

# Treatment only if ailing heart survives climbing CCU

## No elevator, escalator or ramp at the coronary unit at Mitford Hospital

DURDANA GHAS

Bala Ram, an elderly heart patient from Nazira Bazar of old Dhaka, was climbing up the stairs of the newly-built coronary care unit (CCU) at the cardiology department of Mitford Hospital, the second largest public hospital in the city.

He had no other option but to use the stairs as there is no elevator, escalator or ramp reaching the CCU.

"I am having chest pain for the last couple of weeks but doctors are yet to find the reason," he told this correspondent amid short breaths resulting from the effort he was making to go upstairs.

"If there was at least a ramp then I could take him upstairs on a wheelchair," said a relative accompanying Bala Ram.

Bala Ram is one of the many heart patients who have to go up and down the stairs of the CCU, situated at the second floor of the new building of Mitford Hospital, unaware of the harm being done to their ailing hearts.

While talking with Bala Ram, a senseless elderly heart patient was being carried to the CCU by four people in a makeshift stretcher.

"Often I see patients going upstairs clutching their chest. I don't know how the CCU was built in this building without the provision of any lift or ramp," said a doctor of CCU seeking anonymity.

"Most of the patients coming to the CCU are emergency cardiac patients mostly suffering from severe chest pain and breathlessness. In these cases physical exertions like climbing up stairs aggravates the pain and other symptoms," he said.

"Even ambulatory patients like Bala Ram who are able to walk should not climb stairs. The ideal rule for carrying heart patients is to use lifts with minimal jerking. But most of the time I see patients being man-handled or carried in stretchers with jerks," he said.

Other problems include the lack of ventilators and surgery units.

"When we have emergency patients with breathing problems we have to rush him to another section of the hospital that contains the ventilator. But sometimes it is also not possible to shift the patient quickly as there is no elevator,"

said a doctor of the hospital.

"At present we have to avoid patients suffering from congenital heart problems or damaged valve for lack of a surgery unit," he said.

Load shedding remains another crucial problem as the unit is yet to have a generator.

"We have many new and expensive machines here. To

maintain these machines properly we need generators," said a doctor.

However, the ECG, angiogram and other vital machines are connected to the emergency electricity line of the hospital.

The 30-bed unit always remains busy as a large number of people, mostly from places near Buriganga, Keraniganj and old parts of the city depend on this unit for heart ailments.

People connected to the city through the river routes, like those coming from Chandpur, Barisal and Munshiganj, comprise another large portion of the patients.

"Most of the time we have to accommodate extra patients because of the pressure," said a doctor.

Asked about the non-availability of elevators, ramps and generators, Prof Syed Azizul Haque, head of cardiology, said it happened because when the building was constructed CCU was not in the plan but two lifts and generators are being sanctioned and they will be set up soon.

"This unit is still being constructed. We have already solved many problems by ensuring uninterrupted water supply, electricity besides

setting up a well-equipped cathlab. Gradually all problems will be solved," he said.

Asked what is done for the patients needing surgery he said they are referred to the NICVD.

"But if we had had a surgery unit then we could treat these patients here and the pressure on NICVD would also have lessened.

"In future the unit will be shifted to the third floor of the building where a surgery unit and a ward for non-acute patients will be set up at a cost of Tk 3 crore. Then it will become a complete CCU," he said.

About the crisis of ventilators Prof Haque said patients with respiratory problems are generally not admitted to this unit.

Asked whether it is possible to move the CCU to the ground floor, the hospital officials said it already houses the outdoor unit and it will be very difficult to shift all the machines of the unit to the ground floor.

Asked when the lifts will be operational Dr Md Sohrab Hossain, deputy director of the hospital, said it may take a few weeks to set up the lift.

"Ten days ago we approached the health secretary and he ordered the CMMU [construction, maintenance and management unit] for the lifts. The work order has been done. It may take two to three weeks," he said.

Till now over 300 angiograms, angioplasty and pacemaker set-up treatment has been given to the patients, said sources at the unit.

In 2007 this unit treated 1,863 indoor patients. In January 2008, 163 indoor patients and 289 outdoor patients were given treatment, said sources at CCU.

Trans-radial angiography is being done at the unit, which has boosted up the treatment facilities. Besides, the academic part of the CCU trains doctors on patient management. Till now it has provided diploma degree on cardiology to 17 doctors.



Two patients being brought to the Mitford Hospital.



# Kamalapur station to wear new look

## Murals, paintings, fountains and greeneries to increase beauty

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Kamalapur, the largest railway station in Bangladesh, is set to have a new appearance and improved commuter service soon, sources said.

A Tk 44.68 crore projects for development and beautification are underway to revamp the 40-year-old station building and the main compound.

Formally launched in May 1968, the station is the centre point of railway link with rest of the country. For its grand architecture the station attracts many tourists.

Railway sources said the terminal building will be embellished with murals, paintings and fountains. Greeneries will be added to the front with landscaping.

