

# Manpower shortage hits community clinics

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Although the government has opened a total of 8464 community clinics, out of 11,500, they cannot provide people with the expected level of service because of lack of manpower and logistic support.

In spite of having sufficient budget, it will be tough to run those community clinics without assigned manpower exclusively for community clinics, said government officials.

As starting the community clinics was one of the priority issues of the Awami League (AL) government, most of the community clinics were opened within the last four months to provide people with primary healthcare support and to work as referral centres.

But the fact is that most of the community clinics remain closed for most of the time for inadequate number of Health Assistants (HA) and Family Welfare Assistants (FWA).

"It is not possible to run all the community clinics with the existing manpower. According to the rule an HA is supposed to stay at the community clinic three days a week while an FWA the rest of the days. But the reality is that there is no HA in many wards," said Dr Saidur Rahman Bhuiyan, civil surgeon of Gazipur district.

He also said that a total of 189 community clinics have been reopened recently among the 193. But there are only 158 HAs in the district against the post of 273, which is quite inadequate. The same goes for the FWAs.

About 7,000 posts of HAs are currently vacant country-wide. As no HA was recruited since 2004, manpower shortage has been hindering the

health service and leading the community clinics to work partially.

"We have already sent a proposal to the government to recruit at least one assigned person for each clinic as the HAs and FWAs are appointed temporarily and they have lots of other jobs to do," said deputy programme manager of community clinic Dr KM Azad.

"However, we are trying to manage HAs from the adjacent wards for the community clinics where there is no HAs. World Health Organisation (WHO) also expressed its willingness to provide us with one health worker for each community clinic," he said.

While visiting the community clinics at different districts, the correspondent found that most of the clinics are either closed for its shabby condition or partially closed for lack of manpower, drugs and other logistic.

The condition of the community clinic at Kamarjuri village of Gachha union, where people come once a

month to immunise their babies, is so vulnerable that people find it difficult to get inside the clinic.

The earth has been removed from the basement, as it remained abandoned for eight long years. The doors, windows and floors lie in a dilapidated condition while the electrical fans, chairs, tables and other equipment have already been damaged for remaining unused for so long.

It is also very risky for the expecting mothers to enter the clinic climbing the stairs since if they slip for once, it will be hazardous for their life and the foetus also.

Condition of Khaikur (south) Community Clinic, which was launched on January 16 in 2001 by the then lawmaker Ahsanullah Master, is almost the same as most of the time the clinic is kept under lock and key.

The locals also complained that without providing immunisation once a month, the community clinics are virtually non-functional. They also

expressed disappointment as the clinics that were built spending lots of money are now in shambles and requires further amount for renovation.

About 80 community clinics in the country have already gone under water for river erosion.

The AL government in its last regime decided to set up one community clinic for every 6,000 people and about 11,500 community clinics were established by 2001 with a view to providing people with healthcare services. But during the period of the BNP-led four-party alliance government these community clinics were abandoned and the present government is trying to reopen these clinics.

The community clinics are supposed to be considered at the first step of Essential Service Package and run as one stop service centre as per the need of the community people.

Registration of the pregnant mothers, ante natal, during delivery and post natal services, immunisation of the babies, treatment of ARI, diarrhoea, tuberculosis, malaria, short-term family planning service and health education will be provided at the community clinics.

Director of Primary Healthcare of Directorate General of Health Services Dr ABM Jahangir Alam said that medicine worth Tk six crore have been sent to the district civil surgeons' office and people will soon start reaping the benefits of the community clinics.

He also said that if the community clinics could be run properly, it would reduce pressure from the upazila health complex and if the community clinic workers are provided with Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) training, safe delivery could be ensured, too.

