

HIV/AIDS impact on labour force severe

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the labour force is severe as it reduces the supply of workers, slashes their incomes and raises labour costs for employers, said the speakers at a workshop yesterday.

Nearly 13 million workers died of AIDS worldwide as of 2000 and some countries are likely to lose more than 30 percent of their workforce, said Ronald Berghuys, officer-in-charge of International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Dhaka, adding that the ILO is paying heed to the issue as it also reduces the production and profitability.

"As illness forces workers to leave the jobs, valuable skills and experiences are lost. Along with lower productivity and profitability, tax contributions also decline while the need for public services

increases," he said.

It is the appropriate time to intervene in HIV/AIDS issue as the rate of HIV-infection in Bangladesh is still low, said Ronald at the inaugural session of a two-day capacity building workshop for trade unions on HIV/AIDS.

The workshop, organised by the ILO at a city hotel, is meant for training of the trainers of labour federations so that they can act as peer educators for their fellow trade union members.

In a multimedia presentation on 'The National HIV/AIDS Scenario in Bangladesh and the Country Response', Dr Mozammel Hoque, deputy programme manager of National AIDS and STD Programme, placed some recommendations for the business sector to combat HIV/AIDS.

Since there is potential impact of

HIV/AIDS on the business, the owners and managers need to understand the impact on their industries and the benefits of HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, he said.

He also mentioned that HIV/AIDS programmes for the workforce are one of the most important approaches to involving the business sector in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

Representatives from 13 labour federations are taking part in the workshop.

Shahabuddin Khan, programme officer of ILO in Dhaka, M Matiur Rahman, chairman of National Coordination Committee for Workers Education, Dr Zeenat Sultana and Dr Mohammad Hanifuddin were present on the occasion.

EC delegates visit Sylhet

UNB, Dhaka

As part of its election 'roadshow', the European Commission delegation visited Sylhet yesterday to explain the role and background of the forthcoming EU Election Observation Mission to Bangladesh.

The delegation comprised Dr Stefan Frowein, Head of the delegation of the European Commission in Bangladesh, and Charles Whiteley, Head of the Political and Trade Section.

Referring to the current political situation in the country, Dr Frowein said the European Commission is following events in the run-up to the parliamentary elections very closely.

He said: "It is clear that Bangladesh is passing through turbulent political times with significant changes to the Caretaker government, the deployment of the armed forces and the continuing stalemate between the parties," he said.

Dr Frowein added: "It is vital that every drop of political will is put to good use by the Caretaker government and the political parties to ensure that a way forward is found which ensures that the people of Bangladesh's expectations for a free, fair and peaceful election are fulfilled."

The 'roadshow' is designed to explain to media and civil society in different cities across Bangladesh why the EU dispatches Election Observation Missions across the world and the values and international commitments that underpin election missions, said a press release.

Railway to sell advance tickets

Bangladesh Railway has taken special measures for selling advance tickets for home-bound inter-city train passengers at Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet station counters ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, says a press release.

The five-day special sale will start on December 22. Tickets of all classes will be sold everyday from 8:00am to 4:00pm under the supervision of specially assigned officials.

Tickets for December 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 will be sold on December 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 respectively.

"There will be no refund for tickets sold on the above dates," the press release added.

Apart from advance tickets, regular tickets will also be sold during the period.

Victory Day Charity Run

Gulshan Youth Club (GYC) will organise 'Victory Day Charity Run and Walk 2006' at GYC playground on December 16, says a press release.

Apart from GYC, participants from Hash Club, Bangladesh Mountaineering Club, Bangladesh Tourist Expansion Forum, Dacca Base Camp, Keokaradong.com and Bangladesh Adventure Club will take part in the event.

The fund raised from this event will be dedicated to support a 'Free Friday Clinic' operating from GYC playground and distribute winter clothes among the indigenous people of Bandaban Hill Tracts.



Seminar

Alliance Francaise de Dacca organises a seminar on 'Some important facts of the Western Art Musical Training'. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dacca. Time: 5:00pm.

Discussion

Action on Disability and Development (ADD) will hold a discussion on 'UN convention on promoting the Rights of persons with disabilities' will be held. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 12:00noon.

