

KUWAIT-BANGLADESH FRIENDSHIP GOVT HOSPITAL

Potential unfulfilled in 18 years

|| MD FOISAL AHMED ||



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

The hospital is seven-storied, well-furnished and is the only government facility in a 10-kilometre radius. It does not have the problem most hospitals do -- space shortage. Yet, it has failed to serve residents of Dhaka in 18 years since inauguration.

Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital, situated near Rajuk Uttara Model College in Sector 6, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2001. In 1992, the Kuwait government and a philanthropist organisation of that country gave \$2 million to build the 250-bed facility, especially for the poor. The construction finished in 1996, but the inauguration was pushed back five years apparently due to a legal battle with its construction firm.

A year after opening, the government leased the hospital out to a private organisation, which started running it under the name of American Super Specialised Hospital.

But in the following seven years, the organisation failed to make the hospital fully operational, only running services at a limited scale for outpatients.

In 2009, a newly-formed Awami League government sued the organisation for taking over the government hospital unlawfully, said the hospital's former director, Prof Dr Md Amirul Hassan. After a six-year court battle, the government won the case and got custody of

the hospital in 2015.

The same year, it started running the hospital on its own, still on a small scale, and appointed a few doctors, nurses and employees from the National Tuberculosis Control Programme under the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), but failed to launch the hospital to its potential.

In June 2016, the hospital was handed over to Kurmitola General Hospital (KGH).

Brig Gen Aminul Islam, who was then director of KGH and the hospital, said, "When I took over the hospital, it was in a poor state. In my tenure, many doctors and nurses were appointed to the hospital. I also ensured uninterrupted power supply, set up a deep tube-well for drinking water, and built some infrastructure."

After the better part of two decades since its inception, the hospital finally got its own director in November 2018.

One month later, the newly-appointed director, Prof Amirul Hassan, opened indoor services for the first time and decided to admit patients to 100 beds. However, logistical issues continue to hinder smooth operations. With limited resources, it offers only a few pathological tests like blood and urine tests. The radiology facility -- where X-rays are done -- is in a bad shape, too.

Manpower crisis has always been a feature of the hospital. Most of its rooms remain locked as a result, said Prof

Amirul, talking to The Daily Star recently.

"We don't have the problem of space, while most hospitals in our country have to keep patients on floors and corridors."

Currently, some 2,200 patients receive treatment at the outdoor services daily, but the indoor services are still limited to 100 beds, he said.

Prof Amirul increased the numbers of doctors and nurses to 63 and 37 respectively, but there is only one administrative officer and one superintendent.

Asked how many employees the hospital needs to run at full capacity, he said there is no final organogram yet, and hence the hospital cannot appoint anyone based on its requirements. "There are a few employees on daily wages."

Dr Soheli Parvin, one of the two consultants at the radiology department, said, "There is no technician or computer operator at the department. We are having to do their jobs as well."

Nursing supervisor Shamima Akter said it is difficult to serve so many patients with only 37 nurses in a 100-bed hospital. "It will be harder if all 250 beds open."

Md Alimuzzaman, the lone administrative officer, said that although the hospital is under the custody of DGHS, it is not financially independent yet.

It does not have a financial code under which the government directly channels funds to a state-run hospital,

said Prof Dr Abul Kalam Azad, director general of DGHS. "So, it gets money from Kurmitola General Hospital. Once the hospital has its code, there will be a final organogram and it will receive funds."

Alimuzzaman said the initial organogram was endorsed by the public administration ministry, but it is awaiting the final approval by the finance ministry.

The organogram would specify how many doctors, nurses and employees the hospital will need and how many wards or departments it will have, he said. "Funding depends on the code but it is not certain when the finance ministry would endorse it."

Former director Prof Amirul said, "A big fund is required to make the hospital fully functioning. In 2018-2019, this hospital's allocation came from Kurmitola General Hospital."

Prof Amirul was replaced by Dr Md Shahjan as the hospital director on June 3.

Asked about his plan, the new director said his focus is on getting the organogram of 218 employees and the financial code approved.

