

CASHING IN ON PATIENTS' PLIGHT

Illegal clinic business on in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

Unregistered clinics are doing brisk business illegally in Magura town and three upazilas cashing on patients' plight.

Unscrupulous people are doing the brisk business allegedly in connivance with a section of government doctors.

There are 31 clinics in the district, 21 of them unregistered and 10 registered. All of them have brokers at Magura Sadar Hospital and upazila health complexes to lure patients, assuring them of 'better treatment'.

Some doctors at government hospitals also get 'commission' for sending patients to such clinics, it is widely alleged.

Brokers run after patients from well-to-do families. Poor patients who can not get admission to government hospitals and health complexes seldom draw their attention.

Brokers enjoy free access to the hospital and health complexes.

A section of nurses and other staff at the government hospitals also work as brokers, many patients and their attendants alleged this while talking to this correspondent recently.

At government hospitals, patients are often advised by a section of doctors to go to certain clinics for 'better treatment'. Patients are left with no choice but to follow the 'advice', thereby unknowingly falling prey to the greed of unscrupulous people.

During this correspondent's visit to Magura Sadar Hospital and three

other upazila health complexes, some brokers admitted that they are paid to lure patients to private clinics.

'As doctors are also involved in the process, I do not consider it unethical,' said a broker asking not to be named.

Another broker, Dilip said he gets between Tk 200 to 250 from the clinic owner for luring each patient. 'It is the only means to maintain my family,' Dilip admitted.

A government doctor gets 'commission' ranging from 30 to 35 percent of money the patient spends at private clinics. Other staff members get between 10 to 15 percent for sending a patient, sources said.

'I was refused admission at the Sadar Hospital on Sunday'. A doctor informed me that I would have to wait for at least six days to get admission. 'When I came out of the doctor's room, a staff came to tell me that I could be treated at a private clinic,' said Shafiqul Islam, a businessman, now under treatment at a clinic on the Sayed Ator Ali Road in Magura town.

Shafiqul is suffering from breathing problem and slow heart beat.

'When I showed interest, the staff took me to a man standing near the emergency ward. He gave me the address of the clinic. But the quality of treatment is extremely poor here.'

When asked, Resident Medical Officer (RMO) Md. Moslemuddin at the Sadar Hospital, however, expressed his ignorance about doctors' getting commission. He said, 'Adequate measures have been taken to prevent brokers from

entering the hospital', he said.

During this correspondent's visit to one such private clinic in the town, a few patients complained that they had spent a lot of money for so many diagnostic tests which had been seemingly unnecessary. But they did not get proper treatment.

They even alleged that the clinic had no registered doctors and trained nurses. It is not even properly equipped with instruments.

'These clinics follow no rule. They see patients as source of money only,' a leading doctor at Magura Sadar Hospital said.

There are numerous allegations of malpractice, wrong treatment, wrong diagnosis and post-operative infection due to unhygienic condition. Death or permanent disability from alleged wrong treatment is not few and far between, which at times leads to clashes and ransacking of clinics.

But the authorities are unmoved. Common allegations are poor state of operation theatres (OTs) and post-operative rooms.

But the most frightening thing is that the number of such unregistered and below standard clinics is increasing in absence of inspection by the authorities concerned, sources said.

This is the best business one can think of, said a clinic owner, referring to the virtually unregulated trade. The few registered clinics are getting frustrated because unregistered ones dominate the business through adoption of unfair means. Yet there is no action, he said.

When contacted, Magura civil surgeon (CS) Farid Uddin Ahmed admitted existence of unregistered clinics and their unethical business.

He said, 'A committee headed by me and comprising additional deputy commissioner (DC), additional superintendent of police (ASP) and municipality chairman after inspecting has already listed the unregistered clinics and had ordered stoppage of their illegal business.' He also assured more effective measures to stop the illegal business.

Bangabandhu's homecoming day observed at RU

RU CORRESPONDENT

The historic homecoming day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was observed on the Rajshahi University (RU) campus yesterday.

Bangabandhu Parishad held a discussion at the central library to mark the day. Parishad president Prof Mukhlesur Rahman was in the chair.

Speakers demanded execution of the killers of Bangabandhu. They bitterly criticised the former Four-party Alliance government for failure to execute the killers of Bangabandhu. They said, it sheltered the killers. They threatened to launch a greater agitation with general people if their demand is not executed.

The teachers also demanded resignation of caretaker government chief as he is busy in implementing the blue print of BNP led Four-party Alliances in the election.

The meeting was addressed by its general secretary Prof Abdus Sobhan, former RU VC Prof Saidur Rahman Khan, Prof Mizan Uddin and Prof Anando Kumar Shaha.

University teachers, students, officials and employees took part in the discussion.

Abducted SSC examinee yet to be rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

A Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinee who was abducted 55 days ago is yet to be rescued from the clutch of abductors.

Mohammad Zakirul Islam, 16, a student of Sarishabari Riaz Uddin High School did not return home after his abduction from Sarishabari upazila town in Jamalpur on November 15 last year.

