

'Continuous monitoring system needed to combat bird flu'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday underscored the need for immediate measures and continuous monitoring system to combat the spread of avian influenza virus in the country.

They also laid emphasis on integrated efforts of the ministries concerned and owners of poultry industry to prevent bird flu.

The roundtable titled 'Present bird flu situation of Bangladesh and implementation of the national resistance policy' was organised by the Citizens committee to resist bird

flu in Bangladesh at the National Press Club in the city.

Prof Ahmed Kamal, acting convener of the committee, said the government did not give due importance to the problem which might cause serious havoc in the country.

He said at the beginning many governments in Africa were indifferent to the outbreak of AIDS, but when they took the issue seriously it was too late.

Though Bangladesh government has taken many measures regarding the avian influenza recently, it did not give enough importance about it earlier, he

added.

Prof Kamal said, " We have to take adequate preparation immediately for the sake of poultry industry and public health."

A member of the committee said some investigation teams had visited different firms where the virus was detected and found that their bio-security measures were very weak.

Besides, most of the firms are not following the national policy to cull all the chicks within one kilometre of the affected firms, he added.

Dr MM Khan, an expert on avian influenza, said Bangladesh is a

fertile place for the virus.

"We must confine the virus only to chicks before it spreads to human being and if the virus once can spread to people it would be dangerous," he cautioned.

Dr Khan said it is still not too late to gear up the monitoring and surveillance system on firm workers to keep them virus free.

ABM Faruque, professor of pharmacy department of Dhaka University, said the main problem of the country is that it is densely populated and there is lack of awareness about the virus.

He alleged that some experts hid the matter resulting spread of the virus among the chicks and no administrative actions were taken against them.

He urged the government to ensure bio-security in poultry firms to protect poor people who work there.

Prof Anu Muhammad, member-secretary of the committee, said the monitoring system of the government is very poor and the virus will spread here faster due to low resistance power of country people.

"We will be in dangerous situation, if we hide the truth for the sake of country's image," he said, adding that the owners of poultry industry and the ministries concerned should work together to combat the bird flu. Media can also play an important role in this regard," he added.

Committee Members Engineer M Inamul Haque, Abul Hasan Rubel and Nur Muhammad also spoke at the roundtable.



Dr MM Khan, an expert on avian influenza, speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are Prof Anu Muhammad, Prof Ahmed Kamal, Engineer M Inamul Haque and Abul Hasan Rubel.

Arrested journo sent to jail in Jhalakati

UNB, Jhalakati

A court here yesterday sent a journalist arrested by joint forces for extortion.

Hasan Mahmud Talukder alias Ripon, district correspondent of Bangla Vision, daily Khabarpatra and Karotoa was caught red handed on Sunday evening while he was taking Tk 5,000 as toll from Kirtipasha UP chairman Abdus Shukur Mollah at Polash Hotel in the town.

Mollah said Ripon threatened to report against him if he fails to pay him Tk 50,000. Later, he agreed to pay Tk 5,000 and informed the joint forces, Mollah added.

He filed an extortion case against Ripon. Police said Ripon will be tried in the Speedy Trial Tribunal court.

Heroin worth Tk 3cr seized in Benapole

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Department of Narcotics yesterday recovered 1.5 kilograms of heroin worth Tk 3 crore from Bhoberber at Benapole and arrested three people in this connection.

The arrestees were identified as Salim, 30, son of Taher of Bhoberber, Uzzal, 35, son of Yanoor of Patbari village and Nazrul, 31, son of Azizul of Sadipur.

Assistant Director of Department of Narcotics Hafizur Rahman said on information, they raided Salim's house in Bhoberber and recovered the heroin.

Death of people in Ctg landslide condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of various political parties and organisations expressed deep shock at the death of 76 people who died in a landslide after heavy downpour hit Chittagong yesterday.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Bisahsh condemned rampant cutting of mountains by a vested quarter for the landslide and urged the government to immediately compensate the affected families.

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain and General Secretary Saifuddin Ahmed Manik also condoled the incident and called for immediate treatment of those injured in the landslide.

In a separate statement, former minister ASM Abdur Rob expressed his sympathy to the families of the dead and the injured.

Chittagong Association-Dhaka President Abu Alam Chowdhury and General Secretary ATM Piarul Islam in a joint statement expressed deep shock and requested all to help the affected families.

Creation of jobs should be main focus of budget Speakers say at discussion

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a discussion yesterday stressed the need for creating job opportunities to millions of unemployed should be the main focus of the national budget to alleviate poverty.

Prof. Salimullah Khan said deficit budget is usual in developing countries. But creation of job opportunities should be the main objective of the national budget of Bangladesh.

Prof M M Akash of Dhaka University said inequality in the society remains the fundamental problem. Removal of inequality will automatically reduce poverty.

Some 60 per cent of the people are landless peasants, has little scope of earning. The number is gradually increasing, said Akash while taking part in the discussion on "Dreaming of A Self-reliant Bangladesh: Trade, Investment and Budget" at Jatiya Press Club.

