

20,000 intravenous drug users in country

Health minister tells multi-sectoral meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a multi-sectoral meeting yesterday called for raising awareness among the intravenous drug users (IDUs) to prevent spread of HIV.

The IDUs are most vulnerable to HIV infection, they said.

There are about 20,000 IDUs in the country and 3,000 of them are in Dhaka alone, said Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain as chief guest.

It is a great danger signal for the country because the IDUs may act as a bridging population by spreading HIV to sex workers and their clients, he added.

The South South Centre, Bangladesh organised the meeting on 'Advocacy at Policy Level for HIV Risk Reduction' in the city.

The minister said combating the HIV requires support from the ministries concerned as it is a multi-

societal problem, and the health ministry can take the lead role in coordination in this regard.

According to the recent National HIV and Behavioural Surveillance, the HIV prevalence rate among the IDUs is 4 percent, up from 1.7 percent in 2002, he said.

Although the latest survey indicate the HIV prevalence among the IDUs is static at 4 percent, it is near about the concentrated level (5 percent) of epidemic, according to WHO and UNAIDS.

According to the government statistics, Dr Mosharrar said, there are 363 HIV patients in the country. Fifty-seven of them developed Aids and 30 have died.

Referring to the WHO statistics indicating that there are at least 13,000 HIV patients in Bangladesh, he said the WHO figure was based on data while

the government one's was based on case report. "I believe there are lot of unreported cases," he said.

Speakers at the meeting said a massive advocacy programme for the IDUs is a must to prevent the spread of HIV infection.

Inspector General of Police Shahudul Haque, Secretary of health ministry AFM Sarwar Kamal, attended the meeting as special guests while Dr Robert Kelly, country director, Family Health International, Bangladesh delivered the welcome speech.

Jalaluddin Ahmed, director of South South Centre, chaired the inaugural session.

Later, an open discussion was also held. Major General Dr ASM Matiur Rahman, chairperson, technical committee of the National AIDS Committee, moderated the discussion.

\$1.2b Padma bridge to have rail track

BSS, Dhaka

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday said the government would construct the proposed four-lane Padma Bridge at an estimated cost of 1.2 billion US dollars keeping provision of the rail track to connect the southwestern region and the Mongla Port with the capital city.

He said the 6.01-kilometer long and 25-meter width Padma Bridge, which is one-kilometer longer than the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB), will play a vital role in accelerating economic activities, reducing poverty and generating job opportunities for the people.



Brig (Retd) Malik gets Rotary SEED Award

UNB, Dhaka

Brig (Retd) Prof Abdul Malik was named as the recipient of Rotary SEED Award for 2003-04 for his outstanding contribution to prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases.

Leaders of the Rotary Club of Metropolitan Dhaka (RCMD) announced his name at a press conference in the city yesterday.

The award carries Tk 100,000, a gold medal and a citation.

SEED stands for Science, Education and Economic Development. This is an annual award given by RCMD Foundation every year to a living Bangladeshi citizen for his/her outstanding and original contributions to the fields of science, education and economic development.

The award will be formally handed over to Prof Malik at a function in Dhaka on Saturday, said the club's immediate past president Neaz Ahmed.

Neaz said RCMD has recognised Prof Malik as a pioneer in prevention and control of cardiovascular diseases, cardiac surgery, research and education in Bangladesh.

Prof Malik is the founder president of Bangladesh Cardiac Society, secretary general of National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh and honorary adviser to National Centre for Control of Rheumatic Fever and Heart Diseases.

He is the ninth recipient of the award since its introduction in 1995. The previous winners included Dr Muhammad Yunus, Prof M Shafiullah, Fazle Hasan Abed and Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed.

RCMD leaders Nazma Khan, Kazi Kamaluddin Ekram, Fazle Rabbi, Dr Anwar Hossain and Farid Hossain were present at the press conference.

He was addressing a workshop on 'progress report-2' of the feasibility study of the Padma Bridge organised by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at Hotel Sonargaon here as the chief guest.

