



Members of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State talking to Rohingya refugees, who had recently entered Bangladesh, at a camp in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar yesterday.

PHOTO:  
STAR

## Fingers crossed for Bajandar

FROM PAGE 1  
rare skin disorder commonly known as the tree man illness, which covers limbs with warts, making them look like tree branches. He is believed to be the fourth man in the world with tree man illness.

"If Bajandar is cured and the warts don't grow again, it will be a remarkable milestone in the history of medical science," Dr Samanta Lal Sen, national coordinator at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, told The Daily Star recently.

"We are hopeful about his recovery as there has been no reappearance of the warts since his first operation in February last year," he said.

A nine-member medical board has been operating on him, said the noted physician, adding that they were waiting for his lab report. Bajandar's blood, tissue and saliva samples were sent to the US last year for diagnosis.

### BAJANDAR LOOKS BETTER

With a pale face and confusion over his treatment, Bajandar went to the DMCH on January 30 last year. His photos with his hands completely covered by warts grabbed worldwide media attention.

But if you see Bajandar now, you might not recognise him instantly. Not only the warts but also the paleness of his face has disappeared. His health has improved and he smiles frequently.

All of his limbs except for the left hand are bandaged. A few remains of the warts are visible on the fingers and the palm. Bajandar said the condition of the other hand and the legs was almost the same.

Talking to The Daily Star on Saturday, he said his life has changed completely after his admission to the hospital.

Thanking the doctors for their selfless efforts to cure him, he talked about his dreams of making his daughter a doctor in future.

"I want she too serves people selflessly. It is the only way to pay back the nation," he said, adding that the doctors gave him a "new life".

When Bajandar was admitted to the hospital, his hands were so heavy because of the warts that he could not even move them on his own. But now, things have changed.

"Even after the surgeries began, I was wondering whether I could ever use my hands and legs again. But you see, these are functioning, and I can touch my daughter and play with her sometimes.

"This feeling is just out of the world..."

Living in a cabin on the fourth floor of the burn unit for the last one year with his wife Halima Khatun and three-year-old daughter Tahira, Bajandar went outside the hospital just twice for a walk.

Asked, he said he was never bored. "Rather, I felt liberated as the warts were being removed gradually."

Now, all he wants is to go back to his village in Khulna and start his own business with the money donated by people.

"I have received a lot of love from all. Many visited me and gave me gifts as well. All this love and the treatment are giving me the confidence to fight back in life," he said, adding that he did not like the way people used to look at him with sympathy because of the warts.

His wife Halima, who has always been with him, also expressed her happiness over the way things have happened. "I am very happy to see smile on my husband's face."

Bajandar was having malnutrition, anaemia (lack of red cell in blood) and jaundice when he was admitted to the hospital. But now, his health has improved a lot, said Dr Sen, adding that his treatment has absolutely been free of cost.

The government is bearing all the costs.

This is a long term and expensive treatment. The entire treatment would cost nearly Tk 50 lakh, he claimed.

The warts began to appear on Bajandar's limbs when he was 15. After his wedding in 2011, those grew so big that he could not even move them. So he had to quit his job as a rickshaw-van driver.

Bajandar's case received worldwide attention from renowned international media outlets, among others, AFP, The Guardian, BBC, CNN, ABC, Telegraph, Washington Post, Russian Television (RT) Network and Al-Jazeera.

According to DermNet New Zealand, a renowned resource all about the skin, epidermodysplasia verruciformis (also called Lewandowsky-Lutz dysplasia) is an extremely autosomal recessive inherited disorder. Till date, no cure has been found.

A Romanian man was first diagnosed with the disease in March 2007.

Another case was reported in Indonesia in November the same year in a 35-year-old fisherman. The last reported case also occurred in Indonesia in 2009.

The Indonesian fisherman, whose case had also received worldwide attention, died on January 30 last year from the complications related to his condition as the warts began to reappear. Those were surgically removed earlier.

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## Dust threatens public health

FROM PAGE 1  
Mirpur, Gulshan, Mouchak, Malibagh, Moghbazar, Jatrabari, Beribadh, Rampura, Moddho Badda and Zahir Raihan Road near Dhaka Medical College Hospital are some of the areas where the menace is at its highest.

Dust particles small enough to be inhaled not only cause irritation of the eyes, coughing and sneezing, but also asthma and bronchitis.

"Every 10 out of 100 children exposed to dust develop asthma while seven to eight percent of the adult suffer from chronic bronchitis," said Prof Md Rashidul Hassan, former director of the National Institute of Diseases of the Chest and Hospital.

"Dust mixed with pollutant particles is responsible for lung cancer," he warned.

He added that the number of such patients was increasing in the country, and advised spraying water on construction sites regularly.

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has recently dismantled some ramps of Mayor Hanif Flyover near Bakshibazar intersection. Thousands of people, including patients, cross this road each day through the concrete dust.

On January 26, Anisur Rahman took his six-year-old son to the DMCH for treatment of respiratory complications. On both ways, the boy was exposed to the heavy dust.

"He [the boy] is allergic to dust. Doctor asked us to keep him from dust. How can the authorities not see the dust in front of the hospital?" said Anisur.

In Gulshan and Banani, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) is carrying out extensive road and divider repairing work. In Mirpur, Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTC) and Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) are working for Metro Rail and a water supply project.



Scott Randall examining the results from the 24 hour dust measurements at the embassy in 2011. The final result showed levels three times the legal limit in Bangladesh.

PHOTO: NORWEGIAN EMBASSY, DHAKA

quality monitoring and planning in one of the world's most densely populated cities.

As part of the project, a delegation from NILU had travelled to Dhaka to conduct an initial screening study.

