

## Nurses missing

**FROM PAGE 1**  
their inadequate numbers hinder good services to patients. The doctors and nurses also talked about the nurses' not getting promotion and the lack of quality training for them.

Recruitment of nurses in public hospitals is halted for last five years. In 2003, 1,034 nurses were recruited and since then no recruitments were made even though every year around 1,200 nurses graduate from government nursing institutes and approximately 10,000 nurses are unemployed at the moment.

"Here we do not get a nurse to give saline to a patient when we need them to do it," said Project Director of Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) Shantamant Sen adding that if the shortage of nurses continues, patients will die without getting proper care. He said it is not possible to provide good service to 234 patients on an average day at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit with only 31 nurses.

It is very difficult to provide good service to such a large number of patients with only two nurses per shift working in one section of the unit, he said.

The unit has seven sections and at least 7-8 nurses are required per shift in each section to provide a reasonable service to patients, nurses told The Daily Star adding that the situation gets even worse in the afternoon and night shifts when only one nurse is available in a section.

They said 20 nursing posts are now vacant under the project as the decision of appointing nurses is not getting the go-ahead from the secretary concerned.

Around 2,000 patients receive in-door treatment at the 1,700-bed DMCH on an average day but only 559 nurses are there to take care of all patients including at the operation theatres, emergency wards and the out-door section, DMCH sources said.

It is a common scene across the country as the government remains quite indifferent to nursing issues, they said.

"As there is no strong professional body of nurses, their demands are often unmet. At the same time there is a lack of political will in developing nursing service in the country," said AM Zakir Hussain, former director of Primary Healthcare and Disease Control. He said posts have been created for doctors even at union levels but no nursing posts were created during the last five years.

Since most nurses come from less privileged class of the society, the level of their self-esteem is often low and their remuneration package is also not satisfactory, which are enough to hinder good nursing service in this country.

Division among the nurses is also an issue because of which their lone association has been inactive for long.

The Directorate of Nursing also has to work under pressure from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which does not allow the nurses to have their own independ-

entbody.

According to the report of Bangladesh Health Watch titled "The State of Health in Bangladesh, 2007", the country lacks at least 2.80 lakh nurses. The number of doctors is almost double the number of nurses, which should be the other way around.

The number of registered nurses is only 22,555 and the nurse to population ratio now stands at 1:6342, according to Bangladesh Nursing Council (BNC) reports.

The international standard for nurse to patient ratio for general patients is 1:4 and for critically ill ones it is 1:1, which is not attainable under the present socio-economic condition of Bangladesh.

The 46 government nursing institutes along with 19 private institutes allow 2,280 nurse aspirants a year to study for diploma in nursing, which is quite insufficient, sources say.

Promotion of nurses is also very slow and a nurse has to stay many years just being a senior staff nurse before getting a promotion.

"I create dissatisfaction among the nurses and gradually they lose their interest in work. A sense of deprivation among them is one of the main reasons behind the deteriorating service," said Deputy Registrar of Bangladesh Nursing Council Suraiya Begum. She said last year around 125 nurses were promoted after a long wait.

Even though the population and the number of patients have increased significantly, the number of nurses and nursing supervisors have not increased at all, she went on to say.

According to the Directorate of Nursing, there are 729 posts of nursing supervisors and 153 of them are vacant since 2006.

A proposal was made in 1999 to create 800 new posts for nursing supervisors and the authorities had agreed to it but it is yet to materialise even though eight years have gone by.

Based on an ordinance, the Bangladesh Nursing Council (BNC) has been operating for more than 58 years and there is no distinct regulation at all for this autonomous body. It even lacks the manpower to take necessary action against any wrongdoings of nurses, sources said.

Similarly, Directorate of Nursing neither has a complete structure nor the manpower. It has been running for the last 16 years with workforce sent there on deputation. It also does not have a fully-fledged director but an acting director.

Promotion process is so sluggish at the Directorate of Nursing that many retire soon after getting the post of acting director of the directorate. In 2004 Khadijatul Kobra went into retirement only after working three months as the acting director of the directorate.

Even though the National Plan of Action in 1994 recommended complete independence of the directorate, no steps were taken in the last 14 years to this end.

## Wildfires still raging along US coast

AP, BIG SUR, California

Wearry firefighters got no rest during the holiday weekend as a pair of out-of-control wildfires roared across the landscape along California's central coast at opposite ends of the arid Los Padres National Forest.

Despite lower temperatures and lighter wind, one stubborn fire that already had forced the evacuation of Big Sur inched closer to historic vacation retreats.

