

Treat 10 poor patients free of cost a month

PM urges specialised hospitals

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged specialised health facilities to offer free treatment to at least 10 poor but complicated patients a month as part of their corporate social responsibility as she opened a three-day international cardiology conference here.

"I would like to urge the owners of private hospitals and clinics to come forward with the mentality of serving the distressed humanity with more dedication," she told the inaugural function of the 3rd International Conference on Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery at Hotel Sonargaon in the city.

The prime minister said, she believed such united endeavor "would not cost much for a hospital but help ease miseries of many people" while the cost of treatment should also be lowered as well "as it is too costly for our common people" while "it is an undeniable fact that the governments is not in a position to provide cent percent healthcare facilities to the citizens".

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni also spoke at the function organised under the auspices of LabAid Cardiac



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaks at the inaugural function of the 3rd International Conference on Cardiology and Cardiac Surgery at Hotel Sonargaon in the city yesterday.

Hospital, while LabAid's Managing Director Shamim Ahmed gave the welcome address.

Cardiologist Prof Jalal Uddin chaired the function attended by a number of local and foreign cardiologists.

Hasina said the government was aware of the deadly consequences of soaring incidences of cardiovascular diseases amongst a vast majority of the population.

"Staggering number of people in rural areas who succumb to this deadly disease mostly undiagnosed is a serious concern for the policymakers of the Ministry

of Health and Family Welfare," she said.

But, she noted that the traditional focus in South Asian countries were on communicable diseases and reproductive health issues that "pushes non-communicable diseases in the back".

"We should, therefore, recognise and include prevention of cardiovascular diseases as part of the primary healthcare strategy in South Asian countries, particularly in Bangladesh," the premier said.

Her comments came as the world health statistics suggested that every year the number of deaths due to cardiovas-

cular diseases was on the rise while such diseases were becoming a major health burden in developing countries.

In 2008 alone, about 18.7 million people died from cardiovascular diseases, amounting to 35 percent of all deaths worldwide and more than half of these deaths occurred in developing countries.

"South Asia comprising of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka represents more than a quarter of the developing world and is likely to be seriously affected by the increase in cardiovascular diseases," Hasina said.

She feared that the rise in number of heart patients in Bangladesh our country may be attributed to changes in people's life style that is less healthy while "work stress, smoking, unhealthy food habit and lack of regular exercise are some of the causes responsible for cardiovascular diseases".

The premier said the modern medical sciences discovered many new tools both for diagnosis and treatment of heart disease while increasing number of new pharmaceutical agents discovered for treatment of heart disease was now available.



Ichchey Shishu Media Group, a platform for children, organised a photography exhibition on 'The state of children in Bangladesh' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday to mark the 20 years of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Women most vulnerable to climate change impacts

Reveals study

UNB, Dhaka

Women in Bangladesh are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change impacts because of their less exposure to public sphere and critical information for emergency preparedness, says a study.

"They (women) are also less mobile due to strict gender codes of social behaviour and have lesser chances to escape from affected areas. (Most importantly), climate change issues, policies and programmes are not gender neutral," says the study titled 'Climate Change, Gender and Vulnerable Groups in Bangladesh' carried out recently by the Climate Change Cell under the Ministry of Environment and Forests.

The study areas include coastal islands of Dhalghata in Moheshkhali and Charfassion in Bhola, water-logged region in Keshabpur upazila of Jessore and Noakhali Sadar and Subarna char, saline-affected region - Tala and Shyamnagar of Satkhira, drought-prone region of Manda in Naogaon, flood-prone areas of Char Harirampur in Faridpur and Kurigram Sadar.

According to the study, "the design and insecure environment of cyclone shelters in Bangladesh is not found gender-friendly. Besides, the inadequacy of shelter capacity has caused occasional abortion and or miscarriages, while would-be-mothers at advanced stage are cramped into a crowded shelter."

During the study, many women alleged that there are cases of sexual harassment on the way to shelters, which do not often provide minimum

gender-friendly sanitation facilities. During post-cyclone period, intra-household food insecurity and sanitation become the major concerns for women.

AFM Shahidur Rahman, an environmentalist, said rural women are responsible for half of the world's food production, producing 60-80 percent of foods in most developing countries, yet they are disproportionately vulnerable to climate change.

