

Cataract surgery can restore the sight of 'blind' children

SULTANA RAHMAN

A simple cataract surgery can restore the vision of a number of children in the city who are believed to be blind, says Dr MA Muhit, clinical research fellow of International Centre for Eye Health (ICEH), London.

Muhit's belief is based on a research he had conducted in association with the Child Sight Foundation in Bangladesh.

"The scenario is not much different in eye cases of the capital

and the rest of the country," said Muhit who was surprised to find the same level of ignorance among urban people and people from rural areas regarding eye care.

Three-year-old Shetu and her sisters Salma (12) and Sabina (8), all thought of as blind from birth, never knew that one day they would be able to see. The children could not see because of childhood cataract but the parents thought it was some kind of a curse on the family.

Like many others, they also had

no idea that children could develop cataract and thought only the aged suffered from that.

"We were a doomed family with no happiness. But now I know cataract is treatable and it has been like a journey from darkness to light. By daughters can see now," said Anjura, the mother of the three girls.

Shetu, Salma and Sabina started seeing after the Childhood Blindness Project of Bangladesh (CBPB) arranged cataract surgery for the sisters free of cost.

It is believed that more than 40

thousand children in Bangladesh are blind and around one fourth of them could see light again but do not receive treatment due to lack of awareness, information, financial support and professional opinion from qualified ophthalmologists.

"The number of cataract related blindness cases among children is abnormally high in Bangladesh compared to other developing countries," Muhit said.

"Cataract surgery can help one third of them to regain visual power while half of the visually impaired people require rehabilitative measures and education," the researcher said adding that childhood blindness is tough to detect.

"As the literacy rate is poor and people are not conscious enough in Bangladesh, they consider blindness as a natural curse," said Muhit who works at London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine under the University of London. "A large number of children are blind due to preventable diseases and some also inherit cataract from their parents," he added.

Waterlogging wreaks havoc on Shahidullah Hall residents

IMRUL HASAN

The residents of Shahidullah Hall area of Dhaka University have long been suffering from severe waterlogging due to lack of proper drainage system.

Almost half of the hall compound goes under knee-deep water if it rains for several hours. The waterlogging paralyses normal life in the area.

"The lanes in the hall area go under water if it rains for four to five hours. We have to suffer terribly due to the waterlogging," said Sohel Arman, a student of the hall.

The dormitory number-2, fourth class employees' quarters and the provost's bungalow of the hall are the worst affected zones.

Due to absence of drainage system water entered every room of the provost's bungalow during the last monsoon, forcing the residents to shift to other house.

"We have tried to solve the problem, but failed," said Dr Abul Khayer, provost of the hall. His wife blamed the DU authorities for their negligence to the problem.

"I have sold my car at a throwaway price because there is no place to keep it safely in the rainy season," she added.

The DU authorities remain silent about the problem. No effective measures have been taken to resolve the problem of waterlogging, the hall students said.

They alleged that the DU authorities have not taken any initiative to set up a sewerage line in the hall area.

"Another problem is that the age-old



The entire area around the Shahidullah Hall goes under water after a heavy downpour.

sewage tank of the hall often overflows. The sweepers clean it by removing the dirty water with buckets," said an official of the hall.

Officials of Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) and DU Engineering Section blame each other for the waterlogging on the hall compound.

Ameer Hussain, chief engineer of DU, said it is the responsibility of Wasa to

pump out water from the area. "We have sent a letter to Wasa regarding the development works of drainage system on the campus. But we have not yet got any response."

But an executive engineer at the Wasa zonal office at Segunbagicha said DU is an autonomous body. It has own engineering section and fund. So Wasa has no role to play.



An eye camp for children in the city set up by the Child Sight Foundation.

12x3

12x2

12x3