



'...He died in my arms'

MUNTAKIM SAAD

"Fire!", "Leave immediately!" -- such screams were ricocheting off the walls and echoing down the corridors of the children's ward at Shaheed

Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, as frenzied patients started running for safety, moments after Thursday's fire broke out at the hospital.

On the second floor of the ward, Tara Miah and Salma Begum were sitting beside their seven-month-old son Tariqul, who was lying on a bed with an oxygen mask on and saline drip injected into his hand. Soon, a plume of smoke engulfed the entire ward.

And then, electricity went off. Panicked and confused, Tara Miah took off the oxygen mask from his son's face and took him in his arms.

It took the family around 30 minutes to get out of the hospital amid the chaos. By the time they reached a private hospital opposite to Suhrawardy hospital, the baby was no more.

"I couldn't save my son... perhaps, he died in my arms," said a sobbing Tara Miah yesterday.

"There was chaos everywhere... I lost track of my mother-in-law on the way. I could not even take any of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Health services at Suhrawardy hospital slowly but surely returning back to normalcy after Thursday's fire. With cleaning work going on in many wards such as medicine ward (female), *bottom left*, hospital authorities had to set up temporary booth in front of the emergency ward to readmit patients yesterday, *top*. A completely burnt storeroom on the ground floor, *bottom right*.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Suhrawardy hospital resuming services

Around 700 patients readmitted; it's a lesson for all, says health minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Walls scorched black, beds gutted and fan blades bent due to heat -- such was the scene at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital yesterday, following Thursday's fire.

With its four wards completely gutted, the hospital has partially reopened while many patients, who were evacuated and shifted to other hospitals, have started to come back.

However, the hospital was not admitting any child patient as the children's ward was badly damaged. Women's ward was also severely affected by the fire.

From the ground floor's storeroom to the second floor's children's ward, on the same side, was completely gutted.

Hospital sources said as of yesterday, Intensive Care Unit, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, operation theatre, emergency unit, and some other units were fully operational.

Around 1,200 patients, including those at ICU and surgery ward, had to be evacuated. The health and home ministries formed two committees to investigate whether short-circuit caused the fire.

Visiting the hospital around 11am yesterday, it was seen that many patients were returning to the hospital from DMCH, Nitor and other hospitals. Some came in ambulances, some in auto-rickshaws and rickshaws, depending on distance.

"I took my father to DMCH yesterday [Thursday]. But the doctors there said we can go back to Suhrawardy hospital," Rakibul Islam of Barishal told this correspondent.

A total of 1,174 patients -- 526 male, 576 female and 72 children -- were shifted to other government hospitals on Thursday night, said Suhrawardy hospital's Director Prof Uttam Kumar Barua.

Four wards out of 13, and a burn unit, will remain closed for investigation, he said.

"The emergency ward reopened last night [Thursday] and some others went on operation today [yesterday]. We hope all the wards except for those four affected will be able to resume normal function from tomorrow [today]," he added.

Many important files containing patients' history were either burnt or lost due to the fire. Patients' attendants were seen running around, looking for those.

Till last evening, around 700 patients returned to the hospital and resumed treatment.

Meanwhile stressing the need for improving fire fighting capabilities at all government hospitals, Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the fire incident at Suhrawardy hospital is a lesson for all concerned.

The minister said this while addressing a press briefing at his Baridhara residence.

He said electrical connections and damaged sections of the hospital will be examined to find the reason behind the accident.

Talking to reporters at the hospital, AKM Shakil Newaz,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Looting was the motive

Police claim about murder of former Eden College principal; arrest two

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two house helps planned the killing of former Eden College principal Mahfuza Chowdhury Parvin in her flat to loot cash and gold ornaments, police said yesterday.

Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner (Ramna division) of DMP, made the disclosure yesterday, after arrest of two accused in the murder case.

House help Swapna alias Rita, 35, was arrested from Netrokona district and Runu alias 'Rakiber Ma' -- who liaised the recruitment of housemaids to the family -- was held from Mirpur area yesterday, he told reporters at a press briefing at New Market Police Station.

Another housemaid Ruma alias Reshma, 30, was still on the run, he said.

The DC said both housemaids provided false personal details to be appointed in Mahfuza's house. They strangled her on February 10 and Ruma stole the victim's cell phone and a diary which contained their photographs and other details.

More details may come to light upon further investigation, he said.

Sazzad Ibna Rayhan, assistant commissioner of New Market zone police, who is coordinating the investigation, said they are carrying out raids in and outside Dhaka to arrest Ruma.

Victim's husband Ismat Quadir Gama filed a case with New Market Police Station against the three on Sunday.

In the case statement, Gama mentioned that the killers made away with Tk 50,000 and 20 tola of gold ornaments, worth around Tk 10 lakh, after the killing.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

HEALTH SECURITY

PM for predictable financing in developing countries

UNB, Munich

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday emphasised the importance of predictable financing for health security initiatives in developing countries.

"Often, WHO (World Health Organization) had been caught wrong-footed due to the enormity of crises, dearth of resources and its capacity. So, predictable financing for health security initiatives in developing countries and LDCs is an urgent need," she said.

