

Needless tests multiply burdens on patients

Physicians get 30-40pc of test costs from diagnostic centres

MAHMUBA ZANNAT

He is a schizophrenia patient for 30 years. As his physical and mental condition was deteriorating day by day, the helpless mother took him to a new psychiatrist but got disappointed just on the first day just seeing the list of pathological tests.

Mahmudul Haq, 47, was taken to Colonel (ret'd) Mohammad Nurul Azim, a behavioral scientist and consultant psychiatrist of Prescription Point at the city's Banani, last June. The psychiatrist asked him to go for CT Scan, Electroencephalogram (EEG), Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test and blood test on the very first day.

"We had to pay Tk 3,500 for CT Scan and Tk 1,500 for EEG. They also charged Tk 5,000 for IQ test, which is only Tk 500 at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU)," said Halimunnissa, mother of the patient.

What is the point of testing IQ of a person who even cannot pass out his excreta properly, she questioned.

Not only Mahmudul but almost all the patients are to spend for such unnecessary tests suggested by the physicians. Doctors get 30-40 percent of the total cost paid for tests they refer, said sources from different diagnostic centres.

"We have been continuing his treatment for last 30 years and even taken him to India and USA. But no doctors ever asked us for IQ test before," said Halimunnissa adding that they charged Tk 5,000 for the test taken at another chamber of the retired colonel.

When contacted, Dr Nurul Azim told The Daily Star that chronic schizophrenia sometimes creates brain atrophy and it is possible to identify the atrophy through CT Scan of brain.

"The treatment will be totally different if the patient suffers from brain atrophy. There are two types of atrophy and

the treatment is different for these two types," he said adding that if there is atrophy, IQ test is a must for proper treatment.

The psychiatrists of different hospitals said pathological tests depend on the doctors and the condition of the patients. But ethically it should be done following a discussion with patients or their relatives.

Considering Bangladesh's socio-economic perspectives, 'clinical diagnosis' (diagnosis based on signs, symptoms, and laboratory findings during life) should be carried out first to avoid pathological tests, they said.

"As we cannot change the IQ of a chronic schizophrenic patient of 47 years, then asking for IQ test is quite useless and it is same for the CT Scan and EEG," said a mental health researcher preferring anonymity.

Excessive or unnecessary tests thus grasp a huge amount of money from patients. Still trend of the doctors' prescription for unnecessary pathological tests is increasing day by day, they added.

"When I went to a top private hospital following low pressure, vomiting etc., I was referred to the Cardiology department where the doctor asked for some immediate diagnostic tests that included Eco, ECG, TSH and routine tests of blood and urine," said Arzu, 36, of the city's Kathalagan area.

"As the doctor asked me to show the reports of the tests on that particular day, I had no scope to think of going outside for those tests," she said adding that she had to spend Tk 6,500 on that day before starting any kind of treatment.

"It bothered me and so I went to the Marie Stopes Clinic the next day. Hearing my symptoms they told me that I am pregnant and asked me just for only urine test," said Arzu.

Some doctors at different public

hospitals also refer patients to private pathological centres saying to prefer good one.

Abul Hashem who admitted to the Suhrawardi Hospital was found going to the Trauma Centre for blood test leaving his wife.

"As after 12:00 noon, no pathological test is carried out at the Suhrawardi pathology centre, so I am going to the Trauma Centre as per the recommendation of my doctor," said Abul Hashem.

The man had to spend Tk 859 for hemoglobin, creatinine and blood sugar tests, which were possible to do from Suhrawardi Hospital by spending only Tk 170.

The technologists of the hospital pathology centre said more than 80 percent patients who come to the outdoor department for treatment, go to the private clinics for pathological tests as a significant number of doctors consider the diagnostic centres as a mode of earning some extra money.

"The hospital pathology centre runs 24 hour in two shifts. After 2:00pm, only the emergency tests take place at the laboratory," said one of the technicians.

Though the hospital and clinic section of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) is supposed to look into these matters, they just show excuse of lack of manpower for weak monitoring.

Deputy Director (hospital and clinics) of the DGHS ABM Lutful Kabir said that formulation of a policy is under process to control the private clinics and diagnostic centres.

"We don't have to do much directly against commission business and [unnecessary] pathological tests. It is the doctors who can say best which test is needed for the patients," he told The Daily Star.



Islami Andolan Bangladesh holds a rally at Muktangon in the city yesterday blocking Zero Point, Paltan, and adjacent areas, causing severe traffic jam. The photo was taken from Zero Point.

Save Dhanmondi playground

Demand speakers

DU CORRESPONDENT

Environmentalists yesterday demanded of the government not to build any structure on Dhanmondi playground, keeping it open for all.

The demand came from a rally organised by Poribeshsammato Basjoggo Dhaka Bastobayan Parishad, a movement to save Dhaka, in front of the playground in the city.

The speakers said a vested quarter is

trying to privatise the playground in the name of renovation of the club and the field.

Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) President Prof Mozaffar Ahmed said it is a conspiracy to block the access to the playground for all. Children and youths of the area used to play and the old do physical exercise in the playground.

The speakers expressed concerns for lack of adequate number of playgrounds in the city, which hinder the natural growth of the kids. They urged the gov-

ernment to make some open fields.

Several hundreds of locals and youths joined the programme and requested all to prevent the privatisation process.

NDF Chairman Ibnul Saeed Rana moderated the programme chaired by Citizens Rights Movement President Md Mafizul Haque Sarkar.

