MPs pledge to sensitise people to fight HIV/AIDS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday expressed determination to act as "opinion leaders" to promote awareness of public about combating AIDS, a rising threat of Bangladesh.

Both treasury and opposition bench lawmakers also said they will actively work to eliminate stigma as well as discrimination associated with people with HIV positive.

Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali at the meeting assured both treasury and opposition bench lawmakers of holding talks if they raise the issue in parliament.

All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) and Peoples Empowerment Trust in association with Bangladesh Parliament organised the meeting at parliament members club to mark World AIDS Day to be observed tomorrow.

Presided over by the deputy leader, the meeting was addressed by Awami League (AL) lawmaker Meher Afroz Chumki, Whip Sagufta Yasmin Emily, AL lawmaker Dr Murad Hassan, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Iqbalur Rahim, Narayan Chandra Chanda, Ashma Zerin Jhumu, Shahin Monowara Haque, Begum Noor Afroz Ali, BNP lawmakers Mozahar Ali Pradhan, Shammi Akhter and Nilofar Chowdhury and Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafizuddin Ahmed.

The lawmakers, irrespective of their political identities, said they are ready to work to fight HIV/AIDS.

They called on the government to form a regulatory body to oversee the activities of NGOs working on HIV/AIDS.

Shawkat said lawmakers should play an active role in eradicating stigma in the society centring people with HIV positive.

"They [people with HIV positive] are the victims of circumstances but they are not to be despised," he added.

The deputy speaker urged the lawmakers to raise the issue in parliament so that the speaker of the house can hold discussion on the issue.

Murad said, "NGOs get a handsome amount of foreign grants but we don't know whether they expend those fund in a right way or not. Therefore, a regulatory body is an imperative to oversee their activities."

Iqbal urged the government not to scan only the homecoming expatriate Bangladeshi workers' health [whether they are HIV positive or not] in the airports, but also other passengers' health who stay abroad for work purpose.

AL-backed panel sweeps Juta election

UNB, *Savar*

The ruling Awami League (AL)-backed teachers' panel swept the election to the executive council of Jahangirnagar University Teachers' Association (Juta) held at the university club yesterday.

Out of 15 posts, the AL-backed panel won 14 posts, including the president and general secretary, while the BNP-backed nationalist teachers' panel won only one post of executive member.

Prof Abul Hossen of Physics department and Dr Arju Miah of Chemistry department were elected president and general secretary respectively.

Other office-bearers include Prof Abul Khayer of Botany, vice-president, Md Shamsul Alam of Geography and Environment, treasurer, Anwar Khasru Parvez of Microbiology, joint secretary.

Nine executive members from Awami League backed panel are: Nusrat Jahan Chowdhury of Public Administration, Md Ismail Hosain of Economics, Md Abdul Mannan Chowdhury of Physics, Prithila Naznin Nilima of Bangla, Md Khabir Uddin of Environmental Science, Md Lutfur Rahman of Drama and Dramatics, Md Moniruzzaman of English, Md Bakhtiar Rana of IBA, JU, Sukalyan Kumar Kundu of Pharmacy while Prof Dr Sohel Rana of Pharmacy from the nationalist teachers' panel.

PHOTO: PID

Recipients of free new textbooks pose for photograph with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her secretariat office in the city yesterday. The next academic session began with the inauguration of the free textbook distribution programme the same day. (Story on Page 16)

PHOTO: STAR

Comrade Khalequzzaman inaugurates the national convention of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal by releasing balloons at Dhaka Mohanagar Natya Mancha in the city yesterday.

Biman flights rescheduled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to end of Daylight Saving Time in Bangladesh (during winter season), departure and arrival timings of all Biman flights scheduled to depart from or arrive at Bangladesh after 2300 HRS BST (11:00pm BST) on and from December 31 will be one hour earlier than what is shown on the original schedule.

All concerned holding Biman tickets issued before December 27 are requested to note this change, said a press of Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday.

DEFAMATION CASE

Court summons Amar Desh editor, publisher, reporter Jan 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued summons upon daily Amar Desh acting editor Mahmudur Rahman, publisher Alhaj Md Hashmat Ali and reporter M Abdullah asking them to appear before it on January 10 next year in connection with a defamation case.

Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Emdadul Haque passed the order hours after advocate Abdul Malek alias Moshiur Malek, president of Bangabandhu Foundation, filed the case against them.

Malek filed the case with the court against the three for publishing false news on Prime Minister's son Sajeeb Wazed Joy and her energy adviser Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury on December 17.

In his complaint, Malek mentioned that the accused had run the news item with an intention to tarnish image of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her son Joy in the society. The news was false, fabricated and concocted and it hurt him.

The complainant also appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against the three for committing such offences.

2 SC judges retire today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Supreme Court judges -- Justice Md Joynul Abedin and Justice Md Abdul Aziz -- will go into retirement today.

There are a total of 11 posts of judges in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star that the government will appoint judges to the vacant posts after the court, now on annual vacation, reopen on January 3.

Call to strengthen ties with India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citizens Rights Movement, a civil society organisation, yesterday called on the government to take an initiative to strengthen relations with India and ensure security and peace in the South Asian region.

It also placed an 11-point recommendation, including signing of a 'free trade agreement' between Bangladesh and India for the development of economy and formation of bilateral and joint commissions with Saarc countries to combat terrorism in the region.

Secretary general of the organisation Tusar Rehman placed the recommendations while reading out a written statement at a discussion on 'The present government's duties in strengthening Bangladesh-India relationship, the prime minister's visit to India and our expectations' at the National Press Club.

