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DMCH is the lone place to go!

Hundreds of patients with head injuries die without treatment

By Naimul Haq

If a poor man has a traumatic head injury, the only place in the country where he can get emergency treatment is at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). Putting aside Chittagong and Rajshahi medi-cal college hospitals with lim-ited treatment facilities.

Unfortunately, the neurosurgery department at the hospital, where head and spinal cord injury patients are treated, is handicapped. It even lacks neurosurgical instruments and other basic facilities.

Moreover, head injury treatment has recently become expensive at Banghabandu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital. The admission and other treatment fees have been raised since it was turned into an autonomous body last

So. DMCH is the natural choice for most of the patients. The neurosurgery department at DMCH was found to be grappling with patients coming from every nook and corner of the country.

"Many patients die without getting proper treatment here and this is the reality." one of the doctors at the department said. The death rate for patients at the department is one of the highest in the hospital. On an average, about 10 patients die every week at the wards owing mainly to lack of care and facil-

The operation theatre (OT)

lacks the most essential tool-an operating table-- that helps keep a patient's head firmly in position so that head movement during operation is completely restricted.

Currently, the neurosurgeons are somehow 'managing the jobs'. "In absence of the table, we are using ordinary table as a substitute which is highly risky. A slight movement can lead to a patient's death or permanent disability because when we are operating we are dealing with nerve cells

which are interlinked with spinal cord and other parts of the body," said the doctor who preferred not to be named. He also said there is only one

operating room at the department. The department receives patients, mostly victims of road accidents, almost once in every two hours during daytime. The number is less at night. Since there is no other OT, many gravely injured patients needing immediate surgery have to wait until the OT is free. "In fact", he said, "many patients died simply because when they came the OT was occupied."

To make things worse, the only sucker machine to clean patient's breathing windpipe often goes out of order. The hospital workshop too ill-equipped to urgently repair the devices.

"In such a situation, we are often helpless. I have witnessed many patients die simply be-

cause we did not have the device in place on time," said another doctor, who also spoke on con-

dition of anonymity. The age-old OT lights also frequently go out of order. "The lights are vitally important during operations because neurosurgery involves complex works. At times we have to wait for engineers to fix the lights keeping dyeing patients wait-ing," said the other doctor.

"Head or spinal cord injury patients are very delicate to handle. The moment a patient arrives he or she should be attended immediately. Very sadly, on many occasions, patients with grave injuries are left alone bleeding for want of manpower or simply because the appropriate instrument is not available.

The male ward was found to be packed with patients lying on the floor in most of the time. In the other one, children and female patients were accommodated in a handful of beds in a corner of a staircase giving an impression that it has not been cleaned for ages.

"We can never guarantee a hygienic environment here. Almost all the mattresses are blood-stained, posing a greater risk of infection. Patients always run the risk of being infected with deadly micro-organisms," he added.

There are only three doctors

 one registrar and two assistant registrars available in addition to three neurosurgery consultants. But head of the department Dr Shafiq Uddin Ahmed thinks there should be at least five doctors to handle emergency cases.

"I have written to the authorities about the crisis of doctors since I joined a few weeks

Added Dr Ahmed, also a visiting consultant to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Australia, "The nurses working in neurosurgery department are supposed to be specially trained but none of them are. It puts me in great difficulties coping with such adversity."

Dr Ahmed's view on creating more posts for doctors was shared by his former senior colleague - a renowned neurosurgeon of the country Professor Ata Alahi who retired in September 1998.

put forward a proposal for strengthening the existing manpower in the department. But it never got any response." Alahi lamented. "The support service here is

"While I was in service I had

no doubt very miserable. People do not get what they want," said Dr Ahmed. When contacted, DMCH director Brigadier Badrul Munir

admitted that the department is

poorly equipped. "We are doing

our best to provide all we can

within the limited resources."

poverty awareness.



Not a snapshot from tinsel town

Sunil Dutt, the famed filmstar-turned-politician, takes a ride on a fiton, meandering through the streets in the Old Town. Now a member of the Loksabha, the lower house of Indian parliament, Dutt is on a visit to Bangladesh with Hands Across Borders, a group having representatives from India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh. As head of the team, Dutt is on a tour of the region to create anti-Star photo: AKM Mohsin

Doing it on their own

Power crisis forces factory owners to buy generators

By Rafiq Hasan

Many industrialists are installing their own power generation system at the factories to face the acute power crisis and meet emergency needs.