Environmental activists Tushar Rehman, Jashim Khatabi, Iqbal Habib, Arifur Rahman, Mosiur Rahman, and Ashraf Siddique Shisir spoke at the rally.

Two hurt as 'bomb' explodes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two day labourers were wounded as a 'petrol bomb' exploded while they were working at a nursery in the city's Kamalapur yesterday morning.

The injured Mohammad Ali, 60, and Akram Hossain, 18, were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station Tofazzal Hossain said a 'cocktail' suddenly exploded when the labourers were digging earth inside the nursery.



A women's union of Burmese people living in Bangladesh stages a protest in front of the High Court in the city yesterday rejecting the election in Myanmar under military junta.

Chinese medical ship due Nov 9

UNB, Dhaka

A medical ship of Chinese Navy, "Peace Ark", will arrive in Chittagong on November 9 on a week-long visit to Bangladesh with a message of peace, friendship, and humanity.

This is for the first time a Chinese Navy medical ship will visit Bangladesh.

"It is an important move to strengthen the friendship between China and Bangladesh. It shows good cooperation between Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) and Bangladesh Armed Forces," Senior Col Li Chenglin of Military, Navy and Air Attache of the Chinese Embassy, said Thursday.

Briefing reporters on the mission of Peace Ark, he said the ship will provide humanitarian medical services to government officials, armed forces personnel, citizens and Chinese people in Bangladesh and carry out medical exchange.

The ship will provide health inspection, treatment, sanitation promotion etc. to local people and military personnel in Bangladesh and offer professional training to local military medical staff.

Peace Ark will have 300 doctors and nurses, and 150 crew with an ambulance helicopter.

It has 300 beds, eight operation rooms, and medical departments including ICU, casualty wards, burn wards, ordinary patients' wards, dental clinic, ENT clinic, pharmacy, medical laboratory, CT room, X-ray room etc.

It has also units of cardiology, neurology, respiratory, digestive, rheumatic, general surgery, orthopedics, thoracic surgery, urology surgery, plastic surgery, gynecology, and traditional Chinese treatment.

Peace Ark, 178m long and 24m wide, is arriving in Chittagong as the last destination of its five-nation tour. Earlier, the ship called at Djibouti, Kenya, Tanzania and Seychelles. It will leave for China on November 15.

House issue to be settled politically

Says Moudud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed yesterday said the dispute over Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence will be settled on the streets as it is a political issue.

He, however, said that besides carrying out demonstrations on the streets, BNP will continue legal battle in the apex court to protect its chairperson's residence.

Moudud made the remarks as the chief guest at a roundtable discussion on Government's Role with Khaleda Zia's Residence and Citizens' Expectations organised by Swadhinata Forum at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday morning.

Describing the cantonment residence as the symbol of multiparty democracy and nationalism, the former law minister said whatever the High Court verdict was on the issue, the government cannot occupy the residence.

There is no precedent in the subcontinent that the government through an administrative order evicted someone from a residence registered in his or her name, he said.

He added that people are disappointed with the HC verdict which recently upheld the government's decision, asking Khaleda Zia to leave her cantonment house.

President of the forum Abu Naser Muhammad Rahmatullah presided over the meeting. Maj Gen (ret'd) Ruhul Alam Chowdhury, BNP chairperson's adviser; Jatiyatobadi Juba Dal General Secretary Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal and BNP's executive member Khaleda Yasmin, among others, addressed the gathering.

Cyclonic storm 'Jal' moves slightly

UNB, Dhaka

The cyclonic storm 'Jal' over southeast bay and adjoining southwest bay moved slightly west-northwestwards over the same area yesterday.

It was centered at 6:00pm about 1,495kms south-southwest of Chittagong port, 1410kms south-southwest of Cox's Bazar port and 1,445kms of south of Mongla port.

It is likely to intensify further and move in a west-northwesterly direction, a Met office bulletin said.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 54kms of the storm centre is about 62 kph rising to 88 kph in gust or squalls. Sea will remain rough. Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's bazaar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted distant warning signal number two.

All fishing boats and trawlers over North Bay have been advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution till further notice.

FREE CFLS DISTRIBUTION Over 1cr energy saving lamps given

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first phase of the free distribution of energy efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) under 'Efficient Lighting Initiative for Bangladesh' programme has been completed in which more than 1 crore CFLs have been delivered to households.

The government of Bangladesh with World Bank assistance initiated the programme under the 'Rural Electrification Renewable Energy Development (RERED)' project to provide reliable and affordable power to the people of Bangladesh.

The government, however, expected additional support from World Bank for deployment of another 17.5 million CFLs in the second phase.

Under the additional financing for RERED Project, the World Bank has provided 15 million US dollars for procuring 1 crore 5 lakh CFLs, to build a systematic distribution system, and to conduct a comprehensive consumer awareness scheme.

World Bank also expects to extend support for the second phase of the programme observing the good results in the first phase, said a press release of the World Bank.

The first phase of the programme ended on October 23 marking record-breaking distribution of CFL bulbs in a day when on June 19 this year 55 lakh CFLs were distributed.

The CFLs were distributed at over 1,500 rural and urban distribution centres spread across 39 districts. One consumer could collect a maximum of 4 CFL bulbs in exchange of equal number of regular bulbs showing the copy of the electricity bill.

The CFLs consume one-fifth of energy compared to an incandescent lamp of the same output resulting in saving consumers electricity bills.



Anti-eveteasing Facebook forum forms a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday protesting harassment of women.

Advertisement for 'Star Campus' magazine, featuring the headline 'Linking Young Minds Together' and a photo of the magazine cover.