

1. General Government expenditure on health as % of total expenditure on health, 2000	36.4
2. General Government expenditure on health as % of total general government expenditure, 2000	7.1
3. Per capita government expenditure on Health at average exchange rate (US\$), 2000	5

A solution to water crisis

NAIMUL HAQ, Back from Cox's Bazar

For more than 3,000 people in a remote village of Satghoria in Whaikhyang, some 65km from Cox's Bazar, finding fresh drinking water is a fortune.

Satghoria is not a place where one can install a tubewell few feet down and pump out pure drinking water like in the rest of the plain land where groundwater for drinking is easy to find.

Geologically Whaikhyang is located in high altitude so the groundwater table is not so easily accessible. Even reaching deeper aquifers for safe water is often very difficult on one hand, and on the other, expensive.

But the reason why tubewells are not popular, like in the plain land, is salinity and contamination of the groundwater by naturally occurring arsenic.

Just a few hundred yards from Satghoria is river Naf that separates Bangladesh from Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal is also not too far.

Considering its physical features it is quite natural to believe Whaikhyang should have plenty



of drinking water and water crisis for the residents of about 70 villages is unrealistic but the hard reality is quite different.

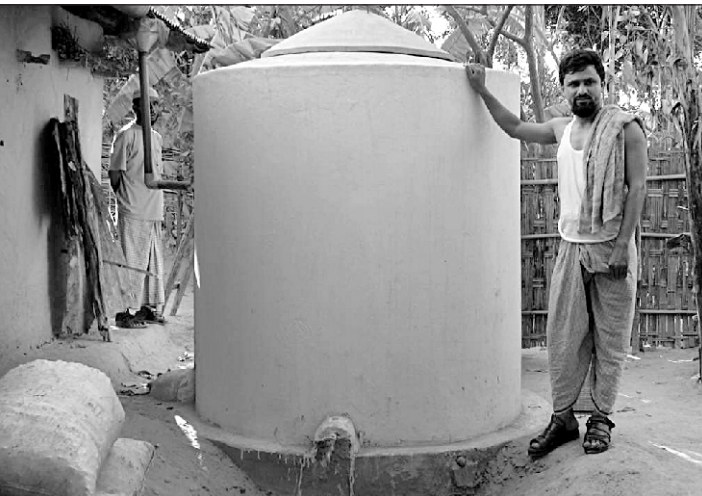
Women walk miles up and down hills to fetch fresh and saline free water to be preserved for days, often weeks. Such ancient practice may puzzle many but it is the custom there for decades.

"We cannot afford to drink water as often as we want. Water is very scarce here so we ration it like in the army. Every drop is

precious to all," said Abdul Malek, a religious teacher at a local mosque.

"My wife along with a few other neighbours go out once a week to fetch water from a distant deep tubewell used for irrigation. In fact, that is the closest source of fresh drinking water from Satghoria," said Khashem Mia, standing next to his hill-top thatched house.

The crisis is indeed so acute in Whaikhyang that even open



water bodies dry up. A barren dugwell next to a small mosque is a testimony of the crisis. It is seven years now the well proved it has no practical use.

"We were very hopeful of the primitive technology but no one drank a single drop from that well," said Kader, an old man in the neighbourhood.

Further down a cluster of villages on a hilltop face same fate water crisis.

"Often we are forced to drink

saline water but it is risky. We drink saline water only when crisis arises," said Fatema Begum.

To bring solution to the problem a local non-government NGO in collaboration with NGO Forum for Drinking Water & Sanitation has constructed a simple technology that holds rainwater in a big cement tank.

A total of six such community based water tanks known as the Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) has been constructed at individual

household to provide drinking water for roughly 20 families from each RWH.

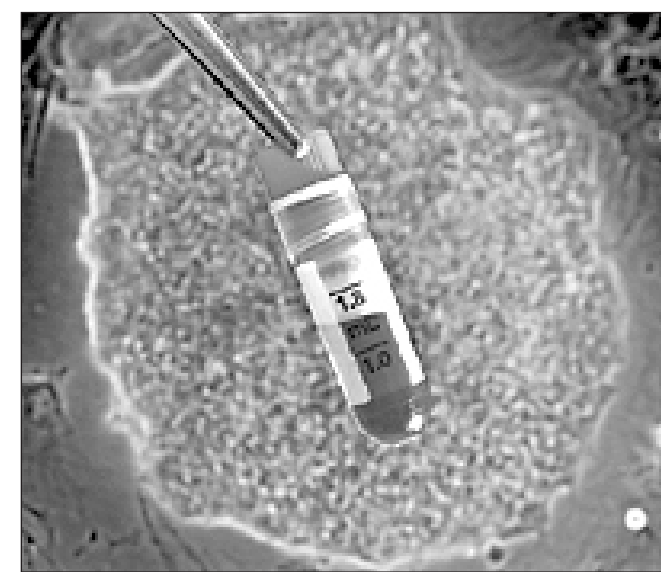
Ahmad Ullah Faruki, executive director of Ideal Society for Health and Development Organisation ISHDO, a partner community based organisation (CBO) of NGO Forum said, "The technology is simple and has great demand. When we first built one it created a sense of urgency among neighbourhood in the area. So based on their demand we planned for more."

Setara, a housewife, who owns, on behalf of her community a 40,000 litre tank built by the ISHDO, said it cost Tk 59,000 but we paid 20 per cent of the total cost.

Such community-based tanks are now only choice for the time being for the people of the locality to depend on for drinking water.

ISHDO has a target to cover, this year, another 300 families of the village through village development committee.

NGO Forum has been working in the areas in partnership with local NGOs since 2000. It built 10 RWH each capacity of 32,000 litres in the region.



An ampoule for stem-cell storage was displayed at the US Stem Cell Bank north of London this week.

Britain opens World's first Stem Cell Bank

The world's first embryonic stem cell bank opened in Britain Wednesday last, breaking new ground in one of the most controversial areas of medical research.

The bank aims to store and supply stem cell lines -- strings of identical cells -- for research and possible treatment of conditions like diabetes, cancer and Parkinson's. Its store of cell lines is expected to number tens of thousands.

But opponents say such research involves the "wanton creation and destruction of human life" and have condemned the bank as a storage site for dead babies.

Stem cells are master cells in the body that have the capability to transform into new cells or tissue.

They can be taken from adults and discarded umbilical cords but those from embryos are considered especially powerful because each one has the potential to become any sort of cell or tissue in the body at all.

Researchers believe they offer a potentially revolutionary way to repair diseased and damaged body tissue, although more research is needed to understand exactly how they work.

Anti-abortion groups argue that the bank is unethical because the extraction of stem cells from human embryos

violates the human rights of the embryos.

Patrick Cusworth, spokesman for the LIFE anti-abortion group, argued that stem cell research reduces human life to "little more than a pharmaceutical product" and holds out "false hopes of cures for sufferers of debilitating conditions."

"Using human embryos as a tissue source is unethical, unnecessary and dangerous," he said. "Science must exist to benefit humanity -- not the other way round."

The bank, in Hertfordshire, southern England, will be funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council.

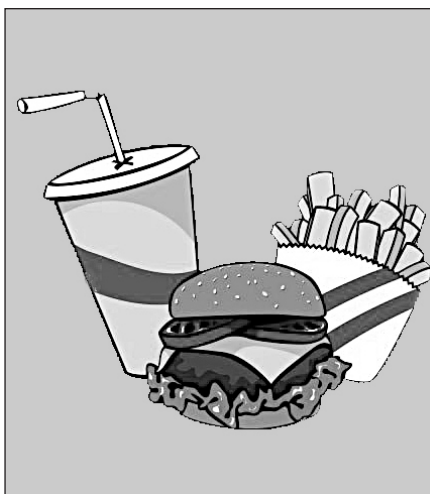
"Stem cell research offers real promise for the treatment of currently incurable diseases," Professor Colin Blakemore, Chief Executive of the MRC, said in a statement.

"The bank will ensure that researchers can explore the enormous potential of this exciting science for the future benefit of patients."

The bank's first two stem cell lines were developed separately by researchers at King's College London and the Center for Life in Newcastle, northern England.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com>

Fast-food breakfast may inflame blood vessels



Dr. Catherine Adams, corporate vice president of worldwide quality at McDonald's and a registered dietician cautioned against reading too much into the findings.

The normal metabolic response to eating involves some inflammation and the production of molecules called oxygen free radicals. Any heavy meal, compared with water, will generate a much greater inflammatory response, Adams noted.

And no one advocates regularly consuming a 900-calorie fast-food breakfast.

However, Aljada said additional research suggests that it is not the size, but the content of the breakfast that may be the problem when it comes to inflammation in the blood vessels.

He said he and his colleagues found that 900 calories' worth of an American Heart Association (AHA)-endorsed breakfast high in fruit and fiber did not produce the inflammatory responses seen with the fast-food breakfast.

"The number of calories is not the issue," Aljada said. "It's the type of food."

There may be something about the metabolism of fat, for example, that spurs significant inflammation, according to the researcher.

In past studies, he and his colleagues found that both pure glucose (sugar) and fat trigger greater inflammatory responses than protein does. The AHA-based breakfast, while high in carbohydrates, contains complex, fiber-rich carbs, as well as antioxidant vitamins that may ward off inflammation, Aljada explained.

For the new study, the researchers gave

nine adults the fast-food breakfast and another eight a glass of water after an overnight fast. They took blood samples before the meal or drink, then again one, two and three hours afterward.

The blood samples showed that in the fast-food diners, markers of inflammation and free-radical production rose and remained high for hours after the meal.

Chronic inflammation is key in the development of the artery disease atherosclerosis, a hardening and narrowing of the arteries that can lead to heart attack and stroke. Aljada said that the concern is that, over time, repeated inflammatory responses like those seen in the study could lead to chronic inflammation in the blood vessels.

He said his advice to fast-food fans is to "eat moderately."

"And," the researcher added, "you may want to look into eating more fruit and fiber."

Adams echoed the call for moderation, saying fast-food fare can fit into a balanced diet. Ordering that Egg McMuffin with a glass of orange juice-rich in free radical-squelching antioxidants is one way to strive for better balance, she noted.

Aljada said he and his colleagues are studying the inflammatory effects of other types of food as well, including Atkins-style high-fat, high-protein meals, and foods with a high glycemic index. Foods in this latter group are digested quickly to glucose and cause a swift surge in blood sugar; they include carbohydrates such as white bread and potatoes.

Source: <http://www.amjclinutrition.com>

Sodas raise cancer risk

Carbonated drinks may raise the risk of esophageal cancer, a usually fatal disease, researchers reported.

Several studies presented at a meeting of cancer and gastrointestinal experts in New Orleans showed that what people eat and drink could affect a range of cancers.

A team at Tata Memorial Hospital in India found a strong correlation between the rise in per capita consumption of carbonated soft drinks in the past 50 years and a documented increase in rates of esophageal cancer in the United States. Team members studied U.S. Department of Agriculture data.

The number of esophageal cancer cases clearly followed the rise in intake of carbonated soft drinks, the researchers found.

That could be coincidence, but they also found research that showed a possible biological basis for the effect. Carbonated soft drinks cause the stomach to distend, which in turn causes the gastric reflux associated with esophageal cancer. The researchers found similar trends worldwide.

"The surprisingly strong correlation demonstrates the impact of diet patterns on health trends," Dr. Mohandas Mallath, who led the study, said in a statement.

But another study showed a potential benefit from drinking coffee and other caffeinated beverages.

A team at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease (U.S.) studied people with a high risk of liver problems and found those who drank more caffeine had fewer

liver abnormalities.

They surveyed 5,944 adults at high risk for liver damage because of heavy drinking, hepatitis infection, iron overload or obesity.

The more coffee they drank, the more likely they were to have normal liver function, the researchers found.

"These results warrant further study," said Dr. James Everhart, who helped lead the study.

Source: <http://www.reuters.com>



Head injury in children has lasting impact

Children with even mild head injury may be at risk for long-term complications, including personality changes and behavioral and learning problems, according to a new study from the UK.

"Many children with mild injury do not receive routine follow-up after discharge home from hospital, yet a significant proportion of them do have some lasting problems which may affect their behavior and ability to learn," Dr. Carol A. Hawley of the University of Warwick in Coventry told.

"This may put them at a disadvantage at school," Hawley said.

To identify children suffering from the lingering effects of a head injury, Hawley's team is working on a questionnaire that physicians could send to parents after children with head injury are sent home from the hospital.

Children found to be at risk of problems could be offered a follow-up assessment, Hawley said. If necessary, children could be referred to an appropriate health professional, such as an educational psychologist, the UK researcher said.

Hawley's study included more than 500 children who had experienced a head injury over a 6-year period.

"We asked parents to tell us what changes they noticed in their child after the head injury, and what follow-up they had received from clinicians," Hawley explained.

