

DOWN TO EARTH

On Government Employees' Hospital In City

The Government Employees' Hospital at Fulbaria, Dhaka, established in 1986, is an innovation in our country in the sense that it serves exclusively the Government employees and their family members as well as the employees of Corporations and autonomous bodies on reference. The retired Government employees and their dependent family members are also covered by its service. It is housed in the building of the former Railway Hospital which was shifted after the Dhaka Railway Station was moved from Fulbaria.

Though established in 1986, the hospital started full operation from 1987. Its characteristic is that treatment at

By ASM Nurunnabi

ferred to major hospitals in the city.

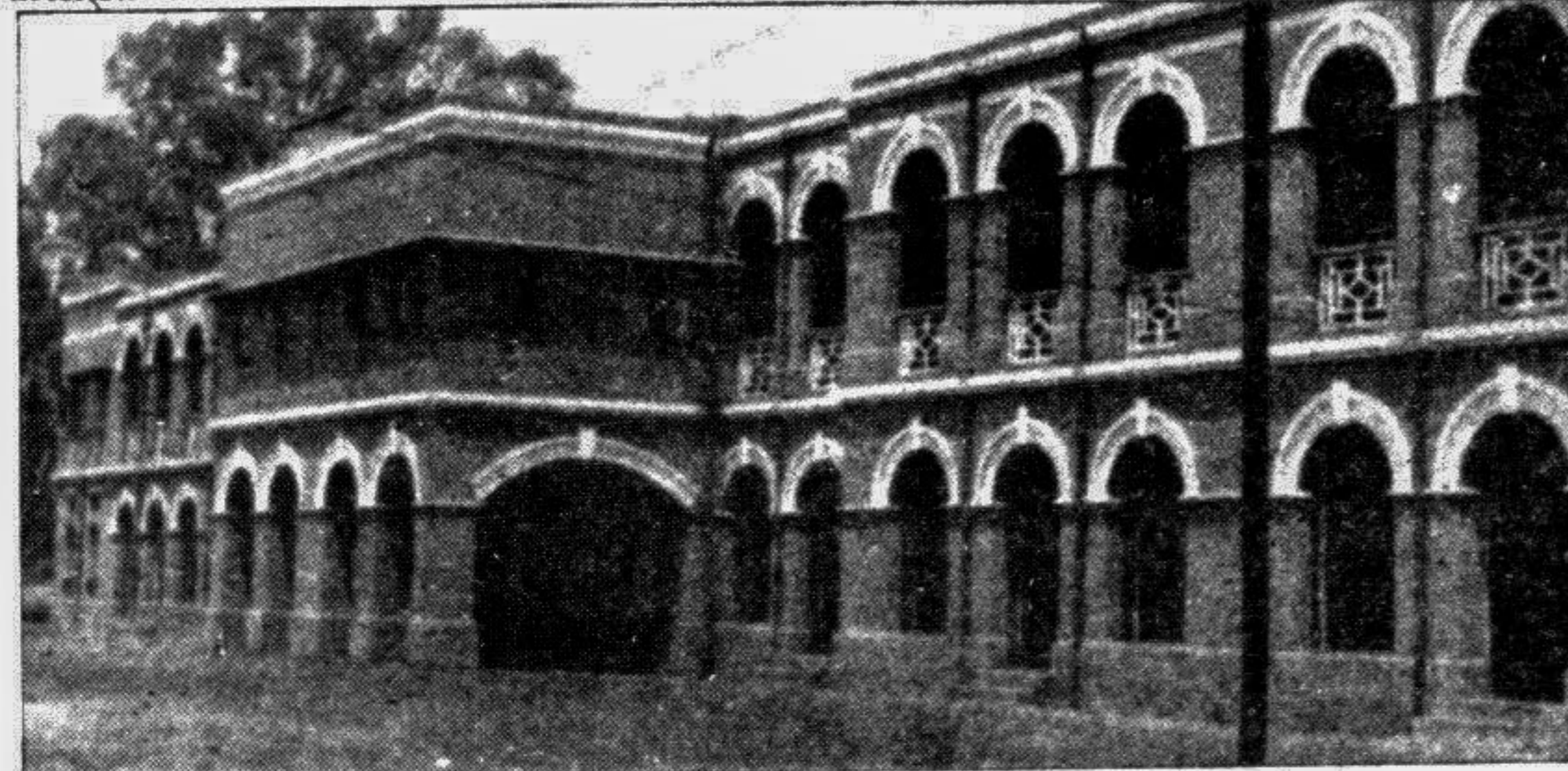
Observers, however, note that even for simple and routine treatment, elementary equipments are lacking. For example, the hospital makes do with old microscopes, while some new ones are an urgent necessity. The operation theatre is in a deplorable state. The whole atmosphere there is wholly unsuitable. Plasters fall off from the ceiling. Yet the surgeons carry on at the risk of infection. No specialist diagnosis in any field is possible because of lack of requisite equipment and technology.

