

Only a little endeavour can help visually impaired newborns see

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Only a little endeavour can help a good number of visually impaired newborn babies see their parents.

But unfortunately, lack of awareness, neonatal care and trained community health workers have left them blind forever.

Congenital cataract leads to blindness around 10000 children in the country that could be avoided if it is removed within two months of their birth, said a study conducted in 2001-03.

According to Child Sight Foundation, 31percent of child blindness is caused by congenital and developmental cataracts.

If a mother has rubella, viral diseases, malnutrition, dehydration or vitamin A deficiency during first trimester of her pregnancy, there lies a possibility of giving birth to a child with congenital cataract, experts said.

Besides, some hereditary diseases, late pregnancy and intake of contraceptive pills also increase the risk of children's birth with congenital cataract.

However, in 80 percent cases the main reason of cataract is unknown, said Dr Kazi Shabbir Anwar of Bangladesh Eye Hospital.

He said cataract is seen mainly among the children of poor families and 95 percent of cataract children belong to lower class.

If a child, diagnosed with congenital cataract, goes through a surgery within two months of his/her birth and gets postoperative care, there is a total possibility of getting back eyesight, said the experts.

They said surgery is the only treatment of cataract among the children, and a delayed treatment increases the risk of amblyopia and irreversible visual impairment or blindness.

Among the 52 million children in the country, a total of 40,000 are blind and 74 percent of all blindness is caused by cataract, according to Bangladesh Blindness Survey 2000.

As people are quite unaware and still consider child blindness is a result of sin of their parents, they just sit idle blaming the God.

The community health workers

also ignore the matter due to lack of training in this field, said Associate Professor of Ophthalmology of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Dr Shafiqul Islam.

"The children do not get expected vision as they come to the doctors when it is too late and expected vision decreases as they grow older," he said.

According to National Childhood Blindness Study conducted in 2001-03 by D M Muhi, Dr C Gilbert and Prof Allen Foster, cataract is the major cause of child blindness in Bangladesh.

"There is lack of information about childhood cataract blindness and its management among the general public and professionals, lack of communication materials to generate awareness in the community and provide information to parents, key community members and health professionals," said Muhi, also a Clinical Research Fellow of International Centre for Eye Health.

According to the experts, ten key activities could prevent child blind-

ness.

These include providing high dose of vitamin A supplements to mothers within one month of delivering a baby and high dose of vitamin A to children aged six months to five years in every six months, promoting breast feeding and immunization of young children particularly against measles.

Besides, early detection of blind children within households and communities, eye examination of blind children and referral of children with cataract, good quality cataract surgery and optical correction as well as regular and long-term follow-up care could restore the eyesight of child with cataract, they added.

"The overall budget in health sector and tertiary care facilities should be increased and it needs political commitment of the government. Meanwhile, paediatric ophthalmology should be established as a discipline in the hospitals," said Dr Shafiq.



PHOTO: STAR

With Eid round the corner, shoppers throng different shopping malls in the city to buy dresses. This picture was taken from Basundhara City yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of AI-Quds Committee burn Israeli and US flags in the city yesterday as they observe the AI-Quds Day.

Powerful bomb recovered from Assam rail track

AFP, New Delhi

Paramilitary troops in India's north-eastern state of Assam spotted a powerful bomb planted on a track minutes before a passenger train was to pass, a railway official said Friday.

Railway spokesman T. Rabha said the bomb was found in the town of Tihu, 80km west of Assam's main city, Guwahati.

He said bomb disposal squads were at the station. No further details were immediately available. The bomb scare came as the oil-and-timber-rich state was paralysed by a one-day strike protesting an Indian Army crackdown on an influential separatist group, officials said.

"Shops and businesses, educational institutions and banks are closed, while most public and private transport are off the roads," a police spokesman said.

The protest against New Delhi's decision to resume anti-insurgency operations against the banned United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) was organised by a newly formed pro-rebel civil society group calling itself the People's Committee for Peace Initiatives.

"We want the government to begin peace talks by immediately stopping the military offensives against the Ulfa," said the group's spokesman, Lachit Bordoloi.

The peace process came to an abrupt halt last week when a group of 11 civil society leaders nominated by the separatists to negotiate with New Delhi pulled out of talks, after the government formally ended a six-week ceasefire.