Blue for peace

Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and civil society members will stage a demonstration as part of their 'Blue for Peace' programme demanding proper investigation into the killings. Venue: In front of High Court. Time: 4:00pm.

Workshop

Bangladesh Press Institute (PIB) and Marie Stope's Clinic jointly organise a workshop titled 'More participation of men in reproductive health'. Venue: PIB seminar room. Time: 10:00am.

Book launch

Nymphae Publication will launch five books by former secretary and Ambassador Muhammad Zamir. Venue: Radius Centre, Bay's Galleria, 57 Gulshan Avenue. Time: 5:00pm.

Launching ceremony

Centre for Governance Studies of Brac University will launch its first publication 'The state of governance in Bangladesh 2006: Knowledge, perceptions, reality'. Venue: hotel Golden Deer auditorium. Time: 3:30pm.



PHOTO: PIB

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Patricia A Butenis calls on President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

Prof Amartya to attend launching ceremony of HW report

UNB, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen will attend the launching ceremony of Bangladesh Health Watch - State of Health Report 2006 on December 26.

The ceremony, to be held at the Brac Centre Auditorium at 10:00am, will be chaired by Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed. Nobel laureate Dr Mohammad Yunus is expected to be present as the guest of honour.

This year's theme of the State of Health Report is 'Health Equity'.

Bangladesh Health Watch is a civil society initiative to monitor the progress in achievement of good health for all citizens of the country.

The Health Watch scheme draws on the ongoing initiatives and experience of the existing network of community-level health watch groups in initiating a process of institutionalising a monitoring system for health in Bangladesh.

Nine killed in ship breaking yards this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least nine workers were killed in accidents in different ship breaking yards at Sitakunda in the district this year.

Young Power in Social Action (YPSA), an NGO that works with the yard workers, organised a candle-light vigil on Tuesday night on DC Hill premises in memory of those victims. YPSA also published the list of the deceased at the programme with details, also citing the reasons behind the accidents.

Resident Editor of the daily Prothom Alo Abul Momen, Bureau Chief of the daily Bhorer Kagoj Omar Kaiser, YPSA Coordinator Mahbubur Rahman and Programme Officer Mohammad Ali Shahin spoke at the programme.

The speakers alleged that workers have long been forced to work in risky conditions at different ship breaking yards.

"Civil society members and environmentalist groups have regularly expressed their concern with such risky and unsafe working atmosphere but the authorities concerned and yard owners turned a deaf ear", they alleged.

The deceased are Didarul Alam, 20, of Foyjun Shipyards (January 25); Mohammad Mati, 27, of GL Shipyards (July 4); Mohammad Malek, 32, and Mizanur Rahman, 28, of Harun Steel Shipyards (July 7); Jahangir Alam, 42, and Abul Kalam, 25, of Royal Shipyards (July 12); Hafizur Rahman, 20, of Sajil Shipyards (July 16); Kabir Ahmed, 30, of Namreen Enterprise Shipyards (July 20) and Abul Kalam, 30, of Rahmania Shipyards (December 4).

Shahin observed that the number of casualties might be higher since many of the accidents inside the yards remain unreported.



PHOTO: STAR

Prof Muzafer Ahmed speaks at a roundtable on 'Ways to overcome the present political crisis' at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. Shushashoner Janney Nagorik organised the seminar.

Woman UP member killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Unknown criminals slaughtered a female union parishad (UP) member allegedly after raping her in Meherpur.

The victim, Ismat Ara, 36, wife of local BNP activist Anwarul, was an elected member of Amjhiup union parishad of sadar upazila in Meherpur.

Family sources said, Ismat had been missing after she left for the upazila headquarters on Sunday, December 10 and a General Diary (GD) was filed with sadar police station later.

Police recovered the body near her house at Beltala field. She might have been killed after rape, suspect police.

According to sources, Ismat Ara infuriated the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (BPCP) several years back when she helped the police arrest Rustom, a regional leader of the outfit. The outlaws later threatened Ismat Ara with dire consequences.



Temperature may fall

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country in the early morning, Met Office said in a forecast.

