

# Country's lone filaria hospital serves well, defying odds

### Immediate government help required to regularise salary of doctors, staff, enhance services

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The country's lone filaria hospital at Dhalagachh village in Saidpur upazila under the district has continued rendering quality service to filariasis patients, although the independently run hospital is beset with serious financial constraints.

The 25-bed hospital was set up by NGO Institute of Allergy and Clinical Immunology of Bangladesh (IACIB) in 2002 with the financial assistance of Japan government and the MoU mentioned it as the world's lone filaria hospital.

Governments of Japan and Canada provided further support for infrastructure development and improvement of treatment standard till 2012.

It received some help from Bangladesh government too.

"But the hospital is now passing a hard time as its founder chairman, also chief of NGO IACIB left it in 2012 following allegation of gross irregularities against him. All logistic and material support from home and abroad has remained virtually suspended since then," said Surot Ali, administrative officer of the hospital.

"World Health Organization (WHO) regards Nilphamari and its surrounding areas as the country's worst filaria affected region. According to our recent survey, 20% of total population in the

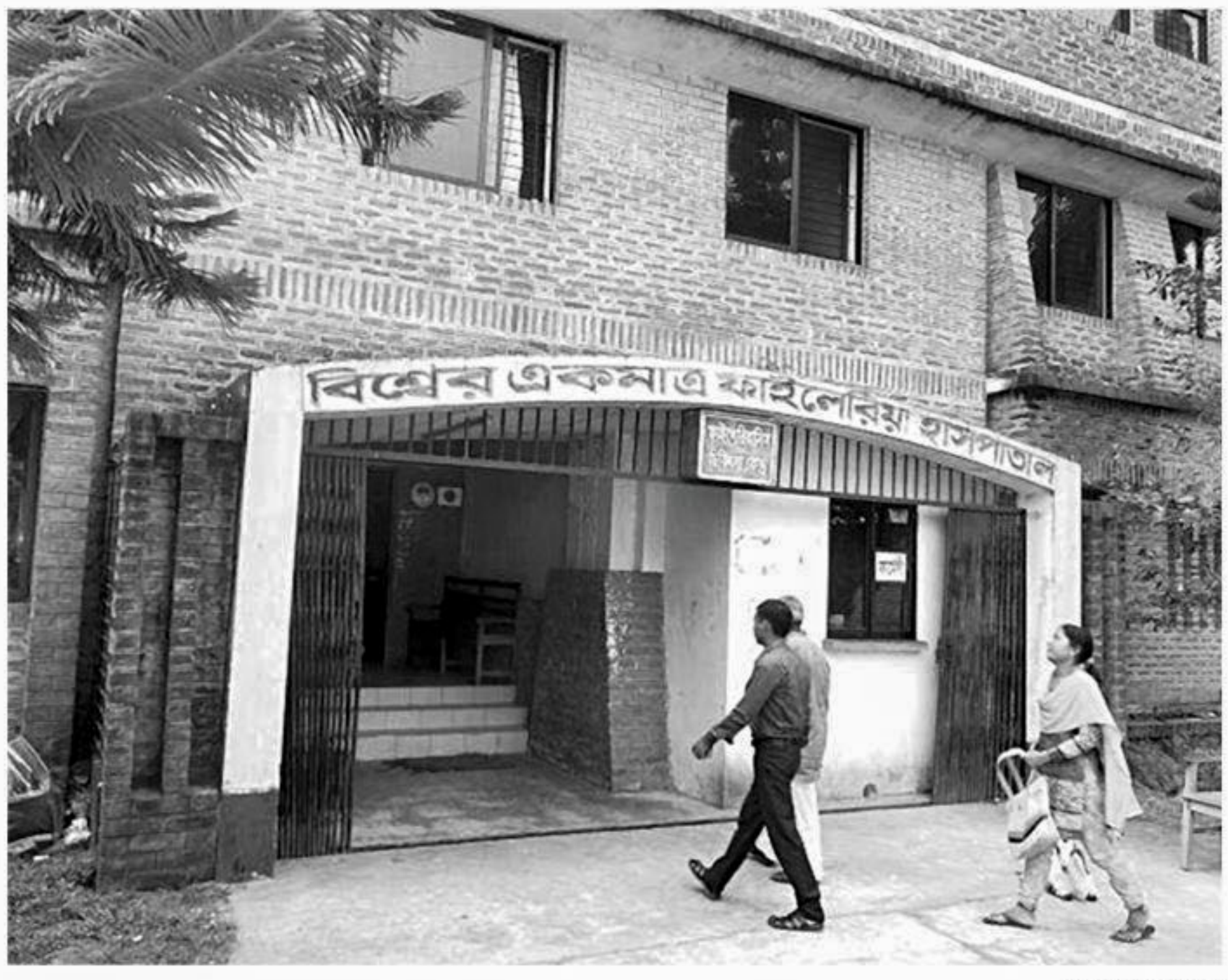


PHOTO: STAR

Despite different problems including financial constraints, the country's lone filaria hospital at Dhalagachh village in Saidpur upazila under Nilphamari district has continued providing quality service to patients, thanks to the sincerity and dedication of a few doctors, nurses and other staff.

district are either affected with filarial disease or carrying its parasite," he said.

