

Effective advocacy

FROM PAGE 16

The roundtable on "State of Tuberculosis in Bangladesh 2005", organised jointly by The Daily Star and BRAC, was held in the conference room of The Daily Star.

To cut down the prevalence of TB the speakers stressed the need for launching effective advocacy programmes and a monitoring system so that the grassroots population have access to information as well as to the facilities. They also said decentralisation of advocacy programmes and the monitoring system is important.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the discussion while Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, executive director of BRAC, Dr Zafullah Chowdhury, project coordinator of Gono Shastha Nagar Hospital, Major General (Dr) ASM Matiur Rahman, chief advisor to the National HIV/AIDS Programme, Frank Matsaert, enterprise advisor to the Department for International Development (DFID) of the government of the United Kingdom participated.

Dr Vikarunnessa in her keynote paper said Bangladesh is one of the top five highly TB affected countries in the world. A total of 70,000 TB infected persons die each year and 300,000 new TB cases are expected every year in the country. Globally, one third of the world population is already infected with TB, while more than 10 million develop TB each year, she said.

Dr Vikarunnessa said the present TB detection rate is 46 percent while the rate of successful cure was 85 percent in 2004. The disease is more prevalent in males than in females, she said.

The National TB Programme (NTP) mobilises resources through effective partnership to ensure quality diagnostic and treatment services under directly observed treatment strategy (DOTS) to fight the spread of the disease, she said.

The DOTS is ensured at upazila health complexes, by NGOs, hospitals and community members, she added.

Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury, executive director of BRAC, said monitoring and advocacy have to be decentralised down to the union parishad level.

The public-private partnership is weak, which should be strengthened by including more partners to curb the spread of the disease, he said.

Dr Zafullah Chowdhury said medication and hospitalisation is not the ultimate solution, instead raising of social awareness about medical problems is needed to control the spread of the disease.

He stressed the need for special training on TB for healthcare professionals including doctors, nurses

and paramedics.

All the necessary information on TB should be available in Bangla for the sake of the common people, he added.

Major General (Dr) ASM Matiur Rahman said the prevalence of TB is still on the rise due to illiteracy, malnutrition and poverty. On TB detection, he said only sputum smear test is not sufficient, other methods should also be incorporated.

Dr Abdul Hamid Salim, country director of Damien Foundation, said due to lack of social awareness among the poorest section of the population TB patients are not coming to the clinics despite offers of free treatment and drugs.

Afsan Chowdhury, director of the advocacy and human rights unit of BRAC, said "We have a public-private partnership in place but it is weak. We need to build a strong partnership."

Faruque Ahmed, director of the health programme of BRAC, emphasised the need for making the healthcare system more functional so that the partnership does not remain limited only between the donors and service providers.

He also said healthcare service providers should include the affected communities into the partnership.

Frank Matsaert of the DFID said as 60 percent of the TB cases are still undetected it should be a priority to detect those cases.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam stressed the need for developing effective ways for advocacy programmes for holistic healthcare, as it has not been successfully emphasised yet.

He concluded by saying there is a tremendous scope for amassing national resources for advocacy programmes on holistic healthcare approaches by involving the mass media.

Among others, Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol, representative of WHO in Bangladesh, Dr Peter Herzog, health advisor to the delegation of the European Commission, Dr Dinesh Nair, health specialist of the World Bank, Dr Salahuddin Ahmed of BRAC University, Dr Asif Mujtaba Mahmud of National Institute of Diseases of Chest and Hospital (NIDCH), Dr AKM Shamsul Haq, former director of NIDCH, Dr Mirza Mohammad Hiron, president of Chest and Heart Association, Dr M Amanullah MP, Dr Tahmina Aziz, director of National TB Control Programme (NTP), and Dr Abbas Bhuiyan of the ICDDRDB also took part in the discussion.

14-party meet

FROM PAGE 16

call, the senior opposition leader said, "It is not sensible to sit in dialogue for tackling militancy with the people who have been patronising it."

The 14-party letter will set some pre-conditions for the dialogue and ask the prime minister to prove her sincerity to root out militancy by axing the Jamaat from the government and taking action against other BNP leaders and lawmakers involved in militancy, an opposition source said.

Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday separately met Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain and top leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) at her residence.

In the meetings the opposition leaders talked about gearing up the ongoing movement against the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition.

Dr Kamal Hossain and Sheikh Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League, discussed the prime minister's letter for dialogue and opposition's strategy.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and its General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim in their meeting with Hasina discussed strengthening the ongoing movement to "dislodge the ruling coalition and eliminate the Jamaat-e-Islami".

