



Locals cross the risky hanging bridge on the Dhaliya Khal at Tapto Masterpara near Khagrachhari-Chattogram road in Matiranga upazila on Saturday.

PHOTO: SAIKAT DEWAN

# Makeshift hanging bridge their lone means

Thousands suffer as collapsed concrete bridge in Rangamati's Matiranga not rebuilt

SAIKAT DEWAN, Khagrachhari

People from more than 15 villages of Matiranga union in Khagrachhari's Matiranga upazila are suffering since a concrete footbridge on the Dhaliya Khal at Tapto Masterpara near Khagrachhari-Chattogram road collapsed on June 12 last year under the impact of strong current during the monsoon flood. After failing to get response from the upazila parishad, locals built a hanging bridge about four months ago but the structure, made without involvement of any

engineer or expert, remains a risky one for a large number of users. Usually aluminium wire rope is used to build such a hanging bridge. But 12-mm diameter iron rods have been used there while four tall tree trunks instead of RCC pillars have been used on the two sides of the bridge. The weak bridge tilts slightly to one side. Nurul Islam, headmaster of Tapto Masterpara Government Primary School, said, "When we get on the bridge, it swings. Many students do not like to come to

school as they have to cross the risky bridge. The government approved the construction of a two-story building for this school but its work is not likely to start before building of the bridge." "Farmers requiring to take produces to market are facing problem as it is difficult to carry the items on the temporary hanging bridge," said Deno Mohan Tripura, headman (traditional leader) of Daldhali Mouza in Matiranga upazila. Amrito Kumar Tripura, member of Ward No 3 of Matiranga Union

Parishad, said, "After the concrete bridge broke, we informed the upazila administration, the local lawmaker and others concerned and requested help for rebuilding the bridge. Communication problem also hampers development work in the area, including expansion of electricity lines." Kongjari Chowdhury, chairman of Khagrachhari Hill District Council, said, "Rebuilding the bridge has been included in our priority project. We are waiting for allocation of fund for rebuilding the bridge."

# 46 fishermen jailed for netting hilsa during ban

2 cops also detained for carrying the fish

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Mobile courts in last two days jailed 46 fishermen for short terms on charge of netting hilsa in Rajbari, Faridpur and Tangail districts during the ongoing temporary ban on catching, selling and carrying of the popular fish. Two policemen were also detained for carrying the fish yesterday. Our Faridpur Correspondent reports: Eighteen fishermen were jailed for catching hilsa while two policemen were detained for carrying the fish in Rajbari Sadar upazila yesterday. The detained policemen are Shafiqul Islam, assistant sub-inspector (ASI), and Osman Gani, constable of Rajbari Police Lines. "We conducted a drive with Rab-8 in the Padma river in Sadar upazila and detained 18 fishermen and ASI Shafiqul Islam from a fishing boat while locals caught the other policeman for carrying hilsa early Tuesday," said Rafiqul Islam, nezarat deputy collector of Rajbari district administration, who conducted the mobile court. "We handed over the two policemen to the district's superintendent of police and sentenced the 18 fishermen to two to nine days of imprisonment," he said. The court also seized one lakh metres of fishing nets and 25 kg of hilsa from

different places in the Padma in Rajbari Sadar upazila. The seized hilsa was distributed among different orphanages. Mizanur Rahman, superintendent of police in Rajbari, said departmental action will be taken against Shafiqul Islam and Osman Gani. Another mobile court yesterday jailed six fishermen for 20 days and three others for 10 days for catching hilsa in Sadarpur and Char Bhadrasan upazilas in Faridpur. Besides, 20,000 metres of fishing nets and 15 kg of hilsa were seized from different places in the Padma in the two upazilas. Our Tangail Correspondent adds: A mobile court in Tangail on Monday jailed 19 fishermen for 10 days for violating the ongoing temporary ban on catching hilsa. The fishermen were detained during the drive from 6:00pm on Sunday to 12:00am on Monday from Katulee, Huga and Kakua unions in Sadar upazila when they were catching hilsa in the Jamuna river, said Samiran Kumar Saha, senior fisheries officer in Tangail Sadar upazila. On Monday morning, the detainees were produced before the mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Torikul Islam, also upazila nirbahi officer in Tangail Sadar, and the court sentenced the fishermen to 10 days' imprisonment, he said.



PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Blanket of fog keeps covering the horizon for quite some time after the sunrise as the country's northern region has started showing the signs of early arrival of winter. The photo was taken from Barunagaon village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila yesterday.

Special Supplement

# Poor sleep has disease spinoffs

Study finds that those with severe sleep apnoea tend to have higher calcium deposits in their coronary arteries, raising their risk of heart disease.