Frequent power failures, low voltage and heavy fluctuation in supply are causing damage to the machinery of the millsfactories and hampering production, according to sources in the industries. "Frustrated by frequent dis-

ruptions in power supply from the Power Development Board (PDB) installations, many heavy industrial enterprises. particularly private-owned and multinational ones, were compelled to set up their own power generation plants on the factory premises" one source said.

During a visit to Tongi industrial belt, the hub of more than 500 heavy industrial units, it was found that most of those had their own power generation system. They had to spend crores of taka for this as medium capacity generators suitable for industries cost

more than TK 50 lakh each. This additional expenditure increases production cost and thus decreases the competitiveness of local goods with foreign

goods, sources pointed out.

"We have almost abandoned consuming power supplied by the PDB and installed a generator spending more than Tk one crore" said Meraj Rahman.deputy manager of Akij Printing and Packages Ltd at Tongi Industrial Estate of

Most of the factories in

stalled high-powered 'continuous generator or kept a generator stand- by for meeting emergency needs. "We cannot depend on PDB supply as it goes off regularly

Tongi industrial area have in-

and sometimes fluctuates heavily," Meraj said. According to a monitoring

report by the industrial estate authorities, 12 big factories suffered a loss of around Tk 14 lakh in February this year only due to power failure. "Each of the factories faced

power cut off for 46 hours as it went off 22 times during the month," the report said. According to estate officials,

the situation is the same in other industrial units. There are as many as 131

running industries in the BSCIC estate established on 90 acres of land on the north bank of the Turag river.

Another suspect nabbed

Police continue hunt for killers of Jewel

By Staff Correspondent Police yesterday arrested red-handed.

one more suspect in connection with the murder of Jahangir Rashid Jewel from city's Malibagh area. The arrested was identified

as Mamunur Rahman of 517 Malibagh under the Ramna police station. Rahman's arrest raises thenumber of arrested in connec-

tion with the murder to three. Rafigul Hasan Bipu, a student of Public Administration at Dhaka University, and Nurul Islam, a student of Jaganath University College, were earlier arrested on March 27, two-days before Eid-ul-Azha, with fire arms when they tried to dump the dead body of Jewel at Sector No. 8, Uttara. Both were identified as the members of the Cha-

tra Dal. The youths carried the body in the trunk of a private car and dumped it near a slum in Uttara. Local people chased the youths and caught two of them

Shazneen rape trial

Court sees

prima facie

case

By Staff Correspondent

Nirjatan Daman Bishesh

Adalat (Court for Women and

Child Repression Prevention),

Dhaka fixed April 13 for fram-

ing charges of the sensational

charge of the accused in the

case, Judge Tapan Kumar Rudra

also turned down their bail

report of the victim and accused

Shahid's confessional state-

ment regarding the incident,

the judge in his order said.

"Since a prima facie case of rape

accompanied by murder is

found, so this special court,

meant to try all such cases, has

the exclusive jurisdiction to try

involvement of all the accused

in the alleged offence, so charge

be framed against them all," the

anouncement

Due to the Eid holidays Star

Weekend Magazine will not

be published today. We

regret inconvenience to our

order said.

"Since the record speaks of

prayers by defence lawyers.

Rejecting petitions for dis-

Referring to the post mortem

Shazneen rape case yesterday.

The judge of Nari O Shishu

The victim was the son of

Harunur Rashid, a retired colonel residing in 285 New DOHS, Mahakhali, Dhaka. Youngest among two brothers and a sister, the 18-year-old was an HSC student of Adamjee Cantonment College. According to police, Bipu

went to Jewel's residence. As Jewel came out of the house, Bipu with Nurul Islam and others forcibly took him to the Avijatrick Club at Malibagh. and strangulated him with an electric wire to death. After killing Jewel, they

gang put the dead body into the trunk of the car and set off towards Tongi. On their arrival near the House Building office, they were blocked by police, and the car took a right turn. Then the killers tried to dump the body near Sector No. 8, Uttara.

