

INT'L CONGRESS ON AIDS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Lack of political will key obstacle to preventing AIDS

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, from Colombo

Lack of political will and commitment contributes significantly to stigmatising and ostracising the HIV-positive people, preventing the social cohesion required in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Experts, practitioners and donors made this comment at the 8th International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific yesterday, being held in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo.

At the conference, Bangladesh was reported to have the highest incidences of trafficked women who are highly vulnerable to HIV.

"The lack of political will and commitment to do something about HIV is a significant factor in contributing to stigma. If political and

social leaders show no concern for HIV, then why should their people?" asked Noerine Kaleeba, chair of Actionaid's International Board, at the opening plenary session.

"By discussing HIV openly, sensitively and rationally, leaders can make people sit up and listen," she said.

Otherwise, the people affected with HIV face a kind of 'social death' whereby an individual or affected family are ostracised by the community and cannot access various services, she added.

HIV/AIDS-related stigma is one of the key obstacles to accessing care for persons and families affected by this pandemic as many of them do not know their status either due to lack of facilities, lack of appropriate information or due to fear of stigma,

Kaleeba said.

Bangladesh has many suspected unreported cases because of social stigma in both rural and urban communities, she said.

Deputy Executive Director of UNFP Purima Mane told a plenary session, "Going beyond the silence into action is the only way we can face the future generations knowing that we are doing our best to ensure an AIDS-free generation."

She emphasised the urgency for all countries to make universal access to sexual and reproductive health and to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support a priority. "The greatest impact can be achieved when we link prevention with treatment and care," she said.

A UN Development Programme study on 'Human Trafficking and

HIV' unveiled at the conference found that a large number of trafficked women in South Asia also run the risk of contracting HIV. "The highest reported incidence of this double burden is in Nepal, Bangladesh and India."

The study identified gender inequality, violence and the lack of economic opportunities for women, especially young women, as major factors increasing their vulnerability to both trafficking and HIV.

The study recommends better coordination in national efforts to integrate trafficking and HIV interventions into key sectors, and to create laws and policies regarding the two issues.



UNDP representative Dur Afsan Chowdhury speaks at a discussion titled 'Reforms in Local Government: Perspective Women's Empowerment' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On her left are Mashuda Khatun Shefali, Aeyasha Khanom and Prof Muzaffer Ahmad. Nari Uddug Kendra organised the discussion.

British HC clarifies terms of Working Holidaymakers Scheme

In response to a number of misleading advertisements from visa agents, the British High Commission (HC) yesterday clarified the entitlements, terms and conditions of the Working Holidaymakers Scheme.

According to a press release issued by the high commission, people who are in the age group of 17-30 years are eligible under the scheme to go to the UK for a maximum of two years holiday, and can work there only for half of their stay to pay for their holiday.

Under the scheme, applicants cannot go to the UK if their main reason is going there to work, or to work for more than half of their time in the UK.

It is also not possible to stay for more than two years and qualify for British citizenship after a working holiday.

The press release also added it is not true that any agency can guarantee applicants Working Holidaymaker visa for the UK and that once in the UK it is possible to stay for a long period, working throughout, and eventually qualify for British citizenship.

Head of Immigration Services Jon Verney said agents who deliberately make false claims are not helping applicants, they are actually deceiving them in order to attract business.

He said giving misleading information to visa applicants about the entitlements of the scheme could easily land the applicants in trouble.

They may find themselves in breach of UK immigration rules, and at risk of being detained and returned to Bangladesh, Verney added.

"The UK welcomes genuine applicants. We want to help protect potential applicants from misinformation," he said.

Full information on the eligibility for Working Holidaymaker Scheme and its terms and conditions can be obtained from VFS, British High Commission, and from the British High Commission website, www.ukinbangladesh.org.

Asian air fares bounce back on increased travel demand

AFP, Bangalore

Average Asian airfares rose in the second quarter of this year as tourists and business visitors travelled more, reflecting the region's economic growth, American Express said Tuesday.

After remaining "flat" in the first quarter, plane fares in the region, including Japan and Australia, rose two percent in the quarter to June 30, according to trends monitored by American Express Business Travel.

The increase reflects "the ongoing positive economic environment," said Kurt Knackstedt, head of American Express Business Travel Advisory Services.

