

Proper treatment saves Chandra Banu from Arsenic poisoning

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Only four months of special treatment has brought back 57-year-old Chandra Banu from her deathbed to her own feet again.

The once ailing woman has recovered almost completely from severe arsenic-related ailments. Only a year ago Chandra Banu, from village Devpur of Chandpur sadar thana, was hardly able to walk. The poor widow spent most of her time in bed because she could not move her limbs due to severe pain. She also had constant headache and frequently threw up all that she ate. Banu consulted the doctor in her village several times but he couldn't cure her.

Pigmentation on my palms and foot developed about a year ago. I noticed they were spreading all over and I became weaker and weaker as they spread out. At one stage my skin started to crack," Banu told the Daily Star yesterday.

"At one stage I realised that I was going to die, so I gave up all hope and stopped taking food. I spent most of my time in bed," recalls the old woman.

In mid July this year Banu was picked up by officials of Earth Identity Project which is implementing arsenic mitigation programmes in four thanas of Chandpur district using 'STAR' technology. Nasrin R Karim, Director General of the project says "When I first saw her she could not even walk properly. She was pale and fragile and hardly able to talk. I thought she was going to die. We decided to bring her to capital and treat her to see if anything happened."

It was later found that Banu had been drinking from a tubewell near her thatched house that has arsenic levels in it several times higher than that the level of 50 parts per billion (ppb) allowed for human consumption.

Skin specialist Dr Syed Nasirullah of Dhaka Community Hospital has been treating Banu. "She had severe malnutrition when they brought her in so naturally she was in poor shape. She also had keratosis and melanosis, which refer to pigmentation and cracking of the skin. I believe she



Chandra Banu showing her hands, free of the spots commonly seen in arsenic poisoning victims, after the treatment session.

had extensive exposure to arsenic poisoning," says Dr Nasirullah. "I prescribed vitamins, spirulina and a diet rich in protein and lots of nutritious food for her. Combination of these contributed to the reversal process very fast and she now shows 'signs of considerable improvement'."

"Banu has no symptoms of cancer and she is getting better everyday," Dr Nasirullah added. Officially, 8500 people have been identified as arsenic patients, most of who have similar symptoms as Banu. Officially about 30 million people are at risk of drinking arsenic contaminated water in 61 districts in the country.

Earth Identity Project officials said that about 98 per cent of the tubewells in Chandpur are badly contaminated by arsenic. Currently there is no official protocol or standard for management of arsenic patients in the country. Most arsenic patients, according to reports, are misdiagnosed for common skin diseases. Banu's recover is a hope for thousands who suffer similar sufferings from cure of arsenic poisoning. Experts feel that the government should immediately introduce such specialised treatment for these kind of patients since it has been seen that they can be cured.

SURR locks administrative offices at JU

JU CORRESPONDENT

The activists belonging to the 'Students' Unity for Resistance to Rapists' (SURR) locked all administrative offices at the Jahangirnagar University (JU) yesterday, disrupting all academic and administrative activities.

Yesterday was the 43rd day of the indefinite strike enforced by the SURR to press for their seven-point demands. The SURR has been agitating since August 5 demanding punishment to those involved in the rape incidents. As the authorities did not pay any heed, the SURR decided to go for tougher action programmes.

The SURR activists locked all offices in the Administrative Building at 7.00 am yesterday. University officials and employees could not enter their offices as the activists prevented them at the gates of the building.

Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Bayes called a meeting of the teachers at his residence at 9.30 am to discuss the prevailing situation.

Terming SURR movement 'illegal' and 'illogical', the meeting warned that punitive action would be taken against the SURR activists, if they continue to disrupt administrative activities.

Later, the SURR brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus at noon.

Addressing the rally, the SURR leaders alleged that the authorities are creating session jam by not meeting their demands soon. "We want the authorities to oust the rapists from the campus", they said.

They also alleged that the authorities are patronising the rapists, killers and other terrorists and taking action against the general students who are struggling for a terrorism-free peaceful campus.

Meanwhile, ICD will also go for action programme today to press their one-point demand for resignation of VC. The four-day ultimatum issued by the ICD for resignation of VC ended yesterday.



State ministers (top) and the deputy ministers (above) of the new government take oath at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

WEATHER TODAY

Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Dhaka, Rajshahi, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Khulna division in 12 hours till 6 pm today.

Little change in day temperature is expected over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Country's highest temperature recorded yesterday was 33.0 degree Celsius at Mongla and lowest 22.8 degree at Srimongol.

The sun sets in the capital today at 5.36 pm and rises tomorrow at 5.55 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

Table with columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Cities include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

DHAKA TODAY

News items including Seminar (Shobar Janyo Shasthyo), Blood donation programme, NBIF meeting, and Film show.

STOCK

TODAY'S TRADED ISSUES OCTOBER 10, 2001

Large table containing stock market data for October 10, 2001. It includes sections for 'Day's Market - October 10, 2001' and 'Non Traded Issues'. The 'Day's Market' section lists various indicators like All Share Price Index, Total Turnover, and lists of traded issues with their prices and changes. The 'Non Traded Issues' section lists companies that did not trade, including Bank, Investment, Engineering, and Food & Allied.