The problem is mainly financial constraint. While some of the major hospitals in the

Hospital sources say that with the present daily allowance of only Tk 18 for each patient, it is not possible to effect any improvement in view of the existing high price.

Another serious problem that the hospital sources complain of relates to security. The hospital premises have no proper boundary walls. The old boundary walls have fallen down at many points, allowing outsiders and undesirable elements, easy access to the hospital premises and thereby creating threats of mischief. This aspect needs to be looked into by the authorities on an urgent basis.

The hospital has come into being only a few years. So further improvement may be ex-



this hospital is completely free; even no fee is charged for tickets, as is done in other Government hospitals, from new patients. It is a 30-bed hospital with daily outdoor patients averaging from 250 to 300. It is staffed by 19 doctors including specialists. Since its establishment, a steadily increasing trend has been noticeable in the number of patients seeking treatment. In 1987, the total number of patients was 17,974 which rose to 72,732 in 1992.

The hospital has got departments of major disciplines such as medicine, surgery, eye pathology, gynaec/obstetrics, skin and VD etc. It is, however, understood that though there are specialists in certain departments, facilities for modern treatment here are extremely limited. By and large, treatment available at this hospital covers routine, simple and uncomplicated cases. In serious and complicated cases, patients are re-

ferred to major hospitals in the country, for the same reason, are running without many essential equipments, it is perhaps too much to hope for a better situation in a small hospital like this. About the supply of drugs and medicines, the situation is equally deplorable. The hospital has a budget of only 5 to 6 lakh taka on this account. With this low budget, it is only possible to supply a few low-priced standard medicines to the patients. Some observers are critical that, since, by and large, most of the patients are low-paid government servants who can ill-afford to buy medicines from outside, the result can at best be an apology for medical treatment at this hospital. In such a situation, the desperate ones among the patients in serious cases are obliged to go the limit of whatever resources they have to procure medicines from outside.

The situation is no better in respect of patients diet-

ected in the days to come. Observers, however, stress one point which may be considered by the authorities. This hospital has some specialists on its staff, where as the clinic for government employees, located within the Secretariat premises has none. To make the services of the specialists easily available to the employees of the Secretariat without much disturbing their work schedule, some particular days in the week may be earmarked for attendance of the specialists at the Secretariat Clinic. This arrangement may be possible, as the Secretariat Clinic is situated nearby.

As in other government hospitals, financial constraints mainly stand in the way of desired improvements here also. The redeeming feature is that a beginning has been made in the provision of medical facilities in an institution exclusively meant for government employees.

14 policemen off to Y'slavia

A 14-member police delegation left Dhaka yesterday for Yugoslavia to join the UN peace-keeping force in Zagreb, reports UNB.

The team led by AIG of Police (HQs) Mohammad Masudul Huq comprised ASPs, inspector, sub-inspector, sergeant and habildars.

Earlier, Inspector General of Police ASM Shahjahan gave a hearty send off to the Bangladesh police delegation at a function at Rajarbag Police Telecom auditorium in the morning.

The IGP congratulated the police team on their assignment and urged them to work with the UN peacekeepers with devotion and sincerity.

Additional IGP Mohammad Moazzem Hossain Khan was present at the function.

Diarrhoea takes serious turn in Barisal

MULADI (Barisal), Apr 16: Diarrhoea has taken a serious turn in all the seven unions of Muladi thana, claiming more than 60 lives during the last one month, reports UNB.

Unofficial sources said about 10,000 people were also attacked by the water-borne disease during the period.

Of the victims most were said to be children and women.

Doctors attributed the outbreak of the epidemic to scarcity of pure drinking water, consumption of adulterated food and use of 'kutcha' latrines.

A task-force headed by the Thana Health Officer was constituted to combat the disease.

The Syed Foundation of Bangladesh, an NGO working in the thana, also formed a 22-team comprising local doctors and health workers to check the spread of the epidemic.

The teams were distributing oral salines and making people aware of preventive steps.

The local elite has urged the concerned authorities to immediately distribute adequate medicine and supply tube wells and sanitary latrines for the affected areas.

2 Die in Sirajganj house collapse

SIRAJGANJ, Apr 16: Two children of a family were killed at Tarash thana when their house collapsed in the storm that hit the district Thursday night, reports UNB.

The children Masum (7) and Momata (9) were killed when a wall of their mud house collapsed on them at 9 pm at Tarash sadar. The siblings were sleeping when the accident occurred. Their parents were also sleeping in the next room, the Union Parishad Chairman said.

The norwester, accompanied by a hailstorm, also damaged standing Boro and Irri crop in the area.

Another report adds: Thousands of people celebrated the Bangla New Year 1400 with much enthusiasm and grandeur.

The town, looking festive with colourful processions and melas (fairs), held for the first time in the district, observed the new year like elsewhere in the country by organising elaborate programmes to mark the eve of a new century.

The district administration arranged a 'panta bhat' programme attended by the Deputy Commissioner AZM Shaiful Islam.

The local Shilpakala Academy organised a two-day Baishakhi mela (fair) at the Gandayini High School premises. It was extended for a day today for women only, Academy sources said.

Different social organisations also held similar programmes on the occasion.

Both CPB factions

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Khan said, adding, This time the comrades dedicated in the struggle for emancipation of the commonman would find no reason to support the reformists.

This group according to sources, has already launched a signature campaign among the rank and file of the party seeking their objections to any move to convert the Communist Party into an organisation of liberal democrats.

This group strongly believes that the development model imposed on the country by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and religiously carried out by the local bourgeoisie must be challenged for the sake of the interest of the vast majority of the people.

And in that case, the group feels, there is no alternative but to strengthen the Communist Party to come up with an effective alternative development model for the people.

Shamshuddoha, MP, leader of the CPB parliamentary group that had made the official proposal for the transformation and appealed to the party central body last October for convening a special council sessions to change the party constitution and manifesto, told The Daily Star last week, "We shall definitely come out victorious in the upcoming council session."

Doha referring to his group's overwhelming majority in the party central committee said the scenario evident in the last central committee meeting in February this year would positively be reflected in the council session.

The February meeting of the CPB central committee had accepted the MPs appeal by a majority of 42 13 votes and ordered next month's special council session to consider the proposal of the party MPs.

Doha while talking to this correspondent claimed that

Apr 25 sit-in

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the leader of the Opposition in Parliament and AL chief Sheikh Hasina, a top leader of the committee said, adding "She (Hasina) gave the go-ahead to the programme, reiterating her party's continued support to the committee's movement".

According to an AL leader, the party was determined to make the April 25 programme a 'total success' with a view to giving a befitting reply to the government's recent anti-democratic activities. He hinted the AL might decide upon a programme of its own to protest the "Pahela Baishakh" police "excesses" at a meeting of its central leaders scheduled for this afternoon.

The Samannaya Committee is now busy in hectic lobbying to ensure political parties participation in its programme.

Member-Secretary of the committee Prof Abdul Mannan Choudhury told The Daily Star that the central body of the organisation will meet on April 20 to review and monitor the final preparations.

The committee will bring out a torch procession on April 23 and arrange rallies all over the country inviting people to participate in the sit-in, Prof Choudhury added.

The sit-in in front of the secretariat is planned from 11 am to 2.30 pm.

Besides, the Samannaya Committee has also planned meetings with the Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SKOP), the Dhaka University Teachers Association, the Jahangirnagar University Teachers Association and various professional, socio-cultural and students bodies in this regard.

In a bid to publicise the programme and secure support for its central leaders of the committee are currently addressing public rallies in the industrial areas around the capital.

Editor : S. M. Ali
Executive Editor : Mahfuz Anam

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Three generations of a family enjoy a day out at the BSCIC Baishakhi mela at Dhanmondi Club ground in the city yesterday.

—Star photo

Owners' assoc tells press 'Restrictions threaten future of jatra'

The Jatra Owners' Welfare Association yesterday demanded withdrawal of the government restriction on performance of 'jatra' (folk opera) in the country, reports UNB.

Addressing a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club in the afternoon the Association Convenor Sheikh Belaluddin Jilui said that the government had issued the restriction on March 10 without showing any reason.

He said the government decision had not only threatened the future of the traditional jatra industry but also put into uncertainty the livelihood of about 20,000 jatra artists and more than three lakh people dependent on this industry.

The press conference was attended, among others, by Shahidul Islam, Khandaker Ataur Rahman, Sabari Das Gupta, Imdadul Islam, Raju Talukdar, Sukumar Karmaker and Nurul Islam.

Bilu said that jatra, a popular means of entertainment for the rural people, faced repeated restrictions in last two years and as a result, the owners are gradually losing interest in investing money in this traditional industry of performing arts.

Only 61 of the 210 registered jatra parties could stage performances last season, he said, adding that the owners had incurred a loss of about seven crore taka in last two seasons because of the bans.

The Association Convenor said that this season the jatra owners took prior permission from the Deputy Commissioners of respective districts and accepted all pre-conditions set by the Home Ministry for staging performance. There was no complain of any violation of rules by any party, he added.

"We have staged healthy performances reflecting the Bengali culture and tradition but we cannot understand why the government put such a restriction again without showing any reason", Bilu told newsmen.

In this context, he referred to Jatiya Jatra Utsab at the Shilpakala Academy which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on January 4.

Narrating the hardships of jatra artists and many others involved in the industry, the association convenor demanded lifting of the restriction as well as formulation of an appropriate policy to save this popular form of art.

Replying to a question, Bilu said they are against any obscene dance on jatra stage and informed that they have no link with the sponsors who hire "princess" for performing such dances to attract spectators.

To another question, he said the owners would welcome if the government cancelled licence of any jatra party for staging obscene performances.

The association convenor said they had several meetings with the Home Minister, Social Welfare Minister and State Minister for Cultural Affairs and submitted memoranda to the authorities. But the government is still silent on the issue.

The Association would be compelled to go to the street to realise their demand if the government did not lift the ban on jatra performance within a week, he told a questioner.

Artillery barrage on in Nagorno-Karabakh

YEREVAN, Apr 16 Officials in the disputed enclave of Nagorno Karabakh declared a cease-fire Friday, but the Azerbaijan government said a fierce artillery barrage continued in the region, reports AP.

Previous attempts at a cease-fire in the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan have failed.

The Nagorno-Karabakh information department issued a statement monitored in Yerevan that said the cease-fire had started on Friday, and it invited international observers to monitor the truce.

But the ITAR-Tass news agency quoted the press office of the Azerbaijani government as saying that the strategic town of Fizuli in southern Azerbaijan near Iran came under heavy shelling by Armenian forces from inside Nagorno Karabakh.

It also said Armenia launched attacks on villages along the Armenian-Azerbaijani border, and four people were killed, according to ITAR-Tass.

There was no independent confirmation of the attacks.

Numerous mediation attempts have failed. The prime ministers of both countries cancelled talks in Moscow this week on settling the conflict.

Nagorno-Karabakh forces, reportedly backed by Armenia, captured the Kelbajar region of Azerbaijan this month, widening their control of the territory between Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia.

Azerbaijan had appealed to foreign countries to stop the offensive. Turkey sealed its border with Armenia, halted civilian and aid flights through its airspace and stopped grain shipments to Armenia.

Police rounded up 50 people from different parts of the city in last 24 hours on various charges, a DMP press release said yesterday, reports UNB.

The Midnight File

Pope, Ghali talk ME, Bosnia issues

VATICAN CITY, Apr 16: Pope John Paul II and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali discussed Bosnia-Herzegovina and Middle East peace moves at a 45-minute meeting here today. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro said Boutros-Ghali briefed the Pope on various UN initiatives, UN Security Council deliberations and the strengthening of the world body's moral authority, reports AFP.

15 killed as copter crashes in Afghanistan

KABUL, Apr 16: A military helicopter crashed Friday in central Afghanistan and killed all 15 people on board, including two Americans, aid workers said. John Lane, Director of a British-based charity that located the helicopter and recovered the bodies, said two of those killed were Americans. Further identification was being withheld pending notification of relatives. The helicopter crashed outside the mountain village of Pul-e-Khumrt, 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of Kabul, said Lane, Director of Halo Trust, reports AP.

Turkish jets join NATO operation

VICENZA (Italy), Apr 16: Turkey's 15 Friday joined the NATO operation enforcing a no-fly zone over Bosnia, and officials reported the third possible violation since enforcement began this week. The Turkish Foreign Ministry said NATO's military commander for Europe, Gen John Shalikashvili, had asked for the squadron of F-16s. It said 18 jets would be sent as soon as possible. The Turkish government has been under pressure at home to help fellow Muslims in Bosnia under Serb attack, reports AP.

Hasina's call to restore spirit of Liberation War

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina yesterday blasted the BNP government for what she called its partisanship, and undemocratic and anti-liberation activities, reports UNB.

In a message on the eve of Mujibnagar Day today Hasina called the people for restoring the spirit and values of the Liberation War by defeating the "present Pakistani and autocratic trend."

The Awami League President said, "We stand for truth and justice, we're for independence and economic emancipation of the people."

Criticising the government, she observed that the unbridled corruption, repressive measures on workers and farmers, price-hike of essential commodities and terrorism had disrupted the public life.

Recalling the eventful history that led to the War of Liberation, Hasina said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared independence on March 26, 1971 and asked the people to join armed struggle to liberate the country from the clutches of the Pakistani occupation army.

Immediately after the declaration of the independence, Bangabandhu was arrested by Pakistani military and detained in prison in erstwhile West Pakistan, the opposition leader said.

Besides, the government has not yet implemented the 4-point accord signed with the opposition in parliament on the trial of Golam Azam as war criminal and withdrawal of the case against the 24 personalities.

The opposition leader accused the ruling BNP of betraying with the historic joint declaration of the three alliances that envisaged an end to politics of killing and coup, scrapping of Indemnity Ordinance, institutionalisation of democracy, autonomy of the mass media and commitment to the spirit of the liberation.

Absconder captured after gunfight

By Staff Correspondent

A police constable and an absconder were injured when police and a group of gunmen exchanged shots at Free School Street, Dhanmondi, in the city Friday morning.

Following the incident, police arrested two persons, one of them, Mosharraf Hossain Mashu, who was evading arrest till then and recovered a revolver loaded with five rounds of bullets on the spot, said police.

The police constable Abdul Jalil and the absconder Mashu were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police said that on a tip they rushed to House No 77, Free School Street, Dhanmondi, at around 7 am yesterday to arrest Mosharraf Hossain Mashu.

"When we cordoned off the house, a group of youngmen opened fire to escape and we fired in return", said a police officer.

The gunmen managed to escape except Mashu and Labu who were arrested on the spot. Police also recovered the revolver from Mashu's possession, according to police.

Labu was detained in the Dhanmondi Police Station, said police.

DU student shot

By DMCH Correspondent

Unidentified gunmen fired on a student Moazzem Hossain, near Salmullah hall yesterday evening.

Hossain, a final year student of Political Science, Dhaka University, was a leader of Montu faction of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

Witnesses said that while Hossain was having tea at a stall near the hall, unidentified gunmen riding on a motorbike shot at him at around 7.30 pm yesterday. One bullet pierced through the left side of Hossain's chest.

Hossain was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) from where he was shifted to the Mohakhali Chest Diseases Hospital last night.

Heavy contingent of police was deployed at key points around the university as tension prevailed following the incident.

Police said that two gunmen who fled on the motorbike just after the incident could not be arrested.

However, attending doctors said that Hossain's condition was critical.

Jamaat

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Moulana Abdus Sobhan called for launching united movement to free Prof Azam. He said Prof Azam had always worked for the welfare of the people.

Kamruzzaman said the people would not accept any other than Islamic culture.

Abdul Kader Mollah said the legitimate share of Ganges water have to be demanded with firmness.