Farther south in the national forest, wind up to 40 mph fanned a wildfire near Goleta in Santa Barbara County. About 5,000 homes were under evacuation orders, while residents of 1,400 other homes were warned to pack up and be ready to leave on short notice, said county spokesman Jim McClure.

"The fire is expanding and presenting some very complex challenges because of the terrain and the fact that it hasn't burned in over 50 years," said Capt. Eli Iskew of the Santa Barbara County fire department. "And it's close to all the valuable homes and people."

Authorities planned an aggressive air attack on the Goleta fire Saturday, including drops from a huge DC-10 air tanker that made a single pass over the blaze on Friday.

## Water bodies

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Water Development Board and district administration, meant for reducing water-logging.

Proposing that the theme of the 400th anniversary of Dhaka City should be protecting its water bodies, Bapa President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said, "We're talking about climate change and its impact on nature, but we do not see what we have done to our own city by damaging its drainage system."

He said the uniqueness of Dhaka had been its canals, but unplanned development and excessive greed of some developers have made many of the canals non-existent, causing miserable water-logging.

"Water-logging would be longer, rendering the city unliveable if we don't save the rivers and canals in and around the city," he said.

Taking a swipe at Dhaka residents, Prof Muzaffer said they do not feel the throes of the city. The residents should speak out and put pressure on the government to act, he said.

Drainage system covers only 60 percent of the city, leaving the other parts to canals and other sources, former chief engineer of Dhaka Wasa Kazi Muhammad Shish said. "But we've filled up those canals, which has created water-logging."

Saying some 27 canals out of the city's 36 have been filled up, he said the city could well be abandoned soon if the canals are not restored immediately.

There is also no plan to protect the wetlands where the canals and the city drainages empty into, he added.

Bapa Joint Secretary Iqbal Habib said, "Dhaka remains water-logged for 12-24 hours with only 50 mm of rain. If immediate actions are not taken, water can stay for up to 60 hours."

## Nasim

**FROM PAGE 16**  
minister was brought to LabAid Hospital on June 24 following a brain haemorrhage at Kashimpur Jail. He is now undergoing treatment under a seven-member medical board headed by Dr MH Shahriar Sabet, a neurosurgery consultant.

## Human chain

**FROM PAGE 16**  
apparently stalled.

General Secretary of the BNP youth front Abdus Salam Azad in a written statement criticised the government for filing Zia Orphanage corruption case. He alleged the government is trying to destroy Zia family in the name of creating level playing field.

Jubo Dal will also form human chains in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet on July 10 and exchange of views with district and divisional representatives from July 20 to July 30.

The press conference was also attended, among others, by Khairul Kabir Khokon, Abul Hossain Khan, Abu Ashraf, Mahbulul Huq Nannu and Meer Newaz Ali.

## Local polls

**FROM PAGE 1**  
requirement was not followed in the past.

The present Election Commission would apply the article properly, he said.

Sakhawat said presiding officials would count the votes at vote centres in presence of the candidates' agents and would give them certified copies of the results.

One copy of the results would have to be hung on the wall of the vote centre so people could view them, he said.

## Pricey essentials

**FROM PAGE 1**  
35% of the government expenditures while it is only 5% at the moment covering hardly 10% of the poor.

"This demands both lateral expansion and improved operational efficiency of the SSNP," the report suggests.

Although the average gross amount received by the surveyed beneficiaries was Tk 576, the net benefit stood at Tk 510 after deductions of associated costs and system payments, according to the report.

The deductions were relatively higher for the beneficiaries of Food for Work Programme under Rural Infrastructure Development Project, and for the beneficiaries of primary education stipends.

While 61 percent of the beneficiaries had to travel less than an hour to reach SSNP benefit delivery venues, 42 percent reported wastage of an hour or less in waiting at the delivery points, and 37 percent said the waiting time for them was 2 to 3 hours.

The cost of travelling to delivery points was Tk 25 or less for about half of the beneficiaries, and for 24 percent it was Tk 51 to Tk 75. About 12 percent of the beneficiaries incur a travel cost of Tk 76 to Tk 100 to receive the benefits from designated delivery points.

Although 63 percent of the surveyed beneficiaries said their selections for SSNP was fair and based on pre-defined criteria, 35 percent said they had to approach union parishad or NGO bosses for their selections.

Instances of bribery were reported by 2% of the beneficiaries and lobbying through friends and relatives was reported by 4%, which indicate some degrees of irregularities in the selection processes, the report says.