The study says young men often take advantage of physical proximity of a young girl while all temporary refugees are cramped in a small room.

"We certainly save our lives, but we lose self-dignity at camps," the study quoted a young unmarried girl as saying.

The study says water-logging forces women to stay in marooned conditions for several months a year. Prolonged exposure to filthy water causes severe skin diseases and gynecological problems to women.

During prolonged water-logging, men often leave their families back home in search of employment, leaving the responsibility to 'take care' of their family members on the shoulder of women, increasing their vulnerability.

In absence of land-based production system and incidence of acute poverty, women often are forced to go for anti-social works in their desperate bid to feed their children and their family members, the study further says.

During the dry season, women and adolescent girls in some southern areas usually have to fetch drinking water from distant sources, even 5-6

km away from their homes everyday. When they go out to collect water, they are sometimes harassed by boys and men, the study says.

Young girls often sacrifice their academic activities to fetch non-saline water. Even pregnant women are forced to fetch water irrespective of distance between the source and their dwellings. They suffer from various gynecological problems in the long run for taking over extra burden of work and by using saline water during menstruation.

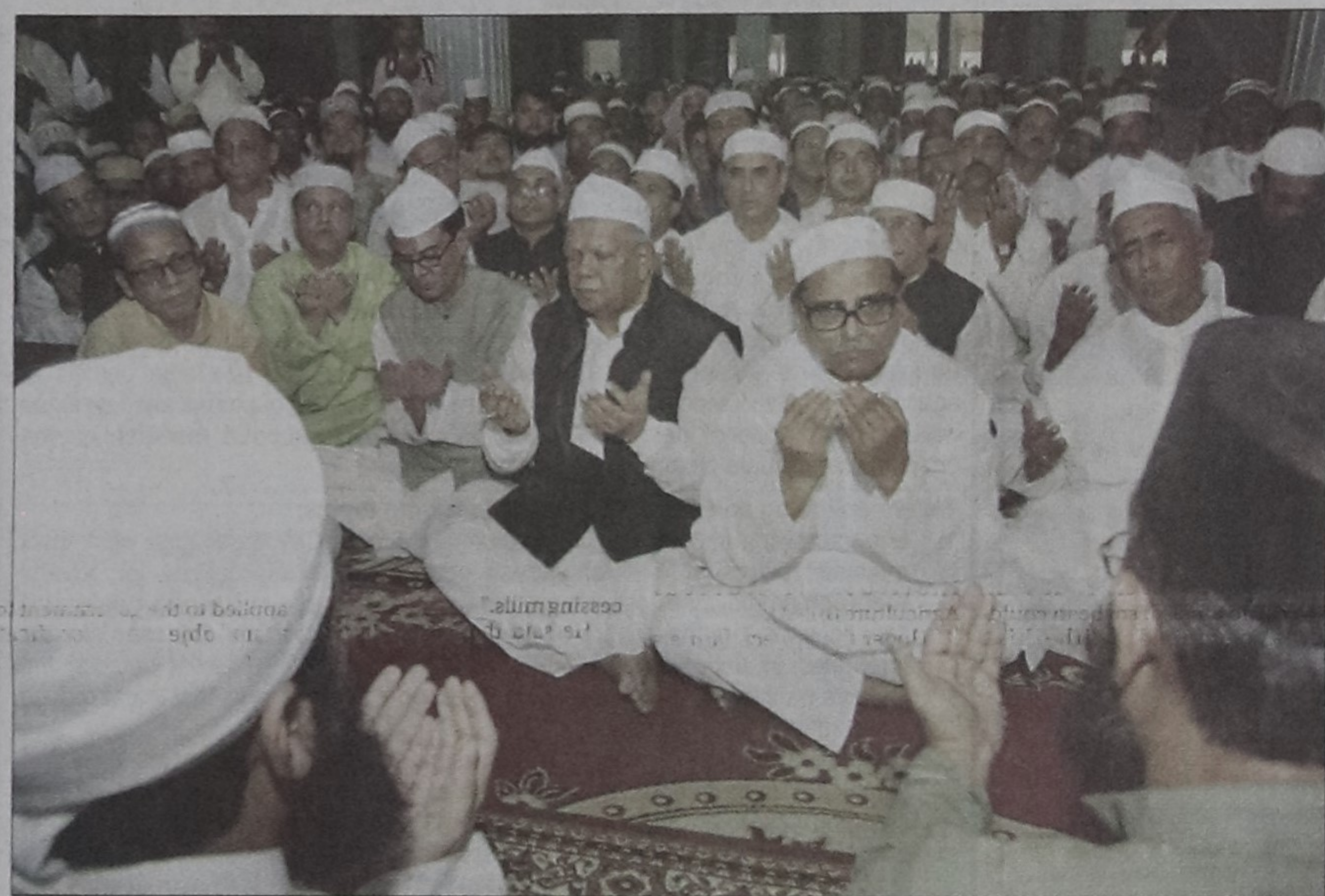
Premature birth, abortion and still birth (blue-baby syndrome) are reported in alarmingly high numbers in the study areas.