With Secretary of the Communications Ministry Md Shafiqul Islam in the chair, Resident Representative of the JICA Akio Arai and Japanese Ambassador Mutsushiro Horiguchi also addressed the workshop as special guests.

Executive Director of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA) AKM Shamsuddin, Chief Engineer of the JMBA Khandaker Azadur Rahman and team leader of the JICA study team M Shibuya also spoke.

Huda emphatically said the construction work for the Padma Bridge would start during the tenure of the present alliance government.

Regarding the fund for implementation of the mega project, he said the JICA has been carrying out the feasibility study on the bridge. Besides the Japanese government, international organisations like World Bank, Asian Development Bank and private investors from home and abroad would extend support for the implementation of the project.

CHT to be brought under SAP

BSS, Tangail

The government has decided to extend the Social Afforestation Programme (SAP) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) with the financial support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

ADB would continue its support to the programme seeing its enormous success in poverty alleviation and conservation of eco-system through creating new forests, Environment and Forests Tarique Islam said this here yesterday.

Tariqul said the SAP, scheduled to end in 2005, would be further extended till 2007 with the ADB support and under the programme steps for social afforestation would be taken in the reserved forests and other areas of the CHT.

He was addressing a function organised to distribute share of profits earned from the SAP at Bhasani Hall here.

Train services disrupted

UNB, Comilla

Train services on Dhaka-Chittagong route were disrupted for nearly two and a half hours following derailment of a goods-carrying bogie of a passenger train at Rasulpur railway station yesterday.

Sources said the bogie of Chitragong-bound Jalalabad train from Sylhet derailed at about 9:55am, leaving several trains stranded on the route.

Train services on the route resumed at 12:15pm after a rescue train from Akhaura station salvaged the bogie.



PHOTO: STAR

Children flip through books at an exhibition of books at the Shishu Academy in the city yesterday. The Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum organised the exhibition on the occasion of Child Rights Week.

Pollution related diseases claim 340 children a day: Bhuiyan

BSS, Dhaka

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the number of families using hygienic latrines would reach 40 percent by December.

Speaking at a press briefing at his secretariat office, he said lack of

awareness is the main obstacle to resolving the sanitation problem.

He, however, said a lot of awareness has been created among the people regarding cleanliness and sanitation through motivational programmes undertaken by the government, NGOs, donor agencies and some social and voluntary

organisations.

The LGRD minister said the media could play an important role to implement the sanitation programme by the year 2010.

Bhuiyan said 340 children die everyday of diseases caused by environment pollution while Tk 500 crore is spent every year for the treatment of water-borne and environmental diseases.

Bhuiyan also announced different programmes to observe the Sanitation Month in October and publish special supplement in national dailies on October 2.

The LGRD minister said the environment is being polluted by the use of latrines at launches, steamers and trains. Such latrines would be banned, he said.

He said about 8,000 hanging latrines had been removed from the capital city.

Qulkhwani



Qul Khwani of BNP lawmaker and former chairman of National Bank Limited AKM Abu Taher will be held at Gulshan Central Jame

Mosque (Azad Mosque) at Gulshan Avenue in the city after Asr prayers tomorrow (Friday), says a press release.

Abu Taher died at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital in the city on September 23 at the age of 69.

Colleagues, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani.

Raise awareness to promote cultural heritage: Unesco

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Unesco yesterday called for raising mass awareness about the rich cultural heritage sites in the country.

"Bangladesh is a resourceful country because of its rich cultural heritage and has got a bright future... but it needs to preserve those heritage sites," Unesco Representative Wolfgang Vollmann told a press briefing in the city.

He said identification of 355 national cultural heritage sites is only a tip of the iceberg; thousands of similar others need proper attention.

"There are many heritage sites which we cannot open due to financial constraints," he added.

He, however, said funding is not a major impediment to preserving the heritage sites, but people's awareness is more vital in this regard.

