



250-bed Bagerhat Sadar Hospital

PHOTO: STAR

# Hospital handover delayed over blame game

The state-run hospital yet to become operational due to bureaucratic tangles

PARTHA CHAKRABORTY, Bagerhat

A blame game over an outstanding electricity bill of over Tk 11 lakh is now blocking operation of the newly constructed building of the state-run hospital in Bagerhat. The building, contains 150 beds, was completed in December 2017 as an extension of the Bagerhat Sadar Hospital. The Public Works Department (PWD) claims the health department of the district had not cleared the electricity bills since completion of the building and thus it could not be handed over. According to Bagerhat PWD, a bill of Tk 11 lakh and 30,000 thousand is to be paid by Bagerhat Civil Surgeon Dr GKM Shamsuzzaman. "The electricity bills are pending against the name of the civil surgeon. We are trying to resolve the issue as early as possible," Mobarak Hossain, executive engineer at Bagerhat PWD said, adding that the construction cost of the building was Tk 33 crore. "It was completed one-and-a-half years

ago but the health department is not taking over the building. The contractor did clear the temporary metre bills upon finishing the construction work." Palash Kumar, executive engineer of West Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd, echoed him. "A series of letters were exchanged between PWD and Bagerhat Health Department regarding the outstanding bills. PWD had asked the civil surgeon to take over the building but he did not comply stating different reasons," said Palash Kumar. When asked about the matter, Bagerhat Civil Surgeon Dr GKM Shamsuzzaman said he was not responsible for the deadlock. "I have not yet received the building. How can the bills be made in my name?" he said, adding, "I am not capable of paying that sum. The matter has been informed to the Directorate General of Health Services." About 17 lakh people in nine upazilas of the district take treatment from the hospital. Construction of the new building started in June 2013 to upgrade the hospital from 100 beds to 250 beds under a project titled

'Health Population and Nutrition Centre Development.' Earlier, it was upgraded from 50 to 100 beds in 1997. But now the patients are being deprived of the services despite completion of the new building. Tandra Sikder, who came to the hospital for treatment, told this correspondent, "The building was completed in 2017 but has not been inaugurated till date. We want the authorities to launch its operations as soon as possible. "It will upgrade the quality of overall health service in the district," she added. Another patient Dipankar Mondol said, "We wanted a 250-bed hospital. Although the construction was completed over a year ago, we are not getting the service due to bureaucratic issues. We need to travel to Khulna for better treatment." Earlier, Bagerhat PWD asked the health department of the district to receive the building, but the latter refused to take it showing some faults of the building.

# Bid to grab property worth Tk 1 crore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An influential businessman is allegedly trying to grab a shop of a Hindu person in Kalmakanda upazila of Netrakona. The shop is built on 8.50-decimals of land worth Tk 1 crore. Sukumar Chandra Saha, owner of the shop, alleged that he rented out his shop at Kalmakanda Bazar to one Jahirul Islam Mustafa on one year agreement. The tenure has expired recently, but Mustafa is yet to hand over the shop to him. "I urged Mustafa to remain vacant the shop but he raised false claims and forcibly has been staying at the shop still now," said Sukumar. "Moreover Mustafa filed a case against me claiming that I took Tk five lakh from him in advance to rent out the shop for 10 years again but no such agreement was done," said, Sukumar, adding that Mustafa's claim is totally false. An arbitration was held in this regard at Kalmakanda Government High School on Thursday and local elites including former Awami League lawmaker Chhabi Biswas was present there, said Sultan Giasuddin Ahmed, former commander of Muktiyoddha Sangsad Kalmakanda upazila unit. But Mustafa did not attend the arbitration, said Sultan, adding that Mustafa is trying to grab the land. Sujon Saha, secretary of Kalmakanda Bazar Traders Association, said they urged Msutafa to hand over the shop to its owner but he did not do it yet. Now it is clear that he is trying to grab the shop on 8.50-decimals of land worth Tk one crore, alleged Sujon. Contacted, Mustafa said he has been continuing his business at the shop for last 29 years on monthly rent basis and he took one year more time last year with a monthly rent of Tk 16,000. "Some five months ago, I made a verbal contract with Sukumar for a 10-year term, finalising Tk 40 lakh as deposit money and I have already handed him Tk 5 lakh in advance and monthly rent was fixed at Tk 20,000," said Mustafa. "But after taking the advance money, Sukumar initiated to rent out the shop to others refusing the contract with me and I had to move to a court in favour of my contract," he said.

