

Patients with cold related diseases crowd hospitals

SHARIFUL ISLAM with SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Public and private hospitals in the city have been grappling with a huge rush of children suffering from pneumonia and bronchiolitis for the last couple of weeks.

Physicians at the hospitals said they are having trouble treating patients with respiratory tract infections, as the number this year is much higher than those in the last few years.

They added that no official survey has yet been conducted though the cold-related diseases broke out around three weeks ago after a sudden change in weather.

According to the hospital records, almost 60 percent of the child patients admitted to Dhaka Shishu Hospital, Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Mitford Hospital, Suhrawardy Hospital,

Institute of Child Health (ICH) and Shishu Hospital at Mirpur have been suffering from severe cold and respiratory infections.

"Two-thirds of the total patients at our hospital are down with cold-related diseases," Dr NK Ghosh, a junior consultant at ICH and Shishu Hospital, said yesterday.

He said 400 patients a day on average take outdoor treatment at the private hospital.

The children's wards at the public hospitals are already filled to capacity and doctors said they have no option but to refuse many sick children every day.

Doctors at the DMCH and Dhaka Shishu Hospital do not give proper attention to the outdoor patients, alleged their relatives.

Sumi Begum of Islambagh said doctor has prescribed three medicines for her four-year-old son without even having a glimpse at the

patient.

A doctor of paediatrics at the DMCH admitted that they do not have enough time to enquire about the problems of a patient due mainly to the influx of the infants and young children.

At the Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday, a doctor on duty said, "We are struggling to attend every patient."

"When we release someone, the bed fills up in no time," said a doctor at the Dhaka Shishu Hospital that can accommodate 481 child patients. He added that they give priority to those with worsening condition.

People were standing in long queues in front of the Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday, seeking treatment of their dear ones.

The DMCH register shows that a doctor has to attend 80 patients on average during the office hours

Hasina asks govt not to delay election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the interim government not to deprive the people of their democratic rights to vote by procrastinating in the name of reforms.

The AL chief also urged the government to hold the election so that the people are able to elect a government of their choice.

"People want to exercise their democratic and constitutional rights of franchise to have an elected government that will fulfil their aspiration. So, let the aspiration of the people be fulfilled as they had waged movements against the BNP-Jamaat coalition government for a free and fair election," said Hasina.

The AL president made the remarks at a view exchange meeting with the members of Awami Chalochchitra (film) League at her Dhanmondi office in the capital.

Saying that the present interim government is the result of the



Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha bulldozes Ambala Sweets, a sweetmeat shop on Dhanmondi Road-2, yesterday during its continued drive against illegal structures.

Babul's bail petition rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected a bail petition of detained Jamuna Group Chairman Nurul Islam Babul in a case filed against him for anti-state activities and illegally possessing public and private properties.

Judge (In-charge) Mohammad Nazrul Islam of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following a criminal appeal by Babul's lawyers against a rejection order of the lower court on February 23.

In his order, the judge said the charges brought against Babul were primarily found to be true.

Police arrested Babul soon after he came out of the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) office on February 22 after submitting wealth statement.

Later he was sent to Dhaka Central Jail with one-month



Law enforcers still cordon off BSEB Bhavan at Karwan Bazar in the capital as hundreds gather near the building that suffered one of the worst fire devastations in the country two days ago.

Dhanmondi yesterday's demolition target

50 structures knocked down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) yesterday knocked down more than 50 illegal structures, most of those partly, in Dhanmondi area.

The eviction team demolished the ground floors and basements of different buildings, which were allegedly used by the owners for various purposes instead of car parking spaces.

During the drive, the mobile court found that United International University, a private university, housed its office, cafeteria, restaurant and game room in its basement.

"They violated the Rajuk rules.

We gave them three days as sought by the university authorities to evacuate the space," Magistrate ASM Emdadul Dastagir, who led the team, said.

They also destroyed the ground floor of an under construction building for illegally setting a market there instead of car parking.

The Rajuk team also found that Roche, a multinational pharmaceuticals company, is using half of its basement area as office instead of car parking.

They knocked down a few structures of Bikalpa Tower, a part of Stamford University, Thumri Restaurant, two steps of a ground floor stairs of Rangs Anam Plaza, a

few portions of Almas Shopping Center, American Burger and couple of Chinese restaurants for violating the Rajuk rules.

However, some building owners alleged that they did not receive any prior notices regarding misuse of car parking spaces.

When asked the Rajuk authorities denied the allegation and said they sent earlier notices to all.

The team also demolished Ambala Sweetmeat located next to Rifles Square, a shopping mall, as it (Ambala) was an unapproved one, sources said.

Rajuk will conduct drive on

Reduced ISD call charges for 30 countries from today

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) will reduce call charges for land and fixed phones and also mobile phones under its economy ISD call charge facilities with 30 countries from today.

As part of the facilities, the BTTB call charges with code '012' through any land or fixed phones and mobile phones with 14 countries will be Tk 7.50 per minute, an official press release said.

