

Formulate comprehensive law to ensure patients, doctors' rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Medical and legal experts at a roundtable yesterday suggested formulating a comprehensive law to ensure patients' rights and protect medical professionals from harassment.

They also called for incorporating more practical-oriented lessons and behavioural sciences into the curriculum of medical institutions in order to improve professionals' expertise and strengthen commitment to patients.

Health 21, a platform for medical professionals and civil society members, Public Health Department of North South University (NSU), Marie Stopes and The Daily Star jointly organised the roundtable on 'Doctors' Rights and Patients' Rights' at the National Press Club in the city.

Gonosasthya Kendra Chairman Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury said medical professionals should change their attitude towards patients. "The education of doctors is funded by public money, but they do not know how to communicate with the people. This is unacceptable."

"An audit should be conducted to

find out how many patients have died in public hospitals and what medicines have been prescribed for them," he added.

Dr Asif Nazrul, a professor of law at Dhaka University, said that although the constitution guarantees health rights for all, it does not allow the citizens to take the government to court in case of its failure.

So, a healthcare rights law should be formulated, he said, adding that this is very important because it involves life and death.

Advocate Morshed Alam of Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) said there are a total of 45 laws related to health issues.

Questioning the effectiveness of these laws, he said a single and comprehensive law should be framed to ensure the patients' as well as doctors' rights.

Associate Professor Saiful Islam of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University said there are many flaws in the medical education system in the country, resulting in shortage of skilled doctors.

"Gaining only biomedical knowledge is not enough for the students to become good doctors. The training that is needed for profes-

sional development is totally absent here," he said.

Dr Saiful, who moderated the roundtable, said improving doctor-patient relationship could solve many problems in the sector. "We should conduct a survey to assess whether the healthcare service providers are prioritising profit, rather than serving patients better in the capital-intensive ventures," he said.

He also said that the gap between the private and public healthcare services should be reduced.

Stressing the moral responsibility of medical professionals, Dr M Shahjahan said the delivery of healthcare is a teamwork process where patients suffer due to lack of coordination in the team. For example, he said, the ratio of nurses to doctors should be 3:1, whereas this ratio is 1:3 in the country.

Health 21 Chief Coordinator Dr GU Ahsan said that 95 percent of people are not aware of their health rights. On the other hand, doctors also do not play any role in raising awareness among patients in this regard, he added.

"The British curriculum that we follow still today has been changed

10 to 12 times in Britain, but it remains unchanged in Bangladesh," he said, adding that there is no provision for fostering commitment among students in the medical institutions here.

Northern University Vice-Chancellor Prof Shamsul Haque said the demand for healthcare services has increased significantly, but no qualitative development of infrastructure has taken place to that extent.

For example, each doctor examines 50 patients a day, whereas he/she is supposed to treat only 10 patients, he added.

"A law should be framed to stop private practice of doctors who are in the government service," medical researcher Dr Jiban Roy said.

In her keynote presentation, ASK Director Dr Faustina Pereira called for ensuring public healthcare facilities, including safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, hospitals and clinics, trained medical personnel and essential drugs.

"The facilities must be respectful of medical ethics and culturally appropriate," she noted. In case of any accident, doctors appear to be solely responsible for it, but the patients also have a duty to know the risks and benefits of the selected treatment and the alternative treatments, she added.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said there should not be any flaw in the healthcare system because a single error can cause the loss of life.

So, fulfilling professional responsibility is crucially important, he said, adding that medium- and long-term plans should be taken up immediately to develop the healthcare system.

Termining the present healthcare system chaotic, Health 21 Executive Director Dr Rubaiul Murshed said they would organise seven roundtables on different aspects of health system and compile the outcomes in a book for consideration by the government.

Samia Ahmed and Sardar Arifuddin of Actionaid Bangladesh, Kawsar Afsana of Brac and Dr Habibul Haque also spoke at the roundtable chaired by Health 21 Chairman Dr Shahjahan M Samad.