The researchers also received questionnaires from a control group of parents of 45 children who had not had a head injury.

"Even after a mild head injury, one in five children had a change in personality according to their parents," Hawley said.

Parents often described the personality change as "like having a different child" than before the head injury, according to Hawley.

And 43 percent of children with mild head injury had behavioral or learning problems that led to them being described as having a "moderate disability," she said.

Among children with more serious head injuries, about two thirds had moderate disability, and about half experienced a major change in personality after the head injury, Hawley said.

All of the children in the study had been treated in a hospital after having a head injury, but only 30 percent of parents said that doctors at the hospital had made a follow-up appointment for their child. In fact, 161 of the 252 children with moderate disability did not receive any follow-up care, according to the report in the May issue of the Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry.

"It is likely that there are considerable numbers of children in the community, and back at school, who have suffered a head injury in the past and who might have subtle but important difficulties relating to that head injury," Hawley said.

Source: <http://www.journalofneurology.com>

Hope for the heart patients in Bangladesh

Emperor of hearts



Dr. Jahangir Kabir

ZAM KHAIRUZZAMAN

It was January 1, 2004. Yakub Ali, a freedom fighter who fought valiantly for the liberation of his motherland in 1971, was fighting for his life at Bed No 14, Ward No 6 of National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute at Mirpur in

Dhaka, a private hospital providing heart care.

He was admitted to the hospital with 90 per cent blockage of his coronary arteries. Literally his life was on the line and his near and dear ones were passing tense moments.

In such a situation the hospital's chief cardiac surgeon Dr Jahangir Kabir, told them to have trust in Allah and himself and he assured them that he would try his best while 'the rest depends on the Almighty Allah.' The surgeon's soothing words brought hope for Yakub and his family. Dr Jahangir told them that he took the case as a challenge.

As per schedule, Dr Jahangir took ailing Yakub inside the operation theatre. The entire family waited in front of the operation theatre for several hours. At one stage Dr Jahangir called Dr Rokon, a relative of Mr Yakub in the operation theatre to discuss something which Dr Rokon did not disclose immediately after his return from the operation theatre. Later, he disclosed that Yakub was clinically dead for a couple of moments during the operation period. "Thank Allah", Jahangir Kabir revived his pulse by applying the massage technique.

On the operation day, Yakub's wife Sakina lost appetite due to overwork and tension. But for the

sake of the request of her relatives she went to the canteen. When she was about to take food, a family member rushed there to tell her to meet right now Dr Jahangir in his chamber in the operation theatre. A bit nervous, Sakina ran down to Dr Jahangir's chamber as if like a lifeless human being. At her sight, tears rolled down Dr Jahangir Kabir's cheeks. He thanked Allah and informed that Yakub responded positively. 'Shukur Alhamdulillah', murmured Sakina.

'But the pumping rate of your husband's heart is very slow. It came down to merely 30 percent. I won't take any risk. An Intra Aortic Balloon Pump (IABP) is badly needed which will help increase the pumping rate,' Dr Jahangir said to her. She at once handed over him the entire amount of the expensive balloon pump. The pump worked properly and Yakub recovered fast.

'How did you sleep?' Dr Jahangir asked Yakub inside the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). 'I slept well,' Yakub replied who stayed there for three days. Afterwards he was shifted to the Post-operative ward from where he was released on the sixth day.

A few days later this correspondent met Dr Jahangir at his hospital chamber. There he asked "What is the mystery of your success?" He said

most humbly "A patient's trust on his surgeon is most important and a surgeon's professionalism matters most." Kabir revealed he does not do private practice, even on Eid days he attends patients.

While replying to a query on the tendency of heart patients here to go to India, he told "It is due to the lack of information and wrong conception about the facilities available in our country." "The package of an open-heart surgery in his hospital is Tk 90,000 which is much below the cost in any Indian hospital, he said.

To substantiate his statement he told that he even operated many patients refused by famous Indian heart surgeons. "All of them are in good health," he asserted.

"In your opinion what is the real surgery?" asked this correspondent. He replied "Children's surgery is the real surgery." "About 18 percent of child patients here are born with heart problems," he said pleading for much more attention and care to children who are 'our best assets.'

Surgeons like Dr Jahangir changed the previous notion. 'Once sufficiently paid, Bangladeshi doctors can do miracles', Dr Jahangir mentioned.