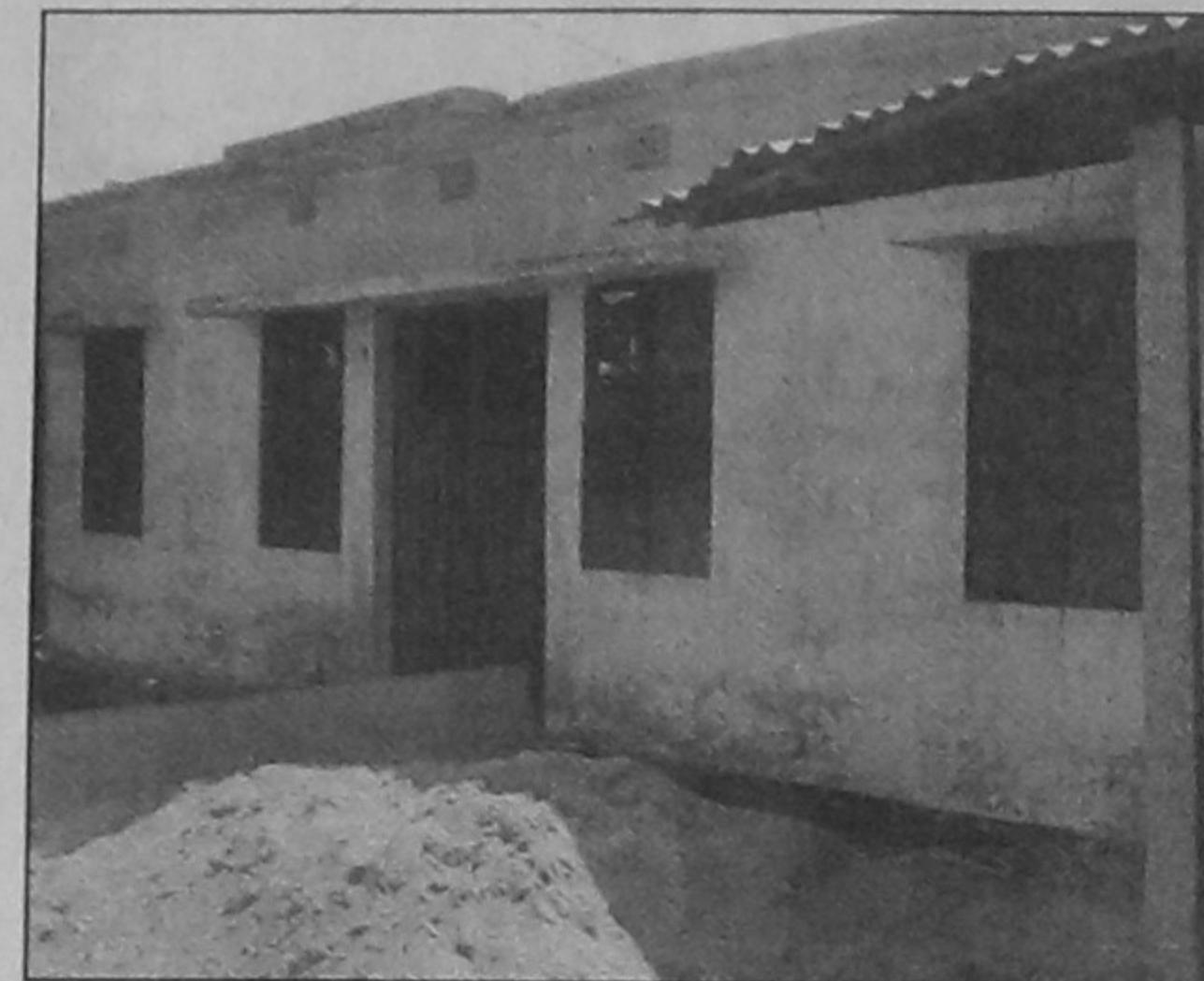


PHOTO: STAR

Khaikur (south) Community Clinic at Gachha union in Gazipur.

# Blake assures Dhaka of all help in fighting terrorism

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Robert Blake yesterday assured Bangladesh of all cooperation in combating terrorism.

The assurance came when the visiting US State Department official called on Foreign Minister Dipu Moni and Home Minister Sahara Khatun at their respective offices yesterday.

During the meetings, they discussed the entire range of bilateral relations and other issues like development cooperation, good governance, human rights, and empowerment of women, climate change and the trial

of war criminals.

During his meeting with the home minister, the issue of border security force, community police and training of Bangladesh law enforcement agencies came up for discussion, sources said.

Robert Blake congratulated the government and the people of Bangladesh for holding a free, fair and peaceful election. He expressed the hope that the ruling Bangladesh Awami League would lead the country in line with the pledges and commitments made to people in its electoral manifesto.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said the government was committed to establishing human rights in the true sense of the term. She also said the government would show zero-tolerance towards extrajudicial killings.

Referring to climate change, she said steps had to be taken to rehabilitate the environmental refugees.

## Updating of voter list begins today

UNB, Dhaka

The updating of voter lists with photographs in the first phase will begin in 153 upazilas of the country today. Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain said yesterday.

Under the updating process, the voter lists will include new voters and the people who were left out during the previous registration while the names of dead voters will be listed as deceased.

People born on January 1 in 1992 or earlier will be eligible to enroll their names in the voter list.

"Before going to the registration centres, people will have to register their names with the enumerators who will visit door-to-door to collect information," Election Commissioner Sakhawat said while talking to reporters at his office.

Earlier, the visiting US Assistant Secretary called on State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud at the Foreign Ministry and discussed bilateral and international issues of common interest.

She mentioned that steps have been taken to strengthen the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) so that it could work freely and neutrally.

The said on this issue the international community was beside Bangladesh. Transparency and international standard would be maintained in this respect, she added. She also sought US assistance in this regard.

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## Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ferdous Ara Chowdhury, wife of politician and social worker of Feni Syed Ahmed Chowdhury, passed away due to old-age complications at LabAid Cardiac Hospital at Dhanmondi in the city in the early hours of yesterday at the age of 82, says a press release.

She left behind her three sons, four daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death. Selim Samsul Huda Chowdhury, an official of The Daily Star and head of Padatik Natya Sangsads, is one of hers.