PHOTO: STAR

Gonosasthya Kendra Chairman Dr Zafarullah Chowdhury delivers his speech at a seminar at the National Press Club auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are former Awami League lawmaker Col (Retd) Faruk Khan, Jasimuddin, AL leader Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Engineer Alfaz and columnist Syed Abul Maksud. Citizens Rights Movement organised the seminar.

Road accidents kill eleven

STAR REPORT

At least 11 people were killed and 12 others injured in separate road accidents in Chittagong, Bagerhat, Natore, Netrakona and Sirajganj yesterday.

UNB from Chittagong reports: Five people were killed and six injured in a couple of road accidents in Sitakunda upazila yesterday.

Two potato traders were killed and two others injured when a truck overturned on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway and fell into a roadside ditch at Baroaulia Kadamrasul.

Local people said the accident occurred when the driver of the potato-laden truck lost control over the steering at about 6:00am, killing Tazul Islam, 32, and Rabiul Hossain, 37, on the spot.

The injured, including the truck driver, were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Three people were killed and four others injured when a container lorry rammed into a CNG-run three-wheeler on Fojdarhat Bypass in the upazila at 8:30am.

Rani, 22, and Shamim, 27, died on the spot while another unidentified man succumbed to his injuries at CMCH.

Four people, including driver of the CNG-run three-wheeler, were also admitted to the CMCH with injuries.

Another report from Bagerhat says: Three fish traders were killed and four others injured when a pickup van overturned on a bridge at Mollahat on Bagerhat-Maowa highway yesterday morning.

Police said two unidentified fishermen died on the spot while five others were injured when the fish-laden van from Dhaka suddenly turned turtle on Major Gauda Bridge.

The injured were rushed to Fakirhat Upazila Health Complex in critical condition where another unidentified fish trader succumbed to his injuries.

One of the injured was identified as Haji Tarek, 35, while identity of others could not be known immediately.

In Natore, a minor boy was crushed under the wheels of a bus at airport crossing in Lalpur upazila on Natore-Ishwardi road yesterday.

Witnesses said a Bagha-bound passenger bus from the capital hit Abdul Matin, 12, of old Ishwardi, while he was crossing the road, killing him on the spot at about 2:00pm.

Later, police recovered the body and sent it to Lalpur Health Complex

morgue for autopsy.

Our correspondent from Netrakona reports: One person was killed in a road accident on Netrakona-Barail road nearby Barail Balu Ghat under Netrakona Sadar upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Sainul Islam, 18, a labourer of the Balu Ghat of village Barail under Netrakona Sadar upazila.

Police said the accident occurred at about 10:am when a truck hit Sainul at Barail Balu Ghat, leaving him dead on the spot. Sainul was going to the Balu Ghat for loading sand to the truck.

The angry people damaged the truck but the driver managed to flee.

A case was filed with Netrakona Police Station in this connection. Police sent the body to the Netrakona Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Our correspondent from Sirajganj adds: A truck driver was killed and two others were injured in a road accident at New Dhaka Road (Chamrargudam) in Sirajganj town yesterday.

The victim was identified as Dilip Kumar, 40, of Stadiumpara village in the town.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at noon when a bus ploughed through a garage when its driver lost control over the steering. Dilip was working in the garage. He succumbed to his injuries on the way to hospital.

Two workers of the garage were also injured. They were rushed to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

Police sent the body to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Correction

One of the two persons killed in a road accident at Boilor in Trishal on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway on Friday has been identified as Al Mamun, 30, son of Mozammel Haque of Bank Colony in Savar, Dhaka while the identity of other victim, who was a driver of a taxicab, could not be known as of yesterday afternoon.

But in a report on road accidents published in The Daily Star yesterday, the victims were inadvertently identified as Harun, 30, driver of the taxicab, and Akkas Ali Chowdhury, 24, a passenger.

We regret the error.