# STALKED BY TEENAGER Girl 'takes own life'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A schoolgirl allegedly killed herself after being stalked by a teenage boy in Sarishabari upazila of the district on Monday night. The 12-year-old victim, Antora Saha, daughter of Narayan Chandra Saha of Saincharpar village in the upazila, was a Class VII student at local school. Deceased's family members alleged that a 16-year-old boy, also a Class X student, of the area used to stalk the girl often on her way to and from school. Quoting the victim's family members, police said the alleged stalker intercepted the girl while she was returning home from her coaching centre around 7:00pm on Monday and gave her indecent proposal that left her mentally disturbed. After returning home she went to her room and hanged herself from the ceiling fan around 8:30pm, police said. Victim's father filed a case with Sarishabari Police Station accusing the boy yesterday afternoon.



Students of Tepibari High School in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila yesterday show red cards to child marriage, dowry, stalking and drug abuse. Protibha Chhatra Sangathan, a local voluntary organisation, and local police jointly organised the programme.

PHOTO: STAR



## BANGLADESH NATIONAL NUTRITION COUNCIL (BNNC) National Nutrition Week 23<sup>rd</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> April

**Nutrition - an overall development prerequisite for social and economic advancement**

**Joint commitment statement to accelerate reduction of undernutrition in Bangladesh**

Good nutrition is crucial for survival, growth, and development. Chronic malnutrition, or stunting (being too short for one's age) in early childhood results in diminished brain development, putting children at a disadvantage for the rest of their lives. They perform poorly in school, and may be less productive and earn less as adults. Undernutrition is the underlying cause for more than 50% of child deaths, and undernourished children face a higher risk of disease as adults. Therefore, nutrition is strongly linked to a nation's development.

The 1972 Constitution of Bangladesh states that access to adequate nutrition is a 'human right'. To emphasize and ensure adequate nutrition, the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman brought to life the Bangladesh National Nutrition Council (BNNC) to address undernutrition in the country through a multi-sectoral approach on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April in 1975.

In the past three decades, Bangladesh has made considerable progress on tackling undernutrition. Stunting has almost halved from over 60% in the mid-90s to 36% in 2017. Bangladesh was one of the first countries globally to achieve the MDGs of reducing child mortality and nutrition. While this is highly encouraging, one in three children, or around 6.4 million Bangladeshi children still suffer from stunting, with marked regional disparities. Additionally, there is poor diversity of diets, micronutrient deficiencies are still common, with half of pre-school aged children and two-fifths of ever-married women anemic. The country's emerging problems of overweight and obesity in adults thereby also require urgent attention. Among ever-married women, overweight has increased from 9% in 2004 to 24% in 2014. Undernutrition alone costs Bangladesh more than USD one billion in lost productivity on a yearly basis.

To address the basic and underlying causes of malnutrition, there is a need to strengthen the implementation of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. Special attention should be given to adolescent and maternal nutrition with a focus addressing nutrition in the first 1000 days. To tackle undernutrition with equity, mainstreaming nutrition into food systems and intensifying efforts to reduce vulnerability by linking with social protection and resilience

programmes are critical. Adequate integration of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and food safety initiatives and addressing the impacts of climate change are essential.

Stunting is a key indicator of child development and future human capital. Further improvement in nutrition is crucial for realizing Bangladesh's aspiration to attain its middle-income status. To accelerate the attainment of the SDG target on nutrition, emphasizing the most vulnerable, Her Excellency Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has launched several multisectoral policies and strategies, such as i) the Second National Plan of Action on Nutrition (NPAN2) 2016-2025; ii) the Second Country Investment Plan (CIP2) for nutrition-sensitive food systems (2016-2020); and iii) the National Social Security Strategy (NSSS). To ensure no child and woman is deprived of nutrition services, the National Nutrition Services Operational Plan (NNS-OP) has also been developed. These initiatives unite 22 ministries and public agencies for a multi-sectoral response.

On the auspicious occasion of the National Nutrition Week 23-29 April 2019, the BNNC and Development Partners jointly reaffirm their commitment to collective action to accelerate the reduction of malnutrition in Bangladesh and underscore the following priorities for the nutrition sector:

1. Ensure adequate and timely access to, and tracking of GOB financing, aiming for at least a 20% budget increase for the nutrition sector in the next 3 years;
2. Enhance the access and coverage of NNS with a focus on improving the quality of nutrition services and counselling and ensure timely supply of essential nutrition commodities like vitamin A capsules;
3. Prioritize a minimum package of multisectoral interventions for nutrition and support institutional capacity across ministries and public agencies to implement it;
4. Promote the diversity and quality of diets to enhance nutrition outcomes
5. Strengthen BNNC's capacity on coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and research components of the NPAN2 with enhanced technical and human resources;
6. Expedite recruitment of District Nutrition Officers in all 64 districts;
7. Support nutrition-related research to inform policy, strengthen evidence-based decision making and accountability through data driven advocacy including with involvement of the civil society and private sector under SUN;

#Unite4Nutrition

