



DMCH PLUNGED INTO CHAOS: Patients and their attendants wait outside while the main entrance to Dhaka Medical College Hospital following a clash yesterday. **Top right**, a journalist with his camera that was broken when doctors drove out newsmen from the hospital. **Bottom right**, pieces of glass scattered at the emergency department following vandalism by DU students.

PHOTO: STAR

EVICION IN N'GANJ Illegal sand traders clear riverbank as Nur Hossain flees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 33 illegal sand traders have frantically cleared piles of sand and stones from the river Shitalakkhya over the last few days as their ring-leader went into hiding after the gruesome seven murder in Narayanganj.

"Nur Hossain would always deal with the local administration to back the entire illegal trade here, but this time we had to comply with the BIWTA directive to clear the river area as he went into hiding," said Md Firoz Alam, an employee at one of the sand traders' seats (*godis*).

As part of an ongoing eviction drive, Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) on Sunday directed the illegal sand traders near the Kanchpur bridge in Ati and Shimrail *mouzas* to remove sand and stones from river foreshores.

A local Awami League leader, Nur Hossain is the prime accused in the abduction and murder of seven men, including Narayanganj city councillor Nazrul Islam and senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar. The seven were abducted on April 27 from Narayanganj and killed later.

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Law respected by none

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according to Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

The issue has become crucial, as confrontations between the patients or their relatives and the doctors have become almost regular now.

Besides yesterday's mayhem over using the lift at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, recently doctors at Birdem Hospital, interns at Mitford Hospital and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) went on strike, following clashes with patients, their attendants or the journalists, who went there to cover incidents of alleged negligence.

In all the cases mentioned above, neither the doctors nor the relatives of the patients followed the legal course. Instead, they resorted to unlawful steps creating total chaos in the institutions. And eventually, the doctors enforced strikes, denying healthcare to the very people they took an oath to serve at all costs.

Most of the 50 incidents of "assaults" last year were triggered by deaths purportedly due to negligence in treatment which doctors denied.

In absence of an effective mechanism to verify the complaints of negligence, the allegations remained unproven and doctors went scot-free in almost every case.

Disregard for the country's prevailing laws reached such a state that the doctors of all the public and private hospitals in Rajshahi enforced a strike on March 27 this year after a court denied bail to a doctor and sent him to jail in a murder case.

The case was filed following the death of a businessman at a private clinic in Rajshahi city less than half an hour after he was taken to operation theatre for a surgery on his fractured right leg on January 30.

During the two-day strike, at least one patient died allegedly for not getting treatment at the RMCH.

According to a study of rights body Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK), a total of 504 incidents of severe medical negligence leading to death or loss of organs were reported between June 1995 and September 2008.

The figure could be much higher if all the incidents had been counted, it says.

However, Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council (BM&DC), the statutory body to investigate such cases, cancelled registration of only three doctors -- two in 1994 and one in 2013 -- for negligence in treatment.

"We hardly get any complaint from the patients. Even if we get, they lack adequate evidences to be proved," said Dr Zahedul Haque Basunia, registrar of the BM&DC.

Dr Jamaluddin Chowdhury, disciplinary committee member of the BM&DC, said people rarely are aware of the existence of such a council as the statutory body has not yet taken any initiative to publicise that patients or their relatives can complain to it for redress.

The BM&DC Act-2010 empowers the body to cancel the registration of physicians if they are found guilty of misconduct or violating provisions of

the law.

"This provision could be a very effective tool for the BM&DC to ensure accountability in medical profession. But unfortunately, it seems reluctant to recognise negligence as misconduct," says the 2013 ASK study on medical negligence.

The act also fails to set the standard of care that a medical practitioner owes to the patients. It has a code of ethics, but there is nothing to further explain what amounts to gross negligence and what does not, the study says.

Since it is not possible for the general courts or lawyers to investigate or hold trials of cases of negligence in such a specialised discipline as medical science, the Law Commission sent some suggestions to the health and the law ministries early 2012 in this regard.

It recommended a law, clearly defining medical negligence, and forming special civil courts to deal with cases on such negligence but nothing has yet been done, said Dr Shah Alam, a member of the commission.

BMA Secretary General Dr Iqbal Arslan said there is standard operational procedure (SOP) for the treatment of a few diseases only.

He also held it important to develop SOPs for all major diseases, saying this would help determine medical negligence.

"People consider doctors as persons of higher standards, but problems arise when their expectations are not met," he added.

Mayhem

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Only to make things worse, some 70 to 80 DU students went to the hospital and vandalised the emergency department, said Mozammel Haque, in charge of DMCH police camp.