"The country is passing a critical juncture when militants with government protection are killing innocent people and for this we the opposition think it's a time to wage united movement to force the government quit," Mujahidul Islam Selim said after the meeting.

Bangla-Pak semi

FROM PAGE 1

the same venue at 4pm (BST). Although Pakistan hold an edge in their previous seven meetings with four wins, Bangladesh, however, go into the latest clash with a refreshing memory of a 4-0 thrashing when the two team's last met in the 1999 SAFF Championship in Goa.

It is the third time that Bangladesh are playing Pakistan on their home soil in full internationals. Bangladesh eliminated Pakistan 2-1 in the semi-finals of Qaid-e-Azam Trophy in 1985 before losing to North Korea by a solitary-goal defeat in the final. Pakistan took their revenge by beating Bangladesh 1-0 in the final of the SAF Games in 1989.

The other Bangladesh victory came at the 1985 SAF Games in Dhaka when the hosts won 2-1. Pakistan will miss Imran Hossain after the key striker picked two yellow cards but Bangladesh will also field their full strength side - the team that started in the first two games - after nine players were rested against India on Monday.

Jamaat man

FROM PAGE 1

After some time, he made another attempt to go inside the building through the second floor. But a security guard who was watching him carefully caught Rasul and took him to the intelligence officials deployed on the court premises.

The intelligence men found a diary in his pocket and a money receipt of Chhannawabganj unit of Jamaat. The notebook contains a couple of sentences like "we will have to work plan wise"; "Police have arrested Wailullah." It also has some jottings of expenses, said intelligence sources.

Under interrogation, Rasul claimed himself to be the superintendent of Raniganj AB Dakhil Madrasa.

He said he came to Dhaka for a work he had to do at the Madrasa Board and went to the High Court building just to sightsee.

Rasul said he checked in Hotel Kader on Alaudin Road in Old Dhaka on December 11.

Later when he was handed over to Ramna police, they arrested him under section 54 of Criminal Procedure Code. He will be produced before Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka today.

Rasul told Ramna police that he is an activist of Jamaat-e-Islami.

ADB sees

FROM PAGE 1

and transhipment centre for the sub-region." Because, it explained, "Bangladesh borders India and Myanmar and is in close proximity to the landlocked countries of Bhutan and Nepal."

Besides, the report said, "With the opening of the Jamuna Bridge and development of the Padma Bridge, the Dhaka-Chittagong transport corridor and other strategic transport corridors can serve to link the northeastern states of India to Bhutan, Nepal, and West Bengal."

But, the ADB observed, "Deficiencies in key infrastructure and a lack of transit rights frustrate opportunities for economic integration with Bangladesh's near neighbours." To address the shortcoming, it prescribed improving regional initiatives under the Saarc and, particularly, the bilateral agreements with India to facilitate trade in energy, to enhance cross-border transit trade and to effectively promote environmental co-operation, among other things.

The ADB's Regional Cooperation Strategy and Programme (RCSP) for South Asia (2005-2008) prioritises sub-regional projects for improving road networks connecting Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, and developing regional railway and power projects.

The ADB also noted that Bangladesh's economic ties to East and Southeast Asia have increased as a result of foreign direct investments, particularly in the apparel sector. The bank envisages deepening of these ties with these regions by easing trade and investment barriers as central to Bangladesh's progress in regional cooperation.

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson has said that the

Benapole land port

FROM PAGE 1

and Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) welcomed the government decision.

The prime minister who inaugurated the three-day fair organised by BKMEA said knitwear sector is becoming one of the main foreign exchange earners of the country.

One-third of the total export earnings come from the knitwear sector, she added.

The prime minister said the government is ready to meet all logical demands of the entrepreneurs to promote local industries, but the businessmen should pay taxes regularly and in due time as part of their social responsibility.

She urged the apparel exporters to maximise the use of the opportunities of duty-free access given by EU, Canada, Australia, Norway and New Zealand.

Khaleda also asked the business community to utilise tariff facilities offered by Thailand, India and China, and take the GSP (generalised system of preferences) offer recently given by Russia to Bangladesh.

Exporters have to diversify export products and maintain international standard to boost exports under these facilities in different markets of the world, she suggested.

Addressing the function Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman also said Benapole land port should be reopened for supporting knitwear sector.

"We have taken a lot of initiatives to resolve the problems of yarn pricing in the local market," he observed and said spinning mills have to reduce yarn prices following international market. "They are doing injustice by charging high price."