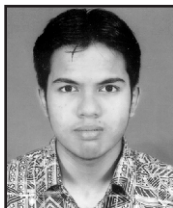
He stressed the need for creation of employment opportunity. That alone will greatly alleviate poverty. He suggested promotion of labour intensive, Agro-based industries.

Mostafa Monwar of Unnayan Onnesha said 60-70 per cent of people of the country are poor as they have little scope for earning. They have no capacity of absorbing the price shock.

Prof Anu Mohammad of Jahangirnagar University said mere allocation of funds in the budget will not alleviate poverty unless the main cause is addressed. "The main problem is that we have no authority on our resources."

Ahmed Swapan Mahmud of VOICE said PRSP based on Word Bank prescription cannot alleviate poverty. Liberalising the market and privatisation will serve better the interest of multinational companies. The multinational companies will always look for reaping maximum profit and never care about alleviation of poverty.

Maple Leaf School student electrocuted



Pratyaya Sarkar, a meritorious student of Maple Leaf International School, passed away on Thursday after being electrocuted at his residence, says a press release.

Pratyaya was the only son of his parents.

Maple Leaf School management has expressed deep shock at the premature death of Pratyaya. In a condolence message, the school management said lively and cheerful Pratyaya will be remembered and missed by all at the school.

The management prayed for the salvation of his departed soul.

Correction

In a report headlined 'Call for global efforts to fix minimum wage' published in The Daily Star yesterday it was mentioned that Dr Syed Refaat Ahmed took part at a policy dialogue. Supreme Court Justice Dr Syed Refaat Ahmed actually delivered keynote address on the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families at the dialogue.

Cirdap calls for integrated local, rural dev model

Bss, Dhaka

The first coordination committee meeting for 'Coordination of good practices of four integrated rural development projects (IRD)' being implemented by Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (Cirdap) ended here yesterday approving the plan of operation for 2007-08 and with a call for an integrated local and rural development model.

The meeting held at the Cirdap Headquarters in the city, chaired by Cirdap Director General Dr Durga P Paudyal, also selected topics for studies to be undertaken during the next fiscal.

Additional Secretary and National Project Director of LGSP Md Abul Quashem and other senior officials were present in the meeting.

The programme, initiated by Cirdap with the concept developed by Prof Yoshihiro Kaida, an IRD expert, attempts to coordinate the four IRD projects of the government.

The meeting noted that since the '50s, many different field level approaches for poverty alleviation and rural development were adopted in Bangladesh.

But, the meeting pointed out that it had now become necessary to evolve an appropriate model of sustainable development to address the emerging issues in this area through a concerted and integrated approach.

Many organisations that have branched out from the concept of IRD have lost the glory once they enjoyed and the IRD concept itself is now under the microscope, the meeting observed.

At the same time, without the central theme of integration, agriculture and rural development projects tend to become piecemeal and poorly coordinated to each other, the meeting regretted.

Experts observed that as a result, often they were duplicated and redundant or they left some important sectors completely unattended. Although donors tend to finance some of these piecemeal projects, they fail to ensure any meaningful linkage with each other, they added.

Secretaries and policymakers of the concerned rural development, local government and other relevant ministries, project directors and senior officials, various agencies and development partners took part in that seminar.



Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain speaks at a gathering of Hindu families at Askor Dushmi village at Agoiljhara upazila in Barisal yesterday. Sitting on his left is former adviser to caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal.



Change attitude towards working children Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need to raise awareness among the people and change the attitude towards working children in order to end child labour in hazardous occupations.

It is popularly believed that poverty is mainly responsible for child labour, but with the advancement of the country, there was no corresponding decline in child labour, they said.

Voluntary Association for Family Welfare and Social Development (VAFWSD) in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation organised the roundtable titled 'Our responsibility in establishing the rights of children working in motor garage and welding workshop' at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Kabir Ahmed Chowdhury, principal of the Institute of Industrial Relations in Gazipur, said various government and non-government organisations have so far identified 400 risky occupations in the country.

He also said time-bound projects

should be taken immediately to eliminate child labour from the hazardous sector by 2015.

Kabir Ahmed also called on the government to set up a labour welfare fund for the welfare of workers in both formal and informal sectors, suggesting that the industrial enterprises should donate a part of their profit to the fund.

Speaking as the chief guest, Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam said children are a vulnerable group in society and the girl children are more vulnerable.

She called for ensuring social safety net for the working children in both formal and informal sectors and changing attitude towards them.

Farzana Nayeem, programme director (Governance) of Manusher Jonno Foundation, said a child needs other people's help for his/her mental and physical growth. If they are deprived of care and affection in their childhood and face adverse situations in workplaces, their growth would be stunted, she

added.

Shamim, 15, a child worker who took part in the roundtable, said he is an orphan but does not want his younger sister to face the same fate as he.

He also said that he would earn money to provide education for his sister.

Speaking at the programme, garage and workshop owners said they treat children working in their workshops with kindness.

They also said that they sometimes have to employ under age children on persistent request from their parents.

VAFWSD Chief Executive Dr Abdul Quaiyum Laskar chaired the programme and its Programme Manager Shaila Yesmin and Executive Director of Steps Towards Development Ranjan Karmakar also spoke.

