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Patients suffer from acute oxygen shortage at DMCH

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

Patients with respiratory problems at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) have been suffering immensely due to short supply of oxygen for quite a long time.

Several patients allegedly have died of breathing difficulties in the last one and a half months for lack of oxygen.

The hospital has been making do with short supply of oxygen for the last few years but during the last one and a half months things have turned from bad to worse as Bangladesh Oxygen Company (BOC) Ltd cut their supply as DMCH failed to pay its outstanding dues, said authorities concerned.

DMCH ward-2 (male medicine) sources said on March 17 the ward received only two oxygen cylinders against its demand for eight. Wards-19 and 21 did not receive any supply of oxygen on March 11, they added.

On March 12 the hospital got only 62 cylinders of oxygen for two days against the demand for at least 200 cylinders.

The DMCH requires around Tk 1.5 crore to spend on oxygen but the government allocated only Tk42.5 lakh for the last fiscal year, sources said.

The BOC has reduced supply of oxygen as the hospital failed to pay dues worth Tk 45 lakh for the last few years, said sources at DMCH.

Hospital sources said oxygen is provided in two ways through pipeline and in

cylinder. Generally oxygen cylinders are used in all 45 wards and in around 100 cabins while in operating theatre (OT), coronary care unit (CCU), intensive care unit (ICU) and in emergency wards oxygen is provided through pipelines.

A few years ago DMCH was an 800-bed hospital, which has now 1700 beds, but supply of oxygen to the hospital has increased very little compared to the rise in the number of patients, DMCH sources said.

Dr Faruq, in-charge of medicine store, said on an average about 1900-2200 patients stay at the hospital's wards and cabins including the burn unit every day but arrangement of oxygen is still the same as when it accommodated 800 patients each day.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

US plans \$3 b military boost for Pakistan

AFP, Washington

The US Defense Department has a three billion dollar plan to train and equip Pakistan's military over the next five years, US media reported Friday.

The funds would pay for helicopters, night-vision goggles and other equipment and counterinsurgency training for Pakistan's special operations forces and Frontier Corps paramilitary troops, the New York Times said.

It quoted Pentagon officials as saying up to 500 million dollars could come from a yearly emergency war budget that President Barack Obama's administration is to present to Congress next week.

But with some legislators expressing concern over the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund, the top US military officer acknowledged that the United States had not mandated enough accountability for the funds.

"There hasn't been an audit trail, and there haven't been accountability measures put in place, and there needs to be for all the funds," Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the Times's editorial board.

"So we're going to do that. For this counterinsurgency money, which is important, it is critical that it goes for exactly that and nowhere else."

Mullen said the Pakistani military must change its focus from fighting arch-foe India to combating militants and insurgents within its borders. "That's not going to change overnight," he said.

Lanka troops take key village, kill 57 rebels

AFP, AP, Colombo

Sri Lankan troops captured a key village from the Tamil Tigers yesterday after heavy fighting that left at least 44 guerrillas dead while another 13 rebels were killed elsewhere, the military said.

Troops moved into Anandapuram, which the rebels had been using as a logistics base, after intense clashes on Thursday, Brigadier Udaya Nanayakkara said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) had been putting up stiff resistance to prevent the army taking the village, the spokesman said.

He said two senior LTTE leaders were among 44 rebels killed in Thursday's fighting.

In another confrontation, police commandos killed 13 Tiger rebels in the eastern district of Ampara on Friday, the military said.

On Thursday Sri Lankan troops killed 34 Tamil Tiger separatist rebels during fierce fighting in the island's north in a drive to end a 25-year-old civil war, the military said.

4 AL activists injured in bomb blast

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Four Awami League (AL) activists were wounded in bomb explosions at Adhara village in Sadar upazila Thursday night.

Sources said injured Shafiq, 20, and Hannan, 22, were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in a critical condition while two others taken to local hospital for treatment.

After visiting the spot, officer-in-charge of Sadar police station KM Abdullah said the blast took place at a field at around 8pm.

Locals said a group of BNP members tried to shift some bombs to a safer place apprehending rain. As the AL activists chased them, they threw the bombs at AL men, sources said.

However, police could not confirm the exact reason behind the explosions.



A number of Bangladesh Chhatra League activists, top left, injured in yesterday's clash between two groups of the student organisation at Mir Mosharrar Hossain Hall of Jahangirnagar University. An armed Chhatra League cadre, top right, stands guard in front of the dormitory. Police raiding the dorm arrest a number of people, bottom left. A ransacked room of the dormitory.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKHI

DEPUTY LEADER OF OPPOSITION Sircar Khaleda's choice, Moudud lobbying hard

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Former speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and BNP leader Moudud Ahmed are in a race to become the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament. The post is still vacant.

However, sources in the BNP said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, leader of the opposition, has already decided in principle to nominate Sircar as the deputy leader of the opposition. They said Moudud is still trying to garner support in his favour.

Sircar and Moudud were defeated in the December 29 parliamentary elections in Panchagarh and Noakhali but they won in the April 2 by-elections of Bogra-6 and Bogra-7 constituencies.

Both of them are waiting to be sworn in as

lawmakers.

Khaleda Zia had vacated the Bogra constituencies after winning all three seats in December.

Giving party tickets to Sircar and Moudud for the Bogra seats, Khaleda issued a letter to BNP leaders and workers in Bogra saying the party gave them nominations because it lacked experienced parliamentarians in the House.

