



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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JAMADIUL AWAL 5, 1441 HJRI

20 PAGES PLUS SHOUT PRICE: Tk 12.00



ICU on sickbed

Critical patients at lone govt cancer hospital deprived of proper medical service as vital equipment lying inoperative for long

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

More than 12 years ago, the National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) authorities had purchased eight high-end ventilators for its Intensive Care Unit.

But the Artificial Respiratory Ventilators (ARVs), the basic device required for running an ICU properly, had never been installed, depriving the critical patients of the medical services they are supposed to get at ICU.

Surprisingly though, the lifesaving devices -- each bought for Tk 70 lakh at that time -- are now left uncared for in a corner inside the ICU.

A central oxygen system was set up more than three years ago, but the ventilators were not installed. To make matters worse, the motherboards of the ventilators have been stolen in the meantime, rendering the machines dysfunctional.

This is one of several cases of irregularities The Daily Star has found during an investigation at the country's lone specialised public hospital for cancer treatment.

The NICRH, situated in Mohakhali, is the go-to place for patients in the low-income bracket. According to an International Agency for Research on Cancer report

released last year, about 1.08 lakh people die of cancer while 1.5 lakh people develop the disease every year in Bangladesh.

A SAGA OF NEGLIGENCE

On several occasions in the past, the ICU in-charge wrote to the NICRH director, requesting him to take initiatives for installing the machines. But those calls were never heard.

"Eight Artificial Respiratory Ventilators have long been remaining inoperative. Critical patients from different departments of the hospital are sent to the ICU. After complex operations, many patients needing ventilator support are also shifted there, but that service could not be provided," said the latest letter sent on September 26.

The ICU department also informed the matter to the authorities in writing and verbally, said the letter.

The Daily Star has obtained copies of the letters.

In the meantime, the 8-bed ICU has now become a 4-bed one.

"It cannot be called an ICU at all because it lacks the basic device," said a doctor of ICU department, wishing not to be named. "We are deceiving our patients in the name of ICU services and they are not getting the treatment they should," he said.

Another doctor, preferring anonymity,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Expensive artificial ventilation equipment left with discarded articles at one corner of the ICU at National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital. The life-saving devices were never installed or used since they were bought 12 years ago. *Inset*, four sets of unused bronchoscopy equipment left in a storeroom for nearly three years. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA



Sylhet leg begins today

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) shifts to Sylhet today as Rajshahi Royals and Rangpur Rangers seek to further their play-offs chances in the days' first game at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

However, hosts Sylhet Thunder -- who are virtually out of contention for the last four after losing seven out of eight games -- will surely look to give their fans something to cheer about when they take on a struggling Cumilla Warriors, who have three wins in eight matches in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BARGUNA'S RIFAT MURDER CASE

Minni, nine other accused indicted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A Barguna court yesterday indicted 10 accused, including Ayesha Siddika Minni, in the much talked about Rifat Sharif murder case.

The trial will begin on January 8 and continue until February 9. At least 37 witnesses are expected to testify.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of the District and Sessions Judge's Court framed the charges, prosecutor Mojibul Haq Kislu said. Separately, Barguna Juvenile Court yesterday fixed January 8 for hearing on charge framing against 14 juveniles accused in the case.

The murder on June 26 last year sparked widespread outrage after footage of the attack went viral on social media. In a video clip, Rifat's wife Minni was seen screaming and trying to save her husband from the attackers. Minni was arrested and placed on remand a few days later on charges of being involved with the killing. She was granted bail later.



Rifat Sharif

Besides Minni, 19, the court yesterday indicted Rakibul Hasan Rifat Faraje, 23, Al Kaiyum alias Rabbi Akon, 21, Mohiminul Islam Sifat, 19, Rejwan Ali Khan alias Tiktok Redoy, 22, Hasan, 19, Musa, 22, Rafiul Islam Rabbi, 20, Sagor, 19 and Kamrul Islam Saimun, 21.

