

# 52pc burn injuries caused by electrocution

Says DMCH Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Around 52 percent of total burn injuries in the country is caused by electrocution which takes place due to lack of people's awareness and proper management of electrical wires, says the admission record at Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit (BPSU) of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

"Incidents of electrocution increase in rainy season when the wires are exposed and disconnected due to rain and storm and people have to repair them frequently," said Dr Samantalal Sen, project director of BPSU.

He said the accidents also took place as the wires are too near to the roof and the high voltage wires are uncovered.

A BPSU record for 2004-05 revealed that the vast majority of people who suffered from electric burn injury are adult. Almost 70 percent of them are aged between 16 and 40, 22.22 percent are aged between six and 15, while 7.5 percent are of the ages between 41 and 60.

While visiting the burn unit, this correspondent saw one Alauddin, 22, groaning there with burns on the chest and knee.

The accident took place when he was busy in fitting the light of a neon signboard in Chittagong.

"As I climbed up, I saw an exposed high voltage wire above my head. I was quite careful about that open wire and knew how much dangerous it was. But I don't know when and how my head touched the wire. Instantly, I received an electric shock causing serious burn on my whole body. Then I fell to the ground," said Alauddin.

"Despite knowing the danger I could not take any safety measures. We are to work with all risk factors," he added.

Dr Samantalal said most often the electric burn becomes so fatal that cent percent cure is impossible.

"Maximum 60 percent of the electric burn is curable," he said, adding that among the burn injury patients who got admitted to the unit since 2003, a total of 40 percent accidents were caused by electrocution due to lack of awareness and safety measures.

The type of electric burn injury is almost the same both in rural and urban areas and the victims are mostly repair workers, said the experts, adding that in the city slum dwellers are the most vulnerable group.

Admitting the fact, Monitoring Officer of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) Osman Goni said around 20 lakh slum dwellers in the city are very vulnerable as they use direct line and do not take proper connection.

A motivational programme has been launched by Desa to inspire them in taking standard connection by forming association and it has reduced the risk of accident to 20 to 30 percent during the last four to five years, he added.

Besides, overhead high voltage lines are being transformed into underground ones in densely populated areas of the city to reduce the risk of electrocution, said Osman.

"As it is a costly initiative and needs Tk 5000 to 6000 per metre, it will take few more years to complete the work that started in 80s, he added.

Electric burn injury causes serious damage in life, as these people cannot go back to their previous jobs mostly, said BPSU Assistant Registrar Dr Kishore Kumar Das.

"If one receives nine percent burns in his hand, there is no way to recover it except amputation. So the damage is very serious in case of

electrocution," he added.

BPSU record also shows that around 31 percent electrocution take place during repair works, 24 percent during elevating telephone or TV antenna and 19 percent during building construction.

As the children are more curious and careless and often like to fly kite on the roof or play with electrical wires or electric polls, they are also the victims of electrocution.

Bangladesh Health and Injury Survey Report on Children 2005 says more than 800 children die from electrocution each year in the country numbering over two per day.

Exposed electric wires caused all electrocution deaths, it added.

According to the record, over 47,000 children were killed or injured by electrocution in that year.

"In most cases, electrocution takes place through electrical system components or equipment that lack grounding system and because of using old, frayed extension cords or electric appliances around water sources," said epidemiologist Dr Mashreky of the Centre for Injury Prevention and Research, Bangladesh.



Construction materials occupy both sides of Road No. 12, Sector No. 6 at Uttara in the city, causing suffering to pedestrians.

PHOTO: STAR



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Artistes perform a dance number at the inaugural ceremony of a drama festival organised by Mahakal Natya Sampradaya at Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday to mark its founding anniversary.

## Criminalisation main obstacle to women's political empowerment

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The political empowerment of women could not be achieved because of political criminalisation and indifferent attitude of the previous governments towards them, speakers at the inaugural ceremony of a workshop said yesterday.

They also called on all to take the responsibility of previous failures and come forward with constructive approach and the vision for the well-being of the nation, they said.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad (BMP) organised the two-day workshop on 'Women's political empowerment and their involvement in electoral process' at Biam auditorium in the city. Some 300 representatives of the Parishad from across the country are taking part in the workshop.

Speaking as a special guest, Dr Shahdeen Malik said criminalisation of politics is the main obstacle to women's political empowerment.

He also hoped that the on-going process of political reforms would bring an end to political criminalisation.

Although about one crore women have been involved in economic activities in the last ten years, they are lagging behind largely because of restrictions imposed by fundamentalists, Dr Shahdeen said.

Welcoming the Election Commission's decision to introduce a provision requiring the political parties to induct 33 percent women members into their decision-making

committees, General Secretary of the Parishad Ayesha Khanam said women leaders have long been struggling for such rights.

Presenting a written statement, Secretary of the central committee of the Parishad Rekha Chowdhury called on all not to

vote for anti-liberation forces, those using religion in politics, loan defaulters, black money holders, criminals, those creating obstacles to the development of women in the name of religion and those supporting violence against women.

Parishad Vice-President Bela Nahi presided over the session.

Later, Prof Sonia Nishat Amin and Ayesha Banu conducted sessions on women's empowerment and women's political empowerment as resource persons.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Shahdeen Malik speaks at a workshop on 'Political empowerment of women' at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday. Bangladesh Mahila Parishad organised the two-day workshop.

