

Protect religions from abuse

President tells international conference

UNB, Dhaka

President Zillur Rahman yesterday stressed the need for acquiring proper knowledge of religions of other communities alongside one's own for protecting the holy religions from abuse by vested quarters that is found openly at home and abroad nowadays.

"We know that every religion teaches people to love and talk about harmony," he said this while he was inaugurating a three-day International Conference on 'Inter-Religious and Inter-Cultural Dialogue' at Dhaka University.

Center for Inter-religious and cultural dialogue (CIID) of Dhaka University and Bangladesh National Commission for Unesco (BNCU) in cooperation with Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) regional office in Tehran jointly organised the conference at DU Senate Bhawan.

Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr AAMS Arefin Siddique presided over the inaugural session attended by State minister for Religious Affairs Adv M Shahjahan Miah. ISESCO Director Dr Abbas Sadri also attended the function as guest of honour.

The president said, "From the history we find that vested quarters have used religions in their own interest and this trend continues till today. Holy religions will have to be protected from such abuse, and for this reason, it needs to learn other religions alongside one's own."

Zillur said Bangladesh is the only country in the world where various religious festivals are officially observed by giving equal importance. "This country is recognised in the world as a land of communal harmony," he said.

He urged all to keep intact the inter-religion harmonious trend in the country. There is no alternative to holding

dialogues to save the world, he added.

"You know that nowadays the inter-religious and inter-cultural conflicts are destroying the peace and stability in various countries of the world," he told his audience from home and abroad.

He hoped that the delegates attending this international conference would be able to play important role in removing the inter-religious misunderstandings through providing proper guidelines.

Appreciating the overseas delegates' gestures, Zillur mentioned that Bangladesh is a land of excellent communal harmony where people of different faiths have performed their respective religious and cultural rituals independently from time immemorial.

"Our government is committed to upholding the spirit of secularism in order to build a happy and prosperous Bangladesh," he said.



A worker erects a fence around occupied land at a ship-breaking yard at Sitakunda in Chittagong yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

PHOTO: STAR

'Total sanitation by 2013'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sanitation Month 2009 was inaugurated yesterday as part of the government target of bringing the entire country under total sanitation coverage by 2013, providing healthy latrine to each family in order to ensure healthy life for all.

The month-long programme was inaugurated by State Minister for LGED and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak at Osmani Memorial Hall in the city with a special target of integrating hard-to-reach people into the agenda.

Nanak said the initiative of observing sanitation month was taken to evaluate the current situation and to plan for the next year. A number of programmes would be conducted to create awareness of sanitation in the country to further achieve the target.

Special attention would be

given to the hard-to-reach people of the country, because they are still left out, especially the people living in the char and hill areas and the slum dwellers in the urban area, he said.

According to a government statistics, about 80 percent people of the country have been included under the sanitation programme by June 2009. The ratio was 33 percent in 2003. In the urban area, the number is 85 percent.

The minister said the ruling government has increased budgetary allocation for sanitation. Every urban parishad received Tk 2 lakh while municipality received Tk 5 lakh to carry on the task. The target is to include the left-out people.

He further said the government alone cannot complete the task and called on the country's development partners, private development

organisations and local government bodies to work together with the government in implementing the objectives of the national sanitation programmes.

State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Mujibur Rahman Fakir said around 70 percent diseases in the country are water-borne like diarrhoea. Every year, around 1.25 lakh children under five die of various water-borne diseases in Bangladesh due to lack of sanitation.

It is the shared responsibility of all to help achieve the target, he mentioned.

State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud, Additional Secretary of Local Government Division Syed Mahub Hasan and Chief Engineer of Public Health and Engineering Department Md Nuruzzaman also spoke.

Koch people condemn death threat to Prof Mesbah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The indigenous Koch people of five districts yesterday strongly condemned the death threat to Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon.

Terming him a great friend of the oppressed indigenous people in the country, they demanded immediate arrest of the culprits and their punishment.

Around 500 indigenous Koch people, including women and children, from 12 upazilas of Tangail, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Mymensingh and Gazipur demonstrated at Joradighi Technical and Agriculture College at Sagardighi under Ghatail and held a protest rally.