According to family sources the victim had problems with a businessman of Banani, which is may have led to the killing. Sources said Jewel had an affair with Sumi and they got married on August 26 last year. Later a businessman named Sohel several times asked Jewel to divorce his wife, but Jewel refused. Jewel's relatives after the

Eid day came to know about the incident, when police asked to identify the body at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital Nurul Islam was first sent to

the Dhaka Central Jail and then to the DMCH for treatment, while Bipu was taken for interrogation. Uttara police said Bipu will

be produced before the CMM's

court today and Kafrul thana

might seek his remand for fur-

ther interrogation. Three separate cases were lodged with Kafrul. Ramna and



PARIS. Apr 1: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former US Senator George Mitchell were named the winners of UN-ESCO's 1998 Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize today, reports AFP.

The two were designated in recognition of "their contribution to the resolution of conflicts in Bangladesh and Northern Ireland" by an international jury chaired by former

Hasina wins prestigious UNESCO prize

US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Sheikh Hasina in December 1997 signed a landmark peace deal with tribal leaders ending 22-year insurgency while Mitchell helped broker last year's historic Northern Ireland peace accord.

Kissinger said that with international conflicts on the wane, "the jury took into consideration the fact that internal conflicts of political, ethnic, religious or cultural origin predominate because of the difficulties of ensuring the peaceful coexistence of minorities within a single state."

The date and venue of the award ceremony will be announced later.

The prize, named after the late Ivorian head of state, carries 800,000 francs (122,000 eu-

Bus goes to Calcutta Tuesday The trial run of the direct before they return on April 10. on April 8. The Indian team will be led

bus service between Dhaka and Calcutta is scheduled to start on April 6, reports BSS.

The much awaited service is beginning under an agreement and a protocol signed by the governments of Bangladesh and India in New Delhi in February. An official of the Ministry of

Communications yesterday said that the delegation from Bangladesh led by Amanullah Chowdhury, Director BRTA, will leave Dhaka on the day for Calcutta. The delegation will hold talks with its Indian counterpart in Calcutta on April 7 where various issues related to the service, including the fare, will be taken up. It will return

Investment Forum

Opposition claim refuted

By Staff Correspondent

The government has made no suggestion to include representatives from the opposition in the official team being sent to the World Bank sponsored Investment Forum Meeting in Paris from April 21, according to a top official.

"We have not made any proposal to include leading opposition figures in the government delegation," the official informed The Daily Star when his attention was drawn to a BBC report yesterday He pointed out that partici-

pation of opposition representatives would have been a very positive step to enhance the image of the country. "We still look forward to their participation in Paris.

Some of them had participated in the Investors Forum Meeting held earlier in Dhaka," the offi-The World Bank had taken

the initiative to include opposition leaders at the Forum, which they declined, according to sources.

The delegation will include representatives from Bangladesh Road Transport (BRTC). Corporation Bangladesh Road Transport Au-

thority (BRTA), customs, immi-

gration and Parjatan Corpora-

tion, members of the police. owners of private transports and media personnel. "We have already received confirmation from the Indian side through our high commission in New Delhi about the date for the trial run," the offi-

cial said. A similar trial run from India will take place on April 8 when a delegation from Calcutta will follow the Bangladeshi team. The Indian

ALCWC meets

tomorrow

by S Goswami, Managing Direc-

tor of West Bengal Surface

expected that within a week of

the trial run, the commercial

operation of the bus service be-

tween the two countries will be-

The official added that it is

Transport Corporation Ltd.

A meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) will be held at 10 am tomorrow at Ganobha-

delegation will hold talks here ban, reports UNB. Khaleda set to reject

From page 1

faxes. The first such arrangement was made in July 1997 marking the completion of one year of the Hasina government.

The BTV authorities sent a letter to Khaleda Zia on March 22 inviting her to take part in the TV show. The letter also reguested Khaleda to let the authorities know of her convenient schedule for the programme by March 31, sources on both sides said.

Having no response from the opposition leader, BTV Director General wrote again on March 31 repeating his invitation and asking for a convenient date.

"It is expected that her (Khaleda's) participation in the programme would bear positive impact on proper practice of democracy and the desired accountability," reads the letter addressed to the personal secretary of Khaleda Zia, also the chairperson of BNP.

However, BNP sources said, the party chief was unwilling to participate in the BTV programme and a reply to that effect would be given in a couple of days.

"Our reply is likely to men-

tion BTV's maitreatment of BNP, belittling the opposition leaders and workers," said a central BNP leader, engaged in

drafting the reply. "The opposition leader may agree to take part in the programme only when the BTV gives up its partisan and biased role and operates neutrally and fairly," he said.

