

INT'L CONFERENCE ON CANCER

Provide healthcare service at affordable cost: Dr Yunus

BSS, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus has called on physicians to inform the common people of affordable and cost-effective cancer treatment.

"Our focus should be on how to provide healthcare services at an affordable cost so that poor people can have better oncology treatment in the country, instead of going abroad," he said at the opening session of an International Socio-scientific Conference on 'Cancer (clinical oncology) for Saarc Region' in the city on Friday.

"Cancer can now be treated as people have been introduced to information and biotechnologies. The country requires a lot of money

to have modern equipment and trained physicians to combat the disease," said Dr Yunus.

The health sector should be considered as a social sector, instead of personal business, so that the large section of poor people can get medicine at a cheaper price for cancer treatment, he added.

Health and Family Welfare Adviser Dr AMM Shawkat Ali attended the conference as the chief guest while Health Secretary AKM Zafarullah Khan was the guest of honour. Prof ABMF Karim of Vrije University in Amsterdam, who is also the chairman of Oncology Club, gave a speech on the theme of the conference.

The Oncology Club and the Federation of Anti-Cancer Activists of

Bangladesh (FACAB) organised the four-day conference. Prof AK Azad Khan, president of the Bangladesh Diabetic Association, presided over the opening session while Prof Dr MA Hai, director of Bangladesh Cancer Hospital and Welfare Home, gave a welcome speech.

Dr MS Chowdhury, Dr BR Dey, Dr R Love and Dr H Arastu of the USA, Dr D Brandis, Dr A Matolsky and Dr GA Zakaria of Europe, Dr P Dev of Australia, Dr TH Chong of Singapore and Dr S Issarachai of Bangkok spoke as designated discussants.

He also underscored the need to carry out more researches and organise skill-development trainings for physicians.

Zafarullah Khan said about six

million US dollars are spent every year on the treatment of cancer patients in the country.

The government has given special emphasis on making the oncology treatment affordable, he said, adding that a modern cancer hospital and a nursing institute are being set up to provide better health services for all.

Prof ABMF Karim said modern medical radiation machines are being purchased, which will help minimise the oncology treatment cost.

He suggested setting up a comprehensive cancer centre of excellence at all medical universities to provide multidimensional cancer treatment. Various types of cancer could be prevented if they are detected at the early stage, he added.

End culture of secrecy

Speakers tell roundtable on RTI ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called for ending the culture of secrecy and introducing e-governance in order to get the most benefit from the right to information law after its enactment.

Stressing the need for more discussions with grassroots people on the draft of Right to Information (RTI) Ordinance 2008, they urged the government to extend the deadline for public opinion on the draft, which ends today.

They also called on the government to bring several changes to the draft ordinance, especially the section on exemption from disclosure, to ensure maximum disclosure of information.

Several speakers also suggested bringing only the government offices and the organisations receiving public funds under the jurisdiction of the law.

Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) organised the roundtable at the National Press Club to collect public opinion on the draft. Syed Abul Moksd moderated it.

Reacting to an opinion that the law has brought the entire private sector under its umbrella, Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said NGOs and businessmen work in public space and receive direct or indirect assistance from the government. "We have the right to information about them."

He also said the draft did not

clearly define the issues regarding the structure of the information commission, funding and offices. The law will be rendered toothless if Article 8 (article on exemption) makes no specific instances, he added.

Prof Muzaffer stressed the need for a civil society organisation that will explain to people the implication of court judgment and orders. "Only having information is not knowledge; so it does not empower people. People need to understand them for their application."

Criticising the formation of the selection committee for the information commission with bureaucrats, human rights activist Hameeda Hossain demanded inclusion of representatives from other fields.

"Preamble of the draft identifies the right to information merely as a constitutional right, not a fundamental right," said Badiul Alam Majumder, Shujan secretary, in his keynote paper.

He said all information can be suppressed by citing threats to 'national security' and 'public interest'. So, there should be specific instances which information, if disclosed, can harm national security, he added.

He also demanded that the provision of exemption from disclosure for the reasons of public interest be deleted "since the law is advocating disclosure for public interest".

He called on the government to consider not charging the people

living below poverty line any fees for seeking information.

Badiul Alam also proposed incorporating into the draft a provision for arbitration council at every office, which will deal with the appeals from an information seeker before he approaches the information commission.

"Representatives of the organisation concerned, citizens and professionals may be included in the council," he said, adding that such council would lessen the pressure on the information commission.

He also proposed that the authorities who would deny the people access to information should go to the information commission to explain the reasons for his action.

Awami League leader Suranjit Sengupta called on the government and the NGOs working on this issue to include the political parties in the process "since they will have to approve the law in parliament".

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam demanded that the information commission be set up before enactment of the law.

Former ambassador Waliur Rahman called for a provision for disclosure of information about defence procurement.

