



PHOTO: STAR

The Lifebuoy Friendship Hospital moors at Kholbari Char on the Jamuna to treat rural people.

A caring touch for the rural poor

ABDUL KADER, back from Jamnapur

Teenagers Kamala and Morsheda said they had successful cleft-lip operation.

Sidway standing 70 year-old old Yunus Ali said he came to the floating hospital for treatment of asthma.

"I have come from Char Bhahadurabad knowing about free treatment", poor Ali said on board the Lifebuoy Friendship Hospital, anchored at Kholbari Char on the Jamuna, 48 kilometres off Jamalpur town.

About 200 people were waiting for treatment of various diseases, including minor operation, if necessary.

The ship-mounted hospital takes Tk five from each patient as 'visiting charge' and Tk three for second visit.

The hospital is providing treatment and health education to people in remote riverine areas where such facilities are lacking due to poor accessibility.

It is at Kholbari Char since December 10 after visiting Lakhir Char, Char Dakatia and Char Churkaibari, Nagarbari and Pachakhola since it started its service in March last year.

This correspondent was among some newsmen from Dhaka who visited the hospital on February 28.

During the one-year period, it provided services to around 36,000 people, out of which 18,000 were treated for various diseases. The rest were given primary knowledge on healthcare, family planning, mother and childcare, safe motherhood, nutrition, immunisation and sanitation, said its Executive Director Runa Marre Khan.

"Our intention is to help the underprivileged people in remote areas who are deprived of healthcare and health education," she said.

It also organises a two-day health camp once a month, when specialist doctors provide voluntary services.

Around 1000 people were given free treatment during the February 27-28 health camp at Kholbari Char.

Hospital sources said health camps are organised to treat as many patients as possible in a slot, when specialist doctors come from the capital.

"None returns without treatment," said Prof SR Khan, one of the founders of the hospital.

At least 100 patients are getting treatment every day. If needed, patients are sent to Dhaka for better treatment, he said.

"Today, five patients were sent to Dhaka for cataract operation", he said.

The hospital has two doctors, an operation room, one pathologist, one X-ray technician and a clerk. Visiting doctors give voluntary service, particularly during health camps.

Yves Marre, a Frenchman, conceived the idea of the floating hospital. He sailed an old barge from France to Bangladesh and donated it to Friendship, a non-government organisation.

The Friendship, along with Lever Brothers Bangladesh Ltd. turned it into a floating hospital in Bangladesh.

Lever Brothers, its major donor, will also bear operational expenses of the hospital for three years, sources at the hospital said.

The ship will leave Kholbari for Roumari in Kurigram next month after completing an Extended Programme of Immunisation (EPI).

DCC launches road repair work today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) launches a nine-month long road repair and footpath development work today at a cost of around Tk 50 crore under the Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP).

"We will complete the project within the stipulated time at any cost," said City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday.

He was speaking as chief guest at a contract signing ceremony between the DCC and the contractors at the Nagar Bhaban.

Financed by the World Bank (WB), the DCC will repair some

main thoroughfares and develop nearly 25 kilometres of footpath in different parts of the city by December.

The mayor directed the contractors to maintain quality of works and meet the deadline.

He also instructed the chief engineer to involve the executives at different zonal offices to have a 'close watch' on the implementation of the project.

The mayor said at present the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is implementing a separate project of Tk 200 crore under the DUTP to improve the city's main thoroughfares.

Hotline

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tion with the Grameen Phone.

The hotline numbers are 0171-595203 for investigation cell, 0171-800400 for legal cell, 0171-800401 for shelter home, 0171-800406 for trafficking cell, 0171-800402 for Rajshahi division, 0171-800403 for Khulna division, 0171-800404 for Sathkira, 0171-800405 for Jessore, 0171-800407 for Lalmonirhat and 0171-800404 for Benapole.

The BNWLA organisation staff will answer all questions of the callers related to violence, he added.