Unesco could not carry out a major drainage work at Paharpur

Boudha Bihar due to fund shortage, said the officials at the news conference held at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium.

The UN cultural organisation will spend around US \$ 100,000 on the promotion of the country's cultural heritage in the current fiscal, they said.

Vollmann said the Unesco did some significant work to promote the heritage sites and will continue to do so.

Mahmudul Masud, joint secretary of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, said that Bangladesh could derive benefit from its rich cultural resources despite its limited natural resources.

"We need to develop infrastructure and improve services to attract more visitors to the heritage sites," he added.

In a bid to promote both the tangible and intangible cultural heritages, the Unesco Dhaka office has planned a series of activities to be carried out in the next two years.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in collaboration with the Unesco will organise a folk music programme at the National Art Gallery Plaza of the academy on October 2 and 3.

A programme on classical music will also be held at the Spectra Centre at Gulshan in the city on October 4.

The Unesco will also organise a dance festival in February next year.

World Maritime Day today

BSS, Dhaka

World Maritime Day will be observed today as elsewhere across the globe.

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO), a specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for improving maritime safety and preventing pollution from ships, in a resolution in 1999 declared the day to be observed in the last week of September.

The day focuses attention on the importance of maritime safety and marine environment and to emphasise the particular aspects of IMO's activities.

On the eve of the World Maritime Day President Iajuddin Ahmed in a message yesterday said that the theme of the day "IMO-Focus on Maritime Security" is very timely.

In a separate message, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said that her government was sincere and active in ensuring security in the maritime area, seaports and ships and also aware in improving marine environment.

To mark the day the Shipping Ministry will organise a seminar at the auditorium of the LGED Bhaban at Agargaon in the city at 10.00 am today.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain will attend the function as the chief guest.



PHOTO: STAR

The Communist Party of Bangladesh stages a demonstration in the city yesterday demanding trial of culprits responsible for all bomb attacks.

DHAKA TODAY

Nat'l Day for Girl Child

Girl Child Advocacy Forum organises a colourful procession, discussion and prize giving ceremony of essay and drawing competition on the occasion of National Day for Girl Child. Venue: Shishu Academy and Jatiya Press Club. Time: 8.30am and 10.30am.

Cosmetics exhibition

Cotopex-2004, a three-day cosmetics, toiletries & perfumeries exhibition, will begin, with Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka as chief guest. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 11.00am.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen an Indian film titled 'A River Called Titas' (1973). Venue: Society Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6.30pm.

Scholarship award ceremony

Barisal Division Kalyan Sangstha, Dhaka organises Sher-e-Bangla Memorial Scholarship-2003 Award ceremony, with Water Resources Minister Hafizuddin Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: Engineering University Girls' School auditorium, Buet campus. Time: 3.30pm.

Seminar

Independent University, Bangladesh will hold a seminar on

'Reproductive health, safe motherhood and family planning: Bangladesh scenario'. Venue: Campus # 5, House # 6, Road # 14, Baridhara. Time: 3.30pm.

Concluding ceremony

The concluding ceremony of the Persian Language and Literature Promotion Course will be held. Venue: Iranian Cultural Centre, Dhanmondi. Time: 4.30pm.

Puja Committee

Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee will hold a preparatory meeting for Durga Puja. Venue: Dhakeshwari Temple premises. Time: 6.00pm.

Int'l Day for the Elderly

Resource Integration Centre (Ric) will took out a colourful procession to mark the International Day for the Elderly. Venue: National Museum premises. Time: 9.00am.

Discussion

Tamaddun Majlis organises a discussion on 'Current national crisis: the way out' to mark its 57th founding anniversary, with Information Minister M Shamsul Islam as chief guest. Venue: Jatiya Press Club. Time: 4.00pm.



Students of Dhaka Commerce College who achieved GPA-5 in the HSC examinations this year pose with Principal Kazi Md Nurul Islam Faruki and Vice-Principal Mia Lutfar Rahman on the college premises.