



PHOTO: STAR

Supreme Court Bar Association took out a procession in the city yesterday protesting the bomb attacks on court premises and in support of today's hartal.

## Create environment where Aids patients can disclose themselves

### Speakers tell Prothom Alo roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With proper awareness campaign, an environment has to be created in the society where people living with HIV/Aids will not be afraid of disclosing themselves for the sake of preventing the deadly disease, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said due to ignorance about the disease many HIV-infected persons are transmitting the virus to other persons while having unprotected sex with their wives or others, which is very alarming.

The roundtable on 'Where we are in preventing HIV/Aids' was organised by the daily Prothom Alo at a hotel in the city.

Different government and NGO officials, lawmakers, doctors and a businessman took part in the roundtable.

The speakers said there has to be a co-ordinated efforts by people from all walks of life to prevent HIV/Aids.

Former secretary Syed Alamgir Faruque Chowdhury said the disease has become a hindrance to development as the infected persons are becoming burden of the society.

He said religious injunctions can play an important role in preventing HIV/Aids.

Major Gen ASM Matiur Rahman, chairman of the technical committee of National Aids Committee, said beside sexual relations there are some other factors like unchecked blood transfusion and using conventional needle

syringe to take drug or blood are also responsible for HIV infection.

Prof Nazrul Islam, chairman of virology department of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said the current prevalence rate of HIV among the intravenous drug users (IDUs) is 4.9 which is almost near the epidemic rate of 5. Once the prevalence rate was 1.9.

Then where is the intervention to prevent HIV, he raised the question, adding that all the money spent so far were on how a person is infected with HIV and not on how to prevent it.

Prof Nazrul said the city-based Voluntary Counselling and Treatment (VCT) centre will not be able to prevent HIV. Instead the VCT centre has to be set up at every thana as most of the infected persons live in rural areas.

He said of the HIV-infected persons, 80 percent are migrant workers who earn the highest amount of foreign currency. So the government has to do something to keep them free from HIV, he added.

Dr Shahadat Hossain, director general of health directorate, said the government has already set up 98 blood transfusion centres across the country to ensure safe transfusion of blood. Another 100 such centres will be set up soon, he added.

"We are thinking of introducing HIV test for migrant workers on their return home from abroad to diagnose whether he or she is HIV positive," he added.

Anisul Huq, former president of

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), said an outbreak of HIV in epidemic form will destroy the country.

He offered NGOs to work on HIV/Aids with the girls working in garments sector.

Salma Khan, chairperson of the network on Convention of Elimination of all kinds of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), said due to gender inequality it is difficult for a woman to save herself from the infection of HIV.

A sex worker knows about the infection of the disease but she can't force her client use condom frequently. If she insists on using condom every time, she loses the client. So she remains vulnerable to Aids despite her knowledge about the disease, said CEDAW chief quoting a study.

"Now HIV/Aids is a gender issue, not a health issue", she said, adding that the government will have to come forward to eliminate gender disparity to prevent the disease.

Moderated by the Prothom Alo Joint Editor Abdul Quaiyum, the roundtable was also addressed by Asaduzzaman Noor MP, Dr Mohammad Ali MP, Dr ASM Amanullah of Dhaka University, Moulana Abul Kalam Azad, Habiba Akhter of Ashar Alo, Wahida Banu of STI/AIDS Network of Bangladesh and Dr Abdus Seim of National AIDS/STD programme.

## Historic trip on Silk Route starts today

### Chinese team to arrive Dec 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nine-member Chinese delegation's historic journey through ancient Silk Route to Dhaka by two cars starts today.

The delegation will start from Kunming, the Chinese capital of western province Yunnan, and end the road trip in Dhaka via Myanmar.

The delegation, scheduled to reach Dhaka on December 10, will cross the river Naf at Teknaf to enter Bangladesh.

The team will stay in Brac Inn at Brac centre and exchange views with the government high ups and local civil society members in Dhaka during their week-long stay in Bangladesh. They will discuss the possibility of the revival of ancient Silk Route to establish a direct road link between Bangladesh and China.

The road link will help enhance trade, commerce and tourism in this part of the world. The Chinese team will also visit Benapole and North Bengal to observe road conditions and attractive historic and tourists spots.

The centre for policy dialogue (CPD), the local host of the Chinese team, requested the government officials to provide necessary support to the team and to keep a ferry at Teknaf for the cars and to facilitate the journey.

This is the first time in recent times a realistic initiative is taken to establish direct road communication between Bangladesh and China. The initiative

was taken first from the private sector but both the governments are giving importance to the issue now.

During the visit of Chinese prime minister last April an understanding was reached to establish a direct road link between the two countries.

## Ruhul Amin new envoy to Bahrain

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to appoint Ruhul Amin, director general (Saarc) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the next ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

A career diplomat, Ruhul Amin joined the BCS (Foreign Affairs) cadre in 1986. He did his graduation in English literature from Jahangirnagar University, according to a foreign ministry press release.

During his diplomatic career, Amin served in Bangladesh missions in New York, Brussels and Paris. Besides, he attended a number of international conferences, seminars and workshops.

As the director general (Saarc), Amin was very much involved in the substantive matters of the recently concluded 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka.



PHOTO: STAR

Asaduzzaman Noor MP speaks at a roundtable on Aids at a city hotel yesterday. On his left are Alamgir Faruk Chowdhury, Dr Shahadat Hossain and Mohammad Ali MP. The Prothom Alo organised the event.