

# American Hospital struggles on with problems

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD  
Central Skin and Social Hygiene Health Centre is struggling hard to cope with crowd of patients due to lack of human resources, logistics and fund.

The health centre at Agrabad in the port city, one of the four in the South East Asia, was established by World Health Organisation (WHO) following Brussels Act back in 1956 to check skin and venereal or sexually transmitted diseases (VD or STD).

Being equipped and run by foreign physicians and health workers, mostly from the USA, in the initial years the centre is best known as American Hospital till date.

Sources said having the largest seaport in the region and frequented by foreign crews, Chittagong was selected for the centre as a full-fledged institute with a modern laboratory and an outdoor on 2.14 acres of land. It examined and provided STD treatment only to the foreign crews in the initial years. It, however, later started examining and providing treatment of both skin and STD to general people when it started running by a director under the then Pakistan central government, said the sources.

Sources said, name of the centre spread further with patients thronging there from the city and different districts under Chittagong division after the War of Liberation.

Some 500 patients come to the centre for treatment on an average now. They collect ticket at Tk 5.00 each and get treatment from 8:00am to 2:30pm six days a week excepting Friday.

But, patients get very often frustrated when the centre fails to provide medicine or treatment due to lack of manpower and fund constraint, they said. "I had to return home empty handed yesterday (Saturday) since I

came a bit late. But, today I came before 7:00am and could manage a ticket for the treatment," said Farida Begum, a poor woman from the city's Laikhan Bazar area.

Md Abul Kalam, a shopkeeper of Madarbari area in the city, was disappointed as he was refused ticket for being late.

"I came here hampering my business and could be satisfied only with a prescription. I was a bit late, but they could have considered my case," complained Kalam.

Dr Md Akter Hossain Chowdhury, head of the centre, said they can hardly provide treatment or necessary medicine to all the patients everyday.

Of the recognised posts of one senior consultant, three medical officers and a bacteriologist created in 1994, those of two medical officers are lying vacant while there were 16 in 31 posts of 3rd and 4th class employees, he said.

"It is difficult to provide the patients with medicine since we get an allocation of 2.5 lakh as against an approximate budget of over 10 lakh," said Dr Akter.

"Besides, there is a shortage of equipment and other logistics," he said.

Kankon Chandra Das, an administrative officer at the centre, said shortage of technicians, health workers and employees seriously hampers the service." family planning department has set up a godown on large portion of the unused land on the centre premises in 1991. Yet, the centre can be expanded to set up a 20-bed skin and STD hospital or institute on the land, said Kankon.

Sources said a proposal was also made in 2008 to set up such a 20-bed hospital, 10 beds for skin disease and 10 beds for HIV/AIDS patients.



Central Skin and Social Hygiene Centre, known as American Hospital, at Agrabad in the port city of Chittagong.

Following the proposal the then director general of Department of Health, visited the centre on May 24 the same year. He said the centre that holds Skin VD (venereal disease) post gradu-

ate class and one-year BCPS training on skin and STD can be upgraded to an skin disease and HIV/AIDS treatment centre, sources said.

The DG also emphasised develop-

ing indoor facilities and increasing allocation for treatment while directing director of the centre to take steps accordingly. Later, decision was also taken in principle to set up two Skin

and STD centres one at the centre and the other at Chankharpool in the capital, they said.

But, no progress was made in this regard till date, they regretted.

## theweekthatwas

### Removal of illegal billboards demanded

Consumers' Association of Bangladesh (Cab) formed a human chain on Saturday in front of Chittagong Press Club demanding removal of billboards, posing threat of accident.

Speakers at the programme said some advertising firms are erecting gigantic billboards violating rules. Such billboards not only create vision pollution but also pose a threat of accident that may cause loss of life and property.

They called upon Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) to launch a drive to evict billboards erected in violation of rules.

They also demanded proper implementation of rules for setting up billboards to avert accident like the one that took place in the capital claiming lives of five people.

Cab Chittagong Unit General Secretary Kazi Iqbal Bahar Caberi, regional vice-president Jesmin Sultana, Cab City President Afsar Khan, Chittagong Press Club Vice President Asif Siraj, Advocate Mabubul Alam, Advocate Alamgir and journalist Iftekharul Islam spoke at the event with SM Nazer Hossain in the chair.

### Debate workshop ends

A month-long debate workshop and festival concluded at Chittagong University (CU) on Sunday with a call for building a pros-

perous Bangladesh through spirit of logic.

Chittagong University Debating Society (CUDS) organised the programmes titled "6th CUDS Debate Workshop and Festival 2010" in cooperation with Lions Club International and Leo District Council at the commerce faculty auditorium.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Abu Yusuf was the chief guest at the concluding ceremony chaired by CUDS Moderator Prof Dr Mahbubul Haq.

Prof Yusuf in his speech urged all the students to make best use of the facilities university offered to build themselves as a good citizen and future leader.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Dr Mohammad Alauddin inaugurated the ceremony while Bangladesh Debating Federation Chairman Abdur Noor Tusher, District Governor of Chittagong Lions Club Shah M Hasan and freedom fighter Faruk-e-Azam Bir Protik were present as the special guests.

### Strict application of anti-tobacco law stressed

Speakers at a seminar in the port city on Wednesday called for proper and strict application of Smoking and Tobacco Use (Control) Act 2005 to reduce use of tobacco and save people from indirect smoking.

They also underscored the need for introducing specific guidelines for every working and public place and public transports to make them 100 percent smoking-free.