"As a result, the Asia Pacific region tends to demonstrate higher and more consistent profitability for its air carriers compared to the European and North American markets," he said in a statement received here.

But American Express said Asia is not a simple homogeneous market, with varied trends dictating travel in the region, depending on

the competition, the preference for economy or premium services and the most popular destinations.


"There was great variety between fare types with full first class and full business class fares both increasing by four percent and full economy decreasing by 15 percent," American Express said.

In India, where competition has increased from low-cost carriers that proliferated in the last four years, average airfares in the second quarter were down one percent.

In China, full and discount economy fares saw the strongest increase for the quarter, largely driven by routes to the Americas that rose 18 percent and 19 percent, respectively.

In Hong Kong, the biggest increases were of six percent and five percent in full first class fares and full business class fares, American Express said.

Singapore was the only market to remain flat for the quarter when averaged across all fares, American Express said.



Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka.

Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 35.4 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 25.0 degree Celsius at Mymensingh and Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:25pm today and rises at 5:37am 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	34.0	26.4	79	65
Chittagong	30.5	25.4	84	79
Rajshahi	34.5	27.4	86	--
Khulna	34.5	26.5	77	73
Barisal	33.7	26.5	75	74
Sylhet	32.1	25.4	97	73
Cox's Bazar	32.6	26.5	75	80

9 get life for killing man over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Nine people, including five of a family, were sentenced to life imprisonment by a court yesterday on charge of killing a man over land dispute.

The court also fined them Tk 5000 each, in default, to suffer one year more rigorous imprisonment, sources said.

The convicts are Ershad Haji, his three sons Hossain Ali, Hasan Ali and Habibur Rahman and his brother Janab Ali of Nalta village, Ajit Biswas, Amjad Hossain and Niamat Uddin of Magurali village and Shawkat Ali of Magri village under Kaliganj upazila.

Judge Ranu Bilkis Banu of additional district and sessions judge's court pronounced the verdict in a crowded room.

According to the prosecution, the convicts attacked the victim Ensaful Haque, son of Sirajul Haque of Magurali village under the same upazila, and chopped him to death while he was returning home at about 7:00pm on January 1, 2002.

A longstanding dispute over land led the killing, court sources said.

The victim's father filed the case with Kaliganj Police Station on the following day.

After examining the deposition of the prosecution witnesses and relevant documents, the court found them guilty and handed down the verdict.

Falu's wife

FROM PAGE 1

NBR filed the case against Mahbuba on July 5. As the accused is absconding, the trial has been held in her absence. She did not even employ a lawyer to defend herself.

Nine witnesses including the plaintiff of the case testified for the prosecution.

After 35 working days of trial, the court had fixed yesterday for delivering judgement. Judge Firoz Alam read out the order portion of the judgment at the court yesterday afternoon.

The judge said the prosecution arguments and evidence were enough for him to find Mahbuba guilty under section 166 and 165 of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984.

Mahbuba will have to serve the two jail terms consecutively, he said, adding that as the accused concealed her income of over Tk 6 crore 32 lakh for evading tax, he decided to direct the government to confiscate the same amount of her wealth as per law, Judge Firoz said.

Mahbuba wanted to evade tax of Tk 1 crore 58 lakh and so she was fined the same amount of money, he said.

Prosecution lawyer Mahboob Ahmed was present at the court during delivery of the judgement.

Senior Special Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka on July 5 issued an arrest warrant against Falu's wife after Mohammad Masudur Rahman Masud, deputy tax commissioner of Tax Circle of NBR, filed the case.

In his order, the judge said the arrest warrant was issued against Mahbuba as the charges brought against her under sections 165/166 of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984 were found to be true.

In his complaint, Masud mentioned that Mahbuba had evaded a total of Tk 1,58,05,733 in income tax during fiscal years 2001 to 2006.

Mahbuba repeatedly gave false information to the NBR about her real income and expenditure and did not show her income tax return, the complainant said, adding that she did not submit statements about her salary received from ntv, even though she had drawn Tk 9,60,000 from the organisation.



Tib Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman speaks at a discussion on 'Corruption in Rajuk plan approval process: Measures to be taken' at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Md Akhter Mahmud and on his left is Azizul Haque. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) organised the event.