Editor of the Bhorer Kagoj Shyamal Dutta demanded reduction in the time limit for disclosure of information to the mass media.

AL calls for saving river water from pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday called for saving the river water from pollution.

It also called for recovering all water bodies that are illegally occupied by land grabbers.

The call came at a meeting of the forest and environment sub-committee of AL at its Dhanmondi office in the city.

Presided over by Dr Hasan Mahmud, secretary of environmental affairs, the meeting was addressed by Dr Hossein Mansur, Akhter Hossein, Shahin Manowara Haq, Sujit Roy Nandi and Syed Kamrul Hassan.

The meeting also prepared a 10-point recommendation that included regular dredging of rivers and installation of water treatment plant in all industries to save water from pollution.

Obituary

Abu Sufian, Jatiya Party president member, president of Jatiya Sramik Party and executive director of Bhuiyan Group, passed away due to cancer on Friday at the age of 65, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two daughters and a son to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza was held at Hatirpool Jame Mosque yesterday. Many Jatiya Party leaders attended the janaza.

His was buried at his village home at Chhatkhil in Noakhali. Former president and former chairman of Jatiya Party HM Ershad expressed shock at his death.

Jatiya Party Acting President Barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud and Secretary General ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader also expressed deep shock at his death.

AKM Anisur Rahman

AKM Anisur Rahman, former chief engineer of the Water Development Board, passed away due to diabetes and kidney complications at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 66, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three daughters, two sons and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He was buried at his village home in Rangpur.

Death anniversary

Today is the 2nd death anniversary of Anwara Begum, wife of Mizanur Rahman Bachchu, a leader of Narayanjan district Awami League, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil will be held at the village home of Mizanur Rahman and at her father's residence in Narayanjan town.

Syeda Afifa Fatima

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The third death anniversary of Syeda Afifa Fatima, wife of engineer Mirza Tariqul Husain, was observed yesterday, says a press release.

On the occasion, a doa and milad mahfil and distribution of food at an orphanage were arranged.

Fatima donated a piece of valuable land at Shantibagh in Dhaka to Wasa to set up water pumps to resolve the water crisis in Shantibagh, Malibagh and Shahjahanpura areas.

She passed away in 2005 at the age of 49.



Ashekane Maizbhandari Association takes out a procession in the city on Friday on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi. (Story on Page 1)

Construct barrage on Gorai to protect southwestern region

Experts urge govt at BBC Bangladesh Sanglap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Experts at a dialogue here yesterday urged the government to take immediate steps to construct a barrage on the river Gorai to protect environment and livelihoods in southwestern region of the country.

They observed that poverty is increasing in the region day by day as

agriculture and fisheries have been badly affected, and people have already begun migrating to other areas due to bad effect of Farakka Barrage of India.

Under the banner of BBC Bangladesh Sanglap, the special dialogue titled 'Farakka and Environment' was held at Renwick Embankment in Kushtia town.

"We need to construct a barrage on the river Gorai immediately to protect the region and its people," said former member of Joint River Commission (JRC) Touhidul Anwar Khan.

The barrage will also help uniform distribution of water in different rivers across the southwestern region, he added.

Touhidul alleged that India has constructed barrages on almost all the rivers that flow over Bangladesh to divert their water.

"As a result our rivers are being dried up gradually," he said, adding that the future generation will face an eco-disaster if people from all walks of life do not raise their voice now for rational share of waters of the common rivers.

Editor of New Nation Mostafa Kamal Majumder, Coordinator of Padma-Gorai Area Water Partnership Dr Anwarul Karim and former Jatiya Party lawmaker Badruddoza Gama also took part in the sanglap as panelists.

BBC's guest presenter Gawhar

Nayeem Wahra, also convener of

Disaster Forum of Bangladesh,

moderated the sanglap organised by

BBC Bangladesh Service in conjunction

with the BBC World Service Trust.

Dr Karim said salinity has

increased alarmingly in the region

affecting agriculture, fisheries and

livelihoods.

Responding to a query, he said if the barrage is constructed the prevailing problems will be resolved to a great extent.

Mostafa Kamal said due to water crisis there is severe arsenic problems in the region.

Gama said pressure would have to be mounted on India for proper sharing of water.

"To press home our demand we will have to raise the issue in different international forums including the United Nations," he headed.

Freedom fighter Jalaluddin dies in road crash

UNB, Dhaka

Jalaluddin Ahmed, a valiant freedom fighter and former chairman of Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Central Command Council, and his car driver were killed in a road accident near Kachpur Bridge last night at the age of 58.

Police said a passenger bus hit the car of Jalaluddin at about 7:30pm while he was returning home from his office, leaving him and the car driver dead on the spot.

Jalaluddin, also general secretary of the Chittagong Samity in Dhaka, left behind his two daughters, one son and wife to mourn his death.