The seminar titled 'Introduction of

guideline to ensure smoking-free environment in public place and public transportation' was organised by Young Power in Social Action (YPSA) in association with Campaign for Tobacco-free Kids (CTFK) and Bloomberg Initiative at a local hotel.

YPSA Smoking-free Advocacy Project team leader Nasim Banu presided over the seminar and presented concept paper giving details on the progress of the project and disseminating idea about the guideline to keep Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) smoking-free.

CCC councillors Nazim Uddin, Shaheda Kashen Sathi, Rehana Begam Ranu and journalist M Nasirul Haque spoke at the seminar.

### Need for English learning underscored

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury emphasised learning English language to put up history and diversified culture before the world.

Everybody should learn English language also to compete with other nations of the world," he said.

He was addressing as the chief guest the inaugural ceremony of a two-day Bangladesh Cultural Diversity Festival (BCDF) hosted by the Independent English Language Club (IELC) at Muslim Institute Hall in the port city on Tuesday.

The Independent Editor Mahbubul Alam presided over the inaugural ceremony

while Chittagong University Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Abu Yusuf spoke as the special guest.

Chief Coordinator of the BCDF Prof Mohammad Nurul Huda moderated the inaugural function while IELC Secretary General Prof M Harunur Rashid delivered speech of welcome.

### BGMEA leaders seek cooperation

Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) called upon bond officials for cooperation to help garments sector overcome setback caused by global recession and acute power and gas crises.

The BGMEA leaders made the appeal while exchanging views with Additional Commissioner Dr Matuir Rahman of Chittagong Regional Office of Customs Bond Commissionerate in the port city on Sunday.

BGMEA First Vice-president Nasir Uddin Chowdhury said the global economic recession and acute crises of power and gas put garments sector into a very vulnerable situation. He sought cooperation of bond officials to tackle the situation.

Dr Matuir lauded the contribution of garments sector to the country's economy and assured them of cooperation.

BGMEA Director A M Chowdhury Selim, Mohammad Farhat Abbash, A K M Saleh Uddin, Engineer Kafiluddin Yusuf and Bond Commissionerate Assistant Commissioner Bashir Ahmed were present at the meeting.

## Muggers make auto journey risky

### Criminals use auto-rickshaws in snatching, robbery and drug peddling in port city

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

The passengers of CNG-run auto-rickshaws are in fear of falling prey to mugging or robbery anytime as the law enforcers can hardly ensure their safety.

The criminals are using the auto-rickshaws, common mode of private transportation, in snatching, robbery and drug peddling in the port city.

Police said they could not check such crimes due to lack of manpower and technologies. Sources in Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) said there are around 17 gangs of muggers who use the CNG-run auto-rickshaws in snatching in the city and its adjacent areas.

The gangs commonly known as 'Tana Party' and 'Gamchha Party' engage at least three operatives to commit any crime.

The Tana Party men snatch valuables from passengers of slow moving vehicles from their speeding auto-rickshaw while Gamchha Party men board auto-rickshaws driven by their cohorts to take away belongings of the passengers and drop them at a lonely place later.

The muggers find the roads stretching from Pahartali City Gate to Olanker Intersection, Naya Bazar to Boropole, Agrabad Access Road, GEC intersection, Zakir Hossain Road and SS Khaled Road to commit crimes and make safe way to flee.

Some dishonest auto-rickshaw owners are also involved with the crime as they rent out the vehicles to the criminals in exchange for higher amount of daily rent, said the sources.

Of 13,000 registered auto-rickshaws, over 100 ply with fake or duplicate documents and licences to avoid arrest after committing crimes.

Earlier in 2008, CMP traffic department had taken initiatives to force the auto-rickshaw owners to set up an iron-grill cover in the vehicles to ensure safety of the passengers from snatchers. They also started developing a database with information about the drivers to reduce such crimes.

The initiatives included marking the registration number of the auto-rickshaw and

telephone number of police control room on upside, making uniform mandatory for the drivers and keeping details about drivers and owners in laminated paper and charging fare according to tariff meter.

But, most of the owners and drivers are not following the rules helping in increase of crimes, said the sources.

Police arrested four members, including an owner of auto-rickshaw, of a gang of snatchers along with two auto-rickshaws running without licence in the city on April 1.

Commissioner (AC) Tanvir Arafat, quoting the arrestees said the auto-

rickshaw owner has seven other such vehicles that he rent to the snatchers in exchange for Tk 2,000 each when he got Tk 450 to Tk 550 only if he had rented those to genuine drivers.

Arafat said they have information that about three such gangs are involved with the crimes under the Double-mooring Zone.

Only after two days of the drive, Locals caught a driver with his accomplice along with an auto-rickshaw while trying to snatch belongings of a rickshaw passenger in city's Nasirabad area. Locals handed over the criminals to police after a good beating, sources said.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) of CMP Detective Branch Jahangir Alam said they are concerned at the crimes committed using the auto-rickshaws.

He said over 100 auto-rickshaws have been seized on charge of involvement with crimes and 50 people were arrested in this connection. Crimes could not be checked completely but reduced significantly, he said, adding that they would launch a drive against the criminals soon.

Deputy Commissioner of CMP Traffic Department Faruk Ahmed told The daily Star that they have asked all the auto-rickshaw owners to set up iron-grill cover in the auto-rickshaw by April 30 this year.

"We have already enriched our database with information of 7,000 drivers and the work is going on full swing to reap benefit from it," Faruk said, adding that police will go tough against the violators.



CNG-run auto-rickshaw



Visitors admire sarees displayed at the Baishakhi Mela (fair) organised by Chittagong Women Chambers and Commerce. The 15-day fair began at Uphar community centre in the port city on April 1.