

550 HIV-POSITIVE PATIENTS IN COUNTRY

Take steps right now to deter HIV spread in epidemic form

Experts tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At present the number of HIV-positive patients in the country is around 550, said the speakers at a scientific seminar here yesterday.

They said although this figure is not that much alarming, the country should take best possible precautionary measures right now to deter the spread of HIV in epidemic form.

The seminar titled 'Update of Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (Haart) in the Clinical Care of Aids-Bangladesh Perspective' was organised by the Department of Dermatology and STDs of Chittagong Medical College and Hospital (CMCH) at a local hotel.

Prof Dr Gofranul Haque, dean of the faculty of medicine at CMCH, chaired the seminar, sponsored by Square Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

Chittagong Medical College (CMC) Principal Dr MA Wahab Chowdhury attended the seminar as chief guest while CMCH Director Brig Gen Md Abedur Rahman as special guest.

Prof Dr AQM Serajul Islam, noted HIV/Aids specialist and head of the CMCH Dermatology and STDs Department, presented the keynote paper.

Square Executive Kazi Shamim Al Mamun made a brief presentation on some recent drugs and the application of their dosage.

Brig Gen Abedur said self-protection is the key to help check

the disease.

He urged all concerned to follow the PCS (prevention, care and support) Formula and spread mass awareness campaign across the country.

"Because of high moral ethics, impact of religion and strong social and family bond, we are fortunate enough that the number of HIV/Aids patients here still is less than apprehension, although the contributing factors to the fatal disease have relatively been very high in Bangladesh," said Principal Wahab Chowdhury.

Prof Serajul in his paper said the recent introduction of anti-retroviral therapy (ART) has reduced HIV/Aids morbidity and mortality by 60 to 90 percent and

improved the quality and duration of life of the patients concerned.

"But the high cost of the therapy is the major constraint in the treatment of HIV/Aids patient in Bangladesh," he said, adding that only 13 lakh people around the world are currently receiving ART while a total of 70 lakh are estimated to require the therapy right now.

Prof Serajul recommended that ARV (anti-retroviral) drugs should be included in the essential drug list and be provided free of cost to each and every one who requires it.

He also called for setting up viral load testing facilities in Dhaka, and training for HIV clinical care and management personnel.



PHOTO: STAR
The road in front of makeshift Bashbari BDR Market at Mohammadpur lies in the most dilapidated condition although the authorities concerned have turned a blind eye. The picture was taken yesterday.

Britain's Brown denies rift with US over Iraq

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown denied yesterday any strategic differences with the United States over Iraq, a day after British troops withdrew from Basra city while US forces are surging in Baghdad.

Government administrators in four affected districts -- 500 kilometres (310 miles) southwest of impoverished Orissa state's capital Bhubaneswar -- supplied the toll, disputed by opposition parties and aid workers.

The health control room in Bhubaneswar set up to monitor the outbreak of the disease said more than 5,000 people were being treated for cholera and dysentery, according to a government spokesman.

But representatives of ActionAid in Orissa challenged the figures put out by the government, saying the death toll was closer to 250, while state opposition parties put it at almost 500.

"Our policy is exactly the same -- to make it possible for the Iraqi people to be responsible for their own security," he told his monthly press conference in London.

The comments came after Britain's remaining forces in Basra Palace in the centre of the southern port city withdrew overnight Sunday to join others at a nearby airbase.

At the same time, US President George W Bush made a surprise visit to the war-scarred country, to take stock of a "surge" in US troops designed to clamp down on militants notably in and around Baghdad.

Brown said Britain and the US face different challenges in different parts of the country. "Both of us wish to see a situation where the security of the different provinces of Iraq is taken over by the Iraqis themselves," he said.

"We've always recognised that this would happen at different stages, that this would happen first in some provinces, but be delayed in others. And we've always recognised the particular nature of Baghdad," he added.

"The process and the aims are exactly the same, that the Iraqis

can take over security for their own country."

The British leader, who succeeded Tony Blair in June, also insisted that London would consult its allies in any further decisions on withdrawing troops from Iraq.

"What we have done is move from Basra Palace to Basra Air

Station in a pre-planned exercise. We will have to make a further decision when the time is right as to whether we move from combat to overwatch as a whole.

"That will be a decision that will be made in concert with our allies and of course in concert with the Iraqi government," he said.



Mike Cowell, managing director of Lafarge Surma Cement, hands over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to executive director of ICDDR,B Dr Alejandro Cravioto recently as part of the company's effort to help the flood victims at ICDDR,B office in the city. Employees and the company together contributed to the donation fund.



A team of Women Entrepreneurs Association of Bangladesh (WEAB) led by vice presidents Naz Farhana Ahmed and Sajeda Minhaz Mukul has distributed relief among the flood-affected people at Shipahibagh in the city on September 2. They have distributed relief among 100 families.

2 Afghan aid workers kidnapped

AFP, Kabul

Unidentified gunmen kidnapped two Afghan aid workers contracted to a development ministry, the government said yesterday as the Taliban vowed more abductions following the just-ended South Korean saga.