Ferdous Ara, youngest daughter of Bashir Ahmed of Ghoramara Mian Bari, was laid to rest at her family graveyard at Sonagazi.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 6th death anniversary of Anisul Haque, proprietor of the now defunct Adbiz, says a press release. He hailed from Pabna. Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

## WEATHER TODAY

### Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Several places in Khulna and Barisal divisions may also experience moderately heavy falls while day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:47pm today and rises at 5:11am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 36.8 degree Celsius was recorded at Rajshahi and the lowest of 21.7 degree at Rangpur.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius	Humidity percentage		
Max	Min	Morning	Evening	
Dhaka	34.5	25.2	71	64
Chittagong	32.0	26.8	75	78
Rajshahi	36.8	27.0	82	69
Khulna	35.4	27.7	79	73
Barisal	34.8	27.0	77	70
Sylhet	29.5	23.5	97	83
Cox's Bazar	34.0	26.5	72	77

PHOTO: PID  
Outgoing Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed pays a farewell call on President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

Lt Gen Mubeen takes over as army chief today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lt Gen Md Abdul Mubeen will take over as the chief of army staff today.

He will succeed Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed.

The outgoing army chief, who was appointed to this post on July 15, 2005, will go into retirement the same day on completion of his tenure of service.

Lt Gen Mubeen will also be promoted to the rank of general with effect from today.

Sources said the chiefs of naval staff and air staff would decorate Mubeen with the rank badge at a programme in presence of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the office of Armed Forces Division in Dhaka cantonment in the afternoon.

In the first week of this month, President Zillur Rahman appointed Mubeen as the new army chief for three years from June 15, 2009 to June 15, 2012.

Outgoing Army Chief Moeen went to Bangabhaban to pay a farewell call on the president.

Moeen's tenure was scheduled to expire on June 15, 2008, but in April 2008, then president Tajuddin Ahmed extended his job for one year.

Moeen was one of the key architects of the 1/11 political changeover during the caretaker government regime.

He took a leading role in backing the interim government that lasted for two years and culminated with the general elections on December 29, 2008.

The newly appointed army chief hails from Kishoreganj. He was made PSO of the Armed Forces Division from major general rank on June 4, 2008. He was general commanding officer of Jessor and 24th Infantry Division in Chittagong.

Son of Major Baseth and an ex-cadet of Mirzapur Cadet College, Moeen was commissioned in November, 1977 as an infantry officer from the third Short Course of Bangladesh Military Academy.

**Remain united to foil plot against democracy Says Matia**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agriculture Minister Md Chowdhury yesterday urged the people from all walks of life, especially the politicians, to remain united to foil any conspiracy against the country's democracy, sovereignty and nationality.

"The evil spirits of Pakistani autocratic rulers are still active to carry out militant activities aiming at creating anarchy across the country and destabilising democracy. But we have to remain alert to foil the ill motives and struggle to establish the nation as a secular, democratic one," she said.

The minister was addressing a memorial meeting commemorating the 31st death anniversary of Comrade Sukhendu Dastagir, an anti-British movement hero and a leftist politician, organised by Bangladesh Sammabadi Dal (ML) at the National Press Club in the city.

Matia also recalled the contribution of Sukhendu to different justice movement, especially anti-British movement.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua, also president of Sammabadi Dal, presided over the meeting.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Seminar

Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) organises a seminar on 'The 2008 US financial crisis: Causes and stages'. Venue: IUB campus, Bashundhara. Time: 4:30pm.

### Seminar on AIDS

Shaheed Dr Fazle Rabee Foundation organises a seminar on 'Youth in preventing HIV/AIDS'. Venue: Eastern University auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

### Seminar

Suma Kushiara Meghna Bachao Andolan organises a seminar on 'Taimapukh dam: Responsibilities of Bangladesh'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

# Withdraw duty on newsprint: Ershad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the proposed budget a 'pro-people budget', Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman Hussein Muhammad Ershad yesterday said opportunity to whiten the undisclosed money and impose import duty on newsprint are the negative sides of the budget.

He, however, said considering the political as well as national interest, they support the opportunity to whiten the undisclosed money, but the time frame for whiting black money should be limited to one year instead of three years.

Urging the finance minister to withdraw the proposed duty on newsprint, Ershad said newspaper industry would be affected badly if the proposed five percent import duty is not withdrawn.

The JP chairman said this a press conference on the proposed budget at his Banani office in the city where party leaders Anisul Islam Mahmud and Ruhul Amin Hawlader were present, among others.

On the provision of whitening black money, he said they do not support it ethically, but it is necessary for the country due to existing global meltdown. But such opportunity should not be given for purchasing flat.

"Such provision is needed to use the siphoned-off money to serve the country's interest, but these money should be invested only in industrial sector."

Applauding the proposed budget, the former president said it is a big budget but not

illogical or unrealistic, even it is not a high ambitious at all.

"There are a lot of positive sides in the budget, even many of our electoral pledges like agriculture and rural development have been accommodated in the budget. So, the countrymen have accepted the budget cordially."

Ershad, a former military dictator, also said that as a grand alliance partner, his party will cooperate with the government to implement the budget to meet the people's expectations.

## One stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of criminals stabbed a man to death in the city's Dakkhinkhan area yesterday.