Concerted efforts needed to prevent spread of AIDS

RU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion here yesterday underscored the need for concerted efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country.

They also called upon the media to work on the issue with more responsibility since information and awareness can only prevent HIV/AIDS.

The discussion titled 'Campaign for creating awareness about HIV/AIDS' was organised by Asar Alo Society at Urban Primary Healthcare auditorium yesterday.

The speakers urged the media to highlight the issue positively so that HIV/AIDS patients do not feel ostracised.

Apart from the media, religious leaders can also play an important role in creating awareness about the issue.

Divisional Health and Education Officer Abdus Salam attended the programme as the chief guest while Society Executive Director Habiba Akter, Rajshahi Social Welfare Department Additional Director Mozammel Haque, Deputy Civil Surgeon Dr Zaharul Islam and Rajshahi City Corporation Health Officer Dr Anjuman Ara also spoke.

WB to help rehabilitate persons with disabilities

The World Bank (WB) is planning to support a government initiative to increase the use of social and rehabilitation services by persons with disabilities, vulnerable children and adolescents, says a press release.

The proposed Disability and Children-at-Risk Project (DCRP) is also intended to improve health, education and employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, including raising mass awareness for their empowerment.

The proposed DCRP will focus on three areas, disability services, awareness and capacity building, children-at-risk services and capacity building of the Ministry of Social Welfare.

National Foundation for the Development of Disabled People (NFDDP) is expected to transform the agency into a centre of excellence for disability services. NFDDP is likely to replicate model management structure and operational processes of the Social Development Fund (SDF) and the Palli Karma Sangsthan Foundation (PKSF).

NGOs with a disability focus are expected to undertake awareness activities through

area-based performance contracting, training and support to partner organisations, and innovation grants, to be approved by the NFDDP Board.

Under children at risk services component, services for vulnerable children and adolescents, primarily in urban and metropolitan areas, will be scaled up with the help of experienced NGOs. It envisages supporting awareness campaign, including shelters for street children, drug abuse prevention and counseling, orphanages, foster care, campaigns against child abuse and hazardous forms of child labour.

The capacity of the Ministry of Social Welfare will be increased by undertaking activities such as surveys, censuses, and needs assessments of PWDs and very vulnerable children; training for ministry staff and its social workers.

It will also provide technical assistance for medium to long-term implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People, which Bangladesh has signed recently.



The road adjacent to the south plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban goes under water following rains yesterday.

Iftekhar leaves for Australia

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday left for Australia to hold formal discussions with Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.

During his three-day visit, he will also meet Speaker of the House of Representatives David Hawker and spoke at a roundtable of the Australian - Bangladesh Parliamentary Group at the Parliament House.

He will also deliver a lecture at the Australian National University on "Evolving Challenges for Bangladesh in South Asia".

He will also receive a briefing from Aus Aid, the development cooperation agency on programmes on Bangladesh.

Prior to his departure Iftekhar said Australia is a key partner in many different spheres and both the countries give considerable importance to their relations with each other.

"We cooperate a good deal on matters of technical assistance and food aid," he said, adding "the quantum of cooperation is likely to increase in the future. The visit will hopefully strengthen our links."

The adviser said, "Also, Australia is an English speaking country whose universities should be a good destination for our students. I believe we should have more academic exchanges."

He said Australia can be an important source of support for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) training, a key to making our economy truly knowledge-based.

Election collapse could spell end for French far-right party

AFP, Paris

The far-right National Front party of Jean-Marie Le Pen had its worst score in more than 25 years in Sunday's legislative elections, encouraging speculation that it is disappearing as a serious force in French politics.

With just 4.3 per cent of the first round vote for the National Assembly, the party was back at levels of support not seen since before it emerged as a major political player in the early 1980s. It has not fared this badly since its 0.3 per cent in 1981.

In a clear sign of its failing fortunes, only one candidate – Le Pen's daughter Marine – had sufficient backing Sunday to qualify for the second round of the vote next Sunday.

By contrast in the 1997 legislative elections, FN candidates in 134 constituencies passed the 12.5 per cent barrier to enter the second round against the mainstream right and left. In 2002, the figure was 37.

After Le Pen's disappointing 10.4 per cent in last month's presidential election – a distinct comedown from his shock second place in the 2002 vote – analysts said the party's long period as a destabilising influence on French politics is all but over.

"For a quarter of a century the National Front has played a baleful role in our politics, trying to popularise - with growing success – its xenophobic and racist message.... This long, excessively long, interim is now drawing to a close," Le Monde newspaper said.

Credit for the FN's eclipse is largely attributed to President Nicolas Sarkozy, whose campaign strategy – with tough talk on law and order, immigration and national identity – was aimed at drawing far-right voters back into the mainstream political fold.

"The president exercises a high degree of fascination for the far-right electorate, not just because of his policies but also because his whole way of governing and the determination he has shown to push through reforms are exactly what many of them want," said Le Figaro newspaper.

Many analysts compared Sarkozy's emasculation of the National Front with Socialist president Francois Mitterrand's deft handling of the Communist Party, which began to disappear as a serious force in the 1980s after it was embraced in an alliance with the Socialists.