The aid workers from a local non-governmental organisation contracted by the Ministry of Rural Development and Rehabilitation were snatched on Monday in the western province of Nimroz, the ministry said in a statement.

The two men were picked up while consulting with local community leaders about public welfare projects, the ministry said.

The latest abductions come as a Taliban spokesman said the extremist militia would continue abducting foreign nationals after the recent kidnapping of 23 South Koreans proved an effective tool in its fight against the government.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the latest abductions.

Bush in Australia

AFP, Sydney

Fresh from a surprise trip to Iraq, US President George W Bush arrived in Australia late Tuesday for an Asia-Pacific summit and a series of one-on-one meetings with world leaders.

Bush's official Air Force One airplane touched down on a rainy tarmac here at about 10:20 pm (1200 GMT) after an unannounced stop in the war-torn country's restive Anbar province to defend his handling of the conflict.

The US president was to meet today with Australian Prime Minister John Howard, a close ally on the war in Iraq, ahead of next week's White House progress report on progress in restoring security and forging unity in Iraq.

Bush was also scheduled to hold talks Thursday with Australian opposition leader Kevin Rudd, who has said he will pull Australian troops from Iraq by mid-2008 if elected prime minister.

Japanese nuclear plant reports minor leak

AFP, Tokyo

A Japanese electric power firm said yesterday that a small amount of water containing radioactive material had leaked from a nuclear plant, amid rising public concern about the country's nuclear industry.

Kansai Electric Power, Japan's third largest power company, said the leak at the light water reactor in Fukui prefecture in western Japan was discovered late Monday.

The radioactive material that leaked outside was estimated to be less than one two-millionth of that permissible for discharge every year, a company statement said.

Monitors placed outside of the facility did not detect any impact to the environment, the company said.

The company plans to stop the reactor for an inspection, it said.

Japan, which has virtually no natural energy resources, relies on nuclear power for about one-third of its power needs.

Japanese consumers are especially sensitive to mishaps at nuclear power plants after a series of scandals involving officials hiding accidents and radioactive leaks.

Schoolgirl, traffic police killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

A schoolgirl and an on-duty traffic police were killed and two truck helpers were injured in separate road accidents in Thakurgaon, Sathkhira and Rajshahi in the last two days.

Our Correspondent in Dinajpur reports: A schoolgirl was killed in a road accident at Sarkerpara in Thakurgaon yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Pinky, 11, daughter of Md Abdul Zabbar and a class VI student of Thakurgaon Government Girls' High School.

Sources said the accident occurred when a stone-laden truck hit the rickshaw she was travelling in from behind while she was returning home after attending her private tutor.

Locals rushed her to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital where Pinky succumbed to her injuries.

Our Correspondent in Sathkhira adds: An on-duty traffic police constable was killed in a road accident on Sathkhira-Jessore road in front of

Police seized the truck and arrested its helper Zahangir Alam.

Soon after the incident, Sathkhira Police Super (SP) Mirza Abdullah Bakri visited the spot.

Our RU Correspondent adds: Two truck helpers were injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Rajshahi highway at Talaimari area in Rajshahi on Monday.

They were identified as Sairul, 25, and Ismail, 22.

Police said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound truck collided head-on with another truck.

Mother police seized the trucks.

Islamic militants released four Pakistani soldiers yesterday, nearly two months after they were abducted from a lawless tribal region bordering Afghanistan, officials said.

The four paramilitary troops were kidnapped on July 6 from the semi-autonomous Bajaur district, a known stronghold of Al-Qaeda and Taliban rebels.

"The local Taliban agreed to free the four militiamen after the authorities released their colleague," Bajaur administration chief Mohammad Jamil told reporters, adding that the release had been negotiated by tribal elders.

The army is still trying to secure the safety of more than 150 soldiers whom militants say they abducted late last week in South Waziristan, another tribal area near the Afghan border.

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Jamaica's first woman premier ousted in close election

AFP, Montego Bay

Jamaica's first woman premier, Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller, has refused to concede defeat after officials said the main opposition Jamaican Labour Party won a close vote.

The JLP won 31 out of 60 parliament seats in Monday's election, against 29 for her People's National Party (PNP), electoral officials said.

"However perplexing some may find the results, the fact is that the people have spoken," said JLP leader Bruce Golding.

"As of now, we're conceding no victory to the Jamaica Labour Party," the prime minister told supporters at party headquarters late Monday.

"There are a number of seats that the People's National Party will be taking action (over) and we have to complete the final count (Tuesday), and we will be watching closely the count."

Sporadic violence marred the vote which also went ahead amid a tropical storm warning as Hurricane Felix passed by.

Simpson Miller said the PNP would call for recounts and that at least three PNP candidates would file legal challenges accusing their rivals of being ineligible because they hold dual US-Jamaican citizenship.



Visitors admire the pictures on display at an exhibition titled 'Drawings and images of the architectural heritage of Shakhari Bazaar and 7 Kotwali Mohalla in Puran Dhaka' at Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday. The exhibition will remain open till September 7 from 11:00am to 7:00pm.