

HIV and AIDS: Present situation and future challenges

GM QUADER

AIDS is a disease which results when a person is affected by HIV virus. As soon as a person is detected HIV positive in blood test, he/she carries the germ and ultimately becomes an Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome or AIDS patient. A person if detected as HIV positive may not be sick at all, but he would be a carrier of the virus and could transmit the same to another healthy person. It may be mentioned here that a person when infected may not test positive for the first 10/15 days as the antibodies which are detected in the blood test require that time to be formed. This period is known as window time. The affected person would live a healthy life till the virus starts attacking immune system of the body. The HIV positive person at

A few members of Parliament formed a group titled Parliament Members Support Group for prevention of HIV/AIDS and human trafficking in September 2003. The objectives of the group specifically on HIV/AIDS issues are for all the people of Bangladesh to raise awareness among the general masses by perusing through various means of communications, activities and manners both in the House and outside the parliament. The potential of the calamity is tremendous and compared to that our preparedness is very low at the moment. For that, not only that we the few fortunate chosen by the people of this country to decide their destiny should try to do whatever possible but set our goal to the maximum and leave no stone unturned to achieve that target.

that point of time becomes an AIDS patient with the complications of the disease which begin surfacing one after another. The virus is found in the body

fluid of the affected person e.g. saliva, tears, and semen or vaginal fluid, etc. The virus has its maximum concentration in the fluid secretion of the sex organs. Other body fluids contain negligible quantity of the virus. The virus does not survive in the open without a carrier for more than 10-15 seconds. The virus does not spread through water or air. As such, general mixing with a person of HIV positive or AIDS patient, like seating together, eating together, shaking hands, traveling together, hugging and kissing, eating with the same utensil, working along with, etc do not pose much danger of getting the infection. Coming in contact with the body fluid associated to sexual activities of an affected person is considered risky. The sex fluid of the affected person having maximum concentration of HIV virus may find an easy access to the blood stream of a healthy partner during the intimate and intense mixing that generally takes place during sexual activities. The healthy person may become infected as a result of unprotected sex with a HIV positive person. Here unprotected sex means sexual activity without taking due care to avoid mixing of body fluid of one partner in the blood stream of the other partner. By and large use of condom by the male partner ensures to protect against contamination during sexual intercourse.

There is another way of getting the HIV infection: that is through transfusion of blood. If a person receives blood of a HIV positive person during blood transfusion that person would become infected. Blood and blood products if used without proper screening for HIV virus always poses a risk of HIV infection to the recipient.

Considerable number of people from Bangladesh venture to different countries of the world for better employment opportunities. Expatriate workers from Bangladesh during their long absence from home and family sometimes get involved with commercial sex workers in those foreign countries. Some of these countries have been identified to have prevalence of HIV and AIDS.

Bangladesh has got a very long boundary with its big neighbour India, the major portion of which do not have any natural barrier. As such, the border is porous and very frequent cross border movement take place both officially and also illegally. Large scale infection of HIV and AIDS has been detected in India recently with the bad news that the disease is spreading at an alarming rate there.

There exists a law in Bangladesh prohibiting transfusion of untested blood. But due to lack of screening facilities at all possible level blood is transfused in patients without proper screening in many cases. This at times become the

cause of many infectious diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Unfortunately, the number of inter-venous drug users is reportedly on the rise in Bangladesh. Habit of taking the drug in a group sharing the same needle is also very common among the drug users in Bangladesh. This may be so because of poverty or/and due to ignorance of the drug users on the possible risk involved in it.

As per the latest statistics, Bangladesh has got a reported case of 365 (three hundred sixty five) HIV and AIDS infected person so far. But, as per UNFPA a UN agency dealing with the issue, the possible number of infected people at the moment as estimated is around 13,000. Of course, this figure of 13,000 infected people is a realistic estimation (and not definitely identified cases) based on all possible factors prevailing in Bangladesh society influencing the spread of the disease.

Though the prevalence rate of HIV and AIDS as has been identified so far is not significant, but the country runs the risk of HIV and AIDS epidemic due to the factors mentioned above which has created conducive environment for its fast spread. Considering all the above, Bangladesh may be termed as low prevalence but high risk country for HIV and AIDS.

Social stigma in respect of HIV and AIDS is extreme and extensive in Bangladesh as in many other countries of the world especially the developing ones. Any person detected as HIV positive, the first impediment that person faces is widespread and extreme social stigma. For fear of being discriminated at every step and also being subjected to inhuman harassment and sufferings, the main concern of that person becomes to keep his disease secret as long as possible. Under the circumstance, the person is not only denied of the treatment facilities to increase longevity and a normal health but also is forced to pose a potential health hazard for others around him with the potential for infecting those unsuspected healthy person.