The victims will be provided with information pertaining to obtaining security, reaching local law enforcing agencies together with phone counselling for trauma victims and several other services.

The mobile phones bearing the ten numbers will be given to the organisation members at its various offices and three Grameen phone operators are to work round the clock by turn in the hotline service.

Ferdous Ara, joint Secretary for the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs said her ministry is planning to set up such a hotline service.

Addressing the press conference, Intikhab Ahmed, general manager of Grameen Phone said the company would try to make it toll free for the callers calling to these particular numbers.

"Right now Grameen Phone does not have the technical support to make it charge free", he said.

New PSC member takes oath

UNB, Dhaka

Former Chief Engineer of Roads and Highways Department M Abdur Rouf took oath yesterday as member of Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC).

Chief Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury administered the oath in a simple ceremony attended by the chairman, members and other officials of PSC, an official handout said.

256 Bangladeshi

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The repatriation process has been stretched to three days to facilitate the journey.

"In the past we had noticed that one day is not enough to send back prisoners. If a lapse occurs on either side then the repatriation process is prolonged. So that is why three days have been kept in hand," a top official of the Deputy High Commission said.

Discussions had been on between representatives of both Indian and Bangladesh governments in New Delhi about the repatriation of the fishermen for sometime now.

Most of the 256 fishermen are from the coastal areas of Khulna, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

BCL observes strike to protest BCS test scam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demanding immediate resignation of the chairman of Public Service Commission (PSC), opposition Awami League's student wing Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) observed student strike at all educational institutions across the country yesterday.

They also demanded punitive action against the culprits involved in the leaking out of questions of the 24th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) preliminary test.

Meanwhile, some activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) beat up a BCL leader near the Central Library of Dhaka University (DU). The victim was identified as Mohammad Abu Abbas Bhuiya, joint secretary of AF Rahman hall unit of BCL.

Academic activities of DU were hampered and administrative activities partially held because of the strike. All scheduled examinations were postponed.

BCL also brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus.

Addressing the rally BCL leaders demanded proper investigation into the question leakage scam.

They declared that the PSC chairman's office will be cordoned off on March 8 and March 11. A memorandum will be submitted to the president demanding resignation of the chairman.

Ambulances

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hospital.

"The distribution of the ambulances irrespective of party affiliation proves Khaleda's firmness to ensure health for all," said the opposition lawmaker.

Kader Siddiqui of Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Janata League recalled with gratitude the assurance of the Prime Minister in the parliament session of providing two ambulances for his area.

He hailed it as a "great step" and hoped that the prime minister would set similar examples in all spheres of national life.

Mahbubur Rahman of the main opposition Awami League thanked the prime minister and said it would benefit the people of the coastal areas.

Maulana Abdus Sobhan of Jamaat-e-Islami, Tajul Islam of the Jatiya Party and Mahbubur Rahman of BNP also spoke.

The function was also addressed by Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, State Minister Amanullah Aman and Secretary M Fazlur Rahman, Vice-chancellor of BSMMU and President of BMA Dr MA Hadi and Secretary General of BMA Dr AZM Zahir Hossain, DG, Health, Dr M Mizanur Rahman and Director of the Central Medical Store Brig General Abdul Kalam Azad.

Ministers, MPs, PM's political Advisers, civil surgeons and senior civil and military officials attended the function.

2 'robbers'

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procession in the afternoon and demanded increase of police patrol in the area. Sources said residents of the area are scared following the incident.

Police said they have already taken the initiative to combat crime in the locality. They have also introduced community police, following a series of robbery in the area.

Sub-inspector Shah Alam filed a case with Shyampur police station in this regard.

Vajpayee govt

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In dira-Mujib accord," said Chatterjee.

The issue has been raised before in Parliament. When the BJP ruled Delhi, CPM MP Hanan Mollah had led a campaign against the police harassment of Bengali-speaking people.

"The BJP government then had almost started a 'cleansing' operation," said a CPM MP.

