treatment," they concluded in their study.

The only remaining reason for prescribing the treatment is to relieve the symptoms of menopause, the Manson team said.

Drugmaker Wyeth, which says its drug Prempro makes up nearly half the market of combined estrogen-progestin treatments, said the study contained "no new findings" regarding the heart attack data initially published last year.

Wyeth said in a statement that while estrogen-plus-progestin therapy should not be used to prevent cardiovascular disease, it remained a "valuable treatment" for the relief of moderate to severe

menopausal symptoms.

The second study, led by Howard Hodis of the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, found that the arteries of 150 women taking hormone supplements clogged just as rapidly as 76 getting a placebo.

For years, conventional medical wisdom asserted that replacing the estrogen lost after menopause protected against heart disease because the treatment often lowered "bad" cholesterol levels and increased the amount of "good" cholesterol.

That produced a "nearly unshakable belief in the benefits of hormone therapy" in the absence of a real test of the treatment, said David Herrington and Timothy Howard of the Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Even when studies, beginning in 1998, revealed there was no benefit, the belief was so ingrained the findings were heavily criticized and dismissed, Herrington and Howard wrote in an analysis in the Journal.

They said this case illustrates that animal tests and observational studies are no substitute for studies that use placebos and include large numbers of people.



PHOTO: STAR

Escorted by party leaders, Leader of Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina checks in at ZIA prior to her departure for Canada yesterday.

Hasina: Gas export

FROM PAGE 12
had a plan to supply the country's natural resources to each and every house.

Asked about the recent submission of charge sheet against her in the frigate purchase case, Hasina said it was the reflection of her (prime minister's) political vengeance. "I challenge them if they can buy a frigate at such cheap price."

About the troubles on the court premises during the court boycott programme on Wednesday, Hasina said: "The government, as part of its plan to politicise every sector, has been making 'history of terrorism' everywhere." They provoked their lawyers to attack the common lawyers and resorted to violence on the court premises, she alleged.

Asked about the fake notes in the Bangladesh Bank vault, the Awami League chief said the government should immediately resign for finding such fake notes in the central bank.

About the upcoming Netrakona by-election, she said: "We will win if the people are allowed to vote freely."

On the ruling party accusation of tarnishing the image of the country through her criticism, Hasina said sarcastically: "Perhaps the prime minister does not understand the difference between criticism of the government and of the state."

In this regard, she further said: "People throughout the world saw what she (Khaleda) and her son have done at the Dhaka University..."

Chhatra Dal cadres attacked and mercilessly beat up innocent students on the campus late at night and also attacked the Chhatra League workers to oust them from the campus."

"She (Khaleda) is not restraining her party cadres. Rather, she and her ministers want to oust everyone and run the country as they wished... if anyone speaks against their hooliganism, does it mean it tarnishes the country's image?"

The former prime minister said that during her regime, BNP also made e-mails and fax abroad, but could that tarnish the image of the country? "They are now basking in the good image created during the Awami League rule."

During her two-week visit, Hasina will go to Miami in USA on August 11 from Canada. She is due to leave USA on August 19 and to reach Dhaka in the morning of August 21.

Senior Awami League leaders were present at the airport to give Hasina a hearty send-off.

Biman pilots

FROM PAGE 12
per the deal, both Selim and Joarder can remain as Biman pilots even if BAPA cancelled their memberships.

The managing director could not be reached yesterday. However, a top Biman official said they are looking into the allegation against the two pilots. The matter is now at an 'immature' stage, he said.

No news of abducted Ctg magnate yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The rescue team was reinforced further as police failed to trace Chittagong businessman and BNP leader Jamal Uddin Ahmed fourteen days into his abduction.

A coordination meeting of the Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and the district police yesterday decided to search 11 other upazilas of the district after combing remote areas of Fatkhari, Raazan and Rangunia in vain.

The rescue operation will also go on simultaneously in all the 12 thanas of the metropolis.

Police meanwhile arrested Mohammad Jahangir Alam, owner of the Kasturika hotel and Safayet Hossain yesterday.

Jahangir is a friend of Shibir Nasir, an accused in over 30 criminal cases who is suspected to have masterminded the abduction. Safayet Hossain is a close relative of Kanchan Nagar UP Chairman Abul Kasem Chowdhury, another suspect.

Safayet Hossain and Ziauddin Chowdhury, younger brother of Nasir who was nabbed earlier, were placed on a seven-day remand.