Proposal for PSC selection body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to making Public Service Commission (PSC) an institution for recruiting meritorious candidates as public servants, its chairman and members must be honest and competent, said the speakers at a press conference yesterday.

They also suggested formation of a selection committee that would propose a panel of persons for prospective PSC chairman and members.

The press conference was organised by Nagorik Sanghati at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city.

The speakers said the selection committee would consist of chief justice and two senior justices of Supreme Court, secretary to establishment ministry, five eminent educationists and five former secretaries.

The committee would recommend the name of proposed PSC chairman and members, and

forward it to prime minister's office (PMO) for final approval of the president, they added.

To ensure transparency of the institution, they also suggested that the PSC should submit its annual report timely to the president and later this report would be made public.

In a written statement at the press conference, General Secretary of Nagorik Sanghati Sharifuzzaman Sharif said other than the quotas reserved for ethnic minority and female candidates, all other quotas should be abolished if it wants meritorious candidates as public servants.

To make the recruitment process transparent, he suggested that if any candidate feels that s/he was not properly evaluated, his/her scripts could be re-assessed.

Karzon Ahmed, assistant professor of law department at Dhaka University, also spoke.

Bureaucrats become politicised to serve own interests

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday called for setting up a permanent civil service commission for making continued reforms in civil services.

They said the civil servants cannot deny their involvement in corruption cases for which few former ministers are in jail.

So reform is also necessary in

bureaucracy, they opined.

The seminar titled 'Changing Role of Bangladesh Civil Service' was organised by Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (Biam) Foundation at its multipurpose hall in the city to mark the International Public Service Day.

Mohammad Abu Hena, ex-secretary and former chief election commissioner, attended the seminar as chief guest while Dr Abul Hossain, project director of multi-sectoral programme on violence against women, and Najibur Rahman, assistant country director of UNDP, presented separate keynote papers.

With Abu Md Maniruzzaman Khan, rector of BPATC, in the chair, the seminar was also addressed by Dr MA Momen, managing director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, and Iqbal Mahmud, additional secretary to establishment ministry.

"Access to information, quality public service, public-private partnership and improving the

quality of electoral process are the key issues in building trust in government," said Abu Hena.

He suggested for an independent local government commission with appropriate power to look after the local government affairs.

Dr Abul Hossain suggested setting up a permanent civil service commission, administrative service commission and separate pay commission to ensure reforms and select meritorious officials.

Dr MA Momen said no head of the state or government has ever asked the bureaucrats to be politicised.

"It is we, the civil servants, who become politicised to serve our own interests," he added.

Mentioning the arrest of few former ministers on charges of corruption, Dr Momen questioned, "Can we [civil servants] deny our involvement in those corruptions?"

Butenis leaves for Washington

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis left Dhaka yesterday for Washington ending her 14 months of eventful and exciting assignment in Bangladesh.

Butenis presented her credentials to the Bangladesh President on April 16, 2006 as Ambassador to Bangladesh.

She left Dhaka yesterday morning by British Airways. Butenis will take up her new assignment in trouble-torn Iraq.

Geeta Pasi will be acting as US Charge de Affaires in Bangladesh.

When asked, American Centre director Jonathan Cebra told UNB that he guessed new US Ambassador is likely to arrive here in October.

US President George Bush, who nominates Ambassadors, has not yet named anyone for Bangladesh.

NCTU closed sine die

UNB, Noakhali

Noakhali Science and Technology University (NCTU) was closed sine die yesterday following a tense situation on the campus.

The university authorities also asked the students to vacate the dormitories by 8:00am yesterday.

Campus sources said the students confined five teachers when they went to the male dormitory for inspection on Friday night. Later, the authorities informed the matter to the local administration.

A police team, led by a magistrate, entered the hall breaking open the main gate and rescued the teachers.

The university authorities postponed all classes and examinations for indefinite period due to unavoidable reasons.

The students said five students were injured as police charged batons on them during the drive in the hall on Friday night.