## Reopen jute mills, reinstate workers: CPB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday demanded reopening of jute mills, reinstatement of workers and adequate supply of fertilisers across the country.

Livelihoods of two crore people will remain uncertain if the jute industry is destroyed as per the prescriptions of donor agencies such as World Bank and International Monetary Fund, CPB leaders said in a statement.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan and General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim also urged the government to take steps, including adequate budgetary allocation, on emergency basis to save the jute industry.

They also called on the government to cancel layoffs in different jute mills, including People's Jute Mill in Khulna, pay salary arrears and other benefits to workers and start operation of jute mills to continue production.

In another statement, the CPB leaders expressed concern over the police attacks on farmers who demanded adequate supply of fertiliser in Rajshahi and Bhola.

The government should take action against the bureaucrats who failed to distribute fertilisers in a systematic manner, the leaders said.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Krishak Samity and Bangladesh Khetmajur Union, two associations of the farmers and labourers, said the agriculture sector would be severely affected as the government has failed to ensure adequate supply of fertiliser.

In a statement, they demanded that the government set up more fertiliser distribution centres across the country to resolve the crisis.

## BCL protests Mainul's remarks on Hasina

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday condemned Law Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain's comments on Sheikh Hasina, a press release said.

In a joint statement, BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon and Acting General Secretary Shahinur Rahman Tutul said his comments on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina have made people laugh.

They said the nation no more wants to hear sermons from the adviser. The BCL leaders also urged him to refrain from making such comments.

## War Museum programmes

Liberation War Museum organises a programme at Slaughter's Den at Mirpur in the city today where Amirunnisa, wife of martyred freedom fighter Abdul Hakim and Shariful Islam Babul, who narrowly escaped death during the liberation war, will recount the days of 1971 before the young generation, says a press release.

The programme begins at 4:30pm.

## Save capital from environmental disaster

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday said existing parks, open spaces, ponds, wetlands, canals and surrounding rivers must be preserved and the lost ones should be restored immediately to save the capital from environmental disaster.

At a discussion meeting, they also said Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) should be reviewed and updated regularly for the greater interest of the city dwellers.

The discussion titled 'Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan and Environment' was organised by

Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) at its Lalmatia office in the city.

Architect Niaz Rahman presented a draft report on the DMDP and Environment at the meeting.

In his presentation, Niaz said establishment of new industrial enterprises within the city has to be carefully controlled by enforcing environmental regulations strictly.

"Better coordination is to be ensured among utility agencies belonging to different ministries, city corporations and municipalities," he added.

Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said permission for construc-

tion of high-rise buildings has to be given only after careful assessment of its impact on the neighbourhood.

He called for gradual expansion of remaining wetlands including ponds and canals and preservation of trees and open space in the city.

Bapa General Secretary Mahidul Haq Khan said the capital city has to be connected extensively with surrounding rivers.

Former vice-chancellor Jahangirnagar University Kazi Saleh Ahmed, Prof Khandaker Mokaddem Hossain of Dhaka University, Bapa Joint Secretary Mihir Biswas, Salma A Shafi, Prof Ishrat Jahan and ZK Baral also took part in the discussion.



PHOTO: STAR

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina consoles bereaved family members of party leader Dr Moazzem Hoassain, who passed away on Thursday night. Hasina came to the National Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday to pay last respect to the late leader.

## 'Faizee's resignation to increase image of SC'

CU CORRESPONDENT

Syndicate members and teachers of Chittagong University (CU) have appreciated the resignation of Justice Faisal Mahmud Faizee from the High Court division of the Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday.

Prof Helal Uddin Nizami, a syndicate member, said the decision of the resignation would increase the image of the SC.

It will also encourage others, who might be involved in such unethical practice, to go one after another, he observed.

Prof Sultan Ahmed, another syndicate member, said the resignation will give a sense of relief since Faizee brought a bad name for the university.

"We are obliged to go for anything and spare none involved in any unethical practice for the sake of establishing justice and holding the judiciary high," he said while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

"Not only Faizee but also others,

who were involved in certificate tampering, should quit the posts that they are holding by means of fraudulence without any delay," he added.

Prof Mohammad Shamsuddin, who led the last probe committee to investigate the certificate scam, said their report was based on the information gathered through the investigation.

"We tried to reveal the truth without considering what it might bring about or who might be affected," he added.

Despite repeated attempts, CU Vice-chancellor Prof M Badiul Alam could not be reached over phone for comment.

Mentionable, the CU syndicate on March 03 this year cancelled around 2000 certificates including those of LLB examinees who passed between 1983 and 1992 on charge of alleged tampering.

Later, the authorities published a gazette notification canceling the certificates of 49 LLB examinees on March 11.

## Decision to hike fuel prices protested

Leaders of Bangladesh Workers' Party yesterday condemned the government decision to raise the prices of petroleum, gas and electricity, adding that the looming price hike would only cause more suffering to the commoners, says a press release.

In a joint statement, President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimol Biswas said price hike of essentials and transportation costs have already made the lives of poor and the middle class miserable.

People of lower income group will not be able to bear the pressure if the price is raised further, they added.

They also said the interests of countrymen should get priority before implementing the agenda of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).