

Dhaka Central Jail was set up, it is assumed in the early 19th century during the East India Company rule. Central jail prisoners worked as labourers when Saint Thomas' church was built around 1820. Documents of 1833 state the then Dhaka jail could accommodate 800 prisoners. On an average there were 526 prisoners a day, from different areas of the then East Bengal.

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The name is Mitford Hospital Emergency

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Potholed floors, absence of proper ventilation, insufficient medical equipment, and shortage of water and gas are the characteristics of the dilapidated Emergency section of the Mitford Hospital, city's second largest hospital founded in 1820.

A big portion of people from the southern part of the city depends on this hospital with 1000 beds. People from Keraniganj and from the other side of Buriganga also come here for treatment.

The Emergency section has only four rooms with dirty, cratered floors and no doors or windows. The rooms contain six shabby observation beds. Waste is carelessly tossed into a metallic bucket. The only ventilation system is some holes in the upper part of the brick wall in two rooms.

Electric fans are suspended from the ceiling with big iron rods. The ceiling itself looks makeshift.

"We have to pour water in the potholes in the corridor of Emergency 10 to 12 times a day to stop dust forming," said Khalilur Rahman, a peon of the Emergency, while pouring water in the holes from a plastic can.

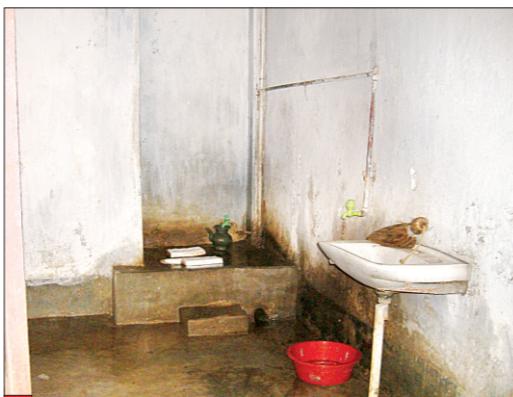
MA Majid, nurse-in-charge of Emergency, said, "As you can see we have no environment to treat patients here. The area is covered in dust from the potholes in the corridor.

"Today [Saturday July 28] the area is relatively clean, as the adviser has come to visit to the hospital," he said while monitoring the water pouring activity in the corridor.

One side of two rooms is partitioned with cardboards, on the other side of which a leader of the fourth class employees lives with his family. Sometimes when the family cooks the smell wafts



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STAR PHOTO

1. The patient observation room of Emergency. 2. The only bathroom without water supply. 3. The makeshift ventilation. 4. The potholed corridor.

into the Emergency through the holes of the cardboard, said doctors and nurses working there.

The ticket counter is on the other side of the hospital.

"The structure is so rickety that if there is a storm outside we feel like the storm is going on inside," Majid said.

"There is no way to sterilise equipments before use here because we do not have any gas supply. We have to use spirit and soap and water instead of sterilising. But often we do not have water supply also," he added.

"We have no security here. If

we keep equipment on the table of the nurses' duty room and go to another room for a while, some of the equipment will be missing when we return," he said.

Md Khorsheed Alam Chowdhury, a nurse, said, "We do not have any equipment to do stomach wash here. So when we have a patient who took poison we will have to take him to another section of the hospital."

The female section of Emergency is without any doors or windows and contains three beds. Female patients hardly stay there, as there is no door and no security, he said.

The only bathroom of the Emergency always remains under lock and key, as there is no water supply there. The supply of electricity is also irregular.

There are six emergency medical officers (EMO) for the Emergency. Three doctors work in three shifts a day by rotation.

Dr Alauddin, an EMO, said, "It will be easier to answer if you ask what is not a problem in Emergency while working because it is always full of problems."

"The Emergency was shifted to this place last December. Before that this place was a godown. The previous Emergency was a better place with tiles and required

equipments," said an EMO requesting anonymity, who has been working there for the last three years.

Dr Subodh Chandra Das, deputy director in-charge, Mitford Hospital, admitted the existing problems and said that the Emergency was shifted to that place according to the orders of DG [director general] Health Dr Shahjahan Biswas, on the reasoning that the Emergency should be at the front side of the hospital.

"On Thursday we got a design from PWD [Public Works Department]. New rooms for doctors and tiled walls are included in the design," he added.

"If 50 people are rushed to the Emergency due to an accident we cannot accommodate them

here and have to send them to Dhaka Medical College. We do not have casualty service either," he said.

"Our present director [of Mitford Dr Mahmuda Khatun] has talked with the DG Health about the renovation of the Emergency. Fan, trolley and other equipment have been given," he said.

"On Thursday we got a design from PWD [Public Works Department]. New rooms for doctors and tiled walls are included in the design," he added.

RIGHT PROJECT AT THE WRONG PLACE



Bangla Motor intersection is one of the busiest intersections of the city where thousands of pedestrians risk their lives everyday trying to cross the road from all directions. Accidents involving vehicles and pedestrians are frequent. The traffic policemen who man the intersection have long been demanding a foot over-bridge at Bangla Motor intersection to manage movement of thousands of commuters every day. Mysteriously the Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka has ignored the demand and went ahead to lay a foundation stone (left) for a proposed over-bridge on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and Paribagh intersection, where not even one hundredth of pedestrian movement is observed than at the Bangla Motor intersection.

Traffic gridlock grips city at school hours

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

The city continues to experience the most chaotic and unbearable gridlocks during the school hours as roads around the schools remain choked with traffic for hours every day.

Various measures including enforcing one-way traffic, prohibiting parking, restricting movement of rickshaws and deploying more traffic officials to oversee the situation have apparently failed to ease the overall situation.

Children shambling with their schoolbags and toddling their way to the school amid almost static tailback especially in the mornings and afternoons is a common sight in Siddheshwari, Kakrail, Motijheel, Malibagh, Gulshan, Dhanmondi and Mohammadpur areas where some of the renowned schools are located.

Queues of private cars and rickshaws are parked haphazardly on both sides of the roads while homebound students and guardians are seen standing and anxiously waiting for a transport beside the half-encroached pavement during school hours every day.

"As I have to drop my son off at his school in Motijheel before I go to my office, I'm always late to my office as it takes about half an hour just to get out of the gridlocks," said Sultan Ahmed from Malibagh.

To make things even more chaotic, more vehicles including rickshaws tend to rashly push their way on the wrong side of the road trying to find passage, making a Gordian knot.

"Although we discourage them to do so, the parents tend

to push their way through the jam and bring their cars in front of the school entrance, making things even worse," said an on-duty sergeant from the intersection near Vigarunnisa Noon School and College.

Shahan-Ara Karim, a housewife from Shantinagar was waiting for a transport on the pavement of Vigarunnisa Noon School. She was frantically waving to the passing taxis and three-wheelers for a ride back home with her daughters.

After anxiously waiting half an hour in the chaos, she started walking towards her home. Ten minutes later, she finally got a rickshaw.

"As both my daughters study in that school, I have to face this chaotic traffic situation twice every day," said Shahan-Ara Karim.

But talking to Star City, most

of the school authorities said their role in improving the traffic situation in front of the schools is quite minimal.

Principal of Vigarunnisa Noon School, one of the schools infamous for traffic congestion in front of it, could not be reached despite repeated attempts. But the school staff said they do not have any plans regarding the traffic situation in front of the school.

Syed Hafizul Islam, headmaster of Government Laboratory School, said that the school authorities have a little to do with the traffic situation.

However, Golam Raham, an official from Oxford International School, said the initiatives taken by the school authorities have improved the situation with assistance from the community police.



Cars stuck in traffic during school hours in Dhanmondi.