It also said that night temperature may fall by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 28.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Cox's Bazar and the lowest of 10.8 degrees at Ishwardi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:14pm today and rises at 6:33am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	25.3	16.2	60	52
Chittagong	28.3	16.3	93	67
Rajshahi	26.0	10.9	78	54
Khulna	26.0	17.0	57	64
Barisal	25.6	16.0	84	85
Sylhet	26.3	14.5	87	76

The Daily Star exposes lies by Falu's media

FROM PAGE 1
Farmgate saying that its process of purchase was without tender, it was bought far below the market price and that the management of the Oriental Bank Ltd was blackmailed into selling it cheap under threat of negative media reports. The whole process of purchase was non-transparent. It may be pointed out that minimum journalistic ethics were not followed before telecasting and publishing such malicious news items and no effort was made to take our comments or version on the story, a practice that Prothom Alo followed.

We totally and completely reject all the above allegations which is motivated by a desire to pressurise and intimidate us in not doing our journalistic duties of exposing the corrupt elements in our society and those who abuse power for personal gain. The campaign against us is an attempt to protect the ill gotten wealth of Al-Haj Mussadeq Ali Falu, Chairman and shareholder of ntv, Rtv and daily Amar Dosh whose expose in daily Prothom Alo triggered the campaign in the first place. This is nothing but the worst form of yellow journalism. It may be noted that The Daily Star did not report anything yet on Mr. Falu, though we were subjected to a malicious campaign.

Below is our response to the false allegations:

1) The Oriental Bank Ltd advertised in the national newspapers including in the highest circulated English and Bangla dailies of the country, namely The Daily Star and Prothom Alo on 31st August 2003 inviting offers for the sale of 18.75 katha at 64 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue Road, Dhaka.

2) The Daily Star sent in its offer after verifying from Civil Aviation Authority about the height restrictions on that land. The land was identified to be in the flight path of

the airport and as such much lower height was allowed than for land around the area, which did not fall on the flight path. Considering all factors we offered a price of Tk 33 lakhs per katha.

3) The Oriental Bank Ltd (Board Division) replied vide their letter of 28 February, 2005 asking us to inform them whether we could pay the whole amount at a time. We replied, on March 1, 2005, confirming our ability to do so.

4) On 28th March 2005 the Oriental Bank Ltd informed us that in a meeting of the Board of Directors held on 19th March 2005, our offer was accepted and that the Board fixed a price of Tk 33.60 lakhs per katha to be paid at a time and requested us to complete all formalities of registering the land.

5) As required by law, a legal notice regarding purchase of the land was published in The Daily Star and Prothom Alo on 7th April 2005 for the information of the general public.

6) On 12th May 2005 the sale deed was executed between the Oriental Bank Ltd and Mediaworld Ltd after payment to the Oriental Bank Ltd and other all payments, including registration fee, stamp duty etc.

We also vigorously protest the false allegation made against Mr. Latifur Rahman, one of the directors of Mediaworld Ltd. He never used this paper to either promote himself or his business. There is not a single instance where Mr. Latifur Rahman either directly or indirectly gained from this paper's influence. On the contrary he and his business suffered, on several occasions, for our bold journalism. We are proud to say that this paper enjoys complete editorial freedom and never is our work interfered with.

We do not know how the daily Amar Dosh, ntv and Rtv arrived at the figure of Tk 20 crore as the price of

the 18.75 katha of land, which comes to more than Tk 1 crore per katha.

The above details make it crystal clear the transparent and legal process through which the land was purchased. Between the time of advertisement of the Oriental Bank Ltd (31st August 2003) and the completion of the sale (12th May 2005) nearly two years passed, which can hardly stand as an example of the deal being pushed through under pressure.

As we had stated earlier, it is not The Daily Star, or Latifur Rahman or the Prothom Alo that has indulged in any wrongdoing. It is Mr. Mussadeq Ali Falu, who abused power during the tenure of the BNP rule, who took full advantage of his proximity and closeness to former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to amass huge amount of personal wealth, property and personal power. Any investigation by the Anti-corruption Commission will reveal the extent of his wealth.