Das Munshi clarified that his party was not against identifying and pushing back illegal migrants. But that does not mean innocent people speaking Bengali should be harassed, he said.

UN resolution

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document," he said.

The United States, Britain and Spain have rejected the Canadian approach, although some diplomats would not rule out a variation of Ottawa's proposal for a future compromise.

A resolution needs a minimum of nine votes for adoption in the 15-member council and no veto from its permanent members -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China.

Virtually certain to vote against the resolution or abstain are France, Russia, China, Germany and Syria.

The undecided members include Chile, Mexico, Pakistan, Angola, Guinea and Cameroon. Both Angola and Pakistan are said to be leaning toward the US stance, which has four definite votes, should no viable alternative or amendment be presented.

Washington's strategy is to get the minimum nine votes and then dare France, Russia, or China to veto the measure.

France has the reverse strategy: if the United States does not get the nine votes, it would be spared making a decision about whether or not to veto the draft resolution.

To complicate matters further, Blix's Friday report may not give much comfort to the United States.

One shot in Motijheel

BSS, Dhaka

A man was shot by a gang of miscreants in the city's Motijheel area yesterday.

The victim was identified as Babul Miah, 40, son of Golam Mostafa of 151/APWD staff quarters.

Police quoting witnesses said the miscreants shot Babul, while he was taking tea at a makeshift tea stall behind the WAPDA Bhaban at noon.

Babul was shot in the thigh.

Local people rushed him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Later, he was shifted to the Orthopaedic Hospital.

A case was filed with Motijheel police station in this connection.

States as Iraq has suddenly cooperated on a host of issues.

Baghdad met a Saturday deadline to begin destroying its Al Samoud 2 missile system, banned because its range may be greater than allowed. Iraqi workers also have dug up buried bombs they say are loaded with anthrax, aflatoxin and botulin toxin and which inspectors are now analysing.

While the manoeuvring goes on, few believe that war can be prevented. The main purpose of the resolution appears to be providing political cover for US allies in Europe and elsewhere who support an American-led assault in defiance of domestic public opinion.

The United States also would like international help in rebuilding Iraq after an invasion but UN officials warned in a meeting with Pentagon planners that assistance would be limited if Washington went to war without a UN endorsement.

Four policemen

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They said they were looking for a mentally retarded man whose photograph was published in a daily yesterday.

Being challenged, they started assaulting Monir. People around caught the three and handed them over to the police camp.

Meantime, some more journalists reached the camp. To their surprise, they saw police releasing the three after taking bribe, and protested.

The four policemen then assaulted the journalists. Monir, along with Abu Saleh Akand of Sangram, Osman Gani Babul of ABAS, Latif Rana of Nawrose and Abu Sufian Titu of Bangladesh Today were injured.

Senior police officials came and took the three persons to Ramna Police Station and assured the journalists of proper action against the policemen.

Bangladesh Crime Reporters Association brought out a procession at the DMCH in the afternoon protesting the incident and demanding punishment to the policemen.

Philippines airport

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running after them," Mindanao police chief Edgardo Aglipay said without elaborating. Aglipay told GMA television the bomb had been planted in an abandoned rucksack.

Government-run Davao Medical Center listed 19 dead from the airport blast and more than 50 injured, including at least nine Filipinos. The identities and nationalities of the other victims were not immediately available.

Casualties at other hospitals raised the number of injured to 114.

Radio station DXDC placed the death toll at 30, without giving a source for the figure, which officials could not immediately confirm.

Television footage showed a long line of hospital beds full of bloodied patients being attended to by green-suited medical staff.

The powerful blast at about 5:15 pm (0915 GMT) obliterated a shed used by passengers and shed-wishers outside the airport's passenger terminal, he said over ABS-CBN television.

An hour after the airport blast, ambulances and other emergency vehicles were still picking up casualties from the street outside the airport, cordoned off by yellow police tape and dozens of soldiers armed with assault rifles.

