

## Course on health equity begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wide differences of income, gender discrimination and rural-urban divide are contributing to health inequities in the country. Health Secretary Ehsan-ul Fattah said yesterday.

He was speaking at the inaugural session of a course on 'Equity in Health' as the chief guest at the Brac Centre in the city. The World Bank Institute in collaboration with the James P Grant School of Public Health, BRAC University, and ICDDR,B has organised the four-day course that began yesterday.

In his speech, the health secretary also pointed out the outstanding successes as well as the challenges in the health sector.

Prof Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice-chancellor, BRAC University, said, "We have invested a lot to build good infrastructure to deliver healthcare services, but we have not invested much to improve our healthcare professionals, which is contributing to the inequity in health sector."

Prof Abbas Bhuiya of ICDDR,B expressed his hope that the course would eventually lead to policy changes and practices in Bangladesh and beyond.

Ado Yazbeck, lead economist from the World Bank Institute, Washington DC, and Xian Zhu, country director, World Bank in Bangladesh, also spoke.

Prof AMR Chowdhury, dean, BRAC School of Public Health & deputy executive director of BRAC, gave the welcome address.

Thirty-five participants, including health sector managers, government officials, journalists, academics, civil society members, and NGO and donor agency representatives, are taking part in the course.

## Breakthrough in liver cancer treatment

AP, Chicago

For the first time, doctors say they have found a pill that improves survival in liver cancer, a notoriously hard to treat disease diagnosed in more than half a million people globally each year.

The results in a multinational study of 602 patients with advanced liver cancer are impressive and likely "has never happened" with liver cancer "and is a major breakthrough in the management of the disease,"

the study authors say.

Patients got either two tablets daily of a drug called sorafenib or dummy pills in the study, which started in March 2005. Some patients are still alive, although on average, sorafenib patients survived 10.7 months versus almost 8 months for those on dummy pills.

That type of survival advantage "has never happened" with liver cancer "and is a major breakthrough in the management of the disease,"

said Dr Josep Llovet, the lead author. "That may not sound like a lot of time," but for liver cancer, "this is actually a quite impressive gain," said Dr. Nancy Davidson of Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health. "It is the first effective systemic treatment for liver cancer, which is such a huge problem internationally."

Sorafenib attacks cancer with a targeted double-barrelled approach. It zeros in on malignant cells themselves and cuts off the blood supply feeding the tumour. It is believed to work on tumours within the liver and those that have spread elsewhere.

In the study, tumours didn't shrink or disappear but in many cases they also didn't grow.

"You are not curing the disease but you are delaying the progression of the disease significantly and strikingly," said Llovet, of Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York and Hospital Clinic of Barcelona, Spain.

The study was halted early, in February, because of the good results, and patients on dummy pills were switched to sorafenib.

"This is a very good step forward in this disease," said Dr. Emily Chan of Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Centre in Nashville, Tennessee.

Results were prepared for release Monday in Chicago at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting.

The drug, sold under the brand name Nexavar, is approved in the United States and dozens of other countries to treat advanced kidney cancer. It is marketed by Bayer Pharmaceuticals Corp. and Onyx Pharmaceuticals Inc., which funded the liver cancer study. They hope to receive approval for liver cancer use from US and foreign regulators.



PHOTO: STAR  
The road in front of Zia International Airport became waterlogged following yesterday's downpour, much to the sufferings of the commuters.

## College student killed in Rajshahi road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Rajshahi

A college student was killed in a road accident in Dewanpara in Rajshahi city yesterday.

The victim was identified as Monirul Islam Khokon, 20, a second year honours student of Philosophy Department of Rajshahi Government College and son of Ansar Ali of Meherchandi area.

The accident occurred when a Rajshahi University bus hit Khokon from behind, leaving him dead on the spot while he was walking along the road at Dewanpara in the city.

Sources said, RU bus drivers usually drive recklessly and many of those buses are unfit to ply the city roads.

### 30 injured in Kishoreganj

Our correspondent from Kishoreganj adds: At least 30 people were injured in a road accident

on Kishoreganj-Dhaka highway at Choisuti area under Koliarchar upazila in the district yesterday.

