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Cancer: Not just a rich man's disease

"Earlier, if anyone needed chemotherapy, they could get a date within one or two days. But now, a patient needs to wait a minimum of seven days to even a month.

Same thing happens for surgical procedure," he says.

According to NICRH, every day, around 70 to 80 outdoor patients receive chemotherapy, while on average, 90 patients receive radiotherapy. But the hospital doesn't have the manpower to manage this onrush of outdoor patients.

The condition is worse in the institute's paediatric haematology and oncology department, where a substantial majority of the children come with leukaemia (haematological cancer). The NICRH only has four beds for them. Dhaka Medical College Hospital's department of paediatric haematology and oncology, has 29 beds for children.

"But we cannot house them all within our departments; many take

treatment in other wards or beds. And you will be astonished to hear that this department runs with seven persons in total, only two of whom are consultants. The condition of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) or Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC) is also not satisfactory," says Professor Dr A K M Amirul Morshed Khasru, the head of the paediatric haematology and oncology department at DMCH.

Although cancer in children is curable, in Bangladesh, 40 percent of children drop out before their treatment is completed. According to a study conducted by Professor Dr Khasru, economic feasibility is a major cause;



PHOTOS: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

however, parents' firm belief that cancer is not curable and their inability to provide sufficient support to their child during the period of treatment also act as hindrances to getting them the treatment they need.

According to experts, time has come to focus to ensuring quality treatment for cancer, outside of the capital. Professor Dr Ruskin believes that we should

establish eight small cancer institutions in the eight divisions, each with an operation theatre, a linear accelerator machine, at least a hundred beds and other necessary resources.

Prevention is ultimately better than cure. If people are better aware of cancer and how to detect it in its early stages it can, in time, erase the myth that cancer is an incurable disease.

Documenting the abuse

Testimonies gathered by the UN, various non-governmental organisations, and foreign government fact-finding teams in Bangladesh are being used to get legal justice for the Rohingya

MALIHA KHAN



PHOTO: AFP

A Rohingya refugee speaks on-camera to a volunteer on July 21 at Balukhali camp, in Ukhaia, to give an account of alleged abuses by Myanmar soldiers before she fled to Bangladesh.

There has been no dearth of investigation teams and reports into the events that transpired in Myanmar. The scale of the horrors in Rakhine has been such that the UN, national and international rights groups, experts sent by foreign governments, and the Rohingya themselves, have been working to document those killed, injured, raped, and the property destroyed, through the testimonies of survivors.

Internal investigations by the Myanmar government have lacked "independence, impartiality and rigor", according to chair of the UN international fact-finding mission Marzuki Darusman, and international access to northern Rakhine has long been curtailed. The results of a US government investigation last month into the "well-planned and coordinated" military operations against the Rohingya community, for instance, are potentially going to be used as the basis for further sanctions and other punitive action against the Myanmar authorities. Political sanctions aside, The Hague seems to be the only legal recourse left for

the Rohingya as they look to the international community for justice.

Last month, the UN released a 440-page report detailing the findings of its independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar (though it was denied access there). Through refugees' accounts and satellite imagery, it documented 392 villages which were partially

perpetrators were overwhelmingly the Tatmadaw, the Myanmar armed forces under commander-in-chief Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing, and particularly the 33rd and 99th Light Infantry Divisions. The report recommended that Hlaing and other top generals be prosecuted in an international court or a special tribunal on charges of

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or completely destroyed -- 70 percent of which were in Maungdaw township, where the majority of the Rohingya in northern Rakhine live. As many as 80 percent of the rape survivors interviewed were gang raped, by up to 10 perpetrators at a time. Thousands were systematically slaughtered.

According to the report, the

genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, stating that the Myanmar military acted with "genocidal intent".

Gathering testimonies

National rights groups have been doing their part in documenting the atrocities and violence suffered by the Rohingya.

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