Sudanese army declares UN envoy unwanted

AFP, Khartoum

The Sudanese military declared UN special envoy Jan Pronk persona non grata yesterday, accusing him of "waging war against the armed forces," in the latest escalation in a war of words between Khartoum and the international community.

The general command accused Pronk, UN secretary general Kofi Annan's special representative (SRSG) in Sudan, of "openly intruding in the armed forces' affair".

Free, fair polls a must for good governance

Speakers tell roundtable

DU CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday said violation of human rights would not stop without a true democratic government in the country.

They said only a good governance can ensure human rights for all and for that a free and fair election is a must.

The roundtable titled 'Importance of mass awareness and free, fair and impartial election in establishing human rights' was organised by Bishwashanti O Manabdhikar Andolon at the National Press Club in the city.

Presenting a keynote paper, Fanindra Sarker said a weak and unstable government comes to power if the election is not free, fair and impartial.

"This kind of government tries to grab power through repression, false case and killing in gross violation of human rights," he added.

Hasanul Haq Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, said the government is the greatest violator of human rights as it is trying to foil a free and fair election through vote rigging.

He said people should be aware of their rights and should resist the alliance government. Jatiya Party leader GM Quader said political criminalisation is the main bar to free and fair election.

"If we want to ensure human rights, an accountable democratic government has to be established," he added.

Chaired by Jamaluddin Sabuj, president of Bishwashanti O Manabdhikar Andolon, the roundtable was also addressed by Sangbad Editor Bazlur Rahman, acting editor of Bhorer Gogoi Shyamol Dutta, Prof Shaheda Obaid and Supreme Court Bar Association leader Maleka Parvin.

Station to monitor air quality in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Operation of the newly installed Continuous Air Quality Monitoring Station (CAMS) was launched here yesterday to bring the Ambient Air Quality of the port city under continuous monitoring.

State Minister for Environment and Forest Jafrul Islam Chowdhury formally inaugurated the CAMS, the first of its kind set up under the World Bank financed Air Quality Management Project, at Chittagong Television Centre (CTV) premises.

While inaugurating the CAMS, the state minister said the station would be monitoring criteria of pollutants on a continuous basis round the year. It would provide information and data to help adopt future strategy towards abatement of pollution from various emission sources like motor vehicles, industrial units, brick kilns and marinesources.

Thus it would also help frame laws in containing the emission, said the minister.

He said ambient air needs to be cleaned to safeguard people, specially children and elderly persons, from various types of lung and heart diseases.

Referring to the ban on two stroke three wheelers in Dhaka and Chittagong city since January 2003 the minister said, through this step \$25 million of the government could be saved annually in terms of public health.

The minister informed the inaugural ceremony that efforts were on to reduce brick kilns and other industrial emissions that contribute to air pollution.

He also said that such CAMS would be set up in all the divisional towns to bring them under a network.

Senior officials of Department of Environment and Chemito Technologies Private Limited, India and representatives from Environment SA France also attended the function.

More donation to cancer hospital

Garment manufacturer and exporter Md Rafiqul Islam from Narayanganj made a donation of Tk 10 lakh to Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital (AMCH) Fund on Thursday, says a press release.

He handed over the cheque for the amount to Kazi Rafiqul Alam, president and chief executive of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) at DAM Head Office at Dhanmondi in the city.

Among others, Prof Nurul Islam, director, public relations of DAM and Md Rashedul Islam, eldest son of Rafiqul Islam were present on the occasion. Against this donation the donor and his wife Firoza Islam will be jointly enlisted as sponsors of the hospital.

On handing over the cheque Rafiqul Islam said, "I am happy that Allah has enabled me to make this donation. The hospital will surely contribute in the service and welfare of the people, especially of the cancer patients."

He further said that each one of us should participate in welfare activities according to our ability.

Mission president thanked him for his generous contribution and said that presently there exists a big gap between the estimated cost of the hospital and the donations received so far but the gap is narrowing fast as benevolent persons and organisations are coming with their assistance in great numbers almost every day.

The RMG sector of the country can play a vital role in this regard, he opined. He expressed his firm conviction that the construction of the hospital will be finished in time and it will start functioning in the second half of 2008.



