



According to Azimushshan, many people accompanied Islam Khan when he came to Dhaka for the first time. They lived temporarily in Mogoltuli or Mughaltuli. People believe there was a naval base before the Mughals. The area where the naval base workers' lived was called Old Mughaltuli. In 1939 the name changed to Biren Bose Road. However, in 1954 it was renamed Old Mughaltuli as demanded by the people.

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# Disability grips Pongu Hospital

Runs with only two physiotherapists amid severe shortage of manpower and equipment

DURDANA GHIAS

Believe it or not, Pongu Hospital, the country's biggest hospital for orthopaedics treatment and rehabilitation, is running with only two physiotherapists against the need of at least 50 of them.

Officially known as the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedics Rehabilitation (Nitor) the hospital has 10 sanctioned posts of physiotherapists, but it is delivering treatment amid severe

After a few visits to the outdoor section and physiotherapy department of the hospital this correspondent found that even though doctors are advising the patients for physiotherapy on daily basis, patients are asked to come twice a week for physiotherapy due to lack of qualified manpower and required instruments.

Ripon, suffering from pain in his spinal cord, was waiting to get physiotherapy at the outdoor section of the hospital but he was asked to come twice a week for

said at present the hospital has only two qualified physiotherapists.

"This patient has broken his knee joint. I have prescribed him for physiotherapy on daily basis for one month but I know that he will get treatment only twice a week here," said the doctor showing a patient who fell from tree.

If a patient gets proper physiotherapy then the possibility of full recovery is 80 to 90 percent. If proper therapy is given then in most cases the patient may not need operation. In many cases

being engaged to give therapy, he said.

Moreover, the two physiotherapists have to attend classes and do other administrative jobs, which hamper their duty at the hospital.

"It is not possible for me to sit in the outdoor section every day as I have to take classes in the college, take examinations and do the administrative jobs," Dr Kabir said.

Patients have to wait several days to get the serial for required treatment at physiotherapy

therapists at the district level hospitals," he said.

At present there are 3 traction machines, 2 short wave diathermy machines (SWDs) and one ultrasound therapy (UST) at the physiotherapy centre. There were 3 infra-red ray radiation (IRRs) machines but these are not working at present.

Doctors said they need at least 6 SWDs, 6 IRRs and 6 USTs.

"Patients have to wait in queue for at least two hours to get a 10-minute heat therapy," said a duty doctor seeking anonymity.

"Patients do not stay at this hospital for regular physiotherapy which is very important for rehabilitation and to prevent disability. Nitor is for rehabilitation but nothing significant is being done for the rehabilitation," he said.

At present eight intern doctors are working in the hospital from 8:00am to 2:00pm -- two in the outdoor section and six in wards where physiotherapy is given without using instruments. There are some assistant therapists who have passed diploma course. They work under the intern doctors.

In spite of the acute shortage of qualified physiotherapists, there were no recruitments to the vacant posts or no new post created in the last two decades.

"I have joined the hospital in 1985 and since then I have not seen any new face (physiotherapist). Due to retirement some posts fell vacant," said Dr Kabir.

"Physiotherapy students are doing internship here but they are not being recruited."

"There was no new recruitment in the last 25 years by the Public Service Commission. Even though demand notes were sent by the director of this hospital, PSC is yet to put advertisement for recruitment," Dr Kabir added.

The physiotherapy students who are doing graduation at the institute are not getting the opportunity to apply for the vacant posts as the PSC has not advertised for it. Some of them are working at the private sector and many brilliant students are leaving for developed countries where physiotherapists have a good demand.

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A patient runs a treadmill without any aide at the poorly maintained physiotherapy centre of the hospital.

shortage of manpower and equipment.

"One of the main aims of Nitor is to prevent disability and to rehabilitate them for which physiotherapy plays a vital role," said one of the two physiotherapists at the hospital.

According to the doctors and physiotherapists working at the hospital, at least 50 therapists are needed to cope with the large number of patients coming to this hospital. But no physiotherapist was recruited in the hospital in the last 25 years.

the treatment.

"I came here for physiotherapy as the doctor in the outdoor section prescribed me to start it from this moment. But when I got there they told me to come on Saturday and Tuesday only," he told Star City.

