

HIV spreads in concentrated epidemic form among IDUs

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though HIV prevalence is less than one percent in the country, it has already spread as a concentrated epidemic form among the injection drug users (IDUs), said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said it is a must to increase awareness along with behavioural change and promote the use of condom among the adults as part of AIDS prevention.

The roundtable titled 'Vulnerability of AIDS and safe relationship' was organised jointly by the Prothom Alo and UNFPA at Biam auditorium in the city.

Terming the IDUs as most vulnerable group, Rebeka Sultana of UNFPA said around 57 percent of drug users have relationship with sex workers, who attend around 40 others in a week.

So they pose immense threat to spreading AIDS, she said.

Besides, as it has been found that some 42 percent of the IDUs are married, there is also the possibility of transmitting the disease to their wives, she added.

Rebeka said as sexual intercourse is the main route of HIV

transmission in South Asia, use of condom should be increased in the country.

A study has revealed that 80 percent of AIDS infection takes place through sexual intercourse, she added.

"Though the demand for condom has increased, the supply is not at all adequate," said Julia Ahmed of Women's Health Coalition, adding that AIDS programme started in the country long time ago, but lack of sustainable leadership and ensuring enough condom to vulnerable groups hinders the advancement of the programme.

The speakers stressed the need for female condom as it can act as one of the tools of their empowerment and women can take their sexual decision by using it.

However, it needs reduction of the cost of female condom and capacity building of women before using it.

HIV/AIDS is also a health and socio economic issue and as such social steps to combat the disease need to be strengthened, said Sultana Kamal, former adviser to caretaker government, adding that raising awareness, supply of con-

doms and women's empowerment is also equally important in this regard.

"It needs coordinated efforts among the government and non-government organisations," she added.

While moderating the roundtable, Joint Editor of the Prothom Alo Abdul Quayum said there are around 11,000 AIDS patients in the country.

From this it can be assumed that the actual number of patient is far more than that as a large number of people do not expose it, he added.

"This also increases the chance of spreading the disease as other people cannot take any precautionary measures," said Quayum.

Director General of Health Services Dr Shahjahan Biswas, representatives of UNFPA and other non-government organisations and law enforcers shared their experiences and made recommendations at the roundtable.

The donors handed over cheques for the money to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office, as his caretaker government continued sending out assistance for the flood-affected people.

Those who donated money included Pubali Bank Tk 50 lakh, China Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh Tk 31.90 lakh, Commercial Bank of Ceylon Ltd Tk 15 lakh, National Bank Ltd Tk 25 lakh, Bangladesh Medical Association of North America, an organisation of

Bangladeshi physicians living in America, 15,000 US dollar, United Airways (BD) Ltd Tk 10 lakh, Bangladesh Tea Association Tk 5 lakh, National Life Insurance Co Ltd Tk 20 lakh, American Life Insurance Co Ltd Tk 5 lakh, Dhaka Commerce College Tk 5 lakh, Dutch Bangla Chamber of Commerce and Industry Tk 1.75 lakh, Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (BIAM) Foundation Tk 36,597.

Islampur Cloth Trader Association donated Tk 8.25 lakh, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh Tk 5 lakh, Birsreshtha Munshi Abdur Rouf Rifles' College Tk 36,715, Kazi Golam Mahbub Foundation Trust Tk 11 lakh, Bangladeshi expatriate in Kuwait Ejaiur Rahman

Junun Tk 30,000, Eastern Tower Flat Owner Cooperative Association Tk 28,205, Johora Khatun Shisu Vidya Niketon, Khulna Tk 20,000, Darlant International School and College, Mirpur, Dhaka, Tk 20,839 and Inhabitants of Oxygen area in Chittagong Tk 24,520.

The chief adviser thanked all for their humanitarian contribution in aid of the flood-hit people of the country.

Pak helicopter attack kills two

AFP, Miranshah

hosted in his honour by the Bangladesh Charge de Affaires of Bangladesh Rezina Ahmed at the Bangladesh House.