When journalists went to cover the incident after the vandalism, interns drove them out, leaving ATN News cameraman Aatur Rahman Himel injured and part of his camera broken.

Immediately, the authorities locked all the entrances to the hospital.

Khandker Shahiduzzaman Meraz, another son of the patient and general secretary of DU Shahidullah Hall Chhatra League, said it was the intern doctors who had assaulted Limon, Shuvo and Samrat.

He admitted his fellow students vandalised the emergency department as there was a rumour that interns had assaulted him, Shuvo and Samrat, and confined him.

"The doctors assaulted Shuvo and Samrat, not me," Meraz said. But when he went to meet the hospital authorities to resolve the issue, intern doctors tried to confine him, he claimed.

Dr Iqbal Arslan, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), told reporters at the hospital that suspension of the DMCH emergency service is unprecedented. "I feel sorry for the patients who had to suffer," he said.

Anupam Begum, a patient of cardiac disease and dental problems, was referred by Dhaka Dental College

in Mirpur to the DMCH. As her sons rushed her to the DMCH around 3:30pm, they found all the entry points shut.

"I was angry because my mother was in an unconscious state. I broke the lock to get the ambulance in. But Ansar members beat me up, and doctors refused treatment," her son Apu, a driver and resident of Old Dhaka, told The Daily Star.

He then rushed her mother to Mitford Hospital where doctors again referred her to the DMCH.

"I again went to Dhaka Medical Hospital around 6:00pm, but a doctor at the emergency department said there was no doctor at the wards because of clashes and asked me to come tomorrow [Wednesday]," Apu said.

There were dozens of other patients who suffered like Anupam Begum.

Meanwhile, the DMCH and DU authorities, BMA leaders and police held a meeting after the incident.

"We have decided to probe the incident and punish those involved in the attacks on the hospital," DMCH Director Brig Gen Mustafizur Rahman told reporters before opening the gate at 4:25pm.

Asked about action against the interns who had attacked the journalists, he said it was not discussed in the meeting.

DU acting proctor Prof Amzad Ali said the university authorities had formed a four-member probe committee to look into the involvement of the university students in the incident.

Main accused still not traced

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threats keep coming. I doubt whether the administration has the intention to catch them," she said.

Mintu, also a joint general secretary of Narayanganj Jubo League, identified the caller as "Langra" Hasan, a neighbour and Nur Hossain's follower.

"The boss has taken note of your action. Your days are numbered," Mintu quoted the caller as saying.

"You won't be lucky enough as Nazrul had been. Your body won't be found," the caller warned.

But this is not the first such call. The first threat came from an unknown person on April 29, two days after the seven that also included senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar were abducted in broad daylight from Narayanganj link road.

Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam filed a general diary with the Siddhirganj police over the threat on May 2.

"We've taken care of your son-in-law. If you don't stop talking about it, we'll make sure that members of both the families (Nazrul's and his in-laws) go missing," reads the general diary describing the threat.

According to reliable sources, Nur Hossain is still in the country. He was in Comilla area over the past few days but is now trying to cross over to India

through Bhomra or Benapole.

Meanwhile, police yesterday recorded the statement of Shahidul, nine days after the sensational kidnap and murder of the seven.

The bodies were later found floating on the Shitalakkhya river.

Shahidul, known as Shahid Chairman, has from the beginning been alleging that Nur Hossain had hired some Rab members for the murders in exchange for Tk 6 crore. His voice went unheard until the media covered it for the last three days.

After the statement to the police, Shahid said he told the law enforcers what he had told the press earlier.

"I want that the real culprits are identified, arrested and given the capital punishment," he told reporters after coming out of the office of the Narayanganj superintendent of police.

On Monday, he told this newspaper that a son of a powerful Awami League lawmaker had brokered the deal with some Rab men to kill Nazrul. The MP's son acted on behalf of Nur Hossain.

The Daily Star could not independently verify Shahidul's claims and therefore kept from naming the MP and his son.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, Shahidul said he had information that part of the Tk 6 crore was paid to the killers through Dutch Bangla Bank and Jamuna Bank.

Contacted, Bangladesh Bank Executive Director Mahfuzur Rahman said the central bank did not get any report regarding these transactions. Under the rules, banks must report to the BB on any transaction exceeding Tk 10 lakh a day from any account.

Meanwhile, several other family members and locals were quizzed by the committee formed by the police for probing the murders that once again bring under the spotlight a trend of violent politics run by people popularly known as "Godfathers," earning the district a dreadful reputation.

Also yesterday, having observed work abstention in protest against the murders, the district's lawyers threatened to lay siege to the Rab camp office on Sunday if the accused are not arrested by then.

