

Groaning, they go back untreated

New 50-bed burn unit yet to open at DMCH

MIZANUR KHAN

Patients with serious burns lie on the floor and corridors of the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), as it has yet to provide inpatient service.

"We lack a modern operating theatre at this unit, patients with severe burns are kept waiting for long and most finally leave without proper treatment," a nurse said.

The modern 50-bed unit, the first ever in a government hospital, was scheduled to be launched last December to overcome the dearth of treatment to inpatients.

But the inauguration did not see the light of day because of what officials called red tape, shortage of staff and medical equipment and is confined to treating only outpatients.

An average of 10 patients comes in for treatment a day. "Patients with second and third degree burns are forced to leave after first-aid treatment at the emergency department," a DMCH source said.

Kakon, a 7-year old girl with severe burns on her back, from Shahajahanpur was brought by her mother who said: "We wanted to admit her to the hospital but there is no room."

"We have only eight beds. But we have many more patients who come in with burns from fire, chemicals and

electric shock. How can we cater to all?" said a doctor in frustration.

"I do not receive treatment on time and my condition is worsening," said another patient Poly Begum, tears welling up in her eyes. The 35-year-old was burnt while cooking.

Considering the increasing pressure of patients, the health department decided to set up the separate state-of-the-art burn unit at a cost of Tk 6.4 crore.

"Although 58 doctors and other officials have already been appointed, we can not start as 15 supporting employees like cleaners and guards could not be appointed as yet," Dr Samanta Lal Sen, head of the unit, told Star City.

"The newly constructed 3-storey building is ready, we are just waiting for the inauguration and the additional staff," he added.

The unit is likely to provide training and research opportunities as well for interns turning the unit into an institute.

"The poor come from distant villages cannot be treated properly; some of them need to be operated on immediately. We cannot ask them to go back. We seem as handicapped as the patients are in this unit," said Dr Sayed Shamsuddin Ahmed who joined the unit as associate professor on his return from the US.

Professor Sen, an eminent plastic surgeon and unit head said there are only nine plastic surgeons in the country to treat almost 1.5 lakh people who get burnt every year.

He also commented that there are no expert nurses to dress wounds although nursing is very important for burn injury treatment.

Officials alleged the Central Medical Store Depot did not provide furniture and equipment for the unit. Earlier, substandard furniture was bought at high prices, sources alleged.

The unit also lacks security, as there is no compound wall around. "Thieves can steal equipment or furniture anytime from the unit," an official said.

The unit has no separate front entrance: hospital employees occupied the only space where a gate could be constructed.

Aided by high officials of the hospital, some workers allegedly grabbed land.

"Although there is a mosque, they have constructed another on the premises with land grabbing intent," a worker said.

The DMCH has now planned to inaugurate the unit next month. Contacted, DMCH Director Nazmul Huda said:

"We could not arrange to have all the equipment yet. We received anaesthesia machine a few days ago. We cannot take the risk of operating the unit without being fully equipped."



A few get treatment as DMCH has only eight beds for burn patients.

SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

High-rise malls to replace DCC's old markets

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has decided to build multistoried commercial blocks in place of its old crumbing markets with a view to provide modern facilities to businessmen and also to compete other modern shopping malls.

"Eighteen old DCC markets have been preliminarily identified as potential spots and tenders have been floated seeking proposals for the multistoried structures from local construction firms," said the executive engineer of DCC's Bazaar Circle.

The construction would be completed on long term settlement basis. Most of the new

shopping centres will be 12 to 24 storied structured ones based on the location and the feasibility report of the markets. From basement to fifth floor the ownership will be totally DCC's. From fifth floor onwards construction firms would get lease of floors for 99 years.

According to the conditions, the DCC won't have to pay for construction costs as the firms will invest in everything and will realise the expenditure through rental and advance payment for the shops.

DCC will be responsible for the management and maintenance of the markets and will get a share of the profit from the construction firms.

The present shop owners have also responded positively to the

reconstruction plan.

"We have come to an understanding with the shop owners that they would be rehabilitated after the reconstruction and based on that consensus we selected the markets," said the executive engineer.

The multistoried markets will have modern facilities like escalators, elevators, 24-hour generators, kids corner etc. The construction period has been estimated at two to two and a half years.