He also urged the government to introduce proposed transit facilities involving Chittagong and Mongla seaports, northeast India, Nepal and Bhutan to boost the national economy.

Other recommendations include setting up of a memorial to Indian soldiers killed in the liberation war, and reconstruction of the Indira Mancha in the Shishu Park area at Shahbagh.

Speaking as the chief guest, Awami League presidium member Syed Yusuf Hossain Humayun said the contribution of India to the liberation war could never be forgotten.

"India had provided shelter and food to around one crore people of Bangladesh during the liberation war," he said.

He also hoped that the prime minister's upcoming visit to India would play an effective role in resolving various bilateral issues.

Former foreign secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed, Senior Vice-President of Citizens Rights Movement Mafizul Huq Sarker and engineer Sardar Amin also spoke at the meeting presided over by chief adviser to the Rights Movement Syed Margub Morshed.

Take steps for quick disposal of cases

President asks CJ

UNB, *Dhaka*

President Zillur Rahman yesterday urged the chief justice to take immediate steps for quick disposal of cases lying pending in courts.

"Take immediate steps for early disposal of the pending cases," he told the newly appointed Chief Justice M Tafazzul Islam who called on the president at Bangabhaban.

During the meeting, the CJ assured the president of taking steps to introduce computerised trial procedures for easy classification of pending cases.

Justice Tafazzul also said that he would take steps to extend accommodation facilities in the Supreme Court. "There has not been any appointment of supporting staff for 14 years. I'll take the initiative in this regard."

Zillur appreciated the efforts of the chief justice and assured him of all-out support.

Contribution of Salma Sobhan recalled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial meeting yesterday said the contribution of Barrister Salma Sobhan to ensure human rights is unforgettable.

She worked for the underprivileged within and beyond the national as well as the international borders and tried to establish a society based on equity, they added.

The speakers said this at the meeting organised by Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) at its office in the city on the occasion of the 5th death anniversary of Salma.

The ASK employees in the morning placed wreaths at her portrait in the office. Wreaths were also placed at her graveyard in Begumganj.

Noted economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, Member of ASK Faustina Pereira, Khurshid Erfan Ahmed and ASK staffs reminisced about the past with Salma.

The philosophy, ideology and activities of Salma were highlighted at the meeting. The employees also expressed their commitment to upholding her ideologies.

Work together to protect children from trafficking

Rights activists tell govt, non-govt organisations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rights activists at a book launching ceremony yesterday urged the government and non-government organisations to work together to put an end to the sexual exploitation and trafficking of children.

They also called for concerted efforts to establish the rights of children in order to improve the lives of children.

The Shishu Surokkhay Amra, a network of organisations working to provide protection for children, launched the book titled 'Breaking the Vicious Circle: Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Trafficking' in association with Save the Children at the National Press Club in the city.

Delivering the welcome address, AKM Mustaque Ali, executive director of Incidin Bangladesh, said this book is a compilation of write-ups featuring experiences of the network at the field level.

The organisations working on this issue can also use this book as a reference book, he added.

Speaking as the chief guest, sculptor Ferdousi Priyobhashini stressed the need to incorporate the issue of trafficking and sexual abuse of children into the academic curriculum to raise awareness among the children.

Executive Director of Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association Salma Ali called on the government to implement various projects to rehabilitate child victims of trafficking.

Dr Nomita Halder, deputy secretary of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Amena Reza Chowdhury, acting chairperson of Breaking The Silence, Salima Sarwar, executive director of the Association of Community Development, also spoke at the programme presided over by Selina Ahmed, programme coordinator, Save the Children Sweden-Denmark.

PHOTO: COURTESY

A twelve-member team of Korea Overseas Volunteer (KOV) arrived in the city on December 26. Korean Ambassador Suk Bum Park welcomes them at his office upon their arrival.

AL MP Latif allegedly misbehaves with police

A CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Ruling Awami League lawmaker MA Latif allegedly misbehaved with the on-duty police sergeants near Kolatoli point at Cox's Bazar sea beach yesterday.

The police administration in the district informed the high-ups of the incident.

Sources said MA Latif, a lawmaker of Chittagong-10 constituency, came to a police check post at Kolatoli in a car at about noon and rebuked the traffic sergeants for harassing the tourists in the name of searching their vehicles.

The police check post was set up as part of special security measures ahead of the New Year's Eve.

Police Sergeants Abdul Aziz and Kanu Biswas complained of the lawmaker's misbehaviour and said they even did not search his vehicle.

When asked, Cox's Bazar Police Superintendent Md Shakhwat Hossain said that as part of security measures, the police set up eight check posts to search people. It has nothing to do with the harassment of anybody.

When contacted, lawmaker MA Latif, however, denied the allegation of misbehaviour and said that he had only advised the police to treat all equally and search the vehicles of well-off people as well.

THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY OF BANGLADESH (PUB)

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2nd CONVOCATION

The 2nd Convocation of The People's University of Bangladesh (PUB) will be held on 9 February, 2010, in Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, Agargoan, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka. Students who have completed their Bachelor and Master's Degree from the PUB in Summer-2007; Winter & Summer-2008; Winter & Summer-2009, but not yet registered themselves for the Convocation, are advised to register themselves by filling up the Registration Form available in the PUB Admission & Information Office (3/2, Block-A, Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207) on or before 15 January, 2010 positively between 10:00am and 04:00 pm Saturday to Thursday. The students who obtained degree from this university earlier but could not attend the First Convocation held in 2007 are also allowed to participate in the 2nd Convocation by completing all the required formalities within the above date.

Registrar, PUB.