Son of Habibur Rahman, a schoolteacher, Zakir was abducted for ransom amounting to Tk 50,000, family sources said.

The abductors also threatened to kill Zakirul for failure to pay the ransom money, they said.

On contact, Sub-Inspector (SI) Azim Uddin of Sarishabari Police Station who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case said we are trying to arrest the abductors.

A school with a difference

Children of poor families getting int'l standard of education for free

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

An English medium school founded by a lady social worker six years ago is now spreading the light of education to poor and deprived children in Saidpur upazila town.

Being a corporate member of Young Learners Centre of British Council, Dhaka, the institution named Marigold Tutorial already won many national and international awards by providing global standard of education to them.

Founder principal of the school, Rukhsana Zaman Shahu, believes that education can change the attitude of children of poor people towards life.

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British Council in December, 2005. Students regularly participate in all national and international competitions every year.

Earlier, students of the school took part at a competition titled, 'The Golden Tapestry Wide Art Project' jointly organised by British Council and Glaxo-Smith-Kline in Dhaka in November, 2004. They



PHOTO: STAR
British High Commissioner in Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury watching an art work of a student of Marigold Tutorial at a function held at British Council, Dhaka last year.

100 BNP men join AL in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

About 100 BNP leaders and activists yesterday joined Awami League (AL) at a function held at Narandia School and College ground in Kalihati upazila.

Kalihati AL organised the function where former president of Narandia union BNP Shukur Mahmud led the party leaders in the joining programme by offering a bouquet of flowers to AL central leader and former lawmaker from Tangail-4 (Kalihati) constituency Abdul Latif Siddiqui. He was present there as the chief guest.

AL leader Iqbal Hossen Rintu chaired the occasion.

Among others, AL leader and former lawmaker Laila Siddiqui, President of Kalihati upazila unit of AL Mozaherul Islam Talukder Thhandu, local AL leaders Anisur Rahman, and Zahangir Alam addressed.

The new comers expressed their determination to work for Awami League. They expressed their solidarity with the programmes of the grand alliance until resignation of Prof Iajuddin as caretaker advisor.

12x2

14x3

Art of surviving disasters

Dhaka Ahsania Mission evolves new community based approach to disaster preparedness

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Khaleda Begum, a mother of two children, lives at Daspara village in Narsingdi district. Being a wife of a poor marginal farmer, she tackles multifarious problems of family.

However, Khaleda was helpless in face of natural disaster. Because her village is situated in a flood-prone area. Previously she used to carry the notions that floods are 'Acts of Allah' unleashing fury and punishment on people and there is nothing they can do but 'grin and bear' when it occurs.

Finally she realised that her perception was wrong. It happened to her after attending a three-day training course on disaster management, conducted by Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM), a leading NGO, in March last year. The training was conducted under the Community Based Approaches to Disaster Preparedness (CBADP) Project.

Khaleda has mastered the skills to survive disasters. Now she is convinced that disaster preparedness can reduce losses to a great extent. After the training, she raised the earthen floor of her house and rebuilt it on strong structure to protect her family from the onslaught of flood and other calamities. She also planted saplings of various fruit bearing and other trees around her

house and on fallow lands around it to protect her family from storm and cyclone. She is also giving advice to neighbours to follow her example to reduce disaster losses. They are also coming forward spontaneously to take preparations ahead of disasters.

In Bangladesh, natural disaster is a regular feature. The country frequently suffers from devastating flood, cyclone and storm, tidal surge, tornado, river erosion and drought as well as constituting a very high-risk location for devastating seismic activity.

But the disaster management plans in our country suffer from severe gaps in terms of preparedness action and community involvement. Communities are largely seen as victims who need help, thus overlooking the contribution they are capable of making in disaster preparedness and emergency management.

DAM brought a change in the approach where resourcefulness of 'victims' is recognised and space given to realise its full potential. The decentralised approach provides opportunity for greater involvement of the community.

The project is being implemented in collaboration with Concern Universal since March 2006.

It aims at decreasing the negative impact of natural disasters in the highly vulnerable districts of Jamalpur, Narsingdi and Barguna by raising awareness of local communities. Primary beneficiaries of the project are 23,274 members of the targeted 241 local community centres (Ganokendra or village development centres (VDCs)).

DAM has 241 Ganokendra/VDCs in the project area which serve as a forum for community participation and development. The centres serve as focal points for project activities.

The Ganokendras / VDCs are used as platforms for community mobilisation.

On contact, CBADP project coordinator Md Jahangir Alam said disaster management style in our country is largely one of charity and relief, rather than disaster preparedness. Once a calamity occurs, the designated state institutions rush with assistance, followed by other formal charitable institutions, individuals and the communities who are not directly affected. Disaster preparedness and mitigation do not portray adequately in the national plans yet. DAM initiated the project to reduce dependency on government turning 'helpless victims' to 'useful resource'.



A meeting in progress at community level to develop disaster preparedness strategies at a village in Narsingdi.