During flood, destitute women are compelled to migrate elsewhere, face most acute conditions of physical and social insecurity and their privacy seems to be completely challenged, the study says adding that sanitation becomes worse especially for pregnant women while adolescent girls cannot maintain hygienic reproductive healthcare and often report perineal rashes and urinary tract infections due to lack of freshwater.

The study found thousands of instances that women could not timely respond to the call of nature for lack of privacy. As a result, they wait till night for excretion.

Moving on embankments or roadside highlands often put adult and young women in constant dangers of sexual harassment and assault, the study points out.

Explaining their bitter experiences about menstrual hygiene management, women reported that saline water creates pain during menstruation.



Special prayers were offered at the Baitul Mokarram National Mosque after Juma prayers yesterday as verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case was delivered on Thursday.

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verdict to be executed in two months

Says state minister for law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will execute the Supreme Court verdict in the Bangabandhu Murder Case within next two months, State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam said at a discussion yesterday.

He said the nation has been bearing the stigma of killing the Father of the Nation for the last 34 years. It was removed on Thursday through the Supreme Court verdict.

Bangladesh Paribesh and Manabdhikar Bastobayan Society organised the discussion styled 'Role of the environment and human rights workers to establish the rule of law' at the Central Public Library in the city.

About the trial of war criminals, Qamrul said the government is pledge-bound to try not only the war criminals but also the grenade attackers and the killers of four national leaders in jail.

The trial of war criminals is expected to begin next month, he added.

He also urged the human rights activists to remain above political bias and play an impartial role in establishing human rights and the rule of law in the country.

Expressing dissatisfaction over activities of some NGOs, Qamrul said, "Some so-called NGOs take cores of money from foreign donor agencies in the name of development, but they spent a little amount

for the development purpose and the remaining amount goes to their pockets."

Blaming tannery owners and other businessmen for polluting the rivers around the city, he said most businessmen did not set up any waste treatment plant in their industries and are dumping wastes into the rivers.

He urged the environmentalists to help the government remove all such irregularities.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Motahar Hossain and language movement veteran Prof Mirza Mazharul Islam also spoke at the discussion presided over by M Ibrahim Patwari, chairman of the Society.

Labour leaders pay last respects to Neil Kearney

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of people from all walks of life yesterday paid their last respects to Neil Kearney, general secretary of International Textile, Garments and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), who passed away on Thursday morning.

Leaders of different labour unions placed wreaths on the coffin of Kearney, which was kept at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city from 3:00pm to 5:00pm yesterday, says a press release.

Kearney, who came to Dhaka on Tuesday on a four-day visit in connection with trade union related activities, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at the age of 59.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, also the president of the Garments Tailors Workers' League, Md Israfil Alam, chairman of parliamentary standing committee on labour ministry, Habibur Raman Siraj, labour secretary of the Awami League, and leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BKMEA), Bangladesh Buyers' Forum, Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad, Jatiya Sramik League, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, Bangladesh Labour Welfare Foundation and Jatiya Garments Sramik Federation placed wreaths on his coffin.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh National Council of Textile, Garments and Leather Workers started observing a three-day mourning period yesterday.



National Garment Workers Federation takes out a mourning procession in memory of Neil Kearney, general secretary of International Textile, Garments and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF), in the city yesterday. Kearney passed away in Dhaka on Thursday morning.

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