Minni and six others were indicted under section 302 and 34 on charges of being directly involved. Two others were indicted under section 212 and 120 B (1) on charges of hatching conspiracy to kill and helping the other accused flee the scene.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Minni

Unblock mobile network in the border areas

BTRC asks operators, revoking its earlier decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has revoked its decision to block mobile phone operators' signals up to a kilometre from the country's borders.

The authorities sent an email to all the mobile operators early yesterday in this regard and asked them to unblock the network in border areas as soon as possible.

Mobile carriers said they have started unblocking, but providing full network will take about a day as the configurations in all towers, some of which are in remote areas, need to be updated.

BTRC on Sunday evening had asked all mobile operators -- Grameenphone, Robi, Banglalink, and Teletalk -- to restrict their network up to a kilometre from the borders.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

DCC MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Amusing affidavits

All 4 main candidates educated, wealthy

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

A Mercedes-Benz car, a Toyota Prado and a Mitsubishi Pajero are worth only Tk 17 lakh, believe it or not.

This is exactly what businessman Mohammad Saifuddin, Jatiya Party candidate for Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayoral polls, mentioned in his affidavit submitted to the Election Commission on Tuesday.

His wife owns a BMW car and a Nissan sedan but their prices were not given.

On the other hand, businessman Atiqul Islam, Awami League mayoral candidate for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), has no car, shows his affidavit. A total of 14 mayoral candidates -- 7 each in the DNCC and the DSCC -- are contesting the January 30 elections.

Tabith Awal, BNP candidate for the DNCC and son of businessman Abdul Awal Minto, has a Lexus car worth Tk 7.60 lakh.

AL mayoral candidate for the DSCC Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh has three cars worth Tk 1.66 crore and his wife one with a price tag of Tk 1.63 crore.

He, however, didn't mention the brands or models of the cars. His main rival BNP candidate Ishraque Hossain, however, doesn't have any car.

JP mayoral candidate for the DNCC Kamrul Islam, a former army brigadier, owns vehicles worth Tk 1.12 crore.

Kamrul, also president of Jatri Odhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, didn't mention the number or type of the vehicles.

The affidavits provided by the candidates contain their criminal and

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

COLD-RELATED DISEASES 51 dead in two months

Another six thousand affected across the country, says DGHS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Various cold-related diseases have affected around 5,998 people across the country in 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday.

According to the data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) control room, 948 patients received treatment for acute respiratory infection.

Another 1,980 were treated for diarrhoea and 3,070 for other diseases, including jaundice, inflammation in the eye, skin diseases, and fever, said Dr Aysha Akhtar, assistant director of the health emergency operation centre and control room of DGHS.

Fifty-one deaths were reported across the country between November 1 last year and January 1 due to cold-related diseases, she said.

Meanwhile, a mild cold

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Primary students are all smiles as they hold the new books handed to them on the gymnasium premises of Dhaka University. Over 4.27 crore students of primary and secondary level institutions were handed new textbooks on the first day of the year, yesterday, officials said.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Huji planned to form a 'robber wing'

Say CTTC officials citing info from six arrestees

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

They planned to form a "robber wing" of Huji in the country's southern and northern regions.

As per the plan, the banned militant outfit leaders managed to communicate with 20 people, who were involved in petty crimes like snatching and theft. These people were asked to use chloroform on their victims, said officials of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit.

The leaders wanted 30 percent cut for the "welfare" of the wing.

The wing was supposed to take care of all legal issues of the members if they got arrested. It was also supposed to pay for arrested or on-the-run gang member's family expenses.

The CTTC unit learnt the latest strategy of Harkatul Jihad al Islami after interrogating six robbers, who were arrested in the capital on December 26.

Three arrestees -- Abul Miah, Rafiqul Islam, and Abdur Rahman -- gave confessional statements under section 164 before a Dhaka court on Tuesday.

Three other arrestees -- Billal Hossain, Nur Alam, and Akter Hossain -- would be placed before the court today after the end of their five-day remand.

"We have got some clues and information about the absconding Huji leaders and activists. We are now

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1