In 1997, BNP brought nine specific allegations against BTV and placed pre-conditions for Khaleda's participation. But she boycotted the programme after correspondence of several rounds of letters, and one round of discussion between the BTV and the BNP on the matter had

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is due to appear on the programme on April 5, in which she will answer questions from a four-member panel of experts comprising Mahfuz Anam, editor of The Daily Star: columnist Abed Khan, economist Devpriya Bhattachariya and business leader Laila Rahman Kabir. Questions from the audience in the auditorium and viewers across the country through phones and faxes would also be answered.

Defiant DB men

gasfield in the country.

Other than Occidental and

Cairn, two more oil companies-

-UMC and Okland -- are in an

advanced stage of gas explo-

ration. It is expected that these

From page 1

indirect.

hind the killing of Shafi even 30 hours after the victim was identified. The Criminal Investigation

Department (CID) alleged that DB officials are not co-operating with the investigating team. A high official at the CID office said the driving licence. which was found in a used plastic tea bag, was put in the water tank the very day it was recov-ered. He also added that victim Shafi, the driver, worked for the DB men. But they pretended that they did not know him at all after seeing the picture of the deceased in the driving licence.

Sources said Special Superintendent, Dhaka of CID Emamul Hossain Firoz, one of the members of the probe committee, has resigned from the committee. When contacted, the chairman of the probe committee said he did not receive any

resignation letter. Reached over telephone, Firoz, however, denied that he had resigned and said he was absent from the office due to sickness. It was learnt that one of the DB men summoned by the CID is his brother.

eration by DB in the investigation, the DC DB replied that the video tape of the recovery of the body filmed the tea bag with the driving license inside it. Chairman of the probe

that identity of the deceased will help find out the motive A high official of the CID said, "We have interrogated the wife and daughter of the de-

committee DIG Abul Kashem

Hawlader told The Daily Star

Meanwhile, Kabir, one of the main suspects of Shafi killing. was still at large. An order has been passed on to seize the microbus which Kabir bought from Shafi. It is believed that the vehicle is in possession of

Abul Hossain, uncle-in-law of Shafi, resented at the CID office that none of the prime suspects was arrested. Halima Khatun, wife of

Shafi, told journalists yesterday at her residence she did not know Kabir or Anwar, the canteen contractor at the DB office. She also denied visiting the DB office earlier. She claimed her husband was murdered at the DB office in a planned way. Meanwhile, Anwar was pro-

duced before the CMM's court yesterday and later taken on a five-day remand. The victim was buried at the

Mirpur intellectual graveyard yesterday afternoon.

der the second round block bidding are expected to start oil and gas exploration. These would create tremendous pressure on the national economy that lacks a gas utilisation

Instead of hammering on expansion of industrial base, building gas infrastructure, setting up new fertiliser and gasbased industries in harmony with the growing gas supply, a strong lobby is persuading the government to 'minimise the projected loss' by exporting gas

"Bangladesh's per capita power and gas consumption is among the lowest in the world and to make the economy strong enough, we must enhance their consumption . Gas export is good only if it does not affect our local unmet needs. But sadly, no body is talking about the unmet needs," an expert said.

A representative of an oil company said that no foreign company would bother about exporting gas if local consumption was ensured. "But we are afraid that there is a lack of vision about how best to consume gas and how to make the resource economically meaning-

"Its true that the gas under PSCs is expensive. But by utilising it properly, the nation can have enhanced earning," he said. Citing an example, he said that by setting up an Export Processing Zone like the Korean EPZ, sale of 200 MW of gasfired electricity could be ensured.

"The only thinking of the oil companies and the diplomatic lobbies is that gas has to be exported to earn dollars. None seems to see that we need gas to broaden our industrial base to such an extent that our economy would quickly move towards a take-off stage," said an expert involved with the private

Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry three years ago found out that the biggest threat to industrialisation in the country was poor supply of power --not hartal. "That should open our eyes," he

A study conducted by the

India by 7 wkts Sports Reporter

Pakistan beat India convincingly by seven wickets in the final group match of the trination tournament at Mohali vesterday. Both having confirmed their place in the final, the match, which saw India resting some of their key players, was more of academic interest.