One held with fake 500- taka notes in Jessore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police on Wednesday arrested a man and recovered 200 fake notes of 500-taka denomination at Sreepur Upazila headquarters.

The arrestee was identified as Golam Sarwar, son of Yunus Ali of Village Kagajpur under Sharsha Police Station of Jessore district.

Acting on secret information, police searched the man at Sreepur bus stand and nabbed him along with the fake notes.

Sarwar confessed to police that he is a member of an organised gang of fake currency note makers and suppliers.

He further said that fake currency notes made in several places in the country including Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna are being supplied through their paid agents.

He will be placed on remand, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station said. A case has been lodged.

Blast kills 11 in Iraq

FROM PAGE 1
are also irate with Amman for cooperating with Washington during the war.

Islamist militants have scores to settle with Jordanian security services helping their Western and Saudi counterparts pursue Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network and other groups.

No group has claimed responsibility for the explosion.

Iraqi police Captain Ahmad Suleiman said five policemen guarding the compound were among the dead. Hospital officials said 11 people were killed and some 65 wounded.

Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, US commander in Iraq, said that in terms of casualties it was the worst attack on a non-military target since the end of major combat.

"This shows that we have some professional terrorists who are operating in this country and that we're still in a combat zone," he told a news conference.

SADDAM 'ON THE RUN'
In Saddam's home town of Tikrit, north of Baghdad, the commander of the 4th Infantry Division said raids over the

Indian water

FROM PAGE 12
member Prof. Syed Shafiqullah said, "Farakka barrage is a death trap not only for Bangladesh, it has brought about disaster in Indian states of West Bengal and Bihar too."

Journalist Shafiq Rehman said it was dreadful for Bangladesh that India is unilaterally going to divert water flow into Bangladesh from 54 rivers including the Ganges. He drew attention of the audience to a report headlined "Water wars loom as India presses on with plea to divert rivers vital for Bangladesh" run in the Guardian on July 24 by its Environment Editor John Vidal.

Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed said Bangladesh receives 65 per cent of its total water from the river Brahmaputra. It is really distressing that India plans to withdraw water from such shared rivers, building link-canals.

"We hope democratic India will take no step jeopardising the very existence of lower riparian Bangladesh, showing respect to the UN convention," he said.

Local Government and Rural Development Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said Farakka treaty is a tricky deal as it takes into account the amount of water only at the Farakka point. It has no provision for arbitration and it contains no clause compelling the upper riparian country to equally share water.

"We have to form public opinion that Farakka barrage is a step in violation of human right to fresh water," he said.

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon said, "We often agitate against such issues only to serve political interest, not to resolve them."

Tullow was 'officially' marked as top bidder in blocks 9 and 11. But the government soon brought in 'big' partners like Chevron-Texaco and Petronas, although the top bidder was supposed to be technically and financially sound.

Tullow's proposal to drill 10 wells was brought down to three, which indicates the government was not confident about Tullow's financial strength. Then what was the justification of the official evaluation of the top bidders?

Moreover, beside Shell's profile, companies like Tullow are small in all accounts.

The report nowhere accused Tullow of corruption. It pointed out the timing when allegations of corruption in the government's bidding process surfaced for the first time. It mentioned Tullow indirectly because the analysis wanted to focus only on Shell.

The United Nations has announced 30 points for the indigenous people. But in Bangladesh, neither of those is maintained properly. Most of the indigenous people live from hand to mouth and with a fear of being evicted by the non-indigenous people, the speakers said.

On the theme 'Ensure the Security of Indigenous Women' the BIFF will stage different programmes at Central Shaheed Minar and at Dhaka University auditorium tomorrow.

Sanjeeb Drong, secretary general of the BIFF, Rupayan Dewan, vice president of Jana Sanghati Samity, Albert Mankhin, a researcher of tribal life, Govinda Barman and Radhanath Kastriyo were also present at the press conference.

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8 PWD engrs suspended for corruption

UNB, Dhaka

Eight engineers of the Public Works Department have been suspended on charges of irregularities and misuse of public money.

The suspended officials are Sirajul Haq, Ishiaque Ahmed, Kazi Rezaul Karim, Shamsun Nur, Hazrat Ali, Shafiqul Islam, Abu Taleb, and Sirajul Islam Bhuiyan of the department's Azimpur office.

Of them, one is chief engineer, two are sub divisional engineers, and five sub-assistant engineers.

They have been suspended for their alleged involvement in misappropriation of money of the Public Works Department's projects implemented during fiscal 2002-2003.