15 hurt as JCD factions clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 15 students were injured in clashes between rival factions of Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the BNP, at Jagannath University and Tejgaon College in the city yesterday.

Clashes at Jagannath University erupted at about 11:00am when JCD activists belonging to university student president Pervez Reza-led faction chased their rivals loyal to secretary general Anisul Haque Talukder Khokon in retaliation for their two activists having been beaten up by the Khokon group the previous day.

Witnesses said the Khokon group soon regrouped, leading to a 30-minute clash in which 10 Khokon supporters were injured. One of them, Kajal Devnath, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with multiple head injuries.

Police baton-charged the feuding factions to bring the situation under control and arrested a Parvez supporter. Additional police was deployed on the campus.

Meantime, JCD activists locked in clashes at Tejgaon College yesterday noon over sharing of money they pocketed through so-called 'admission trade'. Five students were injured in the incident.

Police arrested nine people in this connection.

Cracks in supply line disrupts gas supply in Noakhali, Laxmipur

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Gas supply in Noakhali and Laxmipur districts remained suspended for over six hours due to cracks developed in insulation joint of supply line at Senbagh in Noakhali yesterday.

Rezaul Reza, deputy manager of Noakhali local office of Bakhkrad Gas, said the pipe was cracked at a time between 3:00 am to 4:00am yesterday.

The cause of the crack could not be ascertained immediately, he said.

Bakhkrad Gas authorities completed the repairing work of the damaged pipeline at around 2:00pm yesterday.

The crack created a bang and hearing the bang Senbagh police inform the matter to the gas authorities.

114TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

Tributes paid to Masterda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tributes were paid to the memory of Masterda Surya Sen at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city yesterday on the occasion of his 114th birth anniversary.

Speaking on the occasion, leaders of Masterda Surya Sen Parishad urged the Dhaka City Corporation for naming one of the main roads in the capital after the name of the great revolutionary leader.

They demanded inclusion of the life of Surya Sen in textbooks and install his statue on the Dhaka University Campus.

Parishad President and veteran journalist Fayed Ahmed, General Secretary Advocate Subrata Chowdhury, Dr Shamsul Alam Sayeed and Kamruzzaman Nani were present on the occasion.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SANITATION 2008

'70pc of water, excreta-borne diseases can be prevented'

BSS, Dhaka

LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser M Anwarul Iqbal yesterday said it is possible to prevent 70 percent of water and excreta-borne diseases through practicing proper hand washing across the country.

Iqbal was addressing as the chief guest at the launching ceremony of the International Year of Sanitation 2008 and National Hand Washing Campaign on the World Water Day at a five star hotel in the city.

The adviser said, this year will stimulate the national sanitation campaign 'Sanitation for All by 2010' to a great extent.

He pointed out that lack of hygienic sanitation facilities is seriously affecting safe water supply, environment and the public health situation in the country. Without ensuring sustainable sanitation facilities it is impossible to prevent water and environment pollution.

In preventing water pollution and improving the public health situation this year's theme of the World Water Day 2008 'Sanitation' has been appropriate, the adviser noted.

"Sanitation does not mean merely installation of latrines at household level. Although hygienic

latrine installation is a prerequisite to ensure sanitation, yet the basic hygiene practices including hand washing practice are integral parts of sanitation," the adviser added.

Chaired by Local Government Secretary Shaikh Khurshid Alam, the ceremony was addressed by Paul Edwards of Unicef and Chris Austin of DFID as special guests. Andrew Trevett, environmental health adviser of WHO read out the speech of WHO Representative Duangvadee Sungkhobol.

4 of a family electrocuted

BSS, Comilla

Four of a family, including a child, were electrocuted on Friday at Zeroin village under Brahmanpara upazila in Comilla.

Locals said Lucky Akhtar, 5, daughter of Omar Farooq, was electrocuted when she came in contact with a torn live electric wire.

Omar Farooq, 32, his wife Feroza Begum, 30, and other family member Sofia Khatun, 50, embraced the same fate when they rushed to rescue Lucky.



No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 36.2 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Rajshahi and lowest 18.0 degrees Celsius at Sylhet.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:11pm today and rises at 5:59am 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	24.8	76	63
Chittagong	29.3	24.5	80	80
Rajshahi	36.2	23.6	77	69
Khulna	33.5	24.4	83	68
Barisal	33.0	24.4	81	67
Sylhet	27.0	18.0	84	67
Cox's Bazar	32.0	24.1	70	75

DHAKA TODAY

INSA roundtable

Imagine a New Southasia (INSA) organises a roundtable on national women policy 2008. Venue: Bangladesh Economic Association hall room. Time: 10:30am.

Seminar

Journalism and Media Studies department of Stamford University, Bangladesh organises a seminar on 'Prospect of cyber journalism in Bangladesh'. Venue: Kiaré Plaza, Dhanmondi. Time: 11:00am.