Chasing India's modest score of 196, built around Saurav Ganguly's 57 and Robin Singh's 42. Pakistan were in trouble losing three wickets for 34 runs. But, Ijaz Ahmed and Inzamamul Haq played responsibly to steer Pakistan to victory. Pakistan scored 197 runs in

42 overs. ljaz and Inzamam shared a 163-run fourth-wicket partner-

The small suffer as the authorities sleep

A limping BSCIC watches industrial units in Rajshahi dying

By Nurul Kabir, back from Rajshahi Indifference on the part of different departments, security the government has been a ma-

Rajshahi district to its poten-Over the last ten years, at least 31 out of 166 industrial units under the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries (BSCIC), Rajshahi have turned

jor impediment to growth of the

small and cottage industries in

sick, sources say. But, there has not been any significant government initiative for enhancement of the industrial sector in the region. complain entrepreneurs based in the divisional headquarters

of Rajshahi. Opening of the Jamuna Bridge, which, many expected, would bring in change, has so far made little difference. According to some BSCIC officials, the small and cottage

industries in the area have

tremendous potential, if the in-

vestors are provided with certain package services including infrastructural support. "If we can ensure smooth operations in matters related to registration, bank loans, power supplies, payment of bills to

services and so on, nothing can stop the small industries from flourishing," says Morshed Manjur Hassan, an official at

At present, the BSCIC cannot

even ensure uninterrupted power supply to the factories. Its maintenance budget for the entire 1997-98 fiscal was only Tk. 20,000. Under the present circum-

the Rajshahi BSCIC.

stances, the owners are, and justifiably so, not that optimistic. "The actual number of sick factories is, perhaps, much

higher," says an owner of a successful unit in the BSCIC area. "The BSCIC considers an industrial unit sick, when its production goes below 50 per cent of its original capacity. But you cannot just consider a factory healthy when it is delivering 51 per cent of its potential."

Rafiqul Hassan Feroz, an executive committee member of the Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industries. strongly feels that construction of the Jamuna Bridge has really opened up possibilities for agro-

based industries in the northern districts.

"But there would be no growth of industries, if the investors are not provided with working capital. Besides, the government has to effectively control smuggling across the borders, which is a major im-

pediment to the industrialisa-

Of the recognised sick industrial units, eight belongs to the category of engineering, six foods and allied factories, six textiles, two chemical and pharmaceuticals, one forest and ailed, one glass and ceramics, while two belongs to others' group.

tion in the area," he says.

All the five factories that fall under the category of Tannery and leather have also turned sick.

Twenty-nine of the 31 sick units were set up, on bank loans, during the 1980s. According to some BSCIC officials, most of the owners were either inexperienced or had dubious intentions.

"Many of them used political influence to get the plots at that time," admits one official.

"Some of the healthy units also fell sick at different points of time, but they have eventually recovered by switching over to other sectors," says the estate officer of the BSCIC, Rajshahi. "Especially, the silk factories are doing well." According to sources in the

Rajshahi BSCIC, the 'successful ventures' fall under seven categories: food and allied (40); textiles (36); engineering (31); chemical and pharmaceuticals (15); printing and packaging (4); forestry and allied (4); glass and ceramics (1); and others (4). Under the food and allied

category, fall automatic rice mills, flour mills, bakery and traditional rice mills. In textiles, all the factories are in silk production. In engineering, all are Leith and wielding factories. Under the chemicals and pharmaceuticals group, all but one produce ayurvedic medicine, while in the forestry and allied sector all are saw mills.

(With Abdul Wadood in Rajshahi) (Related story on Page 11)

valued readers. **Prayer Timings** April 2

Azan Jamaat 5-30 5-35 Fajr 12-15 Jumma 1-20 4-30 4-35 Maghrib 6-20 6-23 7-35 7-30 Source: Islamic Foundation

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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Uttara police stations in this connection. Gear up gas consumption

Sangu field developed by Cairn and the Jalalabad field by Occiing in the country are particudental -- are supplying gas to the larly keen about increase in gas National Grid. Within a few consumption to be sure that their investments could be reyears, Occidental may start gas production from Bibiana-- uncovered, as was outlined in agreements with the governofficially said to be the biggest

new fields developed by foreign oil companies. The gas is costly and experts say it should be used judiciously to ensure highest economic return-- direct or

Due to lack of gas consump-

tion plans. Bangladesh is find-

ing it tough to pay for gas from

four companies would add new gasfields in the next four to five Simultaneously, the oil

Presently, only two gasfields companies which may sign PSCs with the government ununder PSCs -- the offshore

Asked about the non-coop-

behind the killing. ceased and investigation was proceeding .

Kabir.

Pakistan beat