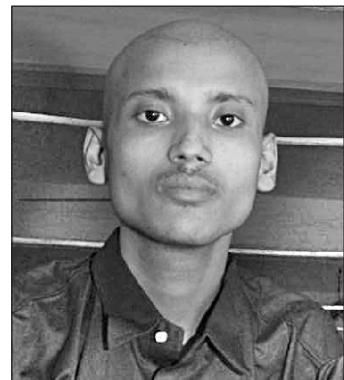


Double blow to blood cancer patients

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN



Alauddin, a 17-year-old schoolboy from Chandpur, is suffering from acute lymphoblastic leukemia or blood cancer and his best hope for survival is a bone marrow transplant.

Unfortunately, that facility is still unavailable in the country and the majority of the patients cannot afford to go abroad for the transplantation. Unconfirmed figures put the number of blood cancer patients like Alauddin to around 200,000 a year, mostly children.

Alauddin came to the capital in hope of a proper diagnosis and treatment. He had been given chemotherapy but could not continue with the expensive process.

The associated medicines alone would have cost him around Tk one lakh for two years something which was impossible for his family to bear. Price of one of the vital drugs mercaptopurine suddenly shot from Tk. 300 to 1200 and Alauddin had no other option but to discontinue.

Besides, chemotherapy can only suppress the cancer. That is why the transplant is vital for

patients.

"Bone marrow transplant sustains the blood formation mechanism of the body for patients suffering from leukemia or blood cancer," said Dr. Minhaj Rahaman Chowdhury, assistant professor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital and one of the doctors treating Alauddin.

Alauddin is admitted in the medicine ward of the BSMMU which offers free seats to patients who can afford the bed-fee. He is currently under the supervision of Dr. Ferdousi Ara J. Jahan, a professor of medicine.

Dr. Imran, who attends to the teenager informed that leukemia is a type of cancer mostly found in

the very young and about five in one lakh children in Bangladesh suffer from it. "But 80 percent of the patients get cured with proper treatment and medication," said Dr. Imran.

However, in Alauddin's case the cancer has repulsed as he did not carry on with the maintenance treatment following the first chemotherapy. "A bone marrow transplant centre in our country is absolutely essential to save the lives of patients like Alauddin," added Dr. Imran.

Now Alauddin has to go through more aggressive and expensive chemotherapy that would cost approximately Tk 2 lakh.

"The drugs are more toxic and we are not hundred percent certain about the recovery of the patient through the second chemo," said Dr. Minhaj.

If he wants a bone marrow transplant, going to India is the only realistic option for Alauddin but the operation would take a staggering Tk. 25 to 30 lakh, informed his doctors.

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The revised project cost is estimated at Tk 827 crore. Of it the WB will provide Tk 608 crore in loan while the Bangladesh government's contribution is Tk 219 crore. Nearly Tk 486 crore of the total expenditure had been spent until the current month, according to DUTP sources.

"The money still unused will be needed to pay due bills to the contractors. After that a small amount might remain unspent," Helaluddin said.

The WB has also extended the duration of the Strategic Transport Plan (STP), a component of DUTP until March 2005. STP was taken recently to design the city's traffic and transport system with an eye to the next 20 years.

"Hopefully we will be able to give the finishing touches to all the incomplete projects by December," said Helaluddin, advisor for institutional support and linkage of DUTP.

The plan is expected to provide solution to congestion and would chalk out measures to ensure sustainable traffic flow and proper public transportation.

An American company Louias Perger in cooperation with Bangladesh Consultant Limited is conducting the extensive study at a cost of Tk 10 crore. The World Bank will fund the eight-month survey. The survey team will come up with a set of recommendations.

"After the completion of the STP, further plans will be taken based on the recommendations," Helaluddin said.

Meanwhile, the decision to make

DCC struggles with garbage logistics

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

dumping because of a serious lack of conservancy equipment.

The DCC has 370 trucks and container carriers, an insufficient number for waste management considering the size of the city.

Only about 222 to 230 conservancy and container trucks are available for operation at a time, which is grossly insufficient for collection of waste from about 4,920 collection points in the city, informed an official of the DCC requesting anonymity.

DCC's chief engineer mechanical engineering division 1 Abdus Sattar however denied the claim.

In his estimate, around 15 percent of the vehicles were in workshops,

which was "very normal."

Chief conservancy officer Sohel Faruque acknowledged that they were unable to make full use of the available logistics at the same time due to some unavoidable technical problems but said that his department was looking at different initiatives to solve the problem.

"We are decreasing the number of dustbins and containers as well as collection points in the city by increasing the capacity of contain-

ers. We hope we will be able to operate more swiftly this way," said Faruque.

The DCC had spent Tk 9.75 crore, out of the sanctioned Tk 10 crore in a project for repair, maintenance and improvement of equipment over the last three fiscal years. But there has been no visible progress to the garbage scenario.

Apart from that special allocation, the mechanical engineering division 1 spent Tk 1.2 crore 1999-2000, Tk 2.7 crore in 2000-2001, and Tk 1.3 crore in 2001-2002, on repair and maintenance.

The mechanical engineering division 2 is responsible for solid waste management equipment, such as bulldozers, excavators etc which disposes off the garbage at dumping grounds. DCC insiders say that of the 44 solid waste management equipment, 60 per cent are always in the workshops. Division 2 had reportedly spent Tk 11 million from 1999-2000 to 2001-2002 for repair and maintenance.

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"Sometimes arguments rage between players of rival groups. We intervene to make sure the problem is solved by mutual understanding," he added.

"Accessories and equipment such as boards and cues are all imported. A single pool board costs around Tk 1.5-3.5 lakh depending on quality, while it is Tk 3-5 lakh for a snooker board," another owner said.

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