In the budget for 2008-'09 fiscal, Tk 16,932 crore or 2.8 percent of GDP has been allocated for SSNPs while it was 11,467 crore or 2.1 percent of GDP in the last fiscal's revised budget.

## City elections

**DELWAR TO DINAJPUR BNP LEADERS**  
Leaders of Dinajpur district BNP and its front organisations yesterday met Khandaker Delwar Hossain at his residence in the capital.

During the meeting, the secretary general urged the party leaders to be on alert to guard against conspiracies against BNP and the country.

Criticising the caretaker government, he said, "They are the opponent of BNP and the nationalistic force and that is why they are keeping the BNP chairperson and her sons behind bars."

Standing committee member Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddique, Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, acting office secretary Rizvi Ahmed, among others, were present.

## Jagannath Hall

**FROM PAGE 16**  
construction of the building could have been done without felling the trees.

Earlier in June, a Bapa team during a meeting with the DU authorities had urged them to undertake a minor deviation in the 'service centre' section of the proposed design for saving the trees.

The team also urged the authorities to seek expert assistance from Bangladesh Architecture Sangsad to save as many old trees as possible during the construction of the dorm.

## EPR amendment soon

**FROM PAGE 1**  
government permission to apply the section will be incorporated.

The government formed a 10-member experts committee last month to review the EPR provisions, especially those related to bail, and five of them are working in a sub-committee to find ways to relax them, said sources.

"We are planning to bring some amendments so that a co-accused in a graft case can get bail. All co-accused including those who have already been convicted will benefit from it," said an official involved with the EPR review process.

Although most top ministers and leaders of major political parties have been arrested on graft charges, some of them are not the main accused in those cases.

Former ministers including Mannan Bhuiyan, MK Anwar, Khandaker Mosharrar, Shamsul Islam and Nizami are co-accused in the Niko graft case in which detained former premier Khaleda Zia is the principal accused.

Following the amendment a co-accused can get bail from the court if they are not named as the prime accused in any other case.

"Our main concern is to relax the 'no bail provision' without hampering the ultimate goal of the war against corruption," a member of the committee told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

He said the essence of the move is to relax the bail provisions for the co-accused family members - spouses and children - of many prime accused.

Mir Mohammad Helaluddin, son of former state minister Mir

About 55 percent of the beneficiaries reported that the benefits they received met their 81 percent to 100 percent food requirements in the previous month, while about 11 percent said they met their 61 to 80 percent food requirements with what they received from SSNP.

Respondents in some areas said they received their quarterly instalments of benefits after six months or even later.

Due to procedural bottlenecks in getting beneficiary cards, sometimes the beneficiaries have to abstain from work for three days, facing consequential loss of income.

Pointing out insensitivity to regional specificities and seasonal adversities like mona and river erosion in the programmes, the report suggests expanding the duration of vulnerable group feeding (VGF) schemes in mona prone areas of northern Bangladesh from three months to five months.

While the amount of VGF support needs to be increased in river-basin areas, especially during monsoons, food for work scheme can be considered as a viable option during other months, the report adds.

On steps to check quantity leakage and maintaining qualities of in-kind deliverables, the report quotes surveyed people as suggesting pre-weighed, packed food grains in airtight plastic sacks.

On the inadequacy of SSNP coverage, the report says the surveyed people argued for lateral expansion to cover more of the poor throughout the country.

In the budget for 2008-'09 fiscal, Tk 16,932 crore or 2.8 percent of GDP has been allocated for SSNPs while it was 11,467 crore or 2.1 percent of GDP in the last fiscal's revised budget.

## Venus

**FROM PAGE 16**  
set in 53 minutes.

Both players maintained a high standard throughout in blustery conditions, but Venus had the edge when it counted.

She sealed victory when Serena sprayed a backhand into the tramlines but her celebrations were muted as she approached the net to give her sister a hug.

"I can't believe that it's five. When you're in the final against Serena, five seems so far away. She played so awesome so it was really a task," said Venus, now a seven-time Grand Slam champion.

"It's unbelievable that I have won five, especially with some of the injuries that I've had. To know every time I come back I have the chance to make history... I love this place."

Venus now needs one more Wimbledon singles title to match Billie Jean King's record of six, with only Steffi Graf (7) and Martina Navratilova (9) ahead of her.

She had lost to her younger sister in their two previous Wimbledon finals in 2002 and 2003, but Serena admitted Venus deserved victory on Saturday.

"She was a little better today. It didn't work out the way I planned," she said.

"It's a great celebration for our family, we're really happy. I've been working really hard and I'm so happy at least one of us was able to win."