Today, The Daily Star has become the most trusted and credible newspaper both at home and abroad. It is the highest circulated English language newspaper of the country and achieved credibility by completely staying away from yellow journalism.

We reiterate our commitment to serve our readers and our country by fighting against corruption, abuse of power, reputation and cronyism. We will continue to expose corrupt individuals in our society. No amount of intimidation through false and malicious propaganda will deter us from our commitment to our readers and the people at large."

Criminals slaughter youth in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of criminals stabbed and slaughtered a youth at Muradpur in Shyampur in the city last night.

The criminals numbering about 15 first looped a wire around his neck and then stabbed and slaughtered him in a lane at around 7:00pm, the police said.

The identity of the youth aged around 25 could not be known immediately.

Receiving information, the police rushed to the spot and recovered the body.

The body was sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College Morgue for autopsy.

Meanwhile, a gang of extortionists shot a man at his house at Shipahibagh in Khilgaon in the morning.

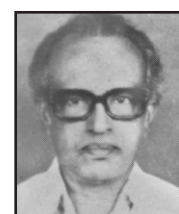
Shah Alam alias Aslam, 28, received bullet wounds in his abdomen.

Some five extortionists stormed into the house of the victim at around 9:00am to look for his brother Khurshed.

But failing to find Khurshed, the criminals ransacked a room and opened fire on Aslam, the police said.

Aslam is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Death anniversary



Today is the 22nd death anniversary of Dhir Ali Mia, an eminent musician and music director of the subcontinent, says a press release.

On the occasion, different programmes have been chalked out including offering Fateha at his grave at Mohammadpur and daylong Qurankhwan, milad mahfil and destitute feeding at his 20, Bashbari, Mohammadpur residence in the city after Maghrib prayers.

FF AM Ferdous passes away

UNB, Khulna

Freedom fighter and language movement veteran Abu Mohammad Ferdous passed away at his Amtala residence in Khulna yesterday at the age of 83.

Mohammad Ferdous, also the president of Khulna Unnayan Sangram Samannay Committee, left behind his wife, four daughters, three sons and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Leaders of different political parties and organisations placed wreaths on his coffin to pay their last respect.

Khitish Talukdar

Khitish Talukdar, a retired school-teacher, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at his village home at Khalia in Rajoir, Madaripur, yesterday at the age of 63.

He left behind his wife, four sons and a daughter and a host of relatives, students and well-wishers.

In a condolence message, Court Reporters' Association expressed deep shock at the death of Khitish Talukdar, father-in-law of Chaitanya Chandra Halder, court correspondent of The Daily Star.

CA's resignation 'impractical'

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Two issues featured prominently in the discussion -- the deployment of the armed forces in aid of the civil administration and resignations of the four advisers, Mokhes said.

Later talking to the reporters, the US ambassador said she told the president that the resignations of four advisers were 'unfortunate' as they are honourable personalities and patriots.

She said the president agreed with her but told her that the four new advisers are also firmly committed to working following the footsteps of their predecessors.

About reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC), the president told Butenis that if both the parties agree he would request Election Commissioners SM Zakaria and Modabir Hossain Chowdhury to go on leave. The president believes the election commissioners would agree to go on leave if both the parties reach a consensus on the matter, Mokhes said.

Consulting with the two major political alliances, the council of advisers headed by Iajuddin in last week finalised a package of proposals including sending of Election Commissioners Zakaria and Modabir on leaves of absence and appointing new election commissioners to reconstitute the EC. But the president in a

sudden move appeared opposed to the idea of sending Zakaria on a leave of absence and unilaterally deployed the armed forces to maintain law and order, prompting resignations of four advisers.

Following non-implementation of the package proposal, Awami League (AL)-led 14-party coalition, Liberal Democratic Party-led National Unity Front, some small political parties and different organisations of professionals have bolstered their demands for resignation of Iajuddin from the office of CA and appointment of a 'neutral person' to the post.

The president's adviser in an unusual move yesterday invited journalists in his office in Bangabhaban and briefed them about the discussion between the president and the US envoy.

The US ambassador discussed issues concerning the next month's parliamentary election and reiterated the US position of preferring holding of a non-violent, free, fair and credible election.