"The doctors and nurses here are working hard, but they are on deputation. Without a permanent workforce, a hospital cannot be made fully operational," Dr Shahjan said.

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Aggrieved JCD leaders besiege BNP office again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Agitated leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) staged a demonstration for two hours in front of BNP's central office yesterday, demanding withdrawal of age limit and expulsion order against 12 leaders.

Over a hundred protesters of JCD, in a procession from Kakrail, assembled near BNP office's front gate around 11:30am with an aim to change the schedule for the council of JCD, the student wing of BNP.

At one stage, they cut off the power connection to the party office and obstructed all from entering it till 1:30pm.

They also barred ex-JCD leader and BNP organising secretary Fazlul Haque Milon from going to the office and beat up a JCD leader as he tried to defy them.

Among those inside the office were party leaders Khairul Kabir Khokan, Shaheed Uddin Chowdhury Annie, and Amirul Islam Khan Alim.

This happened a day after the election committee of Chhatra Dal declared a fresh council on July 15 to include new leadership in the ranks.

BNP has stripped 12 JCD leaders of membership on accusations of breaching the organisational code of conduct on this issue.

It all started after the party dissolved JCD's existing committee and included a new age ceiling, which triggered protests among post holders.

Talking to reporters after their demo, ex-joint general secretary of the dissolved JCD committee, Farroque Munna, said they will continue their protests until their demands for withdrawal of age limit, expulsion order against 12 leaders and rescheduling of the council date are met.

He said they will also stage a similar protest today in front of the BNP office.



"We love Chhatra Dal, and we believe our leaders will resolve the problem through discussions with us."

While some leaders of the demonstrating JCD group were going to Kakrail intersection from Nayapaltan, a few crude bombs were thrown by miscreants from behind. No one was injured in the blasts, however.

Earlier in the morning, another group of JCD leaders and activists brought out a procession at Nayapaltan -- welcoming the announcement of holding the student body's council on July 15.

Later, they along with leaders and activists of different associate bodies of BNP took position inside the office to resist any untoward incident by the demonstrators.

JCD's last committee was formed on October 14, 2014 with Rajib Ahsan as its president and Akramul Hasan as general secretary, and it was dissolved on June 3.

A BNP press release, signed by Rizvi on June 3, said candidates planning to vie for various posts will have to be primary members, students of any educational institution in Bangladesh, and must have passed SSC and equivalent examinations either in 2000 or later -- prompting demonstrations by a group of leaders seeking the withdrawal of age limit.

Meanwhile, the draft voter list of JCD was published yesterday.



Scuffle in front of BNP's central office in Nayapaltan yesterday. Top, an unexploded crude bomb in the area.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DHAKA TODAY

implicit
Joya Shahrin Huq
Exhibition Opening Ceremony, 22 June 2019, 7:00pm
On view: 22 June - 19 July 2019, 10:30 - 9pm
Kalaandaz, 1111 Chhatra Dal (Sector 6) Mohammodpur Dhaka-1207. Facebook: Kalaandaz11

ART EXHIBITION
Implicit
Artist: Joya Shahrin Huq
Venue: Kala Kendra, Mohammadpur
Time: 4:30pm

THEATRE
Play: Rarang

Troupe: Aranyak Nattiyadal
Venue: National Theatre Hall Auditorium, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy
Time: 7pm

PHOTO EXHIBITION
Brattayajan - The Lower Depths
Venue: Drik Gallery
Time: 3pm

ART EXHIBITION
Grits and Grains by Iqbal Bahar Chy
Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka
Time: 3pm

Cabinet secy dismisses TIB report

Bss, Dhaka

The cabinet secretary yesterday dismissed a Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) report that claimed senior government officials are being promoted on the basis of political consideration.

He was briefing journalists after a cabinet meeting at the secretariat, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

"I have not yet seen the TIB report. Like you (journalists), I only know what came in the news. But, the matter is not exactly the same as stated by TIB in a wholesale manner," said Mohammad Shafiqul Alam.

About the TIB claim that wealth reports were not submitted by government officials every five years, he said, "We have submitted the reports. It is a rule for government officials to submit wealth reports every five years."

Replying to a question, Alam said the number of contractual appointments is very few at this moment.

