

Piling up medical waste discarded thoughtlessly at landfills in city corporation areas pose serious threat to public health. Divisional cities, excluding the capital, have around 1,380 healthcare establishments -- public and private -- that produce over 20 tonnes of medical waste every day. To draw attention to this alarming issue, The Daily Star is highlighting medical waste management in major cities across the country. In this instalment, we look at medical waste management in Mymensingh city.

Blatant disregard for rules

81pc healthcare facilities not following due process



PHOTO: MD AMINUL ISLAM



Cattle graze at Moilakanda of Mymensingh, where regular garbage mixed with medical waste has been piling up for years. Bottom left, farmer Abdul Malek stands next to his cropland which has been ruined due to unabated garbage dumping. Right, a worker dumps all sorts of garbage on MMCH premises.

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Majority of healthcare facilities in Mymensingh city are not following proper medical waste disposal system, due to authorities' failure to check the malpractice and lack of necessary government arrangement to dispose of those. The city has a total of 221 healthcare facilities -- 131 hospitals and clinics and 90 diagnostic centres, according to the civil surgeon's office. According to Medical Waste (Management and Processing) Rules 2008, all healthcare centres must have mechanisms to incinerate or

September last year. Abul Hasnat Epu, managing director of Nobo Waste, said necessary infrastructures -- incinerators, two pits and a recycling unit -- has been set up on 18 decimal of land given by the city corporation. The project cost is Tk 40 lakh, which they spent from their own fund. But even after setting up the system to dispose of waste properly, only 18.63 percent of the healthcare facilities avail the service through them in exchange for monthly fees, he added. "We charge hospitals and clinics Tk 2,000-3,000 per month. Till now, only 41 hospitals

Amputated body parts and other materials produced from the operation theatre are buried near the dumping spot, he said. As MCC carries all sorts of garbage in their trucks, it is not productive to keep those in separate containers, said Dr Narayan. "In a recent meeting, officials of public health engineering department and MCC assured us of establishing a modern waste disposal plant on the hospital premises," the doctor added. When asked about taking service from Nobo Waste, he said, "We pay tax to the city corporation. So, the responsibility is theirs."



sterilise medical waste. But no hospital, clinic or diagnostic centre in the city has any such arrangement. Medical waste -- in many cases mixed with general ones -- are dumped in public dustbins and open spaces -- particularly at Moilakanda in Char Kalibari. Amid the situation, Nobo Waste Management Service Ltd in collaboration with Mymensingh City Corporation (MCC) set up a medical waste disposal unit at Akua in

are taking the service." Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), the lone government and major hospital in the city, does not incinerate or sterilise its waste. MMCH Deputy Director Dr Laxmi Narayan Majumder said they are unable to install the equipment. "We have a shed where we dump all sorts of waste. Later, garbage trucks of the city corporation carry those to Moilakanda in the evening."

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw general and medical waste (used syringes, needles, broken glass tubes and bandages) dumped together on the hospital premises. Dr HA Gollandaj Tara, secretary of Bangladesh Private Clinic and Diagnostic Centre Owners Association, said many private hospitals do not want to pay additional fee to another company as they are already paying the city corporation a monthly fee to remove all sorts of waste. SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

AHSANULLAH MASTER MURDER CASE

Two death row convicts' houses attacked in Tongi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Houses of two death row convicts in Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master murder case was ransacked and set on fire in Gazipur's Tongi upazila on Friday evening. Relatives claimed that local AL activists carried out the attack on houses of Shahidul Islam Shipu and his brother Nurul Islam Dipu at Gopalpur, said Officer-in-Charge of Tongi Police Station Kamal Hossain. Shahidul is now in jail in the case while Nurul Islam is on the run. Nurul's wife Sharifa Khanam and nephew Shahriar Nazim said a group of people chanted slogan "Awami League" during the attack. The miscreants vandalised furniture and set the houses on fire by pouring petrol, they said. Firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the blaze, said Atiqur Rahman, senior station officer at Tongi fire station. Three rooms were damaged in the fire

while furniture of around 20 rooms were ransacked, fire service sources said. Mazharul Islam, a local AL leader and councillor of ward-44, did not respond to phone calls repeatedly made by this correspondent. On May 7, 2004, gunmen shot and killed Ahsanullah, also then president of Jatiya Sramik League, and Omar Faruq Ratan, a young man, and wounded 17 others. The next day, Ahsanullah's brother Motiur filed the case against 19 people, including Jubo Dal leader Nurul Islam Sarkar. On April 16, 2005, a Dhaka court handed down death sentences to 22 people, including Shahidul and Nurul, and life terms to six others for killing Ahsanullah. A decade later, On June 15, 2016, HC confirmed death penalty of six persons, including the duo. It, however, commuted capital punishment of seven others to life imprisonment, upheld life term of two and acquitted 11.

Cumilla univ set for maiden convocation

UNB, Cumilla

Cumilla University has completed all the necessary preparations to hold its first ever convocation tomorrow. President Abdul Hamid, chancellor of the university, will attend the convocation, according to the university authorities. Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal will deliver the convocation speech. Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury and University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman Dr Kazi Shahidullah will also be present as special guests. Building up to the occasion, academic and administrative buildings, residential halls, and the main entrance gate have been decorated with lights. Besides, the new graduates have started collecting convocation outfits in a festive mood. Total 2,888 graduates will attend the convocation while 14 among them will be awarded gold medals, said university sources. Cumilla University was established in 2006 as the 26th public university of the country with seven functional departments. At present, there are nine departments with 253 teachers and 7,055 students, according to Cumilla University website.