"Time has come to allow import of yarn through Benapole land port," he said adding that World Bank (WB) also recommended reopening

of the port.

The government will release maximum amount of cash incentives to knitwear exporters before the Eid-ul-Azha, the finance minister said responding to the demands of BKMEA. But he said: "I will stop all kinds of subsidy from next year."

BGMEA WELCOMES DECISION
Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) welcomed the government decision, saying the resumption of yarn import under back-to-back LC (letter of credit) through Benapole port would help flourish the apparel industry.

"This will accelerate the growth of knitwear industry and expand the market especially in the European Union and the United States," BGMEA said in a statement.

BTMA REACTION
Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA) President MA Awal yesterday told The Daily Star that most of the local textile industries will close down if government implements the decision to allow yarn import through Benapole port.

He refuted the BKMEA claim of high yarn price and urged the prime minister and the finance minister to constitute a committee immediately to verify to what extent yarn prices have increased in the local market compared to the international market.

"We contribute to the national economy by operating 210 textile mills. We should encourage local industries...I don't understand why we should import yarn from India."

Awal said the local textile mills have made great contributions to the increase of knitwear exports in the world market by supplying 75 percent yarns.

Biman

FROM PAGE 13

their days in agony in the hajj camp.

Biman sources told The Daily Star yesterday that so far the airliner could make only one of its chartered aircrafts operational, a 576-seater Boeing 747, while failed to make operational another one, an Airbus A330-300, due to non-availability of landing permission for it from Jeddah, and it is yet to charter a third one, a Boeing 747.

After Bismillah Airlines had failed to provide two aircrafts to Biman even after signing a contract last week, Biman started its desperate search for aircrafts from other companies. It succeeded in getting one from AirIuxer of Portugal and the Airbus reached Zia International Airport (ZIA) at 2:00pm yesterday.

But, Biman sources are afraid that unlike the airliner succeeds in chartering another wide-bodied aircraft, which may not be possible before December 20, the anxiety over flying all the pilgrims to Saudi Arabia for performing the January 2006 hajj would remain a reality.

However, situation at ZIA eased to a large extent yesterday after Biman authorities succeeded to operate three of its chartered flights carrying 1,000 plus ballotee (under government management) and non-ballotee (under private management) pilgrims and also managed to embark 194 more pilgrims on a regular scheduled flight of the Saudi Arabian Airlines.

Ending overnight waiting at ZIA, several hundred pilgrims finally made their way to Jeddah yesterday afternoon as Biman could fly out two DC-10s with 272 passengers each on board at 5:50pm and 6:30pm and flew out a Boeing 747 with 576 pilgrims on board last midnight.

Issuing a press release last night, Biman authorities assured that upon departure of last midnight's flight, a total of 3932 pilgrims would have been left Bangladesh and there would be no pilgrim stranded at ZIA.

Magistrate court

FROM PAGE 16

December 7 granted bail to Shaheen and his brother Zaheem of South Jatrabari in the Abdul Hye alias Raja murder case.

According to the prosecution, the two brothers along with 25 unidentified people beat the victim to death on November 27 last year. The victim's wife had filed a murder case later with Demra Police Station accusing the brothers.

On October 28, the brothers surrendered to the High Court (HC) seeking bail. The HC, refusing them bail, directed Shaheen and Zaheem to surrender before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka within two weeks.

The brothers appeared before the CMM court on November 6 and sought bail again. The court rejected their bail petition and gave the order to send them to Dhaka Central Jail.

Following the rejection, the defence lawyers filed a criminal appeal with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court. The court scheduled January 5 for the hearing. The court also called for the lower court record (LCR) on the hearing date.

Another defence lawyer filed a bail petition with the CMM court on December 7 and the court granted bail saying the brothers were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them.

A lawyer requesting anonymity told The Daily Star that no lower court can pass any order on an issue that is pending with the higher court.

Father disowns

FROM PAGE 1

the district appeared before a Notary Public yesterday and formally announced his decision to cut off his relations with his son Mamunur-Rashid, a JMB leader.

Mamun was a student of honours class at Gaibandha Government University College.

He joined JMB activities and maintained no contact with his family for long.

About two years ago, he was arrested by Joypurhat police in connection with armed confrontation with police at Khetlal and was released on bail. He is absconding since then.

Submarine

FROM PAGE 1

presence of the 16 consortium partners involved in the project as well as government, business and media representatives.