Babies getting Internet identity at birth

AP, New York

Besides leaving the hospital with a birth certificate and a clean bill of health, baby Mila Belle Howells got something she won't likely use herself for several years: her very own Internet domain name.

Likewise newborn Bennett Pankow joined his four older siblings in getting his own Internet moniker. In fact, before naming his child, Mark Pankow checked to make sure "BennettPankow.com" hadn't already been claimed.

"One of the criteria was, if we liked the name, the domain had to be available," Pankow said. It was, and Pankow quickly grabbed Bennett's online identity.

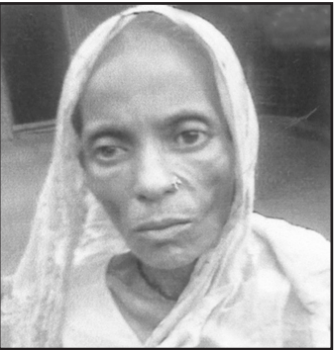
A small but growing number of parents are getting domain names for their young kids, long before they can do more than peck aimlessly at a keyboard.

It's not known exactly how many, but the practice is no longer limited to parents in Web design or information technology.

They worry that the name of choice might not be available by the time their babies become teens or adults, just as someone claimed the ".com" for Britney Spears' 11-month-old son before she could.

The trend hints at the potential importance of domain names in establishing one's future digital identity.

Think of how much a typical teen's online life now revolves around Facebook or News Corp.'s MySpace. Imagine if one day the domain could take you directly to those social-networking profiles, blogs, photo albums and more.



Appeal for help

Sharifa Begum, a housewife, has been suffering from gallbladder cancer for nine months, says a press release.

According to doctors, she needs better treatment, which will cost about Tk 3 lakh. But her husband, a sharecropper, and three sons, who earn a meager living, cannot manage such a big amount of money.

They appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand for her treatment.

Contributions can be sent to Savings Account No. 5082, Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited, Rampura branch, Dhaka-1219.

Interested persons can also call at 0152-390853 to contact her family.

Asia urged to cut malnutrition with vitamin foods

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

A global health group Wednesday urged governments across Asia to enact laws against massive malnutrition that would require food producers to include vitamins and minerals in their products.

Lack of vitamins and minerals have left millions of Asians vulnerable to disease, and about one million children younger than five die annually because of this, the Flour Fortification Initiative (FFI) network said here.

Globally, an estimated 50,000 young women during pregnancy and

child birth also perish and 200,000 cases of serious birth defects are recorded each year because of the problem, it said.

FFI coordinator Glen Maberly said previous experience showed food producers can help if they fortify foods with minerals.

"This ultimately means that governments need to put in place legislation to make it mandatory," he added.

Working closely with the UN Children's Fund, the FFI is a global lobby group pushing to make flour fortified with vitamins a standard practice among major producers.

Malnutrition can cost the global

She said she logs in at least once every month to keep the accounts active and plans to save all messages for when her children get older.

Tony Howells, a business consultant in Salt Lake City, got a Gmail address along with the domain name for his daughter, believing people would enjoy seeing "an e-mail address pop up for an 8-month-old who is obviously not equipped to use it."

Although some parents have yet to use the domain names they've bought, others are sending visitors to baby photos, blogs and other personal sites. Domain name owners have a variety of options to have their personal sites hosted, typically for free or less than \$10 a month. They include baby-gear services like TotSites.com and BabyHomePages.net.

Theresa Pinder initially received a domain name as a Christmas gift from her son's godparents and gives it out to friends and family who want updates.

"People are like, 'Wow. He already has his own Web site,'" said Pinder, a physician assistant in Phoenix.

There are downsides to all this, though: An easy-to-remember domain also makes a child easier for strangers to find. Chances are one only needs to know a child's name and add ".com."

Pankow, a database administrator in Phoenix, said that was one concern keeping him from using the domains he bought for his five children, including a 9-year-old daughter.

"I'd want to research and try to figure out how easy it is to find out what school she goes to and where she lives" based on the Web site and domain name, Pankow said.

GoDaddy and many other registration companies offer proxy services that let domain name buyers register anonymously. Otherwise, the person's name, address and other contact information are publicly searchable.

