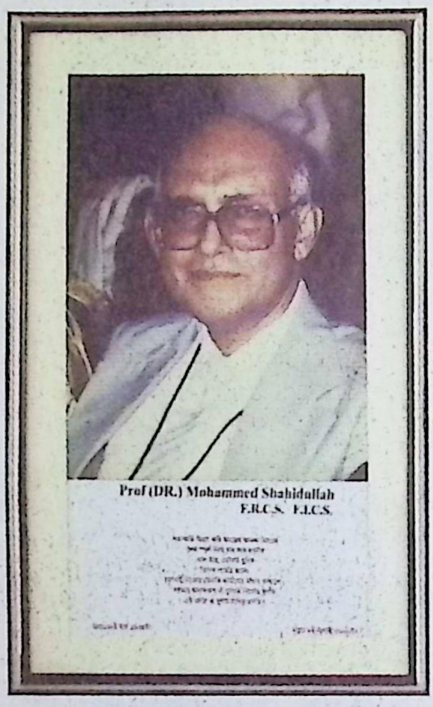
hospital for almost 24 hours when we spoke to him, and he said that he was ready to spend another day there if he was required.

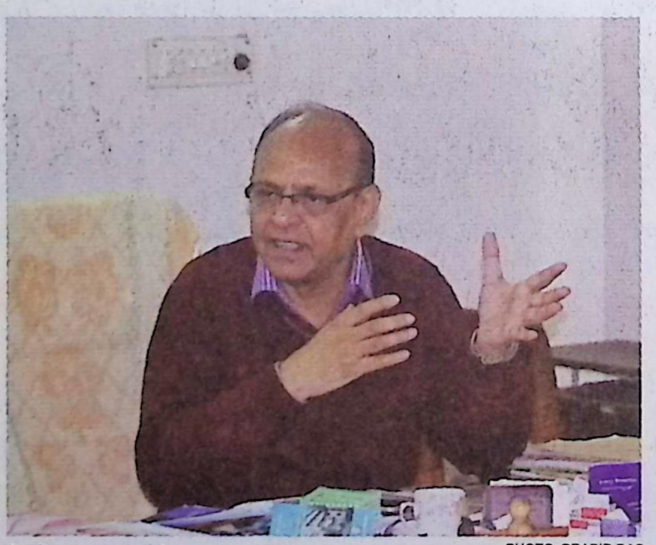
"There is a bed in my office, as I am not sure when I'll be called back to duty. I don't want to have a negligent attitude towards my job, as I'm committed to the work I'm doing, and even my family is aware of that," says Dr Ahmed.

Suchitra Chowdhury travelled all the way from Hobigonj to Dhaka for treatment of burn injuries incurred from a kitchen accident. Even though she didn't suffer serious burns on her body and could possibly be treated at a hospital nearer her town, Suchitra braved the ongoing violence to avail what she calls the "best treatment in the country" at the Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.



Professor Dr Mohammad Shahidullah

Like Suchitra, burn victims from all over the country prefer to get their treatment at DMCH's burn unit instead of going to any other hospital, as they feel confident that their injuries, no matter how big or small, will be treated with utmost care and attention.



Dr Samanta Lal Sen PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

This complete devotion to one's work could be seen when we visited the burn unit for a quick interview with the project director of the unit Dr Samanta Lal Sen and other resident doctors who contributed to the efficient running of the overloaded department. Unsurprisingly, even as we waited to speak to the famed leader of the unit, Dr Sen was busy attending to a police officer injured after a cocktail bomb was hurled at him.

The Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit of DMCH started as a project in 1986 under the tutelage of late Professor Shahidullah. Interestingly, the expansive building where the unit is currently housed was initially a slum which was later removed and a 50-bed burn unit was built in 2003. The project started with a limited number of doctors and nurses and with only a handful of senior plastic surgeons, including Dr Sen and Professor Shamsuddin, among others.

1.5 million people suffer burn injuries every year for different reasons but there was no single place which was fully dedicated to treating them, says Dr Sen. The Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit was built with an aim to alleviate the sufferings of burn victims who couldn't afford expensive medical care and unthinkable fees charged by private hospitals.

"I wanted to be a named cosmetic surgeon at the beginning of my career. I wanted to make people look better, but my vision changed after I joined the unit and witnessed the suffering of the poor people who found it physically difficult to even talk about their immense pain," says Dr Sen.

The soft-spoken doctor argues that even though a number of burn units have opened up in other parts of the country, people feel most confident in seeking treatment from DMCH. Burn specialists have joined units in Chittagong, Rangpur, Faridpur and other districts but patients are ready to travel all the distance to avail the treatment provided by the burn unit at DMCH.

"A woman called me from Rangpur saying that her 80-year-old mother had accidently burnt herself and they didn't know what to do, as the woman was too old to travel all the way to Dhaka. I informed her that there was a burn unit in the Rangpur government hospital and that they should seek treatment there instead of forcing the aged lady to travel the distance. Surprisingly, the