The 16 companies forming the consortium are Algeria Telecom, Bharti (India), BTB (Bangladesh), Cat Telecom (Thailand), Etisalat (UAE), France Telecom, MCI (a telecommunication giant), PTCL (Pakistan), Singapore Telecom, Sri Lanka Telecom, Saudi Telecom, Telecom Egypt, Telecom Italia Sparkle, Telecom Malaysia, Tunisie Telecom and VSNL (India).

BTB Chairman Abdul Maleque Akhand representing Bangladesh termed the submarine cable 'a symbol of international cooperation'.

"This cable will enable Bangladesh join the information super highway, bring international telecom services within reach of common people and open up opportunities for rapid growth of information & communication technology (ICT) in the country," he added.

Ershad bows

FROM PAGE 1

by a meeting source.

In reply, Khaleda Zia said it is not reasonable to take action against anyone until the accusation against him is proved, added the source.

Earlier on the first day of the dialogue, Krishak Sramik Janata League of Kader Siddiqui accused Jamaat-e-Islami of bearing links to the militants and proposed the prime minister purge the party from the government.

The government high-ups felt extremely embarrassed at Siddiqui's suggestions and took the precaution of restraining JP from doing the same yesterday, said a source at the PMO.

Meanwhile, the last-minute change in the proposals split the JP high-ups, resulting in Firoz Rashid, political adviser to the party chairman, withdrawing himself from the delegation to the dialogue, said the JP source.

Firoz Rashid however told The Daily Star last night that he skipped the talks on personal grounds.

After over an hour dialogue held at the PMO, Ershad told reporters that the prime minister said the government will take stern action if anybody is found involved in militancy.

The other participant in yesterday's dialogue, Council for National Agenda (Can), also suggested the government properly investigate the allegations against some of the ruling alliance members of connection with the militants.

The prime minister told the delegation that her government has taken the matter seriously and measures will be taken to this end. Can leaders told reporters after the meeting.

Former chief election commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf led the Can delegation, which also proposed that a special session of the Jatiya Sangsad should be summoned to discuss the militancy issue.

JP PROPOSAL
The JP placed a nine-point proposal to the prime minister, proposing a number of national committees to be formed to stop militancy.

Explaining the proposal for a judicial probe body headed by the chief justice, Ershad said the high-powered judicial commission would investigate whether an international conspiracy is behind the militancy.

"It will also look into whether any

section of the government or any component of the four-party alliance or anyone outside the alliance is involved in the militancy," read the written proposals.

"The government will have to trace the sources of the militancy, their finance and training," the proposals say.

The party also asked the government to take assistance from the countries that also are faced with the similar situation.

It suggested further the prime minister form a national advisory committee drawing representatives from all political parties, professional bodies and civil society for suggestions on how to tackle the menace of militancy.

The prime minister will lead the committee while the leader of the opposition or any leader of the opposition party will be the co-ordinator of the national body.

About the proposals placed by the political parties and professional bodies, LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters that after examining those, the government might accept some for implementation.

Describing the bomb terrorism as a national disaster, he said, "We have to resist the bombers politically, socially and administratively."

After the formal discussion, the prime minister spoke separately to HM Ershad and Rawshan Ershad.

Ershad, who met Khaleda Zia after about five years since his deserting the four-party alliance in 2001, however said the dialogue will not be fruitful without the main opposition party.

Referring to his individual meeting with the prime minister, he said nothing political was discussed.

Replying to a query, both the LGRD minister and the JP chairman said there was no discussion whatsoever on JP's joining the ruling alliance.

Leaders of the Jatiya Press Club and pro-government factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists will take part in the dialogue today.

Right to information

FROM PAGE 16

"In our work across the globe, we have found two things to be elemental for people's wellbeing. They are access to justice and access to information.

These two again are inter-linked, with the former depending to a large extent on the latter," Daruwala observed while speaking at the plenary presided over by MJ Steering Committee Chairperson Hameeda Hossain.

The other panellists were Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan leader Aruna Roy of Rajasthan and Delhi Public Grievances Commission Chairperson Shalaja Chandra from India, legal consultant to the World Bank Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena from Sri Lanka and MJ Team Leader Shaheen Anam.

Aruna Roy described how their movement to ensure people's minimum wage and protect land rights in six Rajasthan districts turned into a war on widespread corruption and then into a campaign for access to information for social audit and bringing transparency and accountability at all levels of administration. The graft was so pervasive that only 15 percent of the development funds, she said, used to reach the target beneficiaries.

Their local movement eventually became a national one. "The demand was made from the grassroots and we put pressure on the political parties to include it in their manifesto," Roy said, adding they also compelled the political parties to implement the commitments.

She said corruption at their locality reduced by 50 percent after the national Right to Information Act 2005 was enacted in May last.

Shalaja Chandra in her turn illustrated how the Delhi Right to Information Act 2001 has complemented in grievance mitigation by her commission. "My experience in Delhi shows the law has made government officials more accountable," she noted.

The conference host, Shaheen Anam, said previously access to information was considered as an important development tool, but lately it has been widely recognised as a fundamental human right, which has both a rights and a governance perspective.

The Bangladesh Law Commission, she said, drafted the proposed Right to Information Act 2002 without any consultation with the socio-political stakeholders. The draft, which is yet to be tabled at parliament as a bill, tells nothing about repealing the Official Secrets Act of the British colonial people. She also listed a number of other restrictive laws and legal provisions including the Evidence Act, the Rules of Business, Penal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure that need to go to provide the people with free access to information.

Anam decorated the tendency among both the government and the non-government quarters to carry on with 'the culture of secrecy' and urged all from the grassroots to the social elites to join and bolster the campaign for the legislation, as otherwise "we may not see this law enacted at all."

The situation in Sri Lanka in this regard is much similar to Bangladesh, observed Kishali Pinto-Jayawardena. There, too, an archaic Official Secrets Act keeps information confined to the people in power. Pinto-Jayawardena was a member of the team that drafted a right to information act and submitted it to the then information minister and prime minister of Sri Lanka in 2001.

But, the document has been put on cold storage since then, she regretted.

Four parallel workshops on various issues related to the conference theme and a roundtable on role of media in promoting the right followed the plenary.

With Gono Sayshtha Kendra Chairman Dr Zafullah Chowdhury as the moderator, Unnayan Shammunay Chairperson Dr Atiur Rahman pre-

sented the keynote paper in the workshop on Socio-political Context of Right to Information. The workshop recommended forming a national platform to campaign for the law.

Speakers in the workshop on 'Women and Right to Information' stressed the need to properly empower women to enable them to press for their rights to information as well as other basic rights. Prof Mahbuba Nasreen of Dhaka University (DU) presented the keynote.

Prof Borhan Uddin Khan of DU law department presented the keynote paper in the workshop on 'Access to information: Violation and Justice,' chaired by BLAST Executive Director (ED) Shamsul Bari.

Development Research Network ED Dr Ananya Raihan read out the keynote paper in the workshop on 'Access to Information and Poverty Alleviation,' chaired by Brac ED Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury.

Power and Participation Research Centre ED Hossain Zillur Rahman moderated the roundtable on 'Freedom of Information and Role of Media,' with Maja Daruwala and Pinto-Jayawardena among the discussants.

The discussants recommended provision for inclusion of e-governance in the draft of the Right to Information Act. They said the draft law should be open to scrutiny by media people and legal experts so as not to leave it to the whims of the lawmakers.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, editor of the Bangladesh Observer, Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star, Mahbubul Alam, editor of the Independent, Matiur Rahman, editor of the Prothom Alo, Nurul Kabir, executive editor of the New Age, and Farid Hossain, bureau chief of AP, Prof Sakhawati Ali Khan, head of the department of Media Studies and Journalism, University of Liberal Arts, attended the roundtable, among others.

HC halts

FROM PAGE 1

validity of the move by the Sea Beach Management Committee (SBMC) dispersing the Environment Conservation Act and rules.

On November 13, the SBMC approved a plan to construct a jetty in the ECA of the world's longest sea beach to introduce tourist facilities like water sports, cruises and floating restaurants and aids for rescue and security operations.

Moving for the PIL writ, Advocate Ozair Faruq said the SBMC has not authorised introduction of commercial activities in the sea beach as such activities are prohibited in the earmarked ECA. "So the authorities' decision is liable to be declared unlawful and construction of the jetty is liable to be directed to be dismantled," he said.

He said the actual intention behind the construction of the jetty is hidden and it is against public interest. The repeated attempts to construct the jetty clearly indicate the respondents are not sensitive about the protection of the fragile ecology of the beach. They are reluctant to protect the beach from indiscriminate commercial activities and exploitation, he submitted.

The construction of the jetty started at the Diabetic Hospital point of the Cox's Bazar coast amid protests from the locals, professional groups, NGOs and other civil society members. Locals undertook various programmes including human chain, token hunger strike, sit-in and memorandum submission to the authorities concerned to express their dismay over the construction move.

On November 24, State Minister for Communications Salahuddin Ahmed inaugurated the construction work of the jetty.