Talking to this correspondent, another patient Shahida Begum said she came for treatment of neck pain but she was also asked to come on the stipulated days.

Dr Kazi Humauan Kabir, assistant professor and course coordinator of physiotherapy, Nitor, said

the intermittent therapy offered by the hospital proves insufficient and ineffective, the doctor said.

"As the service is given twice a week if a patient needs one month's therapy it takes three to four months to complete the treatment. Besides, the intermittent treatment ultimately may not give the desired result," Dr Kabir said.

Due to the lack of qualified physiotherapists, health technologists from the Institute of Health Technologists, Dhaka are

section of the hospital for shortage of manpower and equipment.

Dr Nazrul Islam, lecturer of physiotherapy and a doctor of the hospital, said that it is very hard to attend all the patients every day as people from all over the country come to the hospital for orthopaedic treatment.

"On average we have to attend 50 patients a day and it is very difficult for us. Apart from patients from Dhaka city, we get patients regularly from across the country as there are no phys-

therapists at the district level hospitals," he said.

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In addition to the usual

the pilot project is proven to be a success, said DIP officials.

"The demand for passports is rising by the day and we do not really have the necessary human resources to tackle the increasing demands. So, the DIP has decided to experiment on how to improve things for the convenience of general people," said an official at the one-stop service centre of DIP.

"We have plans to share the responsibilities of distributing passports with private banks to make the services available to more people with more convenience," he added.

Under the project, Trust Bank would accept passport applications through its service windows and send those to DIP. After verifying and issuing passports to eligible applicants, the DIP would then send the passports to the particular branches of Trust Bank where applicants would be able to pick those up, said a Trust Bank official at Dhammam branch.

"In other words, we would be acting as a medium between the DIP and the general public to facilitate the process of passport distribution," he added.

According to sources at Trust Bank, each designated branch of the bank would deploy a team of five to seven bank officials who would be exclusively responsible for overseeing the passport distribution process.

"Since we are specialised in providing this sort of services, we are optimistic that our participation in the passport distribution process would bring about a positive change in the system where people would not have to go through much hassle in acquiring their passports," said a Trust Bank official at Uttara branch.

DIP officials are also hopeful that the general public would be greatly benefited from this new service at Trust Bank.

"If things go as planned, people would be able to get their passports from the nearest branch of a bank," the one-stop service official of DIP said.

"What the banks would do is facilitate the DIP with the passport distribution process. Basically, the passport distribution counters at Agargaon passport office would be extended upto the banks so that the applicants would not face as much hassle in acquiring their passports," he added.



Passport seekers face hassles at Agargaon office every day despite introduction of the one-stop service.



## Amena's agony

Amena Begum, 35, a patient of bone fracture, was sitting on her bed with plastered legs. She was injured seriously when a speeding bus on the Tongi-Savar Road hit her recently. After undergoing operation she is now waiting for recovery. But she may be released midway.

Amena will not complain about the treatment she got at Nitor. Most patients at Nitor are from the lower middle class family like her because of the low cost of treatment here.

"The doctors told me that I need physiotherapy for several months on a daily basis to get back to normal life. But I will be released from the hospital soon after my incision recovers," she said.

"Then I will have to take the therapy at the outdoor section where I can get it twice a week. If I go to private therapy centers, it will cost me around Tk 300 a day which I cannot afford," said Amena.

An intern physiotherapist looking after Amena said that physiotherapy is very important to get patients back to normalcy but they have to release patients before full recovery due to shortage of

