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No drugs, no therapy at lone cancer hospital

NAIMUL HAQ

Most patients at the country's only cancer hospital are being deprived of chemotherapy because the hospital has had virtually no anti-cancer drugs for over six months.

Syeda Begum from Kushtia has been receiving treatment for stomach cancer as an outpatient for more than five months but none of her prescribed drugs come from the hospital.

"We expected the hospital to give

us some medicines but so far we have got nothing," said Hamidul Islam, Syeda Begum's elder son.

"We have to buy most of the drugs from drugstores outside at twice the usual price. In fact, most anti-cancer drugs are either smuggled in or are simply not available. We can only pray to God for a possible cure."

In a male ward on the first floor of the hospital, Md Siddique from Khailajar, Netrakona, faces a similar fate as he struggles with intestinal

cancer.

The hospital has none of the drugs he has been prescribed and he cannot afford to buy even a single ampoule for the injection he needs so badly.

His brother, Abu Siddique says the family has sold its last piece of land in order to pay for treatment. "Every time we are asked to fetch drugs we have to think of finding new ways of finding money to pay for them," he says.

The hospital pharmacist admit-

ted: "We have a very small supply of drugs only four items - but they, too, often run out. So we have to determine who is in most need of the drugs."

A doctor who asked for his name to be withheld noted: "Drugs are really in short supply all year round. Frankly speaking, at the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) very few patients receive a full course of anti-cancer drugs, which are usually costly. In

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Graft allegation against HC judge a fallout of politicisation

Lawyers for correcting appointment process

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

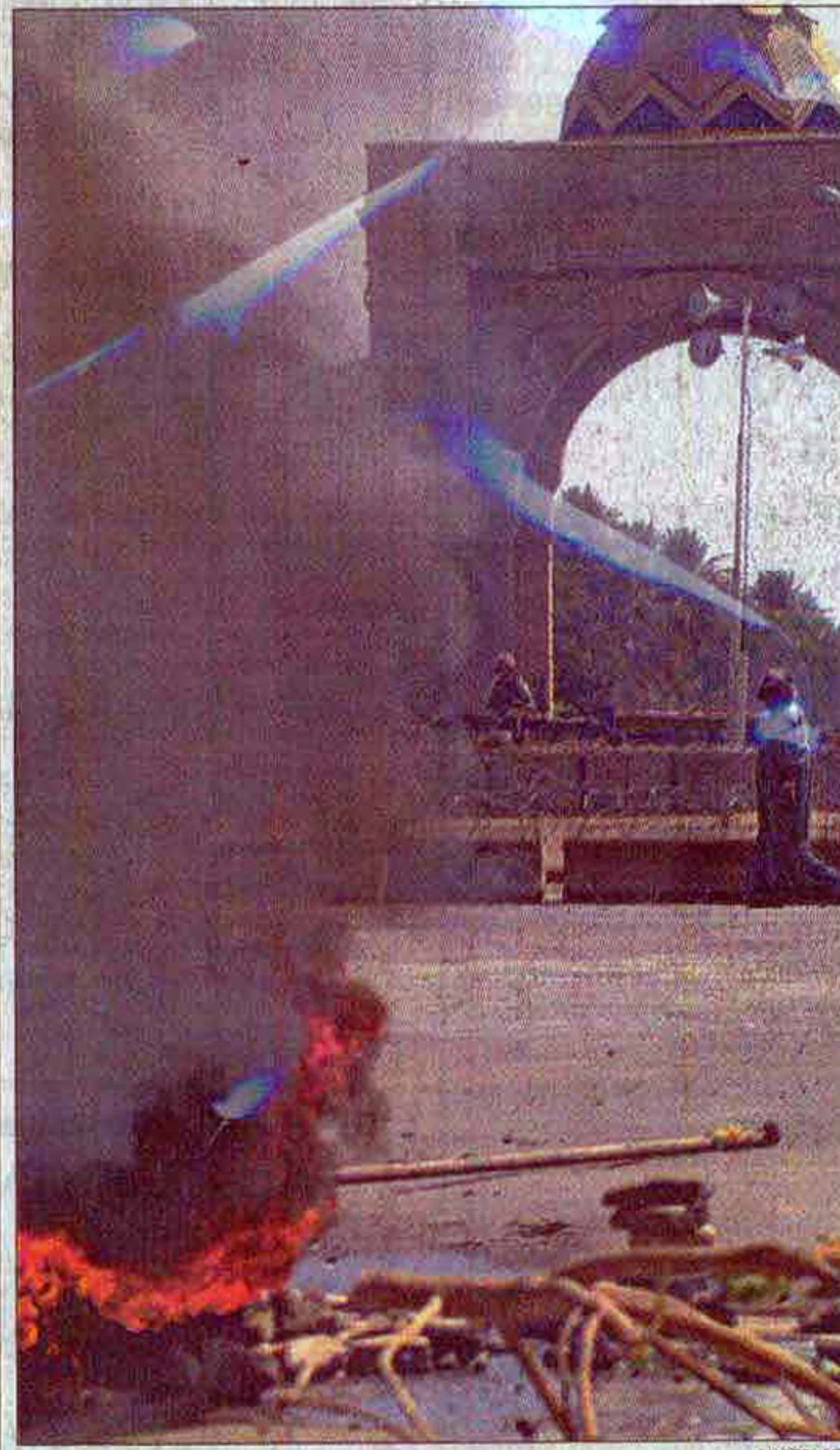
Senior lawyers yesterday pegged the allegation of corruption against a High Court Division judge as the fallout of politicisation of judges' recruitment.