Roundtable

Progressive Teachers Students Guardians Forum organises a roundtable on structured question method and today's perspectives. Venue: Cirdap auditorium. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Department of International Relations of Dhaka University organises a seminar on issues of Bangladesh's maritime boundary and exploring oil and gas. Venue: RC Majumdar auditorium. Time: 4:00pm.

Dissemination session

Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) organises a dissemination session on lessons learned and best practices on early childhood care and development and quality education. Venue: LGED auditorium. Time: 9:30am.

Khaleda, Hasina not fit for Truth Commission

FROM PAGE 1

people will know about their corrupt practices through a legal process, if not the judicial process, he added.

Asked whether those corrupt would be forgiven by the truth commission, the CA said, "Yes, the idea is that they will be forgiven if they admit to having indulged in some kind of irregular corrupt practices of certain amount of money. But, as part of that process, there may be some kind of restrictions on their participation in political activities for a limited time."

Asked if the two 'Beggums' (Khaleda and Hasina) will also be pardoned if they go through the truth commission, the CA said the way thinking is going on is that if somebody is already arraigned and charge-sheeted and the judicial process has begun, they should go through the judicial process.

It is not only the two ex-premiers, he said, those who have crossed that some sort of threshold, they will not be eligible for appearing before the Truth Commission. "That's the thinking now, but it is not yet finalised."

Asked when the emergency will be lifted, the CA said, "We've not yet fixed the time. We will be looking at all options when and how the state of emergency will be lifted."

He said the state of emergency was declared to improve the law and order situation and bring the country back into normalcy. Now the law and order has improved a lot, and even though there is the emergency, it is not being enforced in that sense in many fields.

Citing an example, the head of the caretaker government said press is free ever since his government came to power. "We told the press that they can criticise the government and they have been doing that--and we benefit from those criticisms."

He said as normal activities have been going on and they will be going on, they will, in any case, make it possible for the election to take place. To ensure congenial atmosphere for election campaign, he said, there would be need to lift "some of the curbs on some of the activities up to the elections."

Asked whether the general election will be held by December this year, as promised, the CA said, "Absolutely, that is some kind of deadline. I have said this more than once and the elections will be held at the latest by December 2008."

He said the Election

Commission has also announced a roadmap detailing all priority activities and "I am absolutely committed and confident that the elections will be held according to the roadmap."

Asked whether Khaleda and Hasina would be able to lead active politics, the CA said it will depend on several factors. "At this point in time they have been arrested and facing trial in courts. So, judicial process will go on."

In this context, the CA noted that the judiciary is an independent institution and they will accept whatever decision comes from the judicial process. "It will depend on judicial process and outcome of the judicial process."

Asked whether the number of detained persons in Bangladesh is 250,000 as published in some British press, he straightaway denied, saying that the number is much lower. The total number of convicts and under-trial prisoners is around 75,000 to 80,000, and a handful of them have been detained under the Special Powers Act.

Asked about whereabouts of the two former premiers--Awami League President Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda--the CA said they are not under house arrest.

They were arrested and put in two special houses declared sub-jails by the government for under-trial prisoners.

Asked whether the level of corruption has gone down due to the ongoing anti-graft drive, the CA said corruption has started going down significantly, but it is very difficult to estimate what the current level of corruption is.

But, he said, a general impression is it has a positive impact not because of the people being brought to trial for corruption but the government is working on rules and regulations, making them simpler, clearer and transparent and a strategy to prevent the corruption.

Asked whether he has any intention to float a political party and run for a political office, the CA outright dismissed the idea. He said since he is heading a caretaker government, his first duty is to hold free, fair and credible elections first and carry out institutional reforms to ensure sustainable democracy in Bangladesh.

Asked what he will be doing after the elections, the CA, a former governor of Bangladesh Bank, said he has not yet thought about that but added that he would make himself available to serve the country.

Medicare for 1.35 lakh cops in a shambles

FROM PAGE 1

1, 1997 with the implementation deadline of June 30, 2005.

So far, 194 out of 574 staff members have already left the police hospitals for jobs at other hospitals and many other skilled staff are looking for similar opportunities, worsening the quality of services even further, the sources added.

Shortage of manpower is forcing the police hospitals to refuse providing inpatient care to the family members of the police personnel. The family members currently receive only outpatient services at these hospitals.

The workforce of the hospitals under the project consisted of 80 percent fresh recruits and 20 percent on deputation from Directorate of Health.

Contrary to the profile of the project, these staff members at the police hospitals are yet to receive confirmation of their permanent employment and their salaries are yet to be incorporated into the national revenue budget although the project has been completed a few years ago.

A meeting of the Ecne (Executive Committee of the National Economic Council) on December

31 last year even decided that the manpower of the project would be transferred into the revenue budget upon following existing rules and regulations.