PATIENTS. AT THE HEART OF ALL WE DO.®

If you are being treated for obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) at Singapore General Hospital (SGH), don't be surprised if the sleep disorders doctor refers you to a cardiologist at the National Heart Centre Singapore (NHCS) too. This is because people who suffer from this common sleep disorder, in particular the severe form, are more likely to have calcium buildup in their arteries, a study by SGH and NHCS has found. Calcium deposits or calcifications are a sign of heart disease as the deposits narrow and harden the arteries, reducing the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart. Over time, this can cause problems like chest pain and heart attack. "No matter how little, once calcium starts to build up, it means the process of atherosclerosis (artery hardening and narrowing) has started," said

Assoc Prof Tan Swee Yaw, Senior Consultant, Department of Cardiology, NHCS, and principal investigator of the study. For the study, patients with severe OSA had to undergo a special computed tomography (CT) scan of the heart to find out their coronary artery calcium score, or the amount of calcium in the walls of the arteries. "The calcium score tells you indirectly how much atherosclerosis has occurred," said Assoc Prof Tan. The risk of a heart attack is 0.1 per cent for someone with a zero score, but 10 times more than normal for someone with a score of more than 100, and 25 times more than normal for a score of more than 400, he added. In the study, which enrolled 150 mostly male participants in their 50s, nearly half were found to have atherosclerosis while 8.7 per cent had a calcium score of more

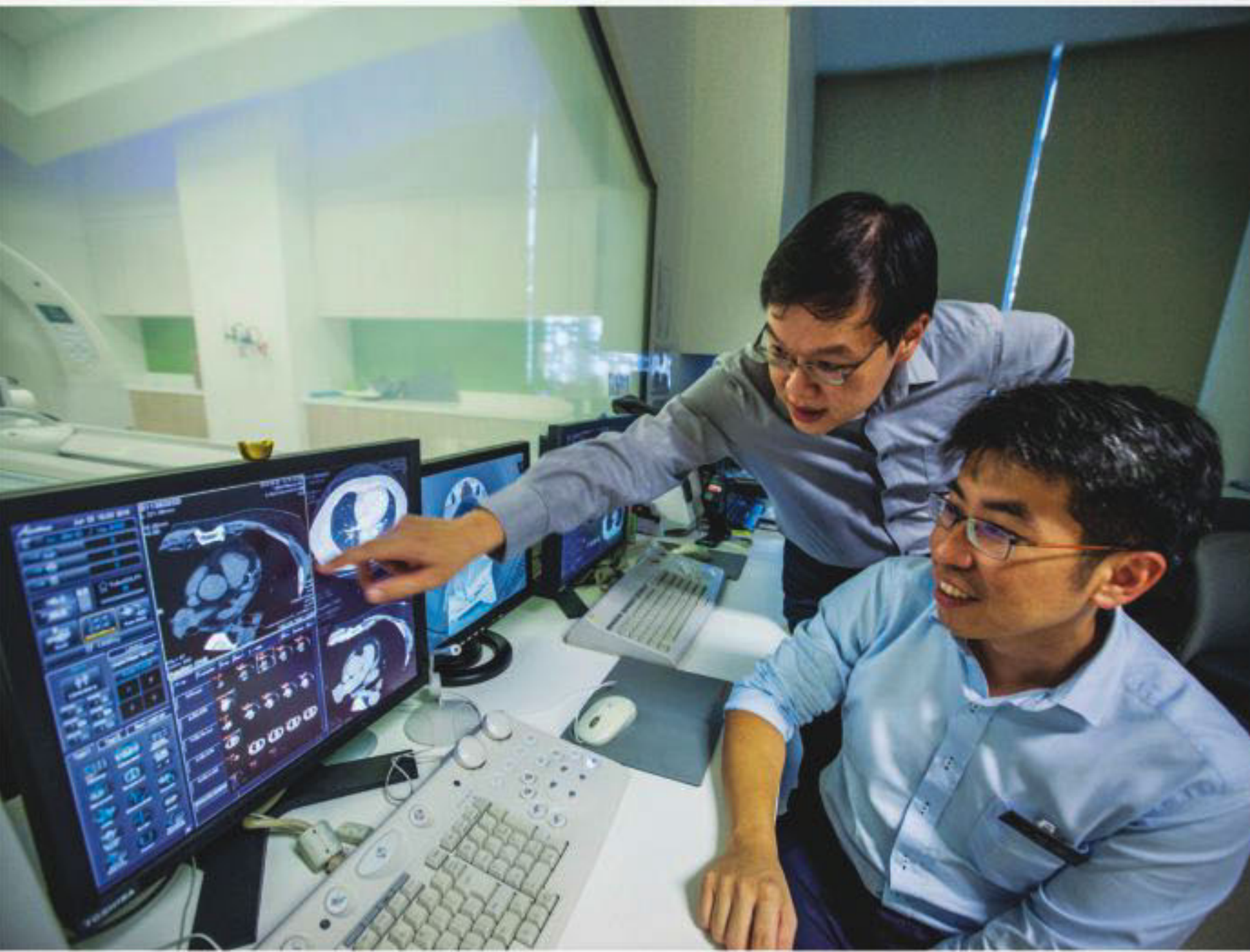
than 400. The participants had been newly diagnosed with OSA. The link between OSA and heart disease has been known for some time, but it is still not fully understood why OSA should lead to an increased risk of atherosclerosis. Using the calcium score may help explain the link, said co-investigator Assoc Prof Toh Song Tar. "It may be because oxygen desaturation (that occurs during the sleep cycle of OSA patients) causes inflammation and damage to the blood vessels, which then becomes the trigger for lipids and calcium to be deposited in the arteries," said Assoc Prof Toh Song Tar, Head and Senior Consultant, SingHealth Duke-NUS Sleep Centre and Dept of Otorhinolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery, Singapore General Hospital. OSA occurs when something – the tongue or fatty tissues – partly or completely blocks the