Bangladesh Koch Adivasi Sangathan organised the rally with its President Ramesh Koch in the chair.

Majharul Islam, office and communications secretary of the organisation, Sushil Koch, general secretary of Bangladesh Koch Adivasi Sangathan, its Ghatail upazila unit General Secretary Shukhen Koch and Sakhipur upazila unit General Secretary Nikhil Koch spoke.

Prof Mesbah, a teacher of History department at Dhaka University, received a death threat over his cellphone on October 4.

The caller threatened him, saying that he and his family members would be killed if he does not stop his activities in favour of the indigenous people, the leaders said.

IDUs WITH HIV

Stop needle sharing to halt spread of HIV

Experts say at nat'l workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Besides Dhaka, the HIV positive people among the injecting drug users (IDUs) have been found in six districts, but the intervention is limited to capital only, said the experts at a national workshop yesterday.

The two-day workshop titled 'Injecting Drug Users and Harm Reduction' has been organised by National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP) in association with the USAID and Family Health International (FHI) at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city.

The speakers said there are HIV positive people among the IDUs in Khulna, Ishwardi, Chapainawabganj, Narayanganj and Chandpur, but intervention has been stopped in those areas since the beginning of the year.

The IDUs are more prone to spread infection among others as the study has found that 90 percent of them share needles.

So, if the IDUs are not addressed properly, the infection would spread rapidly, the experts cautioned.

At some points of the capital the HIV has already turned into concentrated epidemic, they said, adding that HIV incidence among the IDUs in Dhaka jumped from 1.4 percent in 2001 to 7 percent in 2007, which is 11 percent in some points now.

They also highlighted lack of coordination, evaluation and monitoring in the programmes. Interventions and challenges of the programmes were also discussed at the workshop.

Some 15.9 million people inject drugs worldwide and in

South and South-East Asia it is 3.3 million.

One in 10 HIV infections globally are directly linked to injection drug use while in Asia it increases to one in three, experts said.

Speaking as chief guest at the inaugural session of the programme Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque stressed the need for strengthening comprehensive harm reduction programme.

"It might be disastrous if needle sharing could not be stopped," he said, adding that there are 46 lakh drug users in the country and of them 40 percent are young people.

Some 40,000 people are IDUs in the country of which 5,000 are in the capital, he added.

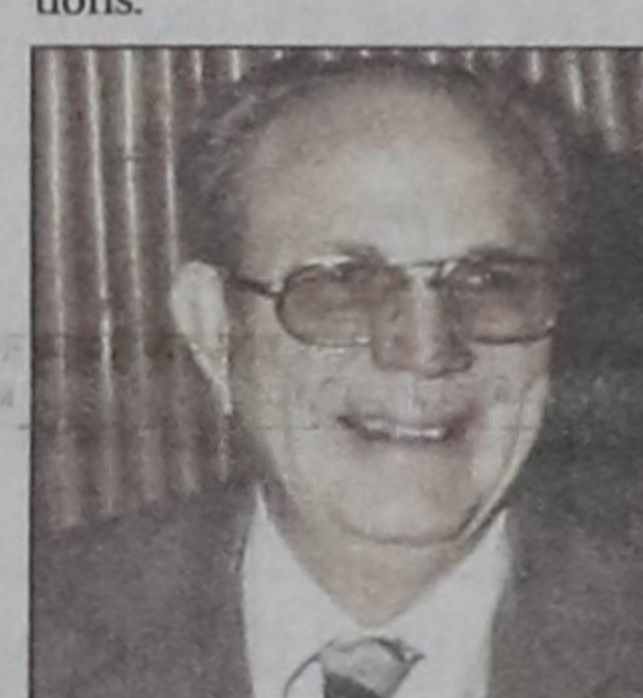
Director General of Health Services (DGHS) Prof Shah Monir Hossain admitted that the advancement in HIV/AIDS prevention programmes did not take place as it was expected.

While talking to the press Additional Director General of the narcotic control department Yousuf Ali said they lack adequate logistics to check narcotic crimes in the country.

Misti McDowell, country director of FHI Bangladesh, Kelland Stevenson, country director of Save the Children USA, Denise Rollins, USAID mission director, and Kazi Shahadat Hossain, line director of NASP, also spoke on the occasion.