The president informed Butenis that the caretaker government has taken all necessary steps to hold a free, fair and neutral election in a peaceful environment and the US ambassador expressed her satisfaction over the measures initiated by the government so far, Mokhes said.

"The United States will continue

supporting the caretaker government in holding a free and fair election for continuity of the constitutional and democratic process," Butenis was quoted by Mokhes as saying.

The president's adviser said Iajuddin and the US envoy agreed that political parties have come very close to solving the crisis and to overcoming their disagreements on electoral issues, leaving only some trivial matters unsettled.

They hoped that the parties would come forward to resolve the trivial disagreements through their wisdom, intelligence, farsightedness and sense of patriotism.

Butenis also apprised the president of her meetings with four-party alliance leader Khaleda Zia and 14-party coalition leader Sheikh Hasina.

On the army deployment, Butenis observed that it is necessary to ensure that the army acts neutrally. They will monitor whether the forces deployed in aid of the civil administration are working neutrally, she added.

President and CA Iajuddin Ahmed assured the US envoy that all the forces will discharge their duties neutrally during the election just like they did in the past. "I have already directed the administration and all the forces to work neutrally," he was quoted by Mokhes as saying.

Delayed polls better than farcical one

FROM PAGE 16

he is departing from that mandate, he said.

The notion of the caretaker government is to become completely non-partisan, he said.

Prof Muzafer Ahmed said the caretaker government is no longer effective as it is gradually changing the character. There is no discussion over bringing amendment to the representative of people order (RPO) and changing election code of conduct, he said.

"There is no alternative to mass movement as people of this area never achieved any significant change through election," Hafizuddin Khan, a former member of a caretaker government, said referring to national elections in 1954, 1965 and 1970.

The people got the right of franchise in those elections but that produced no result in bringing changes in the governments, he said. Stressing the need for raising voice against misrule, Hafizuddin Khan appreciated mass movement in Kansat and Fulbaria.

He opposed the decision of army deployment and said, "No civilian can expect army rule in the country."

Another member of a previous caretaker government SM Shahjahan emphasised empowerment of the Election Commission.

"If the Election Commission is powerful, no other option is

required to hold free and fair elections."

He also demanded massive reforms in the major political parties.

Ex-lawmaker of Jatiya Party GM Kader said the army was deployed to create a mental pressure that would go in favour of the BNP-led four party alliance. Field level leaders of the four-party alliance are already saying that the army would work in favour of them.

He said the Election Commission is partisan to the political parties that are demanding election within 90 days. There are instances of changing the election results using the partisan administration in the past, he said.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam said the politics would be volatile again if the election is held only to uphold the constitution as an acceptable election cannot be held within the existing political situation.

The election can bring peace in the country if it is delayed -- a new council of advisers is to be formed and the election would be held within 90 days from that day, he said.

The election could be delayed if necessary and then the Supreme Court can give a verdict in this regard, he added.

"We should look into what the minimum requirement for holding a free and fair election is," banker Khondoker Ibrahim Khaled said,

adding that mass movement for bringing changes should be done by the political parties.

Terming the resignation of four advisers a reflection of 'non-functioning' of the present caretaker government, development activist Khushi Kabir said instead of holding a faulty election in the country, the whole system should be improved.

Former secretary Shah Abdul Hannan said the formation of a new caretaker government will not be possible within the time limit and it will not help a way out, rather increase the dispute between political parties. He spoke in favour of deployment of army for protecting the country from lawlessness.

Columnist Moshleh Uddin observed that the political deadlock might not deepen so much if justice KM Hasan had not been refrained from taking charge of the caretaker government through pressure. He said caretaker government advisers should not have resigned. He also expressed views in favour of army deployment saying, "If our army personnel can maintain peace abroad why should they not do the same thing at home?"

But the army should play a non-partisan role, he said.

Moshleh Uddin criticised the role played by the foreign ambassadors in confusing political atmosphere.

Veteran journalist ABM Musa observed that the Awami League

was defeated by the political tricks of BNP. He said if the election is held in the present circumstances, the army will be able to remain on the streets for next six years.

"No significant changes in the country was brought by the elections," Musa said, adding that the election system of pre-independence period is yet to be changed.