"We will sign a contractual agreement with all the shop owners before going for the construction," said the executive engineer.

The proposed markets to go for reconstruction are: Mohakhali Community Com-

plex, Gulistan Trade centre, Karwan Bazar Parking cum Commercial Complex, Poribagh DCC market, Polashi Market cum Commercial Bhaban, Buriganga Market cum Commercial Bhaban at Sadarghat, Townhall Square of Mirpur-10, Khilgaon Railway Market, Gulshan Centre Point at Gulshan-2 and Gulshan-2 Complex, Hairat Shah Ali Market at Mirpur, Rayerbazar, City Trade Centre at Gulshan-1 and Mohammadpur Townhall Market.

DCC will also increase some markets up to the 10th floor. These markets are ABC Block of Kaptanbazar Complex, Banani Shopping Complex and ABC Block of Fulbaria City Super Market-2.

Mohakhali Community

City cops to learn manners, at last

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has undertaken a scheme to motivate officers in the 22 police stations to be courteous to visitors.

As per the scheme, DMP commissioner Ashraf Huda will meet with all Sub-Inspectors (SI) and Assistant Sub-Inspectors (ASI) of the 22 police stations.

"As part of the programme I met with a group of SIs and ASIs and asked them to give patient hearing to those who visit the police stations. If necessary entertain them with cups of tea or glasses of sarbat (lime juice)," Ashraf Huda told journalists at

a exchange of views programme at Rajarbagh telecom auditorium last week.

The commissioner said he would meet with all the SIs and ASIs in two weeks, stating that the government agreed to provide funds to entertain visitors. Earlier, no such funds were given to the police stations by the government.

Huda said incidents of crime have decreased in 2003 in comparison to 2002. He said that a total of 16,897 criminal cases were lodged in the DMP area in 2002 while the number of such cases was 16,420 in 2003.

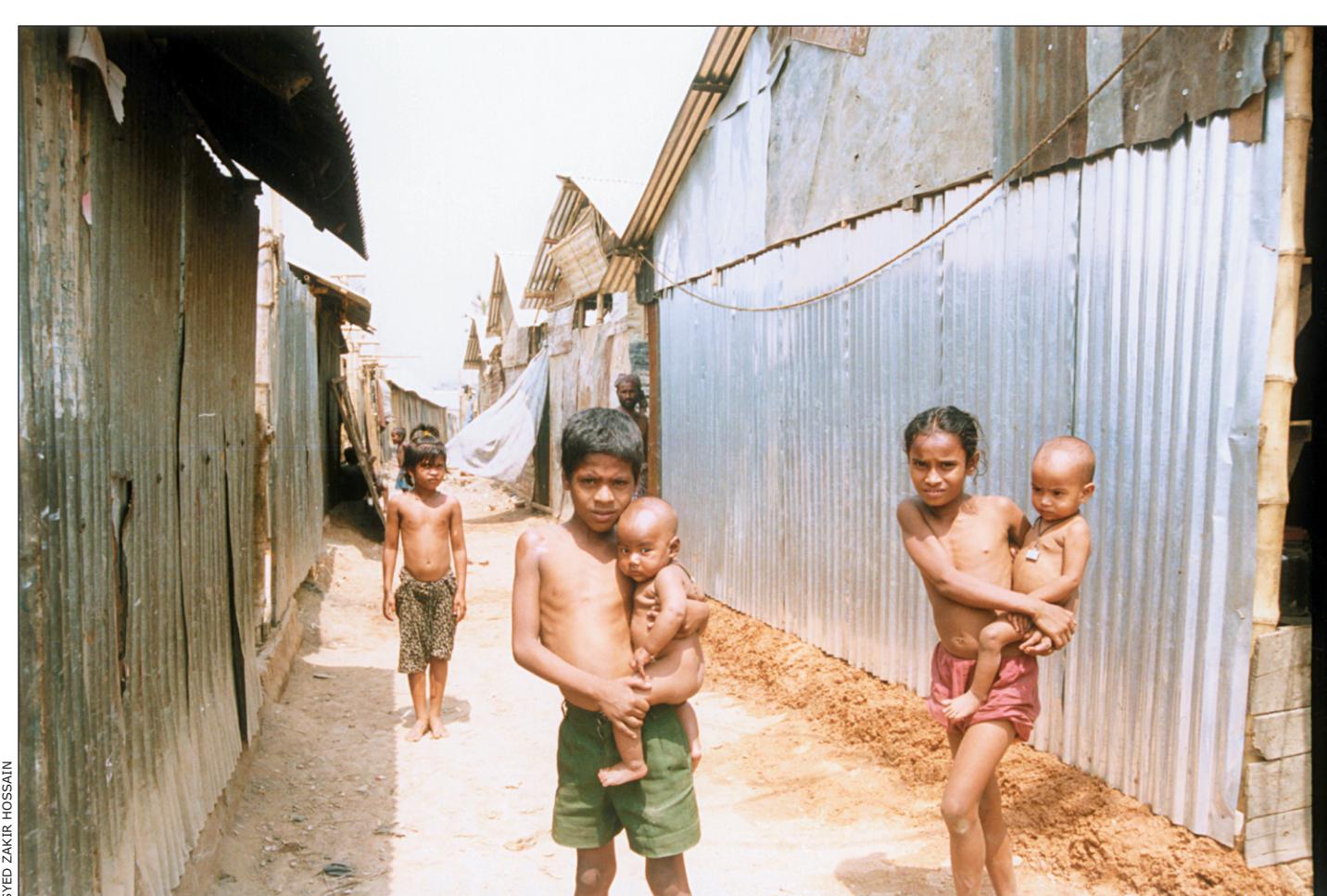
He also said that 388 people were murdered in 2002 while the number was 323 in 2003, sixty five less than that of the