BPI

FROM PAGE 12
production sharing contract (PSC) fund, government loans and funds from other sources.

A 10-member governing board will run the institution. Led by the energy secretary, the board will also include chairmen of the Petrobangla and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, director general of Bangladesh Geological Survey, officials from energy and finance ministries, representatives from BUET, Dhaka University and Bangladesh Geological Association. The BPI director general will be its member-secretary.

The BPI was set up as a research-oriented project in 1981 under the energy ministry with support from the UNDP and NORAD.

The BPI set up its own building at Uttara with a computerised data processing centre, classrooms, an auditorium, a conference room and other facilities at a cost of Tk 19.6 crore.

The BPI infrastructure is used for processing seismic line data for assessment of oil and gas resources.

As per a decision by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) on July 20, 1998 seeking to convert the BPI into an autonomous body within five years, the energy ministry framed the draft law and placed it before the cabinet on July 28.

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AL leader shot dead in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

An Awami League leader and businessman was shot dead and two others were injured with bullets by a gang of miscreants in Ullahpara Upazila on Wednesday night.

Matiar Rahman, 48, vice president of Panchakroshi Union Awami League and owner of a wholesale juice shop came under attack when he was sitting at his shop at about 9pm.

Witnesses said a gang of about 12 came in an engine boat and shot Matiari and two employees, leaving them critically injured.

Matiar, who was also hacked by the gang, was rushed to the Bogra Mohammad Ali Medical Hospital, where he died at about 11pm.

The bullet-hit employees are Subhas and Thandub. Subhas was sent to Dhaka in a critical condition while Thandub was admitted to upazila health complex.

Local businessmen observed a half-day hartal in the upazila yesterday demanding immediate arrest of the killers.

'Kaptai Dam is safe'

BSS, Rangamati

The officials of the Geological Survey Department yesterday claimed that the Kaptai Dam is completely safe and unlikely to be affected by earthquake measuring up to 6 on the Richter scale.

In a press briefing here, Director of Geological Department Mir Fazlul Huq dismissed the press reports that Kaptai Dam might be affected by earthquake.

The dam was built in 1960 for producing hydro-electricity.

Indigenous people

FROM PAGE 12
indigenous people, immediate cancellation of the Modhpur National Park project and primary education in mother language.

Jyotindra Bodhipriyo Larma popularly known as Shantu Larma, chairman of the CHT Regional Council and president of the Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum (BIPF), read out a statement at the press conference organised by the BIPF.

The leaders at the press conference at the residence of Shantu Larma in Banani asked the government to implement the demands of the indigenous people.

The United Nations has announced 30 points for the indigenous people. But in Bangladesh, neither of those is maintained properly. Most of the indigenous people live from hand to mouth and with a fear of being evicted by the non-indigenous people, the speakers said.

On the theme 'Ensure the Security of Indigenous Women' the BIPF will stage different programmes at Central Shaheed Minar and at Dhaka University auditorium tomorrow.

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Dhaka-Agartala

FROM PAGE 12
from different sources before filing any protest.

Besides, Shamsar said he had discussed the matter with the water resources secretary.

Replying to another question, he said Bangladesh has not relinquished its claim of ownership on the disputed south Talpatty island in the Bay.

About the demarcation of maritime boundary with India, the foreign secretary said the issue would be settled under the UN convention on the law of the seas. Any individual country cannot do it unilaterally.

It is a complex law and complex process and it would take time, the secretary said, adding that a maritime cell in the foreign ministry is working on it.

He reiterated Dhaka's willingness to join post-war reconstruction in Iraq.

"Our willingness to participate in the reconstruction remains as strong as it was... Our ambassador is now in Baghdad. We'll join when we will get the request," he told reporters.

Recently, the US government invited some 30 countries to join the post-war reconstruction in Iraq. Bangladesh is, however, not on that list.

On the question of sending troops to Iraq as earlier desired by the United States, Shamsar said Dhaka wants to send them as peacekeepers under the UN umbrella.

About sending troops to Liberia, he said Dhaka is ready to dispatch them to Monrovia as per UN Security Council resolution. The deployment would start in the first week of October, but details of it would have to be worked out, he added.

The foreign secretary said Bangladesh is keen to see the full implementation of the 1974 Indo-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement.

He made the remark in response to a query about unfettered access of Bangladeshi citizens to the country's two enclaves of Dahagram and Angorpta across India through Tintigha corridor.

"We're keen to see the implementation of all provisions of the agreement," he said, adding that issues like demarcation of some 6.5