Under the project, electronic display board will be installed for announcing timetable and routes of the trains. Signs and directions will be put up at all the points.

Wheelchairs will be added to ease the sufferings of the physically-challenged passengers. There will be trolleys for more comfortable luggage carrying. The waiting lounge, newspaper stand and the restaurant will be extended.

ATM booth, fire-fighting equipment will be added. Security will also be beefed up with closed circuit camera and metal detectors.

Md Shafiqul Alam Khan,

director (public relations), Bangladesh Railway, said, "The idea is to improve the commuter service and modernise the terminal building. Most interesting thing is that Bangladesh Railway will not spend any money for this job."

Alam, who is in charge of the beautification project, said, "Private advertising firms will execute the job on their own expenses and in exchange they

will be allowed to rent space for advertisements. However, we will not allow too much advertising."

The murals and paintings will have motifs that will reflect the cultural heritage and traditions of Bangladesh, he added.

Initially 22 companies showed interest in the beautification project. Dia Consortium was selected from 7 short-listed firms

that participated in the tender. An agreement to this effect was signed on January 17 this year.

Alam said around Tk 15 crore will be spent by private firms for beautification only. The rest amount is earmarked for terminal extension and renovation.

Around 20,000 passengers travel through the station every day. Twenty intercity, express and mail trains connect the capital

city with rest of the country every day. Besides, four daily cargo trains transport merchandise to and from river and land ports.

Meanwhile, the incomplete extension project of the terminal building that started in December 2003 and scheduled to finish by June 2005 finally saw some headway.

Executive Engineer of the extension project Md Arifuzzaman said construction of passenger sheds on platform 1, 4 and 5 has already been finished. Passengers suffered a lot during summer and monsoon as these platforms did not have any shed earlier.

Incomplete sheds on platforms 6 and 7 have also been extended.

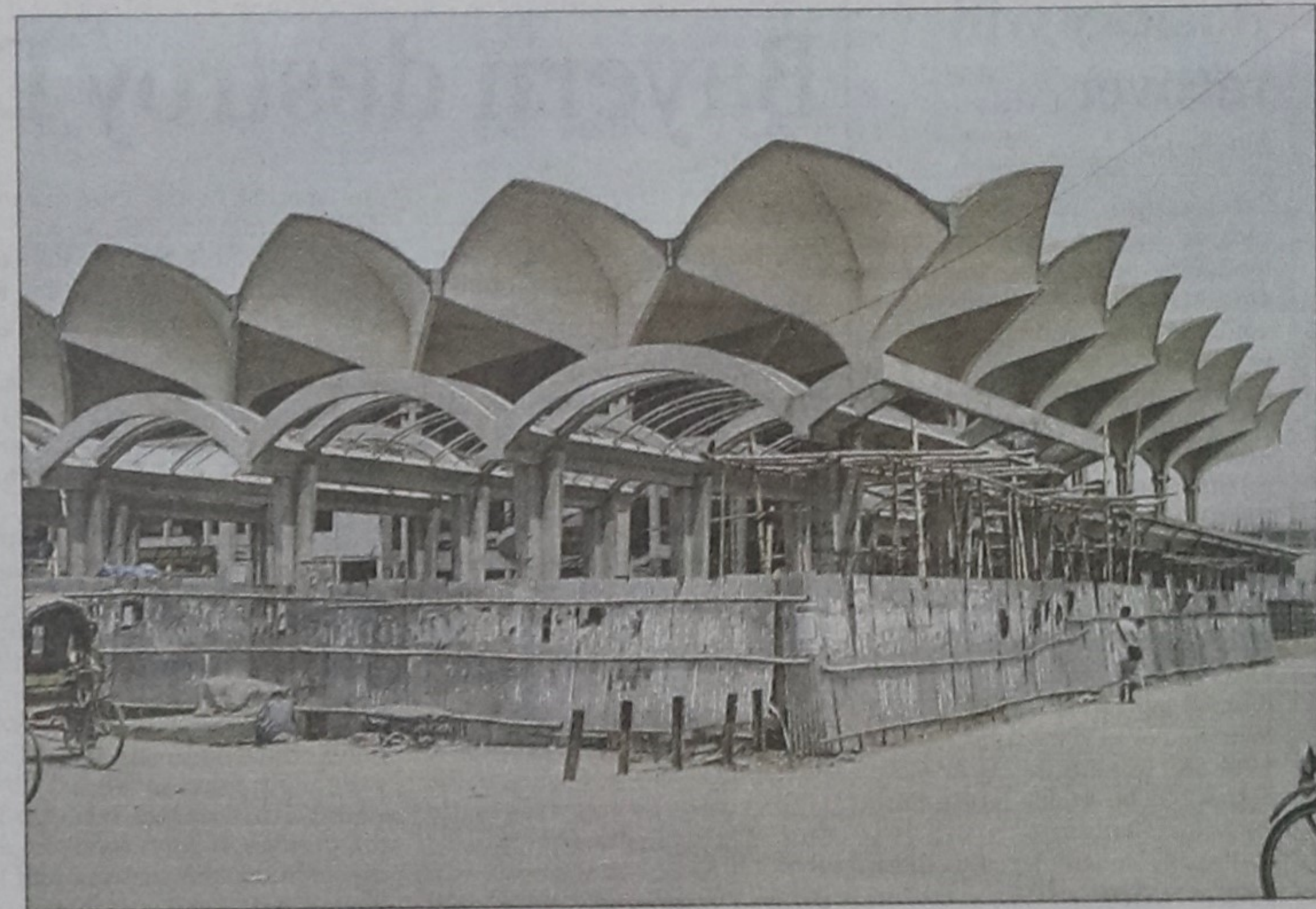
The station has a total of 10 platforms.