Call to promote customer responsiveness in healthcare

A two-day workshop ended in the city yesterday with a call for promoting customer responsiveness in healthcare sector, says a press release.

Speakers at the workshop said sound healthcare management is the key area where healthcare providers should build their capacity immediately.

The Training of Trainers' (ToT) workshop was organised by the Centre for Development and Competitive Strategies (CDCS) at Hotel Summer Palace in Baridhara Diplomatic Zone.

Prof KM Farid Uddin, adviser to Ibrahim Medical College, distributed certificates among the participants of the workshop at the closing session.

Earlier Prof AK Azad Khan, president of Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, inaugurated the workshop on August 21.

The workshop was facilitated by Prof RB Talukdar, Prof A Rab, Prof KJ Sogra, Prof SM Jahan, Prof HK Chowdhury, Prof Liaquat Ali, Prof Abu Sayeed, Dr Praful Pawar and Dr ABM Haroon.

Ulrich Stucky of Swisscontact-Katalyst and Assistant Resident Representative of UNFPA attended the workshop as special guests.

CDCS initiated Swasthya Seba, a pioneering campaign, after conducting a year long research on 30 hospitals in Dhaka.

The findings were shared in the workshop.

Journos harassed despite showing ID cards

UNB, Dhaka

Several journalists complained of "harassment" by the law enforcers despite showing ID cards last night while returning home from their offices amid curfew.

They said joint-force personnel halted a private car of a daily carrying several newsmen at different points in the city and asked them to show their identity cards.

Despite having valid cards, the law enforcers, at one stage, reportedly beat up Aminul Haq Royal, a reporter of Bangladesh Today, at Dainik Bangla crossing.

Jahangir Alam, a staff reporter of the United News of Bangladesh (UNB), was made to get down from the car at Mirpur-10 crossing. Indecent words were hurled at him.

In Plasey area, Rashed Ali, a reporter of a Bangla daily, was also reportedly beaten up by some Rab patrols enforcing curfew.

Private TV channel CSB reported that their mediemen were detained in Mohammadpur area although they showed ID cards.

Earlier, a DMP release said identity card holders of officers and employees of all government, semi-government and autonomous institutions would be considered as curfew pass during curfew hours.

Attack on journos condemned

Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) yesterday condemned the attack on the journalists on duty in the last few days, says a press release.

In a statement the leaders of BFUJ and DUJ demanded immediate punishment of those who attacked the journalists during the violence between the students and riot police.

Ishtiaq Hossain, reporter of The Daily Shamakal, Anwar Ali Himu and Abul Kalam Ratan, both correspondents of The Daily Star in Rajshahi, Sharan Sarkar and Azhar Uddin of The Daily Prothom Alo were injured while performing their professional duties.

BFUJ President Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and DUJ President Altaf Mahmud and General Secretary Omor Farook in the statement also condemned attack on vehicles of several television channels in different places of the country.

The journalists are neither friend nor foe to anyone, said the leaders, adding that the journalist society would not sit idle if they were hindered to perform their professional duties.

Tougher US immigration leads to 'reverse brain-drain'

AFP, Washington

The huge backlog in US immigration visas is leading to a "reverse brain-drain" that will force skilled workers to return to their home country, a report released yesterday concludes.

The study by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation found that more than one million potential immigrants, including scientists, engineers, doctors and researchers, are competing for 120,000 permanent US resident visas each year.

The report said some applicants must wait several years, in part because the number of employment visas issued to immigrants from any single country is fewer than 10,000 per year.

"The United States benefits from having foreign-born innovators create their ideas in this country," said Vivek Wadhwa, a Harvard Law School fellow and co-author of the report.

"Their departures would be detrimental to US economic well-being."

The study by researchers at Duke, New York and Harvard universities is the third in a series of studies focusing on immigrants' contributions to the US economy.

In this study, "Intellectual Property, the Immigration Backlog, and a Reverse Brain-Drain," the researchers concluded that the number of skilled workers waiting for visas is significantly larger than the number that can be admitted to the United States.

Business suffers

FROM PAGE 1

shutters closed.

Very poor transactions at all private and government commercial banks were witnessed when rumour-struck general public were seen on the city roads rushing to safety.

A high official of a leading private bank said very few monetary transactions, withdrawals or deposits, took place at most branches of his bank.