

Expired drugs  
on auction!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) is going to hand over expired drugs, which were auctioned rather than being destroyed, raising the risk of their re-entry to the market.

The authority has piled up a huge amount of intact drug bottles made of glass and plastic, empty oral saline packets along with some old furniture to hand those over to the selected bidder within two or three days.

The unit Chief Coordinator Dr Samanta Lal Sen said they have auctioned expired drugs, empty bottles and packets as scrap inviting tender.

Burn unit sources said some of the bottles were intact with drugs, which have a possibility to be sold in the market again.

Director of DMCH Big Gen Shahidul Haq Mallik said the medicines were declared unusable five months back and the auction was settled as per the rules.

About the piled up intact bottles with drugs, he said, he was unaware whether those were intact or not, and added that he would make sure that the employees will destroy the bottles and packets before the handover.



These expired drugs in intact bottles are being feared to be resold in the market, as those have been auctioned along with other medical waste. The photo was taken from Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Bus operators continue to overcharge

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Although the government-fixed new bus fares were supposed to come into effect yesterday, many bus operators continued charging extra money thanks to lack of an effective monitoring system.

During visits to different city bus stands, this correspondent witnessed harassment of passengers by the bus and CNG-run three-wheelers operators over extra fares.

However, the scenario of inter-district bus terminals was different, as the operators of this transport service did not charge extra yesterday.

The government on Monday re-fixed fares of bus and CNG-run three-wheelers but did not decide about the authorities to enforce its decision.

Two days after the decision Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) appointed two of its magistrates to see if the decision is being followed. The magistrates filed 39 cases against different bus services

and realised Tk 72,700 from them for charging extra fares.

One of the magistrates was on leave yesterday, while his colleague conducted limited drive from 1:30pm to around 3:00pm and filed cases against four bus services, fined two of them, confiscated two buses and seized route permit of another bus.

Sources say the communications ministry was not interested that the BRTA continues the mobile court drives.

It wrote a letter to the police to take charge of enforcing the decision yesterday. Until then almost all the bus operators from Motijheel to Mirpur and Mohammadpur and others city routes charged extra fares.

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told The Daily Star last evening. "The letter has been sent to police to take action if any bus operator violates the government decision."

He said they are cancelling the route permit of the buses that are

charging extra fares. But the minister did not mention how many route permits they have cancelled so far.

Abul Hossain warned that no bus would be allowed to run on the streets violating the government decision.

State Minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak, who rode a city bus from Mohammadpur to Jatiya Press Club to see execution of the government decision, found instances of taking extra fares by different bus operators.

He advised a few passengers to file general diary with the police against the bus operators taking extra fares. The ruling Awami League lawmaker said they cannot allow bus operators to charge extra fares from the people, who voted them to power.

"What the government is doing? Why are they making decisions when they fail to implement that?" asked an angry passenger in Dhamondi after being charged extra fares. Like him, many passengers reacted to The Daily Star at Farmgate and Science Laboratory intersection.

AL Presidium Member Obaidul Quader blamed non-coordination among the ministries and stockholders for problems triggered by the CNG price hike that led to an increase in fares.

Talking to The Daily Star, BRTA Magistrate Mohammad Tofael Islam said he confiscated a bus at Jatiya Press Club after passengers complained of charging exorbitant fares.

The magistrate said they could not conduct their drive for long as officials of ticket counters, which were overcharging the passengers in front of Jatiya Press Club, escaped seeing a mobile court in action.

"Moreover, the operators stopped running their buses through the press club road hearing the news of the mobile court and for this reason we could not continue our drive for long," Tofael added.

## Acid survivors for budgetary allocations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acid survivors at a dialogue have demanded of the government to allocate money in the upcoming budget for ensuring treatment, legal and rehabilitation supports to them and for creating awareness on the issue.

ActionAid, an NGO, organised the dialogue titled "Allocation for the Acid Survivors at National Budget: Do we really think of them?" at Jatiya Press Club in the city yesterday.

The demand of budgetary allocation also has been made for a burn unit at every medical college and hospital to ensure immediate treatment for the victims of acid violence.

Acid survivors from the network of the NGO, "Building Bridge," pointed out their problems they have been facing to get health, legal and rehabilitation supports.

"Even after nine years of falling victim of acid violence I am struggling to get justice. The man who threw acid on me is now released on bail and threatening me to withdraw the case," said Mukta Rani from Dinajpur.

She added that her husband as a tea stall owner finds it impossible to continue the case. If money is allocated for them in the national budget, she could hope to run the case for getting justice, said Mukta.

Purnima Mondol of Shatkhira, another victim of acid violence, said she had to withdraw the case for lack of money as nobody stayed beside her. She is still struggling to earn her livelihoods.

The government should have mechanisms to support these acid survivors and bring them under the state-run social safety net projects on priority basis, said the speakers.

At the same time, the government should ensure proper distribution of the allocation applying strong monitoring system, said the speakers.

"Though the National Acid Control Council [a government body] has got Tk 4 crore to be distributed among the acid survivors, it could not distribute one forth of the allocation in the last two years," said Tahmina, an acid survivor and employee of Acid Survivors Foundation.

Dr Abdul Hossain, project director of Women and Children Repression Affairs Multisectoral Programme, said the funds cannot be disbursed quickly due to some legal constraints.

Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, moderated the session.

Dr Samantalal Sen, chief coordinator of Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, Quamrunnahan of Naripakkha and Shaheen Akhter Dolly of Nari Moitree also spoke at the dialogue.

## Skills in English stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Stress should be put on English language teaching methods to improve peoples' skills in the language since English can be a tool for employment at home and abroad, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

They said the country's overseas workers face problems as their English skills are not up to the mark and they could fetch more remittance if they had good command over the language.

The speakers said partnerships among the government, private sector and educational institutions are needed to carry out effective English language training courses.

The seminar titled "The Future of English in Bangladesh" was organised by British Council Bangladesh at Hotel Westin in the city.

Speaking at the seminar, David Graddol, associate professor and visiting scholar of Department of English in City University of Hong Kong, said the new language, rapidly ousting the language of Shakespeare as the world's lingua franca, is English itself, in its new form.

Anir Chowdhury, policy adviser on Access to Information programme, said efficiency in English language is considered mandatory for eligibility in many jobs.

"For example if a Bangladeshi wants a job in Malaysia, he needs to fight with a Sri Lankan man. In that case, the Sri Lankan would be more efficient in English than ours and eventually he will get a good job."

"The country's private sector considers English as a skill but the public sector provides little scope to exercise English since all files are being prepared in Bangla."

"But English is also needed for the public sector employees as they have to negotiate with other countries," he said.

British High Commissioner Stephan Evans also spoke at the seminar. Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, CEO of RAK Pharmaceuticals; and Huw Jarvis, senior lecturer in TESOL, School of Languages, University of Salford, UK; presented separate papers at the seminar.

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