previous year.

The commissioner said incidents of abduction were 152 in 2003 against 175 in 2002, rape were 225 in 2003 against 219 in 2002, acid throwing were 12 in 2003 against 16 in 2002 and 60 incidents of child repression took place in 2003 while the number of child repression was 57 in 2002.

Mentioning the special drive in all 90 wards by 100 plain-cloth policemen and functioning of 20 mobile courts, Ashraf Huda said the drive has so far yielded good results.

He insisted on continuing the special drive and functioning of the mobile courts.



Korail fire victims go without relief, water and medicine.

Left to fight battle on their own

BISHAWJIT DAS

Twenty-five days into a fire that gutted about 5,000 shanties and killed nine people at Korail in Gulshan, 25,000 inhabitants are living without clean water, medicine and other amenities.

Soon after the fire, governmental and non-governmental organisations came forward to help the survivors with clothes and food, but such relief attempts were temporary. The slum dwellers are left to fight their battles on their own.

Water supplies in the slum area remain snuffed since the fire broke out on March 4, as Wasa (Water and Sewerage Authority) did not repair the

damaged water pipes.

The slum people buy water at Tk 1 a pitcher from six points. "I need around 10 pitchers of water every day and it is going on," Samsun Nahar said.

Some slum dwellers took an initiative to bring water into the slum from surrounding areas through plastic pipes. People wait in line with their pitchers and buckets in hand, but the supply is not continuous.

The Coalition for the Urban Poor along with Radda, Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition and Dusthya Swasthya Kendra provided medical aid for them. The first phase of their programme ended on March 25 and will build at least 45 latrines for the slum dwellers. They treated 100

slum dwellers a day, who came to the medical camp to treat water-related and other diseases.

Their second phase will start from April 1 with household materials such as mosquito nets and kitchen utensils to be provided for 300 families.

The governmental and non-governmental organisations focussed more on publicity than real help, the victims alleged. The relief programme that the ruling and opposition parties promised continued only three days, although they committed to providing for seven days.

The relief programme that Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina inaugurated on March 20 fizzled out, as the party leaders allegedly stopped the

aid right after she left the scene. "I waited seven long hours to get my relief, but returned empty-handed though I had the slip," Shah Alam Fakirsaid.

Nazma Rahman, AL's secretary for relief and disaster management, denied the allegation. "We provided the relief for the dwellers we listed as destitute," she added.

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Chowdhury Kamal Iqbal Yusuf promised house-building materials such as tin and bamboo with food and clothes, when he visited the slum area on March 5. But the dwellers claimed they did not get house-building materials yet.