The Adviser explained the current developments of Bangladesh to expatriate Bangladeshis residing in Moscow, and encouraged them to invest in Bangladesh with the possibilities of high return now and better than ever. "Our expatriates are a major source of our economic growth and progress," he said.

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Most Lebanese killed by Israeli attacks

AFP, Jerusalem

Indiscriminate Israeli attacks caused the vast majority of deaths among Lebanese civilians in last summer's war with the Shia Hezbollah, the US-based Human Right Watch said in a report yesterday.

The group's research found that more than 1,100 Lebanese died in the conflict, most of them civilians. The Lebanese government puts the figure at over 1,200, many of them children.

The adviser attended a reception

Speakers at a roundtable titled 'Vulnerability of AIDS and safe relationship' at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday. Sitting from left are Afsana Taher, Director General of Health Services Dr Shahjahan Biswas, former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal and Dr Julia Ahmed. The Prothom Alo and UNFPA jointly organised the roundtable.

172 Chinese miners dead in mining disaster

AFP, Beijing

The 172 miners trapped in a flooded mine in eastern China nearly three weeks ago were pronounced dead yesterday as officials cited bad management as a main cause of the tragedy, state press said.

The miners "will not return alive," Xinhua news agency quoted a statement from the Shandong provincial government as saying.

Heavy rains caused a nearby river to burst its banks on August 18, flooding the coal mine. An extensive rescue operation has focused on pumping the water from the pit, but none of the missing have been found.

Although officials had previously insisted the tragedy was simply a natural disaster, State Administration of Work Safety chief Li Yizhong said this week that poor planning and inadequate safety procedures were also to blame.

Greens protest Indian Ocean wargames

AFP, Port Blair

Environment groups in this Indian Ocean archipelago yesterday strongly condemned massive wargames in the region, saying the exercise would shatter its fragile ecology.

The protests came as manoeuvres involving more than 30 warships from the US, Australia, Japan, Singapore and India shifted into high gear, moving from the Bay of Bengal towards the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.

The exercise was centred 300 kilometres (180 miles) from the Andamanese capital of Port Blair, where activists said the proximity of the nuclear-powered vessels could damage the archipelago's fragile ecology.

"Our very own Indian navy is constantly infringing into the fragile zone for exercises," said Samir Acharya, who heads the Society of Andaman and Nicobar Ecology.

"This time the only difference is that five countries are involved," he said as Vice Admiral Doug Crowder, commander of the US Navy's Seventh Fleet, flew to Port Blair on Thursday to oversee the wargames.

Thirty-eight of the palm-fringed archipelago's 321 islands are inhabited and its pristine waters contain some of the world's most breathtaking coral reefs and marine life -- including hundreds of endangered species.

Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over the country's all six divisions in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy falls are also likely at places over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

It said that day temperature may rise by 1-2 degree Celsius over the country.

Highest temperature 32.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Chittagong and lowest 24.0 degree Celsius at Rangpur, Sayeedpur and Majidee Court.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:11pm today and rises at 5:42am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity		
	in celsius	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.2	25.2	87	90	
Chittagong	26.6	25.0	95	97	
Rajshahi	28.3	25.1	100	100	
Khulna	30.5	26.0	98	--	
Barisal	29.3	25.4	98	--	
Sylhet	27.2	25.2	98	91	
Cox's Bazar	28.0	24.5	100	100	

Bangladeshis among 53 illegal immigrants held in Greece

AFP, Komotini

Greek border guards on Wednesday arrested 53 illegal immigrants along the Turkish border as well as their alleged Pakistani smuggler, a police source said.

The illegal immigrants were aboard a tractor trailer after just having swum across the Evros river separating Greece from Turkey.

They allegedly paid 4,500 dollars (3,300 euros) to the smuggler, who was to bring them to Salonia, the source said. The immigrants included Kurds, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Iraqis and Palestinians.

From this it can be assumed that the actual number of patient is far more than that as a large number of people do not expose it, he added.

"This also increases the chance of spreading the disease as other people cannot take any precautionary measures," said Quayum.

