

## Cashing in on patients' plight

Magura diagnostic centres charge 10 to 20 times the cost of tests

HOSSAIN SERAJ, *Magura*

Diagnostic centres in Magura are doing brisk business in collusion with a section of government doctors who allegedly get benefit from them.

The doctors refer patients to the diagnostic centres for unnecessary tests, allegedly for 'commission' from them.

There are eight registered and 17 unregistered diagnostic centres in Magura town. Most of these centres have 'arrangements' with doctors to refer patients in exchange of benefits.

The diagnostic centres charge from patients ten to twenty times the actual cost of tests and share the huge profit with doctors. This was gathered from number of employees working at different diagnostic centres who talked to this correspondent on condition of anonymity.

An investigation by this correspondent revealed that doctors get 30 to 45 percent 'commission' from

the profit earned by diagnostic labs. Doctors also get loans, costly gifts such as computer, refrigerator, cell phone and fashionable items from owners of the centres.

Many of the centres have set up doctors' chambers for consultation and this practice is growing.

Everyday, hundreds of patients crowd chambers of government doctors at the diagnostic centres. These doctors are employed at the Sadar Hospital and at upazila health complexes. Some centres have set up air-conditioned chambers for doctors to attract patients. The owners however claim that the arrangements are for benefit of patients.

An employee at a diagnostic centre preferring anonymity said 'blood sugar' test involves less than Tk 6 but Tk 100 is charged from patients while its rate at Magura Sadar hospital is Tk 25 only. A routine urine test costs less than Tk 8, but Tk 50 to 60 is realised.

Another employee said, 'Cost of reagents for blood group test is less than Tk 6 but diagnostic centres charge Tk 130 to 150 for a test. Such a test costs only Tk 33 at Magura Sadar Hospital'.

The centres have different rates for similar tests in the absence of rules by the authorities concerned, they claimed.

"We have no fixed rates", admitted an owner of a diagnostic centre. "These rates are fixed on the basis of mutual understanding among owners".

About the unusual profit, owner of another diagnostic centre admitted that reagents for X-ray films is not expensive. But establishment cost, electricity charge, staff salary and many other things raise the rates, he pleaded.

Managing Director of a diagnostic centre said, "We are in a competitive market. If tests are costlier at one centre, clients would naturally go to another centre. So it is not true

that diagnostic centres are charging unusually high rates.

MA Bari, owner of Unique Diagnostic Centre, once claimed, "We do not pay commission to any doctor, we just run our business on our goodwill only."

Talking to this correspondent, some patients said, they are fully aware of the high profit earned by diagnostic centres but are undone.

"I went to a doctor for treatment of stomach pain. He asked me to get six different tests done. I knew all the tests were not necessary but could I protest the doctor's prescription?", the patient said.

All these are happening as the authorities are silent and they have no control over diagnostic centres.

When contacted, Magura Civil Surgeon Fariduddin Ahmed admitted unusual high rates at diagnostic centres. They should follow the rates at government hospital, he said.

## Lottery for four fertiliser sacks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Four sacks of urea fertiliser were sold through lottery at Derai Bazaar at Derai upazila headquarters in Sunamganj district as there were many farmers demanding those.

About 100 farmers took part in the lottery, held Thursday afternoon, but only four of them returned home happy with a sack of fertiliser each.

Fertiliser dealer Abuds Sattar arranged the lottery to avoid an unwanted situation since there was a great demand of the item during the peak season of IRRI-Boro farming.

Sattar claimed that nine out of 10 dealers in Derai upazila had no stock of urea. Only four sacks were there in his stock on Thursday while about 100 farmers came to him for those.

But the Upazila Agriculture Officer, when contacted, claimed that a sufficient quantity of fertiliser was allotted for Derai upazila and that the allotment would reach by February 15.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

The Roads and Highways Department, in a joint drive with army, demolishing a multistoried building in Mymensingh town yesterday.

## Eye hospital to be built in Sonaimuri

An initiative by local Andha Kalyan Samity

A CORRESPONDENT, *Noakhali*

Sonaimuri Andha Kalyan Samity (SAKS), an association for welfare of the blind, has taken up a noble initiative to construct a full-fledged eye hospital in Sonaimuri Pourasabha.

SAKS president and additional secretary of Commerce Ministry of the Government of Bangladesh, Md Sahab Ullah announced this as chief guest at the concluding function of a four-day eye camp held at Sonaimuri High School on Tuesday.

A contract was signed with Lions International Bangladesh to implement the ambitious project.

This would be the first ever eye hospital in four districts of Noakhali, Luximpur Feni and south Comilla which will cater to the needs of



Sonaimuri Andha Kalyan Samity president Md Sahab Ullah addressing the concluding session of an eye camp held there on Tuesday.

## RDRS resents govt's refusal to approve proposed university

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Leaders of RDRS, a leading national NGO, have expressed resentment at the government's denial of permission to set up a private university in northern districts.

Among others, Noakhali Deputy Commissioner (DC) Habibul Kabir Chowdhury, Sonaimuri Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ataur Rahman and Sonaimuri Pourasabha chairman Motaher Hossain were present at the function.

The Samity organised 30 eye camps so far and treated 39,400 patients, 5,850 of them operated upon by the association in collaboration with BNSB.

A team from the UGC during a visit to the proposed campus in 2005 expressed satisfaction at the arrangements, he claimed. "They highly appreciated the initiative and recommended to the education ministry for approval", he said. "We fulfilled all conditions of the Bangladesh Private University Act 1992 and Amendment Act 1998 but the ministry did not give us approval."

The former BNP-led alliance government at the fag end of its tenure granted two private universities-ASA University and East Delta University.

He hoped that the education ministry under the present care-

taker government will consider giving approval to the university for the sake of higher education and research in northern districts. A team of RDRS is expecting to call in the Education Advisor soon this regard, he said.

Fifteen acres of land have been purchased and a four-storyed building has been built at a cost of about Tk one crore, he said.

### 3 of a family electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Three members of a family were electrocuted at Barera village in Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

The victims are Golam Mustafa, 42, a bus driver, his daughter Masuda, 11, and son Zaman, 4, police and locals said.

The victims were electrocuted when an electric pole broke down on them near their house at about 2 pm. As a result, they died on the spot.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) morgue for autopsy.

A case was lodged with Kotwali Police Station in this regard.

## Stolen cement blocks recovered from BNP leader's 'resort'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Joint forces recovered a large number of cement blocks and current nets from a 'resort' of BNP leader and ward commissioner K M Shahidullah alias Haji Shahid in Bandh Road area near the bank of Kirtonkhola river in the city.

Three caretakers-Sumon, Russel Howlader and Siddikur Rahman-were arrested, police said yesterday.

Haji Shahid is absconding since the joint forces launched the drive to nab godfathers involved in corruption and terrorism.

Water Development Board (WDB) engineer Mosharrif

Hossain said the blocks were stolen earlier and he had informed law enforcers for their recovery.

Earlier, several newspaper reports said Haji Shahid's resort and picnic spot was built illegally by occupying the land of a 'mass killing ground' used by Pakistani occupation forces during the Liberation War and WDB land on the bank of Kirtonkhola river. The lands are yet to be recovered from illegal possession.

4X3

10X3

9X2

5X3