

General ICUs ill for manpower crisis

Causing huge sufferings to patients

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Only three public hospitals in the country offer just 22 beds for general intensive care units (ICU). And that, too, are running with severe shortage of manpower, causing huge sufferings to the patients.

A large number of critical patients come to the ICUs of the three hospitals every day, as they get free treatment there. But majority of them are denied admission due to seat scarcity, doctors said.

Patients with neurological problem, brain haemorrhage, respiratory problem and other serious complications require ICU facility, most of them for a long time.

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), the largest public hospital of the country handling more than 2,000 indoor patients every day, has an eight-bed general ICU.

According to its register, 169 patients came to the ICU last month. Only three of them could be admitted since no more bed was available.

In contrast to the public hospitals, around 50 private hospitals offer ICU facilities in the capital alone. But a bed there costs between Tk 10,000 and 50,000 a day, which is way too high for the poor.

Aside from the DMCH, Mymensingh Medical College Hospital has a four-bed ICU and Chittagong Medical College Hospital a 10-bed one. There are 18 public medical college hospitals in the country.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), which is an autonomous body, provides an eleven-bed general ICU but a bed there costs Tk 10,000 per day on an average.

There is a 17-bed ICU at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) only for the patients with heart problems.

"Setting up an intensive care unit is not an easy job. Moreover, we lack adequate resources and trained manpower," said Health Secretary

Mohammad Humayun Kabir.

He added that the health minister has announced to set up ICUs in district hospitals, but it will take time.

Bangladesh Society of Anesthesiologists, however, says the government lacks vision to ensure treatment for the critically ill patients. Maintaining a bed at ICU costs around Tk 10 lakh per year but it is possible to set up ICU in district hospitals, as the required infrastructure and manpower are there, they added.

SITUATION OF THE EXISTING ICUs

According to medical experts, there should be one nurse for every two patients at the ICU with sufficient doctors.

But the eight-bed ICU of the DMCH has only 13 nurses against the need for at least 32 in different shifts. As for the doctors, 10 junior consultants on deputation are struggling to attend the patients.

Dr Mozaffer Hossain, assistant professor of anaesthesia department of DMCH, said they cannot provide quality treatment to the patients, as they do not have permanent doctors or nurses.

The unit has an acute shortage of support staff as well, he said, adding that the support staff there are paid by the doctors and the nurses instead of the government.

The DMCH authorities have recently decided to extend its ICU to a 20-bed one and have managed 15 nurses to attend the additional patients. But they are yet to appoint 10 consultants and 20 medical officers, and adequate support staff.

There is a similar picture at the four-bed ICU of the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), which started operation in 2007.

Despite repeated appeals to the health ministry for manpower, the ICU has no sanctioned doctors or nurses.

"We've to send back most of the patients," said Dr Fazlul Haque Pathan, the ICU in-charge.



DOLPHIN'S SPLASH

Dolphin survey in Padma, Jamuna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for Advanced Research in Natural Resources and Management (CARINAM) is conducting a survey in the Padma and Jamuna rivers to identify the hotspots for the rare dolphins (shushuk) to protect them.

The South Asian River Dolphin (Platanista gangetica) or shushuk in Bangla is listed as an endangered species in IUCN's Red List in 2010.

Water abstraction upstream, decrease in river depth, and the appearance of sandbars during winter season in these rivers cause danger to the dolphins, as the river is divided into small segments which in turn increase the intensity of fishing and river traffic.

Water pollution due to release of untreated effluents from industries and accidental and intentional dolphin capturing also pose major threats for its survival.

The survey is being implemented as a part of a project "Wetland Biodiversity Rehabilitation Project (WBRP)" following a negotiation on development cooperation between Bangladesh and Germany in April 2008, says a press release.

The overall goal of the project is to implement INRMS (Integrated Natural Resource Management System) through wetland dependent people's contribution to secure and restore biodiversity and their livelihoods in wetland and floodplain areas in three upazilas (Bera Santhia, and Sujannahar) of Pabna.

Khoda Baksh Mridha's death anniversary today

METRO DESK



Today is the first death anniversary of Khoda Baksh Mridha, a popular

sports commentator, radio and television artist and a college teacher.