Save lives of Nasrin Akhtar, Nurun Nahar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

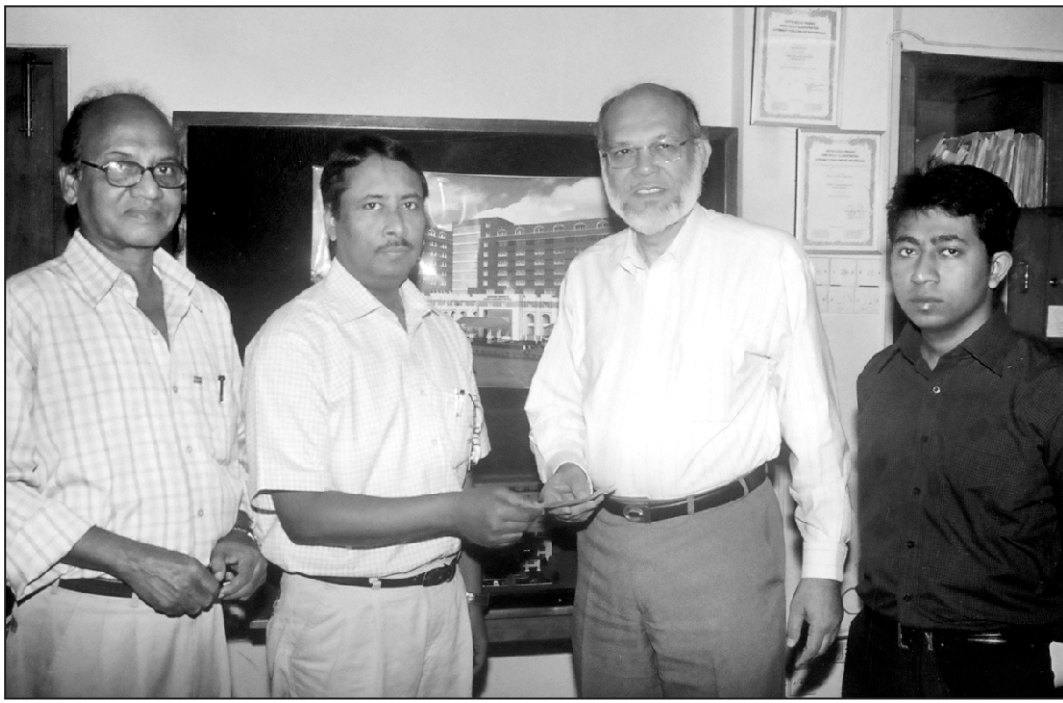
A father has sought financial assistance from affluent people for the treatment of his two daughters suffering from thalassaemia.

Nine-year-old Nasrin Akhtar and 14-year-old Nurun Nahar have been suffering from the disease since their birth. They have to have blood transfusion every month.

According to doctors, the girls should undergo bone marrow transplantation immediately, which involves a huge amount of money.

But their father Nurul Islam, an assistant professor of Haji Monir Ahmed College in Feni, could not afford such an expensive treatment. He has appealed to generous people to extend a helping hand to save his daughters.

Contributions can be sent to Nurul Islam, Account No.-3642, Bangladesh Krishi Bank, GM Hat Branch, Feni. Interested persons can also contact him on 0188747889 or 01199126467, says a press release.



Garment manufacturer and exporter Md Rafiqul Islam hands over a cheque for Tk 10 lakh to President of Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) Kazi Rafiqul Alam at DAM head office in the city on Thursday.

6 killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least six people, including two schoolgirls, were killed in separate road accidents in Comilla, Netrakona, Goaland, Sirajganj and Rajbari yesterday.

A Correspondent from Comilla adds: A passer-by was crushed under the wheels of a bus at Shaktola area on Laksam-Comilla road under Sadar Dakshin upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Md Alauddin Ahmed, 65, of Shaktola village of the upazila.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred at about 9.30am when a passenger bus coming from Laksam hit him while he was crossing the road.

Following the accident agitated people put up barricade on the road for three hours and damaged ten vehicles. Police and Sadar Dakshin upazila Chairman rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Our Correspondent in Netrakona adds: One person was killed and six others were injured when a fuel tanker rammed a tempo at Banuapara in Sadar Upazila at about 8:00am yesterday.

Abu Chand, 40, of village Laogair in Purbadhala, who was travelling in the tempo, died on the spot. Six other injured passengers were admitted to Netrakona Sadar Hospital.

The police seized the fuel tanker. In another incident, one Faujdar Mia, 35, was injured seriously when a bus hit him at Teligati Bazar on Netrakona-Madan road at about 12:00 noon.