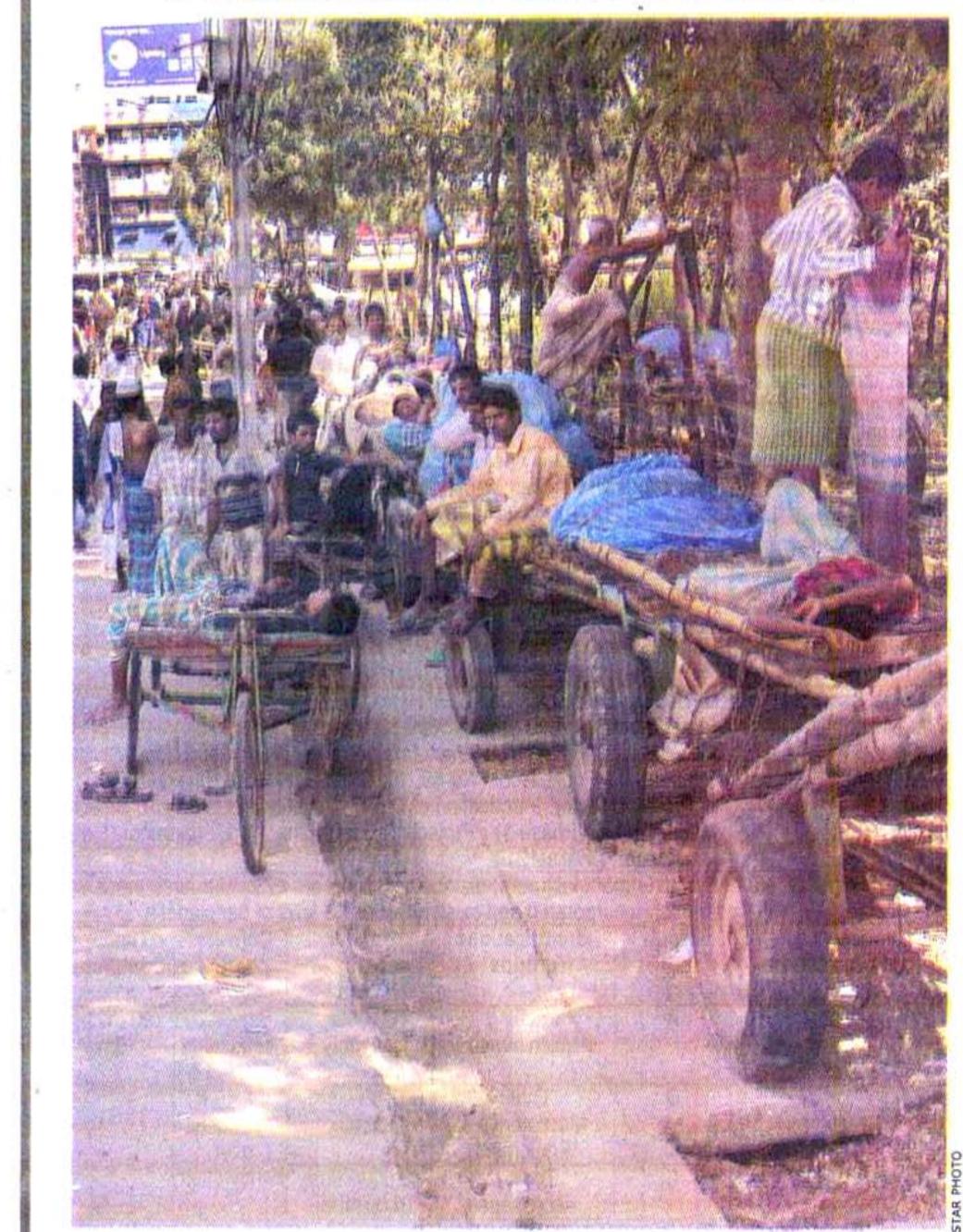
beds.

"If she gets physiotherapy on a daily basis, she will be able to walk again like normal people. If the therapy is not given, then her legs will become stiff and she will lose her normal mobility for life. But we will have to release her after the incision of surgery recovers because we need the beds for more serious patients who need surgery," he said.

"Often we have to release patients before full recovery. We give them some advices so that they can exercise at home but in this way we cannot ensure specialised treatment. There is a progressive way of physiotherapy. When she will complete one stage, she would start the next stage but when she is at home she won't understand when to start the next stage or when one stage is completed," the doctor said.

"When she is released she will resort to the outdoor physiotherapy where she will get the therapy only twice a week. So I am not sure whether the intermittent therapy will get her back to normal life," he added.

## PUSHCARTS NEED A STAND



Pushcarts are lined up occupying a portion of the footpath on the opposite side of Mohammadpur Town Hall as there is no designated stand for them. Pedestrians are forced to walk on the busy road but the authorities are indifferent to the problems.