Police and local people said the accident occurred when a Koliarchar-bound bus from Dhaka collided head-on with a Dhaka-bound bus from Kishoreganj at Choisuti area in Koliarchar upazila at around 10:00am, leaving 30 passengers injured, said Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Koliarchar Police Station. The injured were sent to Bhairab, Kaliachar and Bajitpur upazila health complex.

Traffic movement was disrupted for over four hours on Kishoreganj-Dhaka highway at Koliarchar upazila as the buses were damaged badly, Rashid said.

Later, police removed the damaged buses from the road with the help of local people, he added.



PHOTO: STAR  
Artistes of Bulbul Lalitakala Academy perform at a cultural evening at Shishu Academy auditorium in the city yesterday to mark the birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

## 3 pathological centres sealed off in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Rajshahi

Joint forces sealed off three pathological centres and fined eight private clinics Tk 1.10 lakh in Rajshahi on Sunday night for running business without license or efficient staffs in an unhygienic manner.

Two of the sealed off pathological centres are of Islami Bank Hospital and Mukti Clinic of Laxmipur areas.

The clinics were also fined Tk 40,000 and Tk 20,000 respectively. Life Sine Diagnostic Centre and Pathological Laboratory at Sepoypara was sealed off and fined Tk 10,000 on the similar ground.

Among other clinics, Holipath Diagnostic Centre was fined Tk 20,000, Medipath and Metro pathologies were fined Tk 10,000 each, Laser Diagnostic Centre Tk 4,000, and Ekota Clinic Tk 5,000.

Commander of the joint forces Lt Col Muhammad Aminul Islam, first

### PANASONIC MICROWAVE Cooking session held

Panasonic organised a two-day cooking session for the winners of a special Panasonic Microwave Oven sales campaign at WVA auditorium in the city recently, says a press release.

Prof Siddiqua Kabir, a leading culinary expert and brand ambassador of Panasonic Microwave Oven in Bangladesh, moderated the session.

Prof Siddiqua discussed various functional benefits of using Panasonic Microwave Oven, especially the newly launched Panasonic Microwave Oven GS595A with Inverter and Steam technology.

She also trained the participants on five recipes which can be easily cooked with Panasonic Microwave Oven.

The participants were the first 100 buyers of a just concluded month long special sales campaign titled "Buy a Panasonic Microwave Oven and win a free two-day cooking session with Siddiqua Kabir."

Prof Siddiqua and Sadia Afreen Chowdhury, head of Internal Operation MACOMM, distributed certificates among the participants on behalf of Panasonic at the concluding session.

class magistrate Jonendranath Sarkar and District Civil Surgeon Dr Golam Mortuza coordinated the four-hour raid on different clinics since 6:00pm.

During the raid, joint forces



PHOTO: STAR  
Winners of a special Panasonic Microwave Oven sales campaign pose for photograph at WVA auditorium in the city recently.

## EU seminar on 'Erasmus Mundus' scholarship

A delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh organised a seminar at Brac Centre Inn in the city on Sunday to brief Bangladeshi universities about 'Erasmus Mundus', an exchange and scholarship programme for students and university teachers offered by the European Commission.

The aim of Erasmus Mundus is to enhance the quality and attractiveness of European higher education while contributing to increased intercultural links between Europe and the rest of the world.

Erasmus Mundus offers students and scholars from outside Europe the opportunity to spend up to two years at European universities. Under the student wing of the programme, students that have finished their undergraduate studies can apply for admission to Erasmus Mundus master courses in the academic discipline of their choice.

The master courses are high-quality study programmes offered by a consortium of at least three higher education institutions in different European countries. They last between one and two years and

students are required to study in at least two institutions.

Non-European scholars can also apply for short-term teaching assignments (up to three months) at the various master courses proposed under the Erasmus Mundus programme. Scholarships are available for successful candidates, whether students or scholars, to the programme. In the current academic year 2007-2008, 33 Bangladeshi students were admitted to Erasmus Mundus master courses.

Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh Dr Stefan Frowein said "Erasmus Mundus is about opening up European higher education to the world. We want to make Europe an attractive destination for the best and brightest students and scholars across the world. I hope that even more talented Bangladeshi graduates and researchers will become aware of the opportunities Erasmus Mundus can offer in future."