The countries are Bahama, Barmuda, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Gabon, Guam, Macao, Malawi, Cyprian (American Island State), San Marino, US Virgin Island, Uzbekistan, Vatican and Puerto Rico.

US shifts policy to join Iran, Syria in Iraq talks

AFP, Washington

In a potential policy shift, the United States said Tuesday it would join a conference with Iraq's neighbours which could see senior US officials hold direct talks with foes Iran and Syria.

President George W. Bush's administration previously had rebuffed calls from Congress, regional allies and the independent Iraq Study Group last year for a regional forum and discussions with its two arch foes on stabilising chaotic Iraq.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said a landmark conference, expected in early April, will follow lower-level talks with regional powers plus the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council in Baghdad in March.

State Department spokesman Sean McCormack insisted there had been no change in US policy towards Iran, but repeatedly refused to rule out direct talks with the Iranians on the sidelines of the regional talks.

A senior State Department official added: "I'm not going to lead you to a foregone conclusion that there's going to be such a discussion; I'm also not going to exclude that there's going to be such a discussion."

Iraqi officials said the first gathering, in March, would focus on ending

Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

UNB, Madaripur

An underground operative was killed in an encounter with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members in the town early yesterday.

Identity of the dead could not be known.

Acting on a tip off, Rab men raided the Paka Masjid area where some outlaws were holding a meeting at about 5:00am. Sensing the presence of the Rab men, the outlaws opened fire, prompting the elite forces to retaliate.

Rab sources said an unidentified outlaw received bullets during the "shootout" and died instantly.

A revolver was recovered from the spot.

Increased power tariff comes into effect today

UNB, Dhaka

A five percent increase in electricity tariff for urban consumers comes into effect today.

According to a decision taken by the caretaker government on February 6, the five percent enhancement of power tariff will be effective only for the consumers living in urban areas and using over 100 units of power.

Power ministry officials said the tariff raise will cover only the Desa, Desco and PBD consumers.

At present, the tariff rate of electricity in rural areas is higher than in towns and cities.

Serbia makes new arrests for Kosovo killings

REUTERS, Belgrade

Serbia has arrested four suspects in the killing in 1999 of three jailed U.S.-Albanian brothers who had joined a guerrilla war in the break-away Kosovo province, Serbia's war crimes prosecutor said yesterday.

Belgrade media reported that five former or serving Serb policemen were arrested on Sunday, including a police colonel serving as deputy commander of the gendarmerie.

A spokesman for the war crimes prosecutor declined to confirm whether the suspects were policemen.

"The four will be handed over to the investigative judge today," he said.

Two former Serb policemen went on trial in Belgrade in November charged as co-perpetrators in the murder of Argon, Mehmet and Ilaj Bytyci, ethnic Albanian brothers with US citizenship.

Car bomb kills 10 in Baghdad market

REUTERS, Baghdad

A car bomb killed 10 people and wounded 21 near a vegetable market in Baghdad yesterday, Iraqi police said, as insurgents kept up a campaign of bombings despite a security crackdown backed by US reinforcements.

President Bush is sending 21,500 extra troops to Iraq, most to Baghdad, where Iraqi and US patrols and security outposts have been stepped up in a bid to halt sectarian violence that was killing hundreds of people a week.

As part of efforts to stabilize Iraq, Foreign Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said on Tuesday that Iran and Syria would be among regional states

sending officials to join US and British envoys at a meeting in Baghdad next month.

The United States said it would attend, opening the way to a dialogue that critics have long demanded.

In the latest bomb attack on Wednesday, police said a car bomb exploded on a commercial street in the Bayaa neighborhood of the Iraqi capital, killing 10 people.

U.S. military spokesman Rear Admiral Mark Fox said on Wednesday there were "encouraging signs" in the security plan, notably a decrease in sectarian death squad abductions and killings, but bombings were still a problem.

"We're very early in the process," he told reporters.

Washington accuses Iran and Syria of fuelling the violence in Iraq and has spurned suggestions -- including in the December report of a high-level Iraq Study Group -- that recommended reaching out to both to try to stabilize Iraq.

Washington brands both countries sponsors of terrorism and says Iranian elements have provided sophisticated roadside bombs used in Iraq. The United States accuses Syria of fanning strife by failing to control its border.

Zebari said an initial meeting in mid-March would be a chance for Western and regional powers to try

Ailing Castro breaks public silence

Says he feels more energetic

AFP, Caracas

In his first live broadcast since falling ill last July, Cuban leader Fidel Castro called Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's daily radio talk show to say he was feeling "more energetic."

Castro, 80, handed power to his brother Raul Castro, 75, in late July as he recovered from what is described as gastrointestinal surgery.

The Cuban leader, who first took power in 1959, has since only been seen in official Cuban television and newspaper images, though he has met some few visitors in Havana.



Policemen and Bangladesh Chhatra Mukti activists scuffle at Doel Chhatter in the capital yesterday as the activists protested the presence of Prof Muhammad Yunus at the 43rd convocation of Dhaka University.

Prayer Timing		
March 1		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-07	6-11
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		