Dr Tasnim Azim of ICDDR,B, Simon Baldwin of FHI, Rupali Shishir Banu of CARE, Shamim Rabbani of Padakkhep, Anup Kumar Bosu of Save the

Children presented papers on the IDU situation in the country, programmes taken up and the challenges and recommendations.



'Name road after Dr Garst'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a condolence meeting yesterday demanded the road in front of National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) be named after Dr RJ Garst, father of modern orthopaedic surgery.

Director of NITOR Prof Khandker Abdul Awal Rizvi presided over the meeting at the conference room of NITOR, says a press release.

Dr RJ Garst, a US citizen and also the founder of NITOR, passed away on August 15.

At the beginning of the meeting one minute's silence was observed to show respect to the departed soul of Dr Garst.

Prof Shamsuddin Ahmed, Prof Qazi Shahidul Alam, Dr Samanta Lal Sen, Prof Nurul Alam and Prof Amjad Hossain spoke on the occasion.

Danish support for CHT agri, food security

METRO DESK

The government of Denmark would provide Danish Kroner 20 million for the Agriculture and Food Security Project (AFSP) in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), says a press release.

To this effect, Danish Ambassador in Dhaka Einar Heiberg Jensen and Country Representative of UNDP Stefan Priesner yesterday signed an agreement on the Agriculture and Food Security Project (AFSP) in CHT.

Under the deal, the Embassy of Denmark will contribute the amount to the project.

The project is funded under Danida-supported Agriculture Sector Programme Support-II (ASPS-II) and implemented by UNDP through the 'Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the CHT Project' and is also an integral part of the Community Empowerment Programme (CEP).

The overall agreement regarding 'Promotion of Development and Confidence Building in the CHT Project' was signed between the government of Bangladesh and UNDP on September 27.

The purpose of AFSP is equal to the development objective of ASPs-II: Improved living conditions of poor marginal and small farmer households through enhanced, integrated and sustainable agricultural productivity.

Its primary target group is remote communities in CHT for improved and environmentally friendly upland farm practices of field crops, vegetables, fruits, spices, medical plants, livestock, agro-forestry, fisheries, etc through the farmer field school (FFS) concept and the implementation of small-scale development projects.



PHOTO: STAR

Shelly Manna, wife of late film star Manna, speaks at a press conference organised by Manna Foundation at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On her right is film director Chasi Nazrul Islam and on her left is Siam Iltimas.

SALEABLE PROJECTS (IN DHAKA CITY)

Gulshan PARK 2325-2648 sft	North Gulshan THE PALICAN 3730 sft	North Gulshan FATEMAZIZ 3517-3731 sft	Baridhara DOHS CASSIOPEIA 1144 & 1512 sft	Niketan Spring 1401-1707 sft	Niketan Island Up coming	Banani SIX 1524 sft	Banani Brasilia 1473 sft Ready for living	Banani blue moon Shops & Commercial Up coming
Uttara FLOWER 1238 & 1243 sft	Uttara Arcebah 1915 sft	Uttara LUMIERE 1728 sft	Nazimuddin Rd. Crystal Shops & Commercial	Nazimuddin Rd. PARK 1259 sft	Middle Badda Penance 1178-1627 sft	Wari Crimson 1221-1466 sft	Mirpur PEONENZA 1091-1286 sft	West Malibagh AZARO 1247-1269
Moghbar anz home HEIGHTS 1494 & 1569 sft								

SALEABLE PROJECTS (IN CHITTAGONG CITY)

Khulshi Hills R/A The Legend Sold-out	Khulshi Hills R/A Royal 2057-2125 sft	Nasirabad H/S Joy 2502 sft	Nasirabad H/S JUVENILE Sold-out	Nasirabad H/S Forest 1370-1619 sft	Nasirabad H/S Winter Sun 1506-1943 sft	Panchlaish R/A WIN 1496-2145 sft	Panchlaish R/A MOONLIGHT 2484-2672 sft	South Khulshi Alistar 1340-1768 sft
South Khulshi ROSE 1700-1708 sft	South Khulshi BLUE SHORE 1628-1687 sft	South Khulshi KINGS 1324-1634 sft						

Joy of Living...

1 sft = 0.092 sqm (approx.)

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