

ONE STOP CRISIS CENTRE AT DMCH

# Free services bring hope to victims

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

Tania (not her real name), a 17-year-old garment worker, was devastated when she was raped and left to die on March 26 in Kalsi area of city's Mirpur.

"I was severely injured and could survive only because I was brought here," said the fatherless girl, the breadwinner of her family. She said locals had brought her to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital's (DMCH) One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC).

and children are receiving help from this centre set up by the government in August 2001 with financial help from Danish International Development Agency (Danida).

The centre has provided services like medical treatment, legal help and psychological assistance to at least 618 patients during the period August 19, 2001 to November 30, 2004, according to official records.

"The centre does not only work to prevent violence against women and children but also tries to rehabilitate them," said Bipul Krishna Chand, coordi-

nator, OCC.

Run by two doctors and six nurses, the OCC offers free medical treatment along with security and counselling by OCC police desk for the victims of violence. Their medical examinations are done by forensic department of DMCH.

"Those having critical injury are treated in respective departments and then sent to OCC if necessary while victims having minor injuries come directly to OCC," said Dr Bilkis Begum, consultant gynaecologist of OCC.

She said sometimes patients come from emergency unit of DMCH while

different organisations send patients sometimes.

"Though we have only eight beds in the centre, number of patients never remains less than 15," Bilkis said. However, help seekers are never refused despite the paucity of space. "They share beds whenever necessary," she said.

The victims are provided with free food along with necessary medicine from DMCH. "They are served with the same special diet supplied in the burn unit of the hospital," said Bilkis. However, department of social services office in DMCH provides with extra milk for the victims' nutrition and necessary commodities such as clothes, soap and oil.

Legal counselling and support provided by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) makes the centre different from other sections of the hospital.

In most cases victims of domestic violence, rape and acid throwing end up in the centre where they are assisted with legal help. The OCC police desk having two officers and two constables help them if needed and a legal expert from BNWLA deals with the legal aspects such as filing cases and following them up.

"Sometimes the victims come from other parts of the hospital learning about legal help being provided here," commented advocate Fahmida Akter of BNWLA designated to OCC. BNWLA also arranges temporary shelter for the victims and at least 63 victims were transferred to shelter home until November 30 last year.

Psychological counselling by Naripakkho in the centre helps the victims come out of their trauma.

To ease the help-seekers' access to the centre, the authorities have introduced its hotline service that is open on Sundays, Tuesdays and Thursdays when anyone can call at 9664699 and 011822782 from 11:00am to 1:00pm seeking help from the OCC.



The National Theatre Stage at Shegun Bagicha.

## National Theatre Stage staff not paid since July

ERSHAD KAMOL

Around 27 employees of the National Theatre Stage project have not been paid their salaries since July last year.

The project was taken in July 1994 by the Ministry for Cultural Affairs to improve theatre activities in the country.

The 27 men were recruited in two phases from March 2004. Four of them were appointed when the project was initiated and the rest three months before the completion of the first phase.

"The employees in question did not get their salaries as the first phase of the project officially ended in July 2004," said Maniruzzaman Manir, director of the Drama and

Film Department of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, the supervising authority of the project.

Following the end of the first phase, an initiative was reportedly taken last year to bring the 27 under the revenue board but that file has been lying with the finance ministry for several months. The establishment ministry however, approved the move.

Apart from the employees, nine security and cleaning staff who are working on a daily basis at the project, did not receive their wages since July.

"After the approval from the finance ministry the file will be forwarded to the board of secretaries. As soon as the board approves the files, all employees and workers will get their salary and wages,"

assured Manir.

Project director and director general of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy Ahmed Nazir informed that the workers were given some money on April 1 this year considering their hardship. "Whenever they get their wages, that payment will be adjusted."

The employees of the National Theatre Stage meanwhile, said that they were leading a miserable life.

"Drama is our passion and that is why we are still working. But we are living on loans," said one of them.

The technical hands are suffering the most. "We live in messes and are in constant fear of being kicked out as we are unable to pay the rent" said a technician.



The DMCH One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) helps abused women and children.

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