Director General of Health Services Dr Shahjahan Biswas, representatives of UNFPA and other non-government organisations and law enforcers shared their experiences and made recommendations at the roundtable.



Adviser for Industries Geetara Safiya Choudhury presides over an inter-ministerial meeting at secretariat in the city yesterday.

UK reiterates support to caretaker govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British Minister for Asia, Africa and the UN Marc Malloch-Brown reiterated the British support for the caretaker government's plans and programmes during a meeting with Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury in London yesterday.

They also discussed issues related to climate change on which Bangladesh and the UK are working closely together, and touched on a number of international and bilateral issues.

At the meeting held at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Malloch-Brown expressed his 'understanding, empathy and support' for the caretaker government's plans and programmes, said a foreign ministry press release.

"It was a constructive meeting. The UK reiterates its continued support to the caretaker government of Bangladesh," said Malloch-Brown after the meeting.

Iftekhar said, "On a personal note it was wonderful to be able to see Lord Marc Malloch-Brown in his new responsibility as Prime Minister Gordon Brown's team."

"I had known him well when he served with the United Nations in New York, and I have always admired his keen interest on development issues. He appreciates our achievements in this field. I see him as a good friend of Bangladesh," he said.

Iftekhar stopped off in London on his way back home from an official visit to Russia.

Govt turns down plea to cut taxes on oil import

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday turned down a plea for further cuts in taxes on import of edible oil due to complexities in legal procedure and lack of commitment from the importers to reducing the price at consumer level.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam rejected the request from the leaders of Bangladesh Edible Oil Association who met him at the Finance Ministry conference room. Commerce Secretary Firoz Ahmed and NBR Chairman Badur Rahman were also present.

"The meeting ended inconclusively," the adviser told reporters after the meeting, adding that it would require amendment to the existing law, which is time consuming.

Even then, the government would have considered a further cut in taxes, if there had been any commitment from the importers that the prices would come down, he said.

The finance adviser also referred

to the previous experience when the government permitted import of edible oil at the rate of zero percent customs duty, but the price did not come down.

The importers sought a further cut in VAT and advance income tax, presently applicable at import stage, on some 150,000 tons of edible oil already imported and kept under bond.

"There are enough stocks for the month of Ramadan," association President A Rouf Chowdhury told reporters after the meeting, explaining the need for the tax cuts to release the imported oil at reduced cost.

Replying to a question, he said the importers are selling soybean oil at Tk 73 to 74 per litre at the mill gates, but they do not have control over around 200,000 retailers across the country.

He also said there would be no shortage of supply of edible oil during Ramadan, but problems could arise after Ramadan unless the tax is reduced.

DHAKA TODAY

BELTA Conference

The 4th BELTA International Conference with the theme 'The ELT Profession: Challenges and Prospects' will begin. Venue: Bangladesh Institute of Administration and Management (Biam). Time: 9:00am.

Roundtable

Sakkhar Education and Research Foundation organises a roundtable titled 'Literacy movement: Successes and distresses'. Venue: Little Bird Kindergarten, 77 South Muddapara. Time: 3:00pm.

Cultural programme

HANS organises a cultural programme in participation of a number of autistic children. Venue: LGED auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.

UNFPA Prize giving ceremony

UNFPA will give away prizes among the winners of its Poster Contests held in 2005 and 2006. Venue: Jatiya Mahila Sangstha. Time: 5:30pm.

Network meeting

The 2nd Regional Network Meeting of International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience will begin. Venue: CIRDAP auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.

Roundtable

SHEBA Bangladesh Foundation organises a roundtable titled 'Education: students and anticipations'. Venue: Bangladesh Press Institute (BPI). Time: 9:30am.

Assessment

Bangladesh Dalit's Human Rights will accord a reception to the children of the dalit community. Venue: WVA auditorium. Time: 10:30am.

Prize giving ceremony

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra will give away prizes among the winners of a book reading campaign for the students of class XI. Venue: Kendra auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

Fashion show

The award giving ceremony of Bexifabrics Anyadil Eid Fashion Contest will be