It is very much essential from humanitarian and also from the social point of view that the infected person should be identified and be given all sorts of guidance and medication.

In Bangladesh the issue of HIV/AIDS received due importance when as back as 1985 a very high level committee e.g. National Aids Committee or NAC was formed to deal with matter. President of the country was the chief patron and the health minister was the chairperson of that committee. NAC have been continuing its activities through different sub-committees e.g. Advisory committee, Technical committee, Surveillance committee

etc. In addition, ministry of health has taken up a project titled National Aids and STD Prevention Project or NASP. Some activities on HIV/AIDS are being carried out under that scheme.

So far, the main focus of all the governmental and non-governmental activities in this field have been on the prevention of further infection. It should not be considered unwise considering our low prevalence and high risk situation. But, associated social stigma must also be dealt with seriously by making the people aware about all related aspects of HIV and AIDS and getting rid of misconception and unfounded fear. In addition, friendly care and treatment facilities at an affordable expenditure should be made available to the infected person. These may ensure suitable environment which would enable the affected person to overcome the shame and fear associated with the disease. Only under that circumstance the affected person could come forward openly to reveal about the disease. This would enable them to get the necessary treatment and care and have a comparatively comfortable and longer life. At the same time, risk of further spread of the infection from affected person could also be minimised.

Considering all the above, few members of Parliament formed a group titled Parliament Members Support Group for prevention of HIV/AIDS and human trafficking in September 2003. The objectives of the group specifically on HIV/AIDS issues are for all the people of Bangladesh to raise awareness among the general masses by perusing through various means of communications, activities and manners both in the House and outside the parliament. They would promote regular meeting with key persons working on HIV/AIDS and persuade a just policy for the nation to help combat the social curse. The group would also like to contribute its talents to the government in formulating policy strategy on the HIV/AIDS, establish links among regional and international parliamentary groups working on the same to share experience and exchange ideas among the lawmakers worldwide, identify problems to implement projects on HIV/AIDS and help narrow the gaps among the organizations on these issues. As parliament members they would initiate parliamentary debates, give notices, if need arises, in the House, organize public and private meetings with different parliamentary standing committees, ministers and officials. In addition, the parliament support group would try to stimulate other lawmakers to undertake awareness programs at their own constituencies to make aware their own people through campaign and also oversee the activities of the programs initiated by different organizations, donors and the government and suggest, if necessary, to improve their quality of functions.

The above is a big agenda no doubt. But, the potential of the calamity is tremendous and compared to that our preparedness is very low at the moment. For that, not only that we the few fortunate chosen by the people of this country to decide their destiny should try to do whatever possible but set our goal to the maximum and leave no stone unturned to achieve that target.

G.M. Quader MP is Vice-Chairperson, Bangladesh Parliament Members Support Group on Prevention of HIV/AIDS and Woman and Child Trafficking.

IN MEMORIAM

Poet Tridib Dastidar's flamboyant belligerent life is over

AFSAN CHOWDHURY

*It's too late for you to arrive now, love
It's too late for you to come now, life
It's too late, it's all too late...*

Tridib Dastidar's poem circa 1984
POET Tridib Dastidar's death heard on TV came as a shock because I was out of touch with him for long. Otherwise it was almost predictable. He was slowly running out of health, money and reasons to live for. Poet Belal Chowdhury, friend and consoler of lost souls was there along with a few other writers and admirers at his cremation but he went out like a snuffed candle leaving behind a life which was so crushing miserable that maybe he could take no more. He was 52.

I don't know whether to feel glad that it's finally over or whether to mourn such a flamboyant life full of poetry and pain.