Now a managing committee headed by the local lawmaker is running the hospital.

"In the past, a good number of patients from abroad came to the hospital for treatment of filariasis but the picture is different now. This year only two foreign patients -- Shanti Devi, 30, of Chennai, India and Hamidi, 45, from Oman took treatment here. They returned home after being

cured," Surot Ali said.

Visiting the hospital recently, this correspondent saw 30-40 filariasis patients along with their attendants came there.

"Most patients are given outdoor treatment but serious patients are admitted here for specialised treatment. Of the hospital's 25 beds, only 10 are in use as only two doctors and three nurses are serving here," said Raihan Tarique, resident medical officer of the hospital.

"They are giving quality

service although they are deprived of regular salary. We need at least four doctors and six nurses for smooth running of the hospital," he added.

Sale of tickets to patients, charges for bed, pathology tests and ambulance fare bring some earning for the hospital but it is too small to pay salaries to the doctors, nurses and other staff after bearing the maintenance cost.

Patients have to purchase important drugs, injections and ointments from out-

side.

Class IX student Liton Mia, 15, of Aditmari village in Lalmonirhat said his study discontinued due to filarial disease but now he is recovering gradually with treatment at the hospital.

Shahida Begum, 24, of Shaola village in Rangpur, said, "As the disease made me ugly, my husband wants to take a second wife. Now I have got admitted here with hope to get cured."

Filariasis is caused by parasite filaria entering the body through biting of mosquito called wuchereria bancrofti.

The parasite attacks the lymphatic gland with no initial symptom, doctors said.

After 7-8 years, skin of the affected organ mainly legs, hands and sex organs folds and swells with deposit of odorous fluid and worms, causing pain and irritation.

WHO sources said about half of around 12 crore filariasis-affected people in the world are in this sub-continent.

Dr Abdur Rashid, civil surgeon of Nilphamari, said, "Teams from the government's health directorate visited the filaria hospital and process is on to find ways to enhance cooperation for developing it."

"Teams of doctors employed by the health directorate are working in different areas to eradicate filariasis from the country," he added.

# Quake-damaged school yet to be rebuilt

### Kids attend classes in the yard of nearby house

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Students of Narashingapur Government Primary School in Sujanagar upazila of the district have been attending classes in the yard of a nearby house for the last five months as the school building damaged by earthquakes in May this year is yet to be repaired.

Officials visited the school on several occasions but the authorities concerned are yet to take any steps to renovate its building, said a teacher.

In May, major cracks

developed in the building due to repeated quakes during the period, said Narayan Chandra Biswas, headmaster of the school.

"To avoid risk of accident, we later shifted the classrooms to the yard of villager Johurul Haque's house, 100 metres away from the school building," he said.

The headmaster also demanded immediate repair of the damaged school hosue built in 1995.

For months, their academic activities are being

seriously hampered due to the situation, said the students, adding that due to this, most of the students already left the school.

"We are holding classes at the yard of a house beside the road and when vehicles ply the road, our attention got disrupted," said fifth grader Brish Khatun.

Nargis Akter, upazila primary education officer, said they already wrote to the higher authorities for fund but to no response yet.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Narashingapur Government Primary School in Sujanagar upazila under Pabna district attend classes on the yard of a nearby house as the school building got badly damaged during the earthquake five months ago.



PHOTO: STAR

People of different villages of Bhuapur and Gopalpur upazilas under Tangail district take part in a 16-kilometre-long road march yesterday demanding early steps to repair dilapidated Bhuapur-Tarakandi Road (inset) and building of an embankment from Nalin to Kuthiboyra to protect the area from river erosion.



# 5 get life for murder in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A court here yesterday sentenced five people to life imprisonment for killing a man in Saidpur upazila in 2009.

The lifers are Saiful Islam, 40, son of Raihan Islam, Bablu alias Babul, 35, son of Mokim, Dulal, 48, son of Alimuddin, Mojid, 30, son of Alim, and Moslem, 27, son of Mokim. They all hail from Khata Modhupur village in the upazila.

Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court fined the convicts Tk 10 thousand each. In default, they are to suffer six months more in jail.

According to the prosecution, there had been a long standing dispute between the five and one Safiur Rahman, 60, of the village over the ownership of a land at the village. On the night

of June 23, 2009, they stormed into the house of Saifur, forcibly took him to nearby Dangi Government Primary School and hacked him with sharp weapon. Saifur died on the spot.

Saifur's son Abdul Aziz filed a murder case with Saidpur Police Station the following day, accusing the five. After investigation, police pressed charges against them.

After examining the case records and witnesses, Additional District and Sessions Judge Mahbul Alam pronounced the verdict.

Away in Narsingdi, Two youths were yesterday sentenced to life imprisonment for killing a teenage girl after rape in Belabo upazila of the district in 2012.

The lifers are Amin, 18, and Azim, 25, of Birbagh village in the upazila, reports our correspondent.

# 7 Shibir men jailed for 20 yrs for possessing bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A Rangpur court yesterday sentenced seven activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, to 20 years' imprisonment for possessing crude bombs and bomb making materials.

They are Ahsan Habib, Mostafa Kamal, Mehedy Hasan Sourav, Robiul Islam, Monowar Hossain, Jamidul Islam and Moinul Islam.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Abu Jafar Md Kamruzzaman also fined them Tk 10,000 each. In default, they are to suffer another one year in jail.

Of the convicts, Mehedy, Robiul, Monowar, Jamidul and Moinul were tried in absentia, said Ainunnahar Papri, public prosecutor.

On March 18 in 2013, informed that the seven Shibir men were planning subversive activities in the district ahead of the hartal on the day and the following day, police arrested Habib and Mostafa from a mess in the city.

The law enforcers also seized crude bombs and huge bomb making materials from the arrestees, according to the prosecution.

However, five of their companions managed to flee the scene, sensing the presence of the law enforcers.

Later, Moktarul Islam, sub-inspector of Rangpur Kotwali Police Station, filed a case under the Explosive Substances Act on the same day.

After investigation,

police submitted charge sheet against the Shibir activists.

After examining witnesses and evidence, police found them guilty and pronounced the verdict.

# Arms trader arrested

UNB, Chapainawabganj

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested an alleged arms trader with two pistols, four magazines and 14 bullets in Kanthalpara Jakherbagan area under Shibganj upazila of the district on Monday.

The arrestee is Kamal Hossain, 28, son of Ahia Hossain, a resident of Raghunathpur village of the upazila.

# Long march demanding repair of 16-km road, construction of dyke

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

People of different villages of Bhuapur and Gopalpur upazilas joined a long march yesterday, demanding repair of the Tangail-Tarakandi road and construction of a guide embankment to protect the villages in the upazilas from Jamuna erosion.

The long march began from Sonamui Bazar in Gopalpur upazila in the morning and ended at Bhuapur headquarters at noon.

Abdus Sattar Khan, principal of Haji Ismail Khan College, led the march. Addressing a rally on the premises of Bhuapur Upazila Parishad, Sattar

Khan said numerous pot-holes appeared on the Tangail-Tarakandi road from Bhuapur upazila sadar to Sonamui in Gopalpur upazila as the important road was not repaired for several years.

As a result, the road has turned almost unusable and also causes damage to vehicles.

Drivers of different vehicles, who also joined the march, said it takes about an hour instead of 20 minutes to go from Sonamui to Bhuapur.

Moreover, to avoid the damaged road, the fertiliser-laden trucks from Tarakandi have to move through Jamalpur to pass Bangabandhu Bridge, causing waste of time, said truck driver Abdul Kader.

The authorities, however, have turned a blind eye to the issue, he added.

Though several villages in the two upazilas have been devoured by the Jamuna River, the authorities concerned have taken no steps to check the erosion so far, the demonstrators also alleged.

They demanded construction of a guide embankment from Nalin to Kuthi Boira immediately to check the river erosion.

The demonstrators also threatened to launch tougher agitation in future if their demands were not met within a short time.

# UP chairman aspirant found killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Police recovered the body of an aspirant for union parishad (UP) chairman from Hingerpara village in Sadullapur upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased, Rabiul Islam, 38, of Matherpur village in Pirganj upazila, was a chairman candidate from Dhaperhat union in the upcoming UP polls.

Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Dhaperhat police investigation centre, said locals found the body hanging from a eucalyptus tree in the area and informed the police.

The law enforcers rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Criminals might have killed Rabiul and later hung the body from the tree.

The body bore several injury marks, said police.



PHOTO: STAR

Cauliflowers of a large field at Gokul in Bogra Sadar upazila are ready for harvest.