"During the winter season, Dhaka is probably the most polluted city in the world," said NILU scientist Scott Randall after the visit.

On the balcony of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Dhaka, the researchers were able to measure dust concentrations over a period of 24 hours. The results showed values that exceeded three times the legal limit for air pollution in the United States and Bangladesh, and nearly five times the limit in the EU and Norway, according to the embassy website.

An official of the embassy told The Daily Star last night that test equipment still remain installed at the office though the official could not provide the latest data.

On January 25 last year, the High Court demanded an explanation from the government on the steps taken to remove dust, smoke and other deadly elements causing damage to public health in four city corporations -- DSCC, DNCC, Gazipur and Narayanganj.

Contacted, DSCC Chief Executive Officer Khan Mohammad Bilal said they sprayed water twice a day at their project sites. "We request other development organisations to do that too."

Asked about the court order, he said they were doing their best to prevent air pollution.

His counterpart in the DNCC Moshabul Islam said they had just two lorries to spray water and that another would be added soon. "But this is not enough to fight dust."

But the DNCC has undertaken tree plantation projects to reduce the capital's air pollution, he added.

Dhaka's dust problem, which leads to air pollution, is not new.

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## Myanmar int'l commission

FROM PAGE 1

directly with the Rohingyas who fled persecution in Myanmar and have been staying in Bangladesh illegally. They also held a closed-door meeting.

The delegation consists of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Chairman U Win Mra, Core Member and Founder of Religions for Peace in Myanmar U Aye Lwin and former Lebanese minister of culture and UN Special Advisor to Secretary-General Ghassan Salame. They arrived in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The delegation arrived at the Balukhali Rohingya slum in the morning. They spoke with the Rohingyas there and held a closed-door meeting with them. Later, they left for Leda unregistered slum and spoke with the Rohingyas who recently took shelter there.

The members would visit Kutupalong unregistered Rohingya slum today and speak with the Rohingyas there, said sources in the International Organisation for Migration.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner Md Ali Hossain said the delegation would meet him at his office today after visiting the Kutupalong Rohingya slum.

The members would then return to Dhaka.

During the closed-door meeting with

the Rohingyas in a shanty at Balukhali slum, the members wanted to know why the Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh, said sources.

They spoke with 19 Rohingyas there.

Asked what the members wanted to know, the Rohingyas said the delegation enquired about the torture and repression on them in Myanmar, and that they described all in details.

The members also held a closed-door meeting with the leaders of Leda Rohingya Slum Management Committee at the IOM office inside the slum, said Committee President Dudu Miah and General Secretary Amir Hossain.

After the meeting, Dudu Miah told journalists that the delegation wanted to know how many Rohingyas had fled Myanmar since October last year and taken shelter in the slum.

The members did not speak with journalists.

The delegation is on a visit to know the latest situation of around 65,000 newly-arrived Rohingyas in Bangladesh.

They would hold a meeting with Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali upon their return to Dhaka.

The delegation would also hold talks with the representatives of various international organisations. Before leaving Dhaka on February 1, they would join a

views-exchange meeting to be organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), said IOM sources.

Sources said the delegation would submit an evaluation report on their Bangladesh visit to the office of Kofi Annan-led Commission.

The Myanmar army started a crackdown on the Rohingyas after a terrorist attack on a border outpost in Rakhine state in October last year.

The Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, also known as Rakhine Commission, was formed to find lasting solutions to the complex and delicate issues in the Rakhine State.

The nine-member commission is led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It is composed of six Myanmar citizens and three foreign experts.

The commission will examine international aspects of the situation, and after consultations, it will submit its findings and recommendations to the government of Myanmar through State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in the second half of 2017.

According to UN estimate, some 66,000 newly-arrived Rohingyas took shelter in Cox's Bazar. Besides, there are about 32,000 Rohingyas living in two refugee camps for over two decades.

## EC must be competent

FROM PAGE 1

He would also suggest that the committee pick those who were free from controversy in their careers and had "no political affiliation even in student life".

Another former election commissioner, M Sakhawat Hussain, said the committee's initiative to hold talks with civil society members would be fruitful if it translates their suggestions into action.

Sakhawat said he would submit a written proposal to the committee. "I will write about my personal experience as well as the theoretical aspects."

At its first meeting on Saturday, the search committee had decided to sit with 12 eminent personalities of the country.

Earlier on January 25, President Abdul Hamid formed the six-member search committee, headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, after holding a series of talks with 31 political parties to constitute the next EC.

The tenure of the incumbent commission expires next month.

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He further said the committee could seek opinions of general people on EC formation and devise a mechanism in this regard.

Ahmed said he would also give suggestions on picking honest and competent people for the posts of commissioner.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Sushasoner Jonno Nagarik, said he would also submit a written proposal to the committee, mentioning how the election commissioners could be chosen in a transparent manner.

The committee's initiative is positive but such initiatives had turned out to be "eyewash" in the past, he said.

All stakeholders gave their opinions to the parliamentary committee before the 15th amendment to the constitution was made in 2011. But those suggestions were not considered, noted Badiul.

"We will give proposals but I don't know whether those would be taken into consideration."

Eminent educationist Prof Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque said the main problem in constituting a neutral EC

is division among political parties.

"How is it possible to form an acceptable Election Commission when political parties take rigid stances? ... This is an issue of acceptance."

"We don't know whether all the political parties will accept the Election Commission to be formed following the search committee's recommendations," he said, adding that he would give some specific suggestions for constituting an EC acceptable to all.

SMA Fayed, former vice chancellor of Dhaka University, said, "Everybody wants a free and fair Election Commission. I want people with clean image for the Election Commission."

Former IGP Nurul Huda said those who worked for big organisations and know the electoral laws well would be better choices for the posts of election commissioners.

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