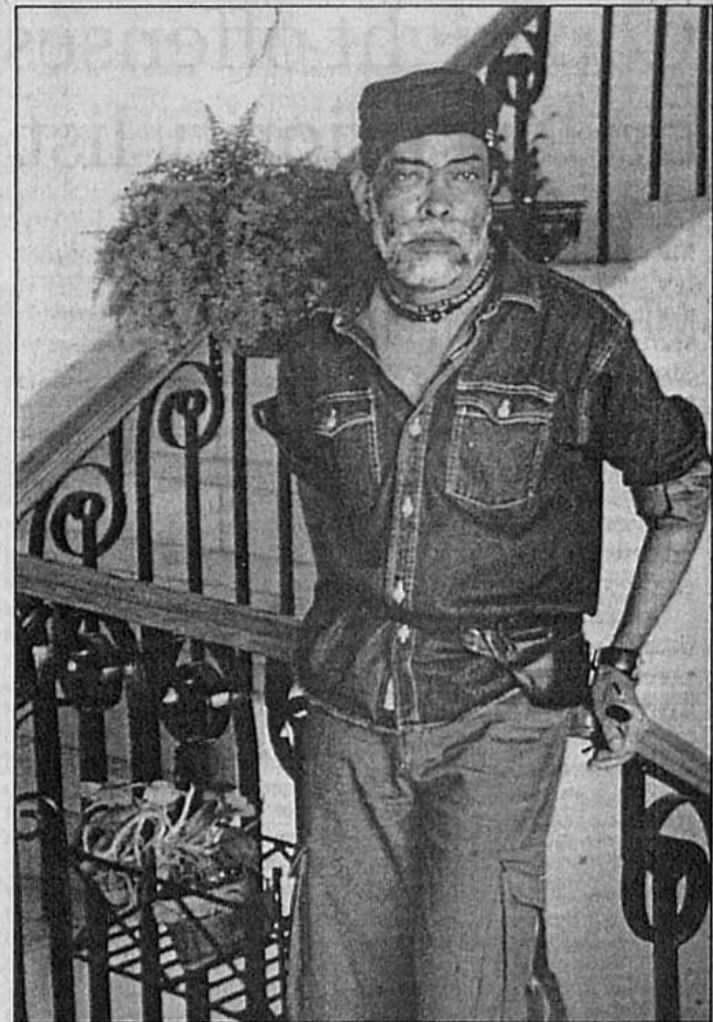
Belal bhai said that his last days had become wretched. "He had diabetes, blood pressure and abscess on his body. His heart was only half functioning. He was drinking, smoking and led a very careless life."

He could have hardly led a careful life. He was not a bohemian, he had no home. A scion of the fabled Dastidar family of Chittagong, many in politics, art and culture in Bangladesh and West Bengal, he had no one left he could call family. After his mother's death early in life, the family began to disperse. His father, according to Tridib became a rootless man who left home, his sisters married away. He really cared about them, now probably gone away to India. I remember one visit home after he got his first job, buying gifts for all. When he was having problems getting leave in his new job he angrily resigned, his body heaving in rage and tears. He later returned in a calmer mind to his job and Dhaka.

We were colleagues at the History Writing Project and Poet Hasan Hafizur Rahman had hired him out of affection. Tridib cared only about his poems but did do a job, no better or worse than many. Without a salary he would have starved. He was rapidly facing that prospect in the last year or so of his life.

There was no one left. The ones who cared had no clout and those who had probably felt nothing but pity for this fabulous human being. But he would have gone anyway. It was already too late even as he began.

Belal bhai mentioned that he was selling whatever he had to survive. He had a fantastic collection of sweatshirts and dungarees that he could have dumped but sold his books instead. He would of course try and steal them back driving his



Tridib Dastidar: 'It's too late for you to come now, life'

book buyer crazy. Other than selling off his personal stuff, he had nothing else left to sell. And what would have happened after that?

After the History Project folded he joined an insurance company courtesy Mahbub bhai - the poet of the famed 1952 poem "kandey asheenee fashir dabi niye eschheer". Both Mahboob bhai and his wife Jowshan apa were fond of him. They were also from Chittagong. That was his city, his home, where his family once held property which was stolen by the powerful. He held this naïve belief that the politically powerful, of Chittagong would come to his aid and build him a house. He never got the joke.

Marriage, poetry and wine While he could be jolly, he was mostly angry. Angry at life that had denied him practically everything except few saving graces of moments when he had pleasures. Like when he had married a Chittagong girl of mixed ethnicity, when his poems were being read by more than a few, when he would get a letter from an admiring female fan, the publication of his books, endless food and liquor at some

fancy feast thrown by a wealthy patron of literature where Tridib felt equal to all...

He had eloped to marry. The bride's father refused to accept Tridib as a groom and shipped her away to some foreign land and he never saw her again. He tried to find her but one day gave up, accepting that terrible situation like all the other terrible situations that happened to him. He spent a lifetime getting used to bad luck.

"Why don't you track her down?" He would giggle jauntily. "It's better this way. She would have left me maybe. Listen, I have written a poem: it's fantastic. Why don't you listen?"

His poems were fresh, full of surprises and musical. The early years were his happier moments because the future held promise and he was healthy and young and writing and already famous.

It was better that he went away in his sleep after suffering a cardiac arrest. I think he sort of just stopped living.

So dear old Tridib, it's time you went home. Maybe all that you love awaits you in the great oblivion.

Afsan Chowdhury is a free lance columnist.