It was Venus's first win over Serena in a Grand Slam final since the 2001 US Open, and levelled their head-to-head to 8-8.

## Supreme Judicial

**FROM PAGE 16**  
in the form of public interest litigation (PIL), told the news agency yesterday that the bench was constituted by the chief justice as the matter involves constitutional interpretations.

Earlier, the bench in its sitting on July 1 appointed a seven-member panel of amicus curiae. They are Barrister Shafique Ahmed, TH Khan, Dr Kamal Hossain, Khondaker Mahbub Uddin Ahmed, Barrister Rafique ul Huq, Mahmudul Islam and Ajmalul Hossain, QC.

On April 28, the High Court, responding to the writ petition, issued a rule on the government and the SC registrar to explain why the impugned ordinance "should not be declared unconstitutional".

The interim government took the initiative in view of a strong public demand as all the successive governments in the past had allegedly appointed judges to the apex court 'on political considerations' sans academic qualifications, professional skills, honesty and reputation.

The ordinance prescribes the formation of a nine-member commission headed by the chief justice, which will recommend names for appointment as additional judges to the High Court.

The commission will also recommend names of eligible candidates drawn from the HC Division for appointment as a judge of the Appellate Division.

## Asia Cup final

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Sunday will be their sixth meeting in Asia Cup finals.

Bangladesh Television and satellite channel STAR Cricket will show the match live from 4:00 pm Bangladesh time.

The excellent batting pitches have been a constant throughout the tournament, and the teams to survive have been the ones which have utilised these conditions better than others - India and Sri Lanka have easily been the best batting teams of the competition. Both have settled line-ups, with most of their top order in superb form, which points towards another run-fest on Sunday.

With both teams in such exceptional batting touch, the difference in the final could be a key spell from one of the bowlers, or some inspiration in the field. Nine matches have already been played on the same square at the National Stadium, suggesting that spinners might have something to look forward to. Sri Lanka have the clear advantage in that department, with Muttiah Muralidaran and the exciting Ajantha Mendis leading the way.

The other aspect where Sri Lanka have the edge is in the field. India's exceptional batting has masked their generally sloppy fielding throughout the tournament. Catches have been missed, the ground-fielding has been erratic, and in a crunch game, these factors could well be critical.

## Maddhapara

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Do there are still five major faults in the mine.

The meeting identified that there was 2.5 lakh tonnes of unsold hard rock worth Tk 8.3 crore at the mine's stock yard. However, the Roads and Highways Department was interested to buy 1.6 lakh tonnes of rock.

The mine is costing the nation \$158 million dollars. An Investment Committee in 2005 identified that \$120 million has been invested in the mine.

Of this sum, Bangladesh paid more than \$71 million though it is the borrower, while lender North Korea gave \$49 million. But as the project was going nowhere, MGMCL has conditionally taken over the unfinished mine in May last year.

The mine was supposed to produce 16.5 lakh tonnes of rock annually or 5,500 tonnes daily since 2000. Instead, it is now producing 1,100 tonnes a day as some work remains unfinished.

The country annually consumes 60 to 70 lakh tonnes of imported rock, but MGMCL's rocks are failing to attract even the government-owned buyers.

## Malaysia door opens

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Commission in Kuala Lumpur.

Many of the abused workers staged demonstrations in front of the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur seeking repatriation and compensation.

After an estimated 2,000 of the mistreated workers made it back home, some received compensation while a large section of them are still being subjected to harassment.

It is alleged that the recruiting agencies that sent the returnee workers to Malaysia have been ignoring instructions of the government to be present at hearings of complaints filed by the returnee workers with Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

International Migrants Alliance (IMA) Research Foundation in a report said on behalf of 442 cheated workers, the IMA has so far filed 42 complaints against 31 recruiting agencies with the BMET. Till date, the BMET succeeded to make the agencies pay compensation to 258 workers and 23 more complaints are still pending.

Tenaganita, a Malaysia-based migrants rights organisation, in an investigation report said it was the "outsourcing system" that was responsible for the exploitation of the Bangladeshis. The organisation demanded cancellation of the system to put an end to worker exploitation.

Under the system, outsourcing firms hire workers and deliver them to principal companies. But, Tenaganita, in its report alleged

that these outsourcing firms most of the time hire excessive workers against a particular number of order for workers placed by the principal companies, leading to unemployment of the additional workers.

Asked to comment on whether Bangladesh has approached Malaysian authorities about re-evaluating the effectiveness of the outsourcing system, expatriates' welfare secretary Chowdhury said it is still a matter of debate. "Some say the outsourcing is even better."