The cabinet also congratulated Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as Bangladesh has become the fastest GDP growth-achieving country among 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific, the cabinet secretary said.

The meeting also gave final approval to the draft of the Bangladesh Flag Vessel (Protection) Act, 2019; Bangladesh Krira Shikkhya Protishtan Ain, 2019; and International Mother Language Medal Policy, 2019," he said.

The cabinet was also informed of the visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Japan from May 28 to May 30, and to Saudi Arabia from May 31 to June 3, Shafiqul added.

Legitimising black money failed to yield any benefit in the past: Inu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers from treasury and opposition benches yesterday expressed dissatisfaction over slow implementation rate of development programmes, disorder in the banking sector, and keeping scope for legitimising undisclosed money.

While taking part in a general discussion on the proposed budget for 2019-20 fiscal, they also demanded for review of decision to allow whitening black money, supplementary duty tax on phone calls and import duty on smartphones.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu demanded scrapping of scope for whitening black money as the decision was "against the spirit of the constitution and unethical". Such practice failed to yield any benefit in the past, he said.

He also demanded forming a commission on banking sector for bringing order in the sector. "Initiative for amending laws related to banks and merging of banks is immediately needed," he said.

"Bangladesh Bank has legal

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ROHINGYA CRISIS No bold decision from UN: Momen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

United Nations Security Council was not able to take any bold decision, or adapt a resolution on the Rohingya issue due to lack of consensus among permanent members, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen informed the parliament yesterday.

He also said that UN bodies and other non-governmental organisations not being allowed into Northern Rakhine is a big hurdle for creating a conducive situation for Rohingya repatriation. As a result, the refugees are not interested to return.

Momen said there are strong diplomatic efforts for resolving Rohingya crisis at United Nations Security Council, UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council, but UNSC was unable to take steps due to lack of consensus.

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'Stop rape of children' Pallabi residents urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Locals, including school-goers, yesterday at a protest rally in the capital's Pallabi urged the government to stop incidents of child rape by taking prompt actions.

They took to the streets for about an hour in the morning and vowed that alongside government initiatives, they would mobilise community members against such violent acts.

Breaking the Silence, an organisation working for child rights, and Naripokkho in association with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) arranged the rally as part of a community-level campaign, in front of a local shopping complex.

Some 279 children were raped since January this year. Twelve were murdered after rape, and there were 32 rape attempts, according to data provided by the organisers. Furthermore, 37 children were sexually harassed, they said.

In contrast, 356 children were raped last year, and 22 died. There were 53 rape attempts, they added.

Mamota, a local school student, said, "I don't want any child to become a victim of torture and rape."

Fazlul Haque, a local child rights activist, claimed the government did not take a hard stance despite children getting killed after being raped across the country.

Praising organisers for arranging the rally, Abu Sayeed Panna, secretary of local ward-5 of Dhaka North City Corporation, said local government authorities in the area have been vigilant about child rape incidents.

He said they regularly hold meetings and try to raise awareness among community members about child rape and other violent incidents against children.

Rina Roy, a director of MJE, said they hope that the area will be free of child rape with due initiatives taken by local government authorities. She urged community members to work together to this end.

Country facing drug problem due to geographical position

Home minister tells House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday informed the parliament that law enforcement agencies lodged 1,19,878 cases against 1,61,323 drug traders in 2018.

A total of 6,156 cases against 6,671 drug traders were lodged between January to May this year, the minister said while answering a query of Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque.

He said that illegal drugs entered Bangladesh from India and Myanmar. "Although Bangladesh is not a narcotics-producing country, due to its geographical location Bangladesh is now facing drug problems," he said.

He said yaba -- the much-talked-about drugs in recent times -- is coming from Myanmar through the Naf river, while cannabis, phensidyl, heroine and injectable drugs are coming from India.

"To prevent entry of yaba in Bangladesh, the government has created a temporary circle of Narcotics Control Department comprising nine officials. Besides, an anti-narcotics team of 19 officials, including 10 battalion Ansars, are working in Cox's Bazar district," he said.

He also said there is a plan to establish

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