"As the recruitment process is opaque, the government is appoint-

ing inefficient people, loyal to the ruling parties, as judges," said a former government attorney preferring anonymity on grounds that he does not want to be a party to the ongoing pro- and anti-government lawyers' 'mud-slinging'.

"Since the allegation against a

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An Iraqi man passes a US soldier standing guard at the entrance of Coalition Provisional Authority headquarters in Baghdad, behind tires set alight by former Iraqi intelligence staff demanding payment of salary arrears.

Dhaka to host river meet in January

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Bangladesh and India agreed to hold the next Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) meeting in Dhaka next January after a two-day successful round in New Delhi on water share.

Indian Water Resources Minister Arjun Charan Sethi told reporters Wednesday that both countries felt the frequency of JRC meetings needed to increase.

The 35th JRC talks that dragged past Tuesday midnight were held after three years, although the two nations were to hold meetings twice a year.

Sethi indicates that India may discuss the controversial multibillion dollar river-link plan with its neighbours after the taskforce for a feasibility study of the plan comes up with recommenda-

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Marshall wants to meet Hasina

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The 49th conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) begins in Dhaka tomorrow amid the main opposition Awami League's boycott in protest at what it said was the government's arrogant attitude toward the opposition.

Belying expectations of a possible

change in the opposition's tough stance after arrival of CPA Secretary General Denis Marshall in the city, the AL remained unbending on its position to skip the CPA conference first ever in Bangladesh.

Upon arrival in Dhaka yesterday morning, Marshall tried to make an appointment with Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina through an aide.

CPA Director (Finance and Administration) Mahub Alam talked to Hasina's Assistant Private Secretary Dr Awlad Hossain who told the aide to contact AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil for an appointment.

But Jalil said he did not get any call from any CPA headquarters official until 10:00 last night.

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Magistrate did not salute Mirza Abbas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandker Fatema Begum, magistrate at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, has refused a UNB report published in different newspapers on September 29.

The magistrate said she did not salute but stayed sitting when Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas entered her courtroom.

The UNB report was also published in The Daily Star under the

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Delay in execution of pricing policy for petroleum bugs WB

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank (WB) has expressed 'serious concern' over delay in implementing the pricing policy for petroleum products and natural gas, under which prices would be readjusted to the rates at international market.

"Unfortunately, while good progress had been made by energy ministry in designing the new pricing regimes, they had not been introduced as of now, notwithstanding prior agreements reached," says a WB draft aide-memoire.

A WB-IDA follow-up mission on oil and gas sector technical assistance that visited Dhaka recently was informed that the ministry

regretted the delay and that it would be gazetted before end of September and introduced on October 1.

Officials at the Energy and Mineral Resources Division said the new pricing regimes could not be gazetted due to BG Press's engagement with other urgent matters.

They expect that the pricing policies could be implemented on return of State Minister for Energy AKM Mosharraf Hossain from abroad on October 4, with approval from the prime minister.

"The government also wants to implement the new regimes by the Energy Regulatory Commission now in the formation process," said an official.

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Nobel literature award goes to Coetzee

AFP, Stockholm

Reclusive South African writer JM Coetzee won the 2003 Nobel Literature Prize yesterday for his writings born out of his experiences of the former apartheid system in his country.

Coetzee, "who in innumerable guises portrays the surprising involvement of the outsider", will take home the prize sum of 10 million kronor (1.11 million euros, 1.3 million dollars), the jury of the Swedish Academy said.

Coetzee's editor in Britain, Jeff Mulligan, said the white South African "was delighted, very delighted" to have won the prize, but said the author, who is known to shun the limelight, would not

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