Sources said BNP lawmakers Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and MK Anwar were in the race for the post of deputy leader of the opposition but Khaleda refused to pick any of them to avert controversy and resentment within the party.

The ruling party would benefit if Salauddin Quader Chowdhury is nominated as deputy

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Optimism fades after G20 'turning point'

AFP, London

An initial surge of optimism over a G20 recovery plan to lift the world economy out of recession was tempered yesterday, as markets digested the details.

US President Barack Obama hailed the deal struck at a key summit in London Thursday as a "turning point", and US and Asian stock markets rose sharply after the leaders produced their agreement to the waiting world.

The Group of 20 developed and emerging economies agreed to commit one trillion dollars to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other global bodies to help struggling economies.

But London's FTSE index failed to share the

positive assessment of Obama, who left Britain Friday with his wife Michelle to attend a Nato summit in France and Germany.

After surging up more than four percent on Thursday, stocks in London opened down 0.35 percent Friday, although analysts said concerns about imminent US jobs data could be depressing the market.

In New York, the Dow Jones closed up 2.79 percent Thursday and Tokyo finished the day up 0.34 percent, approaching a three-month high.

The G20 agreement generally received a warm welcome from the British media.

The Times said the summit "took important steps to improving the machinery for coping

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

APRIL 6 UPAZILA ELECTIONS Legality in question as EC follows invalid rules

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Questions have been raised over the legality of upcoming elections to six upazila parishads as the Election Commission (EC) prepares for holding the postponed polls under the conduct of upazila parishad election rules that are no longer valid.

With the expiry of the upazila parishad ordinance on February 25, the conduct of upazila parishad election rules, made under the authority of the ordinance, automatically ceased to have effect.

But the EC is exercising authority under the voided rules for holding the postponed polls to six upazila parishads slated for April 6, arguing that it is completing the process, which began earlier when the rules were valid.

Exercising authority under the rules, the EC on March 18 appointed 24 judicial magistrates to hold trial of electoral offences.

The appointments were made through the

law ministry following the Supreme Court's (SC) approval, EC Secretariat officials said.

A senior EC official said the SC did not enquire whether the conduct of the upazila election rules were still valid or not. It just approved the appointment on receipt of the EC's letter seeking permission from the SC, he added.

Legal experts said the ongoing activities to hold the postponed polls under the rules are illegal as there is no provision for giving any protection to continue the process for holding the elections under the rules.

When contacted over the phone, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain said the EC is not holding fresh elections to six upazila parishads, rather it is continuing the process, initiated earlier under the conduct of election rules to hold the polls on January 22.

"So, the upazila parishad ordinance and the rules are deemed to remain in force in this matter," he claimed.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



This large pothole on the street in front of Sayedabad Bus Terminal has been causing mishaps almost every day for the last six months with the authorities concerned turning a blind eye.

PHOTO: STAR

13 feared killed in NY town gun rampage

AFP, New York

Up to 13 people may have been killed yesterday in a rampage by a gunman believed to be holding dozens of hostages at a civic centre in upstate New York, local radio reported.

"A dozen or more may have died in the last two hours," Bob Joseph, news director of local WNBC Radio in the town of Binghamton, told CNN, quoting sources.

Other reports said four were shot at the American Civic Association building, which helps new immigrants to the United States.

Reports said the gunman may have also taken between 20 and about 40 hostages in the civic centre in the small city located 217 kilometres northwest of New York city, near the border with Pennsylvania.

Police armed with automatic rifles surrounded the American Civic Association build-

ing in Binghamton as officers carried out several stretchers, CNN television footage showed.

One person, who was clearly still alive, was seen on television being stretchered out.

The local Press and Sun-Bulletin newspaper reported that at least four people were shot and that 41 hostages were in the building -- 15 in a closet and 26 in the boiler room.

According to Joseph, the gunman was believed to have parked a car so that it blocked the back door of the civic center, preventing escape.

Television images showed crowds of anxious people gathered in the area of the civic center.

The centre's website said it assists immigrants and refugees with immigration and personal counseling, resettlement, citizenship, family reunification, interpreters, and translators.

The shooting came just days after a heavily-armed man burst into a North Carolina nursing home on Sunday killing eight people.

Najib sworn in as new PM of Malaysia

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Najib Razak was sworn in as Malaysia's prime minister yesterday, assuming charge of reuniting a fractured ruling party and shoring up an economy in crisis.

Najib took the oath of office in front of the Malaysian king at a palace ceremony broadcast live on national television.

The transfer of power follows the resignation Thursday of his predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who analysts say failed to live up to his promises during six unremarkable years in office.

"I, Najib Razak, who has been chosen to hold the post of prime minister, swear that I will carry out the responsibilities which I have been entrusted with to the best of my ability," the 55-year-old said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Ex-KCC mayor Tayebur sued for ill-gotten wealth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case with Khulna Sadar Police Station against former KCC mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income.

ACC Assistant Director Enayet Hossain filed the case on Thursday night under sections 26(2) and 27(1) of the Anti Corruption Act.

In the case, the complainant stated that Sheikh Tayebur Rahman had illegally amassed wealth worth over Tk 1.7 crore and concealed information of the asset in the statement submitted to the ACC.

Earlier, the former KCC mayor was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment in two extortion cases and acquitted in another case filed against him under Arms Act.

He is now on bail.

Prayer Timing		
April 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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