Mirpur slum fire victim dies at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman, who was severely burned in Friday's fire at Chalandika slum in the city's Mirpur, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday. Parveen (35) was admitted to DMCH with 90 percent burns on that day and breathed her last around 7am at the hospital's burn unit, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH police outpost. Parveen was among two people who were injured when the fire broke out at the slum around 4:15am, reducing around 400 shanties to ashes. Another injured, Shahidul, has been admitted to a private hospital in the capital.

Two 'Neo JMB' men held

They were involved in bomb attacks on Krishak League office, police garage in Khulna last year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police yesterday claimed to have arrested two operatives of militant group "Neo JMB", who were allegedly involved in last year's bomb attacks on a Krishak League office and a garage belonging to the law enforcers in Khulna. The arrestees -- Nur Mohammad Anik (24) and Muzahidul Islam Rafi (23) -- are students of Khulna University and active operatives of the group, police said. They were arrested during a raid in the city's Gollamari area. Police also recovered bomb making materials from their possession, Khulna Metropolitan Police Commissioner Khandaker Lutful Kabir told reporters at a press conference in his office. Kabir claimed that both the arrestees in primary interrogation admitted their involvement with the attacks. Police officials said the arrestees got radicalised by watching videos of various

militant groups. They acquired expertise in making improvised explosive devices and other bombs, and planned the attacks, they added. As part of their plan, they rented houses in different areas of the city and did recces before the attacks. The bombs they exploded during both attacks were remote-controlled, the police official said. At least two persons were injured in the attack on Krishak League office on September 23 last year while a motorcycle was damaged in another bomb attack on a police garage on December 5. Terrorist group Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibilities of both the attacks, according to US-based SITE Intelligence Group. Replying to a query, the KMP commissioner, however, said they did not find arrestees' link to the global terror group. Police are trying to find out their sources of fund, he said.

DIU celebrates 18th founding anniversary

CITY DESK

Daffodil International University's (DIU) 18th founding anniversary celebrations concluded yesterday on its permanent campus in Savar of Dhaka. Dr Rubana Huq, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and managing director of Mohammadi Group was present at the programme as chief guest. She also inaugurated the Anisul Huq Bhawan on the campus. Dr Abu Belal Mohammad Shafiul Huq, former chief of army staff, and Jesmin Wafa, sister of late mayor Anisul Huq were also present, said a press release. Presided over by Dr Md Sabur Khan, chairperson of DIU board of trustees, the programme was also addressed by teachers of the university. In her speech as chief guest, Dr Rubana Huq told the students that there is a difference between rich people and great people. "Education can help you realise this difference. I hope you will all be enlightened with the education you have received here." Dr Md Sabur Khan said, "There is no alternative to enhancing your skills for your career. DIU is engaging its students in various co-curricular activities in this regard, such as Art of living, Employability 360 degree and One Student One Laptop project." The four-day celebration was inaugurated by State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr Md Enamur Rahman on Wednesday.

Come forward to protect rivers

Speakers urge all at int'l water conference

UNB, Kuakata

Praising the High Court verdict that recognised rivers as living entities, speakers at a conference yesterday said people should come forward to protect the rights of rivers. They said people need to be more active to protect rights of rivers, as the High Court judgement alone is not enough to ensure that. They came up with the observation at the closing ceremony of the two-day 5th International Water Conference 2020 arranged by ActionAid Bangladesh at a hotel in Kuakata, Patuakhali. Prof Dr Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University's International Relations department, said, "The law and the court say the rivers are living entities. Such judgement gives people the courage they need." He further said, "We've got this judgement through advocacy for many years. With this verdict, people will be able to play a more meaningful role in protecting the rights of rivers." Dr Imtiaz said the change of mindset about rivers is also the responsibility of people. "This change will come through research and advocacy. Legislation is not a permanent solution," he added. ActionAid Bangladesh believes that the lives of marginalised people are being hampered by river grabbing and pollution, and therefore it is important to work on this issue with a holistic approach, said its Country Director Farah Kabir, adding "One of the objectives of this conference is to raise public awareness about this issue." Rahima Sultana Kajal, executive director of local NGO Avas, said the water conference is an attempt to unite those who are thinking about working with water and the environment. Osman Bin Nasser, senior officer of ActionAid Bangladesh, said, "All the directives of the High Court need to be followed by all concerned. River encroachment or polluting those is a punishable offence as per law. Since a river itself is not capable of suing anyone, any person can file a case under this law if any river is encroached." On the final day, researchers presented studies on water and river issues, such as the use of waterways in future communication systems, research on the river Halda, water pollution and water quality assessment of the Padma, and management of sustainable drinking water centres. A total of nine papers were presented in the two-day conference, participated by researchers from home and abroad.



May be she was reading this book when a fire broke out at the slum in port city's Mirzar Pool area on Friday, razing more than 100 shanties. While many were busy salvaging whatever they could find or setting up makeshift shelters yesterday, this little girl -- amid the charred remains that once was her home -- sat down to take a last look at her favourite book. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN