

# Develop village info centres to improve rural lives

## Moudud tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed yesterday underscored the need for developing financially viable village information centres across the country so that rural people can become aware of their constitutional rights and improve their lives.

"Ensuring access to information can help bring about a significant change in the lives of rural people. We need to develop self-sustained information centres in rural areas to build a prosperous Bangladesh," he said at a seminar as the chief guest.

Development Research Network (D.Net) organised the seminar on 'ICT and access to information: How to make it work for promoting human rights' in collaboration with Manusher Jonno at the Brac Centre Inn in the city, with Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno, in the chair.

The people are not aware of their rights in most cases as there is a lack of access to information, the minister said, adding that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) can help reduce the gap between the information-haves and the information have-nots.

The more people become aware of their rights, the less incidents of human rights violations will



PHOTO: STAR

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed speaks at a seminar on 'ICT and access to information: How to make it work for promoting human rights' at Brac Inn Centre in the city yesterday. On his right are Shaheen Anam and Dr Ananya Raihan and on his left is AMM Yahya. Development Research Network (D.Net) organised the seminar in collaboration with Manusher Jonno.

take place, he observed.

Giving a presentation on different aspects of village information centre, Dr Ananya Raihan, executive director of D.Net, said his organisation has been implementing a project styled 'Abolombon - Empowering people through improved access to information on governance and human rights' since March 2005.

Information intermediaries are a vital component of the process of disseminating information about livelihoods through using ICT, he

said, adding that providing the information in local language can have a positive impact on the livelihood of the community.

Terming the lack of access to information an obstacle to the empowerment of the rural people, he said it makes them vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen, leaves them exposed to preventable diseases and accidents and deprives them of justice.

Participating in the panel discussion, economist Dr Atiur

Rahman said that a positive change is taking place in rural areas through various initiatives. It is also a very positive aspect that the government is not interfering in these initiatives, he added.

Common people would reap enormous benefit if they have access to information, he said.

In her speech, Shaheen Anam lauded the model developed by D.Net, which other organisations can implement for the welfare of the rural people.

People need information at every stage of their lives, she said, adding that the non-government organisations can facilitate the initiatives, but the government should play the key role in this regard.

Stressing the need for reducing poverty in the country, AMM Yahya, director of GrameenPhone, said the community information centres can be financially viable if local people are involved in the process.

Salma Khatun, a mobile phone operator of a village information centre of D.Net, said the villagers, who did not have any idea what a computer is, are now reaping the benefit of ICT after the centre was set up at her village in Nilphamari.

"The use of ICT can bring about a revolutionary change in rural areas," she said.

EXTORTION

## Security guard shot in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown extortionists opened fire at a security guard at city's Mirpur area early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Khurshed Alam, 50, a security guard of an under construction building at Wasa road at Shewrapa.

Police sources said the criminals came to the spot at around 6:00am asking for Mohammad Ibrahim, the owner of the building, and tried to enter the building. When the security guard resisted them, the criminals shot three rounds of bullets at his chest and two legs, leaving him injured.

Khurshed is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

# Prolonged use of skin lightening products poses health hazards

## Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prolonged use of skin lightening products poses health hazards such as damage to skin, nerves and kidneys, experts at a seminar said yesterday.

Such products with composition of hydroquinone, mercury and steroid cause hyper pigmentation, extreme darkening of skins and other severe health hazards, said dermatologist Dr Ataur Rahman.

Gender in Media Forum in association with the ActionAid Bangladesh organised the seminar on 'Skin whitening cream: Advertising and effects' at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Highlighting the socio-cultural aspect, the speakers said the fairness fixation has been reinforced

and perpetuated by the media.

"With the advent of satellite TV, we are flooded with images of a 'fairer' culture, thus creating dissatisfaction with the 'self' and inciting the racial conflict," said Ferdous Azim, a professor of BRAC University.

Dr Geeti Ara Nasreen, professor of mass communication and journalism, Dhaka University, said the advertisements of the cosmetics companies carries such messages that it seems the skin whitening cream is the passport to success.

Advocate Faustina Pereira, director of Advocacy and research, Ain O Salish Kendro, said the advertisements for skin whitening creams are violating the article 10 and 11 of the Constitution that guarantees equal rights for women.