The prime minister made the call while speaking at the health security roundtable titled "Health in Crisis - WHO Cares", hosted by Munich Security Conference (MSC), Centre for Strategies and International Studies, and WHO at Hotel Bayerischer Hof in Munich, Germany.

"Ensuring global public health security is also a global responsibility. As a global organisation, WHO needs to maintain the lead to engage the nations on board," Sheikh Hasina added.

She said the emergence of contagious diseases like Ebola, cholera and tuberculosis globally reveal that the existing health system needs to be upgraded and transformed.

Hasina said global health is multidimen-

sional -- spreading over boundaries -- and requires sustained high-level commitment and closer international cooperation. "We need to work collectively. Advanced technology and innovation have provided us with opportunities to work on health security, particularly for the vulnerable sections of our society," she said.

"Despite technological advancement in health sector, people still suffer from diseases. It's unfortunate that we're failing to ensure appropriate healthcare for our people while right to health is the fundamental premise as described in SDG-3," she said.

About Bangladesh, she said the government is pursuing consistent policies and providing financial support for the development of health security in the country.

"We saw remarkable improvements in health sector alongside our socioeconomic development. Our efforts have made us a role model of 'good health at low cost'."

She said her government has already integrated health-related SDG targets into its development plans. "Vision 2021" and "Vision 2041" have given top priority to ensure health security in Bangladesh.

"As per our election manifesto 2018, we are planning to expand the universal health

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

VIOLENCE AGAINST MINORITIES

Total number fell in 3yrs; but rape, murder increased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incidents of violence against religious minority communities in the country came down in the last three years, but serious crimes like murder and rape saw an uptick, according to a recent non-government report.

In 2016, the minority communities faced at least 1,471 incidents of violence, including murder, rape and assault, but it came down to 806 last year. In 2017, the total instances of violence was 1,004, said the report.

However, the number of murder and rape -- two of the worst forms of violence -- increased. Last year, more than 90 minorities were killed, which was 71 three years ago [in 2016]. Some 48 rape incidents, including 16 gang rapes took place last year, which was 32 three years ago.

Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, a representative body of religious minority communities, prepared the report based on news published in different national dailies and information provided by their activists.

The findings were unveiled at a press conference organised by the Oikya Parishad at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the capital yesterday.

According to the report, the number of assaults, grabbing of property [house or land], death threats, extortion and idol vandalism declined in the last three years.

At least 875 people of the minority communities faced physical attack in 2016, but the number came down to almost half (447) last year.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

More dangerous than autocrat

Says BNP's Moyeen Khan about govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has imposed an "autocratic rule" on the country in the name of democracy, alleged BNP standing committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday.

"The government has established an unwritten one-party rule Baksal. They pretend to be democratic and often talk about democracy," he said.

The senior BNP leader was addressing a human chain formed by Jatiyatbadi Mahila Dal in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club, demanding release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The government has been branded as "neo autocrat" by a German-based research institution, said Moyeen Khan, adding that the country's people have to be aware of it.

He said a government

SEE PAGE 5 COL 8

Boimela in full bloom

2,150 books arrive in first half of the fair

SAYYED MOHMUD ULLAH

The Amar Ekushey Grantha Mela saw a huge gathering of booklovers yesterday, on the weekend following two lively days -- Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day.

Thousands of people gathered at the fair grounds on Bangla Academy premises and adjoining Suhrawardy Uddyan, after waiting in long queues from dawn to dusk.

"I am wearing a garland and a flower crown today as well, because I am still enjoying the festivity with my friend. I bought some poetry books today," said Mim Jahan Tonni, a student of DU's international relations department.

Meanwhile, with the arrival of 272 new books yesterday, so far a total of 2,150 new titles have hit the stalls in the first half of the month-long fair, according to Bangla Academy.

Publishers also expressed their satisfaction over good sale for last couple of days including yesterday.

"New books on poetry are in high demand, while both the new and old novels of some prominent writers including Humayun Ahmed, Zafar Iqbal, Imdadul Haque Milon and Anisul Hoque also saw good selling," said Forhad Hossain, a stall attendant of Mawla Brothers publications.

In the morning, Bangla Academy arranged its weekly special schedule for

children -- "Shishu Prahar" -- that continued from 10am to 1pm.

The sellers were seen super busy managing a huge number of children and their parents, looking to buy books at Suhrawardy Uddyan.

"It becomes too difficult for us to manage the increasing number of children at such a small place of children's corner; authorities should allocate more space for us in future," said Rayhan Siraji, a salesman at Prasiddha.

Fair sources said at least 300 new books for the children have already been published at the fair this year so far.

Dewan Aziz, publisher of Pragati prokashoni, told The Daily Star that they have already published 30 new books on children -- both fiction and educational.

Aklima Jahan, mother of fifth-grader Oporna, said they have bought some books of prominent children's writers including Selina Hossain and Ali Emam.

"My daughter likes to read ghost stories, but I am trying to convince her to read some other books, as she is growing up," she added.

Earlier at 10am, children participated at a music competition held at the main stage on the Bangla Academy premises. The announcement of results and prize-giving ceremony of the competition will be held on February 22, said a press release.



THE WEEKEND CROWD ... The book fair sees a big rush of attendees yesterday, many of them bringing their children along to enjoy "Shishu Prahar" -- a special segment dedicated to the little ones.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS