

Weekly weather forecast for

High 27C

A.M. t-storms

helodhaka

humid. Thursday High 27C

storms; humid. Friday High 27C

storms; humid. Saturday High 26C Low **24C**

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Doctors call for trauma centres to tackle crisis

MIZANUR KHAN

Doctors, treating the victims of the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally, demand emergency trauma centres in big cities soon, as numerous victims of natural disasters and accidents wait in hospital corridors for treatment.

Grenade-wounded people rushed to hospital on the evening of August 21, but there was no room for a single victim. No hospital can treat many at the same time," said Dr Alam, a doctor in the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

On the day of the carnage that left 20 people killed and more than 300 injured, blood-smeared people were lying uncared-for on the floor of the emergency unit. Cries for blood and help rang out everywhere. Thousands rushed with blood bags to the emergency unit, turning the DMCH into a virtual war hospital home to injured and mutilated bod-

DMCH Director Nazmul Huda said about 200 people took primary aid from the hospital, while 40 people were treated officially on August

Most victims first went to the DMCH with injuries and left it, as there was no room and only two doctors and three nurses like other days were on duty at the emergency

The injured were also taken to Bangladesh Medical College, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University and Hospital (BSMMUH) and other hospitals. "We really need emergency trauma centres where we can treat such victims," said Dr Saiful Islam, BSMMUH emergency medical officer.

Selim Chowdhury, who took about 200 splinters in the lower part of his body, including legs and pelvis, said: "I rushed to the DMCH alone but did not find a place amid a large number of patients. Then I went back home by taxi. My family took me to the DMCH again 12 hours after the bloodbath."

"Many are injured in natural disasters and fatal accidents at a time and need quick treatment. Developed countries have emergency trauma centres to treat the victims in time," said NK Alam, consultant of the DMCH casualty department.

"The government should set up emergency trauma centres in Dhaka, Khulna, Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Barisal to face such a crisis," said Dr Firoz Kader, head of $the\,DMCH\,casualty\,department.$

The casualty department lacks trained doctors, nurses and wardboys. "It is impossible to carry emergency tests and run urgent operations with run-down machines. We are also understaffed to make things worse," another doctor said.

There is no intensive care unit, high dependency unit, blood bank and radiology and pathology services at the casualty department that houses 60 beds -- 36 for men

and 24 for women and children -and where one associate professor, two consultants, one assistant registrar and four medical officers

The casualty department has only one operating theatre (OT), but about 30,000 people are treated here a year, according to the record

patients at the same time as one table, out of two, has long been out of order. This time five injured people were needed to be operated on at the same time," a doctor said, asking not to be named.

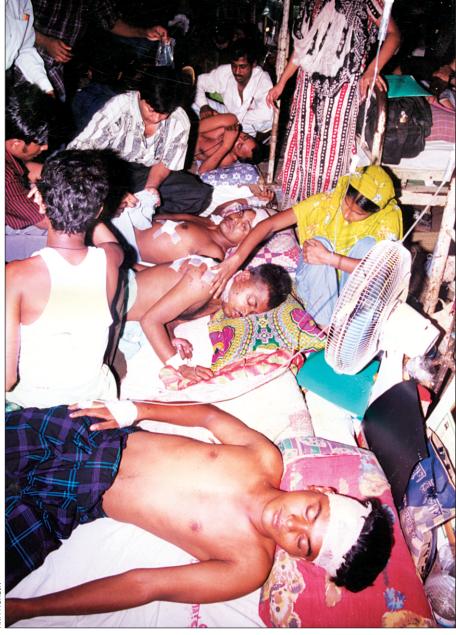
DMCH doctors said the emergency unit experienced the same after the bomb blasts on the Communist Party's rally on January 20, 2001 and fatal blasts at Ramna

Batamul on April 14 the same year. The DMCH director said the

hospital would send a proposal to the health ministry to set up trauma centres as early as possible although the hospital has limited space. "The ministry has already asked us to expand and modernise the emergency department and we are working on it," he said.



As one patient receives treatment at the DMCH for injuries caused by a series of grenade attacks (left) others are treated on the floor of Ward No 32 because of lack of beds(right).



SALIMULLAH MEDICAL COLLEGE

Female students suffer urge govt to uphold in tattered dormitory

the dining hall is the only

bathrooms on each floor

accommodating at least 42

students. But in reality, they

have to do with one toilet since

on each floor since two of the

bathrooms are unusable for

long. One bathroom on the

fourth floor of the new dormi-

all. The washroom floors are

slippery with moss as hardly

they never do their job properly,"

the woes of the students. The

out of order and the students

have to bring water from out-

Incidents of theft are frequent.

mobile phones to thieves," said

"We have two gatekeepers

but they are not around most of

the time," complained a senior

Sharfuzzaman, vice-

principal of the college, said

the number of female students

has increased by 60 percent in

the last 24 months. "This is why

we cannot offer them adequate

However, he added that

another dormitory for female

accommodation," he said.

interns is on the way.

"Many of us have lost our

lone water pump often remains

Lax security makes life even

Water crisis has worsened

anyone cleans them.

said one of the students.

more difficult for them.

one of the students.

student.

tory does not have any door at

'There are three cleaners, but

The dormitory has only three

option," said Soumee.

Scarcity of space not only affects the newcomers but the seniors as well. Low quality of food, unclean toilets and lack of proper security make it even worse for them.

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Living in dining room because of accommodation problem, low quality food and an inadequate number of unclean toilets - these are only part of what the female students of Sir Salimullah Medical College

have to bear with every day. About 450 of the 750 students of the second largest medical college are females. Still, it has only one dormitory for them.