UNB from Sirajganj says: Two schoolgirls were killed in separate road accidents at Bhadrachhat and Meghai Bazar.

Laizu, 11, daughter of Idris Ali of Chandpal village, met with the tragic end at about 9.30am as a truck run over her when she was crossing Sirajganj-Bogra road at Bhadrachhat in Sadar upazila.

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Two robbers beaten to death in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two robbers died in a mob beating at Sadar upazila in Tangail district on Thursday night.

Police and villagers said a gang of armed robbers numbering about 12 to 15 stormed into the house of Mizanur Rahman, an employee of a local NGO, at Gramjoka Biljoka village under Sadar upazila at around 1:00am and looted valuables including cash and gold ornaments worth about Tk 2 lakh.

As Mizanur Rahman shouted for help, the villagers rushed to the spot immediately and caught two of the robbers.

The angry mob then beat the robbers mercilessly and killed them on the spot.

At least 10 villagers were injured in the clash. Among them, four were admitted to Tangail General Hospital.

The identities of the dead robbers could not be known till filing of this report. Local UP chairman Abdul Hamid however told this correspondent that the dead robbers were hailed from Gazipur district.

at about 9:00am.

In Rajbari, Soheli, 12, was killed and two others were injured when a Faridpur bound bus hit them in front of the district jail in the morning.

Rickshaw-puller Dabiruddin and passenger Tarapada Dhar badly injured were admitted to the Sadar hospital.

Police arrested the bus diver and seized the vehicle.

A young man was killed and his two uncles were injured in a head-on collision between a truck and a bus on Daulatdia-Khulna highway in Goaland yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abdullah, 22, of Nilu Shekherpara village in Goaland pourashava.

Police said the truck and bus collided head-on at Dhuldi gate area in the early hours of yesterday, leaving Abdullah dead on the spot and his two uncles injured.

Abdullah's uncles Dulu and Faisal were rushed to Faridpur Medical college Hospital in critical condition. Later, they were shifted to Orthopedic Hospital in Dhaka as their condition deteriorated.

Housewife stabbed to death in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A housewife was stabbed to death at Chandanaish upazila in the district here in the early hours of yesterday.

The victim was identified as Sakina Begum, 39, wife of Jafar Mia of Uttar Muradabad village under the upazila.

Sources said Sakina was allegedly stabbed by her neighbour Motahar Mia and her daughter at around 11:30pm on Thursday.

Jafar and Motahar as well as their family members locked homes for several times on Thursday over their boundary line.

Motahar along with his daughter beat and stabbed Sakina brutally with a chopper at around 11:30 pm when she was alone at her residence.

Critically injured Sakina was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where she succumbed to her injuries at around 2:30am.

Obituary



Maulana Md Shamsul Alam, principal of Panchbagh Islamia Senior Madrasa of Gafurgaoon, was killed in a road accident in New York in the

United States on October 12 at the age of 56, says a press release.

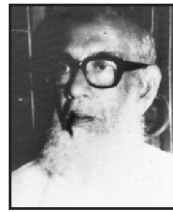
The accident occurred when a truck hit him while he was going to mosque after taking Sehri.

He was rushed to Syracuse University of New York where he died.

Maulana Shamsul Alam, also Peer of Panchbagh, was laid to rest adjacent to Islamic Society of Central New York Jame Masjid after namaz-e-janaza on the mosque premises after Juma prayers on Friday.

He left behind his mother, wife, one son and two daughters.

Death anniversary



Today is the 13th death anniversary of Maulvi Asmat Ali, one of the organisers of the War of Liberation, founder of

Madaripur district Awami League (AL) and former lawmaker, says a press release.

On the occasion, Madaripur district AL has taken elaborate programmes, including offering prayers and placing wreaths at his grave, milad mahfil, iftar distribution and discussion.

Besides, doa and milad mahfils will also be held at the mosque adjacent to his Madaripur residence after Asr prayers and his village home.

Shahjahan Khan MP, elder son of Asmat, has requested all to attend the programmes.

Quikhwani



Quikhwani of Sayed Mustafa Kamal, a retired govt officer, will be held at 15/C, Azimpur Staff Quarter after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

He passed away due to respiratory problems at Holy Family Hospital on Thursday.

He was buried at Azimpur Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Azimpur Chhapra Masque after Esha prayers.