The students continued agitation since June 14 demanding reduction of high fees charged by the university authorities under various heads. They observed different programmes, including processions and token hunger strikes, to realise their demand.

Vice Chancellor Dr Abul Khayer said the fees are higher here than other universities as "we provide better facilities."

He, however, said the demands will be considered after discussion with the teachers and students.

The classes for the first year students were scheduled to start yesterday. At present, about 360 students are studying in the university.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at many places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 34.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sayedpur Court and lowest 25.4 degree Celsius at Bogra.

The sun sets in the capital at 6.50pm today and rises at 5:12am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in celsius	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.6	26.0	87	75
Chittagong	32.2	26.8	77	79
Rajshahi	33.4	26.2	79	96
Khulna	32.5	26.5	76	83
Barisal	30.6	26.5	96	93
Sylhet	33.4	26.0	76	67
Cox's Bazar	33.0	26.0	68	76



PHOTO: STAR

Nagorik Sanghati Adviser Engineer Sarder Amin addresses a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Hafizur Rahman and on his left is Nagorik Sanghati General Secretary Sharifuzzaman Sharif.

Environment woes key source of Sudan conflicts: UN report

AFP, Nairobi

Lasting peace in Sudan will not be possible unless the fractious country takes serious steps to address alarming environmental woes, said a UN report published on Friday.

Decades of war have devastated Africa's largest country and fresh competition for its resources continue to fuel conflict, said the report by the United Nations Environment Programme said.

"Long-term peace in the region will not be possible unless these underlying and closely linked environmental and livelihood issues are resolved," it said.

In its report, entitled "Sudan post-conflict environmental assessment", the UN agency stressed that desertification and land degradation had been a key source of conflict in impoverished Darfur.

"Northern Darfur -- where exponential population growth and related environmental stress have created the conditions for conflicts to be triggered and sustained by political, tribal or ethnic differences - - can be considered a tragic example of the social breakdown that can result from ecological collapse," the UN said.

The conflict in Sudan's parched western region of Darfur erupted in February 2003 when rebel groups complaining of marginalisation and demanding a greater share of the country's resources took up arms.

According to the UN, the Darfur conflict has left some 200,000 people dead. A bitter two-decade long north-south civil war ended in January 2005, after killing an estimated 1.5 million people.

The report identified a string of critical issues, such as population displacement, desertification, land degradation, deforestation, water projects, chaotic urbanisation and pollution from the country's booming oil industry.



Matin Chaudhury's death anniversary today

Today is the 26th death anniversary of Dr Abdul Matin Chaudhury, founder chairman of Bangabandhu Parishad, Bose professor and vice-chancellor of Dhaka University, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani will be held at the Dhaka University mosque, at his village home and at his Banani residence. A milad mahfil will also be held at his Banani residence at 7:00pm today.

Foods will be distributed among the destitute.

Friends, relatives and admirers are requested to attend the programmes and pray for salvation of his departed soul.

Dr Matin Chaudhury got the Independence Day Award 1997 posthumously for his contribution to the field of education.

Obituary

BSS, Dhaka

Col (Retd) Dr Qazi Shafiuddin Ahmed, a former member of the army medical corps, passed away due to cardiac arrests at Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in the city on Friday night at the age of 49, family sources said.

Dr Qazi Shafiuddin, younger brother of Proshika Chairman Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed, left behind his wife, a son, a daughter and a host of relatives and friends to mourn his death.

He was buried at Banani Army Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Gulshan Azad Mosque yesterday afternoon.

His qulhwani will be held at DOHS Club after Asr prayers on June 25.

Jahangir Kabir

BSS, Meherpur

Jahangir Kabir, a valiant freedom fighter of Meherpur town, passed away due to cardiac arrests at the age of 52 on Friday.

He is survived by his wife and one son to mourn his death.

Jahangir was buried with state honour at Sheikh Para Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza on the local primary school ground.