Currently under construction is a shed connecting the terminal building with the parking lot. "Passengers arriving at the station by rickshaw or CNG used to suffer as they had to get off on the street and drag their luggage from there," said Arifuzzaman.

"The connecting shed will solve the problem. Vehicles will now drop off passengers right under the shed, which connects directly with the main terminal," he added.

The beautifully designed concourses of the terminal, the main attraction of the building, have also been renovated.

Railway officials hope to wrap up the project by June this year.



A facelift right on the face of Kamalapur in progress.



Students of the Institute of Fine Arts add a flavour of carnival to the Pahela Baishakh celebration with colourful mask procession parading the city streets on the Bangla new year day.

# How safe are the energy saving bulbs?

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

It was 7 in the evening. Asheque Ahsan, a medical college student, was preparing for an examination scheduled for the following morning. He slammed his pen down on the desk in anguish as his stinging eyes would not let him focus on his notes.

He left the desk for wash-room to rinse his eyes with water for the fifth time in an hour. Minutes later, a refreshed Ahsan got back to his desk and tried to concentrate.

This is not the first time Ahsan had trouble studying in his energy-saving fluorescent bulb lit room. A few weeks ago he learnt from a report that the likely reason behind his frequent headache is the energy-saving light bulb in his room.

"I came across this report in the internet. An environmentalist organisation said energy-saving bulbs flicker at a really high frequency that the brain picks up but the eyes cannot. They also radiate substances that can trigger severe head and eye pains," said Ahsan.

Improper disposal or handling of such bulbs releases mercury into air, soil, water, endangering human health. If the bulb is damaged or broken, the surrounding area should be evacuated for at least 15 minutes to let the poisonous gas disappear from the air," Ahsan wrote in an article citing the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) report.

There have been rising concerns among experts and city dwellers regarding health hazards related to the use of energy-saving bulbs.

Low energy light bulbs are miniature versions of the fluorescent strip lights common in offices and households. They are of the size of regular incandescent bulbs with a filament, but consume just a quarter of the energy.

Critics, however, say the technology is still not up to scratch. Many complain the light is cold or green, and they take up to a minute to warm up properly.

"We tried switching over to energy-saving lights. But I had constant headaches. Moreover, these bulbs are not durable. In one year I had to replace 16 bulbs in my house. Luckily they have warranties," said Ahmed Hossain, a service provider.

According to various international health charities including EPA, British Association of Dermatologists, Spectrum and the Skin Care Campaign in Britain, continuing exposure to fluorescent bulbs may lead to different health conditions.

Health issues involving light sensitivity include the autoimmune disease lupus, the genetic disorder Xeroderma

not been any researches or studies regarding the health hazards concerning the use of energy-saving bulbs.

"There have been some concerns regarding this issue, but we do not have any studies or reports that proves the connection between energy-saving bulbs and dizziness, headaches or skin diseases," said a BCSIR official.

However, the official expressed his personal dissatisfaction with the energy saving bulbs.

"Sometimes I find it difficult to concentrate under the light of fluorescent bulbs. I also get headaches. So maybe these bulbs do have adverse effects



Pigmentosum (XP), certain forms of eczema and dermatitis, photosensitivity and porphyria, said the EPA report.

Optometrists believe that energy-saving light bulbs may cause dizziness, loss of focus and discomfort especially among people with epilepsy—a kind of seizure in the brain.

"These bulbs may flicker at a frequency that the eyes cannot pick up. It is quite similar to PC monitors flickering at 60 Hz, which in turns may cause headache," said Dr Ashfaq-ur Rahman, an optometrist and private practitioner.

According to sources at Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), there have

on health," he said adding that explicit studies are required for confirmation of the health issues.

"While there are no studies stating energy-saving bulbs are hazardous for health, there are also none that says that they are not hazardous," said Emdad Hossain, senior programme manager of Consumers' Association of Bangladesh.

"The fact remains that fluorescent bulbs save electricity by a considerable amount, so they will be more popular especially with the government promoting its usage. If anyone finds them irritating, he can always get back to regular light bulbs instead," he said.