

FIGHT AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS, AIDS AND MALARIA

Yunus supports French initiative

UNB, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus has extended his support to the French government's UNITAID initiative, a healthcare fund launched to support the international fight against tuberculosis, AIDS and malaria.

UNITAID is being financed primarily through voluntary contributions of one euro by air travellers with each air-ticket purchased in each of the countries which have been the signatories to it.

So far, 30 countries have been the signatories to UNITAID and some US\$ 500 million has already been raised. China and India are expected to join it shortly, and the fund expects to grow quickly to US\$2 billion.

French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy sought Prof Yunus's recommendation on the best way to administer the fund and reach medicines to the poor.

Yunus said, "It's a brilliant initiative, and it should be brilliantly executed."

He suggested that part of the UNITAID fund could be used to form social business funds, a concept of Prof Yunus to address specific problems through social business by setting up 'non-loss, non-dividend companies'.

He gave a concrete example of Grameen-Danone partnership to produce fortified yoghurt for malnourished children of Bangladesh.

He proposed that UNITAID could finance the creation of well-designed social businesses in the area of healthcare so that the largest possible number of people could be benefited by this initiative in a sustainable manner.

He called on French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin at his office to discuss micro-credit and development issues, and met Mayor of Paris Bertrand Delanoe.

President of Portugal received Prof Yunus at the presidential palace in Lisbon on Thursday.



PHOTO: STAR

Child artistes perform a dance number at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday as part of Independence Day Festival organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote.

Evicted Rajshahi street vendors demand rehabilitation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Several hundred street vendors, who were evicted from the city footpaths on February 3, have reiterated their demand for immediate rehabilitation as they are living a very miserable life along with their families.

They also urged the authorities concerned to allow them to run their business on the evicted land till they are rehabilitated in other places considering their abject poverty.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Abul Basher, a cloth trader at Saheb Bazar zero point, lamented, "Either kill me or give opportunity to earn a honest living from the footpath."

"I could not buy a set of books worth Tk 500 for my son who reads in class VII although two months of the year have already passed," he added.

Rajshahi Footpath Traders Association Convener Ayub Ali told the newsman that hundreds of traders cannot bear their family expenses as they are now fully unemployed.

Many of them have already shifted their family members to their native villages as they cannot pay the house rent and costly foodstuffs, he added.

Ayub said the association submitted a memorandum to the caretaker government chief through Rajshahi deputy commissioner for their rehabilitation in the first week of this month, but no action has been taken in this regard so far.

On March 21, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed visited Rajshahi and talked to the members of the administration and civil society but did not give any directives in this regard, he alleged.

Earlier in the mid-February, the association tried to draw the attention of the government through a news conference at Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club.

The footpath traders said many of them are already crippled by high interest of loans that they took from different banks and NGO's to run their business.



PHOTO: STAR

The health directorate and other organisations jointly take out a colourful procession in the city yesterday to mark the World Tuberculosis Day.

Road crashes kill 2

STAR REPORT

At least two people were killed in separate road accidents in Brahmanbaria and Patuakhali on Friday night.

Our correspondent in Brahmanbaria reports: A marketing officer of a pharmaceutical company was killed when a speeding truck hit the motorcycle he was riding on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Kuttapara in Sarail upazila on Friday night.

Jahirul Qayum, 30, a marketing officer of Bio Pharma, was coming to Brahmanbaria when the Dhaka-bound truck rammed into his motorcycle from behind at around 9:30pm, police said. He died on the spot.

The truck sped away.

Our correspondent from Patuakhali adds: A six-year old child was killed in a road accident on Patuakhali-Dhaka road in Patuakhali on Friday night.

The dead was identified as Popy, daughter of Mamun Hawlader of Maukaran area under Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

The accident occurred at about at 5:00pm when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus hit Popy when she was crossing the road, leaving her seriously injured.

She was rushed to Patuakhali General Hospital where on-duty doctor declared her dead at 9:00pm.

Locals seized the bus and handed it over Sadar police.