Frustrated over the probe, they demanded visible progress in the investigation by the deadline, reports our correspondent there.

In another development, police seized four of the 11 firearms, licensed against the names of those loyal to Nur Hossain, a day after their licences were cancelled.

Also, the Prime Ministers' Office directed the authorities concerned to confiscate all moveable and immovable assets of Nur Hossain, said a PMO official.

3 Rab officials 'dismissed'

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Lt Col Tareque is a close relative of an influential minister.

Two days after the abductions in Narayanganj, the home ministry withdrew the commanding officer of

FROM PAGE 1

April 30

The bodies of Nazrul, Chandan and four others are found in the Shitalakkhya.

May 1

A seventh body is found floating in the same river.

May 3

Police raid Nur Hossain's house but do not find him.

May 4

Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam alleges Rab members killed Nazrul in exchange for Tk 6 crore from Nur Hossain and other accused.

AL lawmaker Shamim Osman claims Nur Hossain indeed committed the crimes.

Police seize a car of Nur Hossain's younger brother on suspicion, from a glass factory owned by a relative of Shamim Osman.

Locals observe a daylong hartal in Narayanganj demanding arrests of the accused.

The case is handed over to the DB.

May 5

Shahidul claims a son of an AL lawmaker brokered the Tk 6 crore deal with Rab members.

The High Court orders the govt to form a probe committee with no Rab men in it.

The home ministry issues a red alert on the borders so that Nur Hossain cannot flee the country.

May 6

Shahidul and Selina give statements to police.

Rab-11 and three police officials. Later, two more Rab officials were withdrawn.

As allegations against some Rab officials came to light through the media, the armed forces pulled back the trio from the elite force, Mukhlesur Rahman, director general of Rapid Action Battalion, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Different government agencies have been investigating the abductions and killings, he said.

"If any Rab official is found guilty, he will be punished in line with the laws of the country," he said, referring to the sacking and arrest of Lt Col Zulfiqar Ali Majumder, ex-commanding officer of Rab-7, over his involvement in the Tk 2.07 crore robbery at Talsara Darbar Sharif in Chittagong in May 2012.

Speaking at a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on the home ministry, the Rab chief yesterday said if any Rab officer is found involved in the brutal killings, the elite force will not try to protect him.

Coming out of the meeting, committee Chief Tipu Munshi said they were gravely concerned over the incident in Narayanganj, and the government would do everything to bring the

culprits to book.

On May 4, Nazrul's father-in-law Shahidul Islam alleged that some Rab men had abducted and murdered the Narayanganj city councillor in exchange for Tk 6 crore. He claimed that some workers saw Rab men abduct Nazrul near Shibu Market in Narayanganj on April 27.

Nazrul and his four aides, senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar and his driver were abducted almost at the same time after they left the court area by two cars in Narayanganj.

Six bodies, including that of Nazrul and Chandan, were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river three days later, and another was found the following day.

WATCH ON MINISTER'S SON
A minister's son, who faces allegations of involvement in the Narayanganj incident, has been kept under surveillance by intelligence agencies, said sources.

The government will take action if he is found guilty, they added.

On Monday, Nazrul's father-in-law alleged that a son of a powerful minister brokered the deal with some Rab men to kill Nazrul.

The minister's son acted on behalf

Oishee, 2 of her friends indicted

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August 16 last year.

Oishee, who had taken her O-level exams, surrendered to Paltan police the following day. She was later remanded.

In a confessional statement before a magistrate on August 24 last year, she

said she alone had killed her parents and Sumi helped her hide the bodies. Sumi also admitted to helping Oishee.

DB Inspector Abul Khair Matubbar, the investigation officer of the case, submitted two charge sheets -- one against Oishee, Johnny and Roni and

another against Sumi -- before the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in March this year.

A separate charge sheet was submitted against Sumi because she is under 18 and that her trial will be held in a juvenile court.

Internet use to get cheaper

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Telecommunications Company Ltd has slashed its internet bandwidth purchase huge amount of bandwidth, will be Tk 855, and for the ISPs it will be Tk 1,350, said Monwar Hossain, managing director of the company.

The BSCCL took the decision to slash the price due to the competition on international bandwidth price with other international terrestrial cables (ITC).

At the same time, the company has also considered the bandwidth prices in neighbouring countries, he said. Recently, the state-run Bangladesh

Telecommunications Company Ltd has slashed its internet bandwidth price to Tk 2,800 from Tk 4,800.

BSCCL is the lone submarine company that provides international bandwidth to the country, while there are more six terrestrial companies that provide the same services.

The board of BSCCL, headed by the telecom division secretary, has approved the proposal for the price cut. It now awaits the ministry's approval, said the managing director.