On the occasion, various organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes. His family, Khoda Baksh Mridha Fan Club, Sports Commentators' Forum and other organisations will lay wreaths at his grave at Rajshahi Hatemkhan Graveyard. A doa mahfil will also be held at his Hatemkhan residence after Asr prayers, said a press release.

Mridha was born in Hatemkhan of Rajshahi on January 22, 1945. He had served both in radio and television as a sports commentator for 38 years. He also served as a teacher of Political Science at various government colleges, including Rajshahi College.

He was also a cricketer and played for Rajshahi College, Rajshahi district and division and national cricket championship. He also participated in the Ayyub Trophy Cricket Tournament. Besides, he was a Grade-A news presenter and singer of Bangladesh Betar.

Mridha was a successful sports organiser too. He was a vice-president of Rajshahi Tennis Complex, executive member of Rajshahi DSA, councillor of BFF and BCB. He was the founder member of Sunrise Club, Rajshahi.

GIRL ABUSE Punishment demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Mahila Parisad (BMP) expressed deep concern and contempt over the incident in which a two and a half year old girl was raped in the city.

The child was raped on Monday by her neighbour Shaheed, who was later arrested by the police. BMP President Ayesha Khanam and Secretary Maleka Banu, demanded exemplary punishment to the accused.

Intensify Dhaka-Delhi dialogue to resolve issues

Say speakers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

More intense dialogues should be held between the civil societies and intellectuals of Bangladesh and India to guide their governments in resolving outstanding problems, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Problems between the two countries are not beyond solution if there is political will, they said at a three-day discussion titled "Dialogue on Cooperative Development, Peace and Security in South and Central Asia: Strengthening India-Bangladesh Relations."

Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) and Bangladesh Network for Environmental Governance (BNEG) jointly organised it.

Speakers said the Track II Dialogue greatly helped the two governments to take major decisions, like Ganges Water Sharing Treaty and other important bilateral deals and encouraged frequent dialogues outside the government for building greater understanding.

Chaired by BUP Chairman MA Jalil, the inaugural session held at Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation (PKSF) auditorium was addressed by prime minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi, Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Rajeet Mitter, PKSF Chairman Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmed and former adviser to a caretaker government CM Shafi Sami.

Leading Indian journalists MJ Akbar, Indian intellectuals Prof Rashpal Malhotra and Prof Sucha Singh Gill, Navdeep Suri, joint secretary (Public Diplomacy) of external affairs ministry of India and Dr Nilufar Banu executive director of BUP were present among others.

Rajeet Mitter said India wants Bangladesh to grow with it and achieve economic development. He also listed out achievements in various sectors, including trade and investment, security and border management and sharing of Teesta and other rivers since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited India in 2010.

He said India gives more than 2,000 visas, the highest number in Bangladesh every day. MJ Akbar identified poverty as a major hurdle in South Asian countries and said the leaderships in this region must cross that hurdle. He hoped that many of those issues will be solved when Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visits Bangladesh.

Prof Sucha Singh Gill laid emphasis on multi-nation strategies to utilise the flood water, which drains out through Bangladesh each year, wasting a huge supply of freshwater during floods.

The 3-day dialogue will discuss various important issues, like climate change, agriculture and food security, water development and sharing, connectivity, direct foreign investment and energy.

317 Bangladeshis escape Libya

291 arrive today, 288 tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Influx of Bangladeshi nationals through the Libya-Tunisia border suddenly increased as some 317 Bangladeshis afresh crossed the border on Monday following crackdown in Sirte and bombing in the western city of Sabah in Libya.

According to the foreign ministry press release yesterday, 301 Bangladeshi nationals, including 20 families with children, crossed over to Ras Jdir border point of Tunisia on March 28.

Same day, 16 Bangladeshi nationals, including four women and one child, crossed over to

AlSalloum border check point in Egypt.

Around 891 Bangladeshi nationals now await repatriation at Ras Jdir border point of Tunisia.

As per the schedule, 233 Bangladeshis arrive Dhaka from Tunisia through government and IOM charter flight today.

Also, 58 other Bangladeshis stranded in Algeria will return home today with government-IOM arrangements, while another 288 are scheduled to similarly return tomorrow.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will bring back 620 nationals from Tunisia on April 2-3, the foreign ministry said.

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