airways during sleep, reducing the flow of oxygen to the brain. The brain then sends a signal to rouse the person to reopen his airways and breathe. People with severe OSA can get more than 30 such episodes a night, said Assoc Prof Toh. The study was presented at a few international conferences, including the ACC (American College of Cardiology) conference in April in Chicago. It is now being readied for submission for peer review. Started in 2012, the study was completed in 2015. What began as a casual chat over coffee has now become routine practice: since 2015, patients with severe OSA seen at SGH will be referred to an NHCS cardiologist for testing for heart disease. "We are trying to prevent cardiac disease from happening. If a patient comes to us with severe sleep apnoea – and we now know there's a high risk of coronary disease happening – we hope that by referring him to the heart centre, cardiologists will do some intervention, be it medication or other treatments, to stop heart disease from developing or worsening," said Assoc Prof Toh. Added Assoc Prof Tan: "We used to be firefighters, but now we want to be fire preventers. I'd rather detect and see who is at risk, start the appropriate medication, and prevent that heart attack from happening in the first place." Some 1,000 patients are diagnosed with OSA in SGH annually, including 300-500 with moderate to severe forms of the disease. About 15 per cent of Singapore's population has OSA.

“WE ARE TRYING TO PREVENT CARDIAC DISEASE - AND WE NOW KNOW THERE'S A HIGH RISK OF CORONARY DISEASE HAPPENING FOR PATIENTS WITH SEVERE SLEEP APNOEA.” ASSOC PROF TOH SONG TAR, HEAD AND SENIOR CONSULTANT, SINGHEALTH DUKE-NUS SLEEP CENTRE AND DEPT OF OTORHINOLARYNGOLOGY-HEAD & NECK SURGERY, SINGAPORE GENERAL HOSPITAL.

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According to Assoc Prof Toh Song Tar (right) and Assoc Prof Tan Swee Yaw, patients with severe OSA need to undergo a special CT scan to check their coronary artery calcium score, which indicates how much atherosclerosis has occurred.

## Sleep apnoea has link with eye diseases like glaucoma

Of the various sleep disorders, obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) appears to have the strongest association with eye problems, including glaucoma, a common cause of blindness in Singapore. A study by the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) and the Singapore General Hospital's (SGH) Sleep Disorders Unit found that 8 per cent of patients with moderate to severe OSA have open angle glaucoma with normal pressure. In comparison, the prevalence of this type of glaucoma is 1.4 per cent and 3.2 per cent for all forms of the disease in the general population. Glaucoma can cause vision loss, and accounts for 40 per cent of blindness in Singapore. But as with heart disease, while the association between these eye conditions and OSA are clear, the reasons for the connection are not yet understood.

One possibility is that OSA compromises blood flow to the optic nerve. This then creates a transient drop in oxygen supply and increases resistance to blood flow, thus damaging the optic nerve. The study, conducted between 2013 and 2014, recruited 100 patients suffering from moderate to severe OSA. Comprehensive ophthalmic examinations using advanced imaging techniques were done to detect glaucoma even in its early stages. Eight of the patients had glaucoma. Blindness can be prevented if glaucoma is detected and treated in its early stages. Eye drops may be prescribed as the first line of treatment to lower eye pressure and prevent further nerve damage. If eye drops fail to lower the pressure, more invasive forms of treatment like surgery may be required. Apart from glaucoma, OSA has been shown to be associated

with floppy eyelid syndrome (eyelids that are easily everted or turned inside out), non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy (a painless sudden loss of vision) and papilloedema (a swelling of the optic disc), said Assoc Prof Toh Song Tar, Head and Senior Consultant, SingHealth Duke-NUS Sleep Centre and Dept of Otorhinolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery, Singapore General Hospital. In patients with ischaemic optic neuropathy, 70-80 per cent have OSA, Assoc Prof Toh added. Common sleep disorders seen at SGH include insomnia, movement disorders during sleep, and circadian rhythm sleep disorders. "A lack of sleep can have a negative impact on energy, mood, concentration, and overall health," said Assoc Prof Toh, noting that an estimated 30 per cent of chronic diseases are related to poor sleep health.



Patients with severe OSA seen at SGH are routinely referred to an NHCS cardiologist for testing for heart disease.