Accommodation problem peaks in the dormitory with

new enrollment every year. "The first-year students suffer most," said Tanima Ahmed, a hostel resident. "It may take two to three years for

a student to get a seat.' And so, it is the dining and TV rooms where the freshers ultimately land up in.

"Since the dining room houses the students, we have to bring food to our room and eat. Sometimes we sit on the beds of the first-year students in the dining room and have it there," said Sahida Khatun, a

fifth-year student. The hostel for the females has two buildings including a new one built in 1993. The new building has 28 rooms while the old one has 36. Besides, there is a tin-shed single-storey

structure with six rooms. "It is all crammed. Row of beds fill the dining room," said

a student living in the dining hall. "Sometimes it becomes suffocating. We cannot concentrate in study.

Scarcity of space not only affects the newcomers but the seniors as well. According to hostel rules, all interns are supposed to stay on a single

"Our entire batch is now staying on the fifth floor. In each room, 14 of us stay," said an intern. The students said male interns have a separate hostel, but not the females.

Much as the bad accommodation, low quality food is another suffering the female students have to face. The food is badly cooked and insuffi-

"Would you believe that they cook egg, fish, chicken and beef all together," said Tahmina. "The look of the curry is nauseating.

The kitchen is full of dirt and cockroaches and the food is unhealthy.

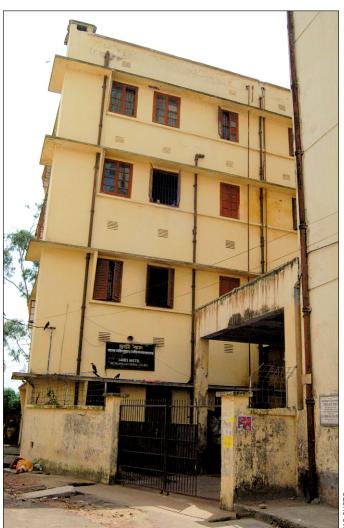
"We often find worms in vegetables," said Shrabonti. another student. Rice is littered with brick chips.

To remain healthy, most residents do not eat at the dining hall and cook their own food. Some of them have refrigerators in their rooms and bring food from home, which they eat for days together.

"But those who can not afford this, the horrible food at

"The plan was passed long time back, but we could not start construction because of fund crisis and fourth-class employees occupying the land designated for the hostel," he said. "We will begin the construction as soon as we get funds and the land."

About the low quality food, the vice-principal said the authorities only supply utensils and kitchen staff. "The students mange the kitchen themselves and we are not responsible for it " he said



The problems faced by students of Sir Salimullah Medical College begin with lack of accommodation in the single dormitory allocated for them.

Women commissioners HC verdict

SULTANA RAHMAN

Thirty women commissioners elected on reserved seats are urging the government not to appeal against the High Court verdict on non-discrimination between them and their male counterparts.

"Once a woman is elected as ward commissioner, there is should not be discrimination in authority between commissioners from general and reserved seats.' said Kazi Nasima Mannan. Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) commissioner. "We are really happy with the High Court verdict," she

added on a cheerful note. Earlier, the local government and rural development (LGRD) ministry in a circular did not allow

government told the media that the government would take a decision to appeal against the verdict on receiving a certified

women commissioners from reserved seats of Khulna City Corporation filed a writ petition last year, challenging the LGRD circular that did not permit women commissioners to take part in census or issuing nationality certificates or reference letters.

copy of the court order.

The verdict came after 10

"Although the ward commissioners from Khulna filed the writ against the government's discriminatory decision, but the 30 commissioners of DCC are always with them," said Nasima, commis-

and Miftah Uddin Ahmed asked

sioner of ward No. 45 in Dhaka. Justices ABM Khairul Hague that of general seat commissioners for meetings attended.

The petitioners said the circular violated constitutionally quaranteed fundamental rights to equality and gender, nondiscrimination and the right to be treated in line with the law.

As the DCC is a corporate body, the government cannot interfere with its powers and functions except for what is permitted by law, the court said.

Dr Kamal Hossain was requested by the court to make submissions on some constitutional questions as a friend of court, called amicus curiae in legal jargon.

The Awami League government in 1999, amending the local government laws, introduced reserved seats to women in the

The verdict came after 10 women commissioners from reserved seats of Khulna City Corporation filed a writ petition last year, challenging the LGRD circular that did not permit women commissioners to take part in census or issue nationality certificates or reference letters

women commissioners to take part in census and issuing certifi-

"The government put us on the field under the guise of women's empowerment. But now they make anti-women rules," Nasima alleged. "The circular disallowing us from issuing birth certificates and similar jobs is simply an insult," she added.

The High Court on August 16 asked the government not to discriminate women ward commissioners against their male counterparts in delegation and execution of authority and annulled a ministerial circular calling it contrary to the constitu-

However, Attorney General AF Hassan Ariff who moved for the the authorities to comply with the constitution and city corporation ordinances in assigning work and delegating authority to women

"We hope the government will realise when it discriminates females against males, how we can expect respect from society?" said Mamtaz Choudhury Tutu, DCC commissioner of ward No.

Abdul Matin Khasru, filing lawyer of the writ petition, said the verdict would apply to the six city corporations and in principle, other local government bodies as well. Barrister Sara Hossain and Barrister Tanjib-Ul Alam also moved for the petitioners.

The remuneration of reserved seat commissioners is less than local government bodies in an effort to politically empower them.

The new provision states that every reserved seat comprises three wards in each Union Parishad, Paurashabha and City Corporation and women are elected representatives

"Being elected for over two years, we would lose our credibility and popularity if the DCC does not allow to work for our voters. So far, we have not done anything important. This is disappointing. said Shireen Rukhsana, DCC ward commissioner from a