The speakers also said the skin lightening creams having ingredients such as mercury and hydroquinone had already been banned in the US, the UK, European Union, Canada, Thailand, Indonesia and several African countries.

Prof ABM Faruque, department of pharmacy, Dhaka University, human rights activist Hamida Hossain, Ranjan Karmakar, executive director of Steps Towards Development, Khuku Chatterjee of ActionAid Bangladesh, Tasmima Hossain, editor of the fortnightly Anannya, Omar Tareque Chowdhury of Gender in Media Forum and Nazneen Shefa also spoke at the seminar moderated by TV personality and columnist Muhammad Jahangir.

## Five new police stations open in city tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) will inaugurate five new police stations approved by the government tomorrow, says a press release.

The newly built police stations are Shahbagh, Jatrahari, Tejgaon Shilpachal, Uttar Khan and Dakkhin Khan.

Shahbagh Police Station (PS) has been formed splitting Ramna PS, Jatrahari PS splitting Demra PS, Tejgaon Shilpachal PS splitting Tejgaon PS and Uttar Khan PS and Dakkhin Khan PS splitting Uttara Police Station.

Shahbagh PS will be set up at Shahbagh police control room building, Jatrahari PS at former Demra Police Station while Demra PS at Ahmed Bawani Textile Mill building at Sarulia, Tejgaon Shilpachal PS at Tejgaon Police Post, Uttar Khan PS at 195 Uttar Khan Madarbari and Dakkhin Khan PS at 193 Dakkhin Khan market road, adjacent to Ayesha shopping complex.

Theses new police stations have been set up with a view to curbing the increasing crime and corruption of the city, added the press release.

## More donation for AMCH

Family members of late Dr Habibur Rahman, the first child specialist of the country yesterday donated Tk 20 lakh for a five-bed ward of the 500-bed Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH), says a press release.

Engineer Rafiqur Rahman, eldest son of Dr Habib, handed over a cheque to Kazi Rafiqul Alam, president of Dhaka Ahsania Mission at its office at Dhanmondi.

Dr Habib's another son Rabiul Hassan and daughters Rokeya Soidar, Mahmuda Haque, Rowshan Morshed and Shaila Huda were present.

The ward will be named after late Dr Habibur Rahman.

## DEMAND FOR REINVESTIGATION INTO UDICHI BLAST CASE

# Fresh programmes announced

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Committee for Reinvestigation and Trial of Udichi Blast Case yesterday announced fresh agitation programmes to press home its demands.

Members of the committee announced the programmes from a

rally at Muktangan in the city, says a press release.

Under the programmes, the committee will begin a three-month-long signature campaign in favour of its demands from the Central Shaheed Minar on August 25.

Later, similar programme will be held in all districts.



PHOTO: STAR

A child expresses her anger at the Israeli attack on Lebanon during a demonstration in front of the High Court yesterday. Shikipari School of Tangail and Narigrantha Prabartana organised the protest.

Besides, a gathering of family members and relatives of Udichi killing victims will be held in Dhaka on August 31 where they will share their grievances and press their demands.

There will be a roundtable in Dhaka in the first week of September with the participation of leaders of different political parties, social organisations, cultural groups and professional bodies.

The central leaders of the committee will attend demonstrations in divisional headquarters in September.

In October, the committee will bring out processions across the country carrying dummies of the victims and form a human wall.

Presided over by Nasir Uddin Yusuf, convener of the national committee, the rally was addressed by Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, Prof Jatin Sarker, Communist Party of Bangladesh President Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu, Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya and cultural activist Golam Quddus.

## Dengue spreads in Khulna alarmingly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Dengue fever, a viral disease transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes, has been spreading in Khulna city at an alarming rate.

According to Dengue Control Room of the Khulna Civil Surgeon, a total of 16 dengue patients were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital, Khulna General Hospital, Dakop Upazila Health Complex and other private clinics of the city and district in the last one month.

Meanwhile, there has been no effective move at the government level to contain outbreak of the disease.

However, acting Civil Surgeon of Khulna Dr Maksuda Begum claimed that a programme has been taken to create mass awareness against the dengue.

Khulna City Corporation is yet to launch the anti-dengue drive as announced last week.