Flag-carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) suspended flights to Davao until further notice. The last of three PAL flights to Davao for the day was recalled back to Manila

about 35 minutes before touchdown, an airline statement said.

President Gloria Arroyo "strongly condemns the Davao bombing as a brazen act of terrorism, which will not go unpunished," presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunyay said in a statement.

Arroyo was holding an emergency meeting of the cabinet oversight committee on internal security to discuss the government response, he added.

Separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels, blamed in the car bombing of Cotabato airport on Mindanao on February 20 that killed one person and left six others injured, condemned the Davao bombing and denied responsibility.

"We are expressing our willingness to coordinate in any investigation for the purpose of determining the real culprits in this bombing," MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu said in a radio interview. He said the 12,500-member group only attacked "military targets".

The military launched a major offensive against the MILF in central Mindanao last month, killing nearly 200 guerrillas and displacing 214,000 civilians.

The attacks came amid planned deployment of US troops on the nearby island of Jolo, a stronghold of Abu Sayyaf rebels with alleged links to al-Qaeda Islamic militants.

Mindanao's large cities including Davao were without electricity earlier Tuesday in suspected MILF sabotage attacks.

Opposition demands JS probe

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Law Minister Moudud Ahmed said, "We should have invited Suranjit Sengupta to the meeting. He relied on newspaper reports."

Moudud also claimed that the government had no hands in cancelling the exams.

Suranjit then read out a report from a national daily and referred to other newspapers which reported that the PSC's decision came in the wake of a cabinet

meeting.

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan thanked the PSC for cancelling the test thus establishing its credibility.

Mannan alleged that the PSC was politicised during the AL rule.

Earlier, Opposition Chief Whip Abdus Shahid stood on a point of order and criticised the PSC chairman for defending the

test despite reports of question paper leakage. Shahid demanded removal of the chairman.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar then said he would not take press reports into cognisance and explained that only the president can remove the PSC chairman provided a supreme judicial council finds the chairman either mentally or physically incapable or guilty of gross misconduct.

Barisal BNP

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quarters raised questions about the neutrality of the Additional Divisional Commissioner (General) as RO.

The RO yesterday distributed election symbols among candidates for the post of mayor, 30 posts of ward commissioner and 10 reserved seats for women ward commissioner through lottery.

Sarwar got "Bicycle", Chan "Ship", Kamal "Wall Clock", Eneyet Peer "Fish", Majid Munshi "Rose", Altaf "Chair", Salahuddin "Umbrella", Ikbah Zahid "Pigeon" and Dewan Fakrul Alam got "Lantern" as election symbol.

"The government could request the PSC to take a certain step. But the PSC's image has been tarnished by the direct intervention of the government," he added.

Prof. Serajul Islam Chowdhury said, "How can the PSC say that there was no evidence of leakage without

Super Sixes

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Kenya, a non-Test playing nation, who go in with 10 points.

Kenya gained through their stunning defeat of Sri Lanka at home in Nairobi and then earned four free points when another qualifier, New Zealand, forfeited their match in the Kenyan capital for security reasons.

India, who lost to Australia but won their remaining five matches, take away eight points, followed by Sri Lanka (7.5 points), New Zealand (4) and Zimbabwe (3.5).

Four of the six teams who made the second round during the 1999 World Cup have qualified once again. The newcomers are Kenya and Sri Lanka, who replace South Africa and Pakistan.

Zimbabwe

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before to Douglas Hondo to make it 4-1.

Yousuf Youhana made it 55-2 when he was caught behind by Tatenda Taibu off Zimbabwe captain Heath Streak.

When play was called off, Saeed Anwar was unbeaten on 40 and Younis Khan on zero.

(Scoreboard on page 15)



PHOTO: STAR

An empty corridor greets two students of Dhaka University yesterday as the Bangladesh Chhatra League called a student strike to protest leakage of questions in the civil service exams.