Ghulam Mustafa, president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira), said Malaysia's labour market has a huge potential for Bangladesh as Malaysian employers prefer Bangladeshi workers for their hard work and their willingness to work longer hours.

"The government therefore should've been extra careful about handling the issues before it even started sending the workers. The problems arose as the high commission in Kuala Lumpur attested job demand letters without inspecting the factories," he added.

Now that Malaysia started issuing new job approvals again, the high commission should be very cautious. "I also asked recruiting agencies to visit the factories before sending workers because they are also equally responsible for protecting workers' interests."

According to BMET, around 3.36 lakh workers were issued emigration clearance so far while about 3 lakh already left for Malaysia.

## Afghan MP shot dead

**FROM PAGE 16**  
pick-up vehicles," Nuristani told AFP. Two doctors and a female nurse were also dead, he said.

But the coalition said Friday and again Saturday the dead were militants who were escaping after attacking a Nato-led military base in the rugged area.

"The insurgents then entered two vehicles and began travelling away from the firing position. Ground forces called coalition attack helicopters for support," it said in a statement Saturday.

"The attack helicopters then destroyed the two vehicles, killing more than a dozen militants."

It said it was aware through the media of allegations of civilian casualties and was "engaging with Afghan officials on this matter."

There was some angry reaction in the province with the head of the government's provincial council there, Rahmatullah Rashidi, warning "the body would stop working" if such killings continue.

The seven-year internationally supported campaign to fight a bloody Taliban-led insurgency has seen several incidents in which civilians were killed, as well as claims of civilian casualties that have proven untrue.

Such incidents are most often impossible to independently verify, as was the one in Waygal.

In more violence Friday, two unknown attackers shot dead legislator and tribal leader Habibullah Jan as he was driving in his troubled home district of Zhari in Kandahar province, authorities said.

The legislator, aged around 55, was also the head of Kandahar's prominent Alizai tribe and a former commander of the 1979-1989 anti-Soviet resistance.

A spokesman for the Taliban, who are active in Zhari and have carried out several targeted killings, said it was not involved. "This is not our work," spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP by telephone.

President Hamid Karzai and the UN representative strongly condemned the killing.

"The enemies of Afghanistan's people, by killing of another son of this land, have tried to silence the voice of the Afghan nation," Karzai said in a statement.

## 48 rebels killed

**FROM PAGE 16**  
yesterday, the ministry said.

Two LITE cadres were killed and another injured by troops in the same area later in the day.

Meanwhile, two tiger rebels were shot dead when troops launched an attack in Kirinthivu in Mannar yesterday, the military said.

Rebel spokesman Resiah Ilanthirayan could not immediately be reached for comment.

It was not possible to independently verify the military reports because journalists are banned from the northern jungles where much of the fighting takes place. Each side commonly exaggerates its enemy's casualties and downplays its own.

Fighting has escalated on this Indian Ocean island in recent months, with the military stepping up ground assaults and airstrikes on rebel-held territory. The government has pledged to crush the insurgents by the end of the year.

The rebels have been fighting since 1983 to create an independent state for ethnic minority Tamils, who have been marginalized by successive governments controlled by ethnic Sinhalese. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

The government had vowed to end the insurgency by the end of this year, but army chief Lt Gen Sarath Fonseka told reporters Monday it may take another year to defeat the rebels.

"But they must understand that such brutal and anti-Islamic acts can never stop people reaching peace," he said.

UN representative Kai Eide said the attack "underlines the risks faced by dedicated parliamentarians as they work tirelessly to forge a new future for the people of Afghanistan."

Jan was the 10th member of the lower house to be killed since Afghanistan's first democratically chosen parliament was elected in 2005, four years after the ouster of the Islamic Taliban regime in a US-led invasion.

In neighbouring Helmand province police said 10 rebels were killed late Friday when a mine exploded as they were trying to plant it in a road near Musa Qala.

The town was a key Taliban base for 10 months until December last year when Afghan and Nato-led forces routed the rebels in a day-long operation.

Seven Taliban were killed in fighting with Afghan and foreign troops in the eastern province of Paktika late Thursday, while three others died when a mine they were planting exploded prematurely, the defence ministry said.

About 10 other militants were killed and wounded after ambushing an Afghan army patrol in Helmand's Marja district the same day, the ministry said in a separate statement.

## Quake in Assam

**FROM PAGE 16**  
and lasted 5-7 seconds. There were no reports of casualties or damage to properties.

The epicentre was 290km northeast of Dhaka near Dispur of Assam, said Meteorologist Monirul Islam at Dhaka Met office.