**University of Dhaka
Wanted**

Applications in prescribed form, obtainable from the office of the Registrar, are invited from the Bangladesh nationals for filling up two permanent posts of Assistant Professor in the Department of Statistics in the pay scale of Tk. 7200-260X14-10840/-.

QUALIFICATION: Candidates must have first class either in Honours or in Master's degree in Statistics or in both or an equivalent degree from a foreign University with at least high second divisions in SSC & HSC Examinations. They should have at least 3 (three) years' teaching and research experience in a University. The above requirements may be relaxed in the case of those who have PhD degree or research publications in standard journals. Experience and performance as a teacher as well as significant contribution to different areas of University activities especially in guiding the overall educational and co-curricular activities of the students will also be treated as qualification. Other qualifications being equal preference will be given to those who have M Phil degree.

Eight copies of application together with attested copies of certificates, testimonials and mark-sheets along with a Pay Order/Bank Draft of the value of Tk. 200/- (two hundred) only, payable to the Registrar, should reach him on or before 13-12-2004. Candidates already in service must apply through proper channel. GD-743

**Institute of Business
Administration
University of Dhaka**

IBA/247(Part-6)/2003-04

Appointment Notice

Position: Skilled Technician

Pay Scale: Tk 4300-185x7-5595-EB-195x21x7780/=(NPS-1997) plus other allowances as admissible under the University rules.

Applications in prescribed form are invited from Bangladeshi nationals for appointment in a permanent post of **Skilled Technician** at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), University of Dhaka.

The candidates must have the following qualifications and experiences:

1. A minimum 2nd class degree in MSc/MA or higher degree or equivalent from a recognized university of Bangladesh or abroad.
2. Candidates must not have any third Division/Class at any level of his/her academic career.

Preference will be given to the candidates having experience/training in computer hardware maintenance and electrical & electronics equipment.

Eight copies of applications in prescribed form available from the Office of the Secretary of the Institute with attested copies of certificates/testimonials and mark sheets and 2 (two) passport size photographs along with a Pay Order/Draft of Tk 200/= (Taka two hundred only) payable in favour of the Director, IBA should reach the IBA Office latest by 19 December 2004 during office hours. GD-742 Director

**Export Promotion Bureau
1, Kawran Bazar
Dhaka-1215**

**National Flower Show-2005
Tender Notice**

Export Promotion Bureau in order to promote export of fresh flowers, foliage and ornamental plants is going to organise the 10th National Flower Show at T&T ground adjacent to Manik Miah Avenue from 1st January to 7th January 2005. Sealed tender, hereby invited from bonafide event management company/firm for construction, decoration and management of the event. Tenders will be evaluated on the basis of the quality and cost method. Schedule can be obtained free of cost from the Secretary, Export Promotion Bureau Office. Tender should be dropped in the tender box kept in Export Promotion Bureau Office at Kawran Bazar by 04.12.2004 before 12 noon. 02. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders.

**S. M. Ashraf Islam
Secretary
Export Promotion Bureau
Dhaka**

GD-740

BENGAL FINE CERAMICS LIMITED
H.H. Bhaban (2nd & 3rd Floor), New Eskaton Road
Dhaka, Bangladesh

**21st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that the 21st Annual General Meeting of Bengal Fine Ceramics Limited will be held at the Factory Premises of the Company, Bhagalpur, Savar, Dhaka on Tuesday, the 28th December, 2004 at 11.00AM to transact the following business:

Agenda

1. To receive and adopt the Director's Report and the Audited Accounts of the Company for the year ended 30th June 2004.
2. To declare dividend for the year 2003-2004.
3. To elect Directors.
4. To appoint Auditors for the year 2004-2005 and to fix their remuneration.
5. To transact any other business with the permission of the Chair.

By Order of the Board
Sd/-
(ENAMUL HAQUE SIDDIQUI)
Company Secretary

Dated, Dhaka
November 28, 2004

NOTES:-

1. A member entitled to attend and vote at the Annual General Meeting may appoint a proxy to attend and vote in his/her stead should be a member of the company and qualified to vote. The Proxy Form duly stamped must be deposited at the Head Office of the Company at H.H. Bhaban (2nd & 3rd Floor), 52/1, New Eskaton Road, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh not later than 72 hours before the time fixed for the meeting.
2. Share Transfer Register and the Register of Members shall be closed from December 14th 2004 to December 28th 2004 both days inclusive.

D-1185

সবাই মিলে বিশ্ব জুড়ে

জানবো
প্রতিরোধ করবো
এইডস

জীবনের
জন্য
শিক্ষা

বিশ্ব এইডস দিবস
১ ডিসেম্বর ২০০৪

প্রোবাল মডেমেন্ট
ফর চিনাডেন

HRAC
Plan
World Vision