

A STARK CONTRAST

Well-equipped, yet not fully functional in a year



NAT'L BURN INSTITUTE

A TALE OF TWO INSTITUTIONS... the 500-bed national burn institute (left) is yet to be fully functional due to a lack of workforce. Right across the street, the 100-bed burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital struggles to handle the rush of patients five times beyond its capacity. As a result, patients and their attendees are often seen staying in the corridor or beside the staircase of the unit (right). The photos were taken recently. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, SHAHEEN MOLLAH

SHAHEEN MOLLAH And HASAN MEER

With its clean and calm ambience, the institute looks like a privately-run one, well-equipped to provide treatment to patients.

This public institute -- Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery -- was inaugurated on October 25 last year by the prime minister.

Although more than a year has gone by, at the 15-storey 500-bed institute on Dr Mohammad Shahidullah Sarak in Chankharpool is yet to be fully functional, due to sloth in recruitment and a resultant manpower crisis.

Meanwhile right across the street, doctors, nurses and staff are struggling to cope with the rush of patients as the 100-bed burn unit at Dhaka Medical College Hospital remains severely overcrowded.

The national burn institute, which brought hope for improvement of a situation so dire, was expected to be operational within six months.

An estimated 2,200 staffers, including doctors, nurses, technicians, ward and administration staff members, had been allocated to the institute.

"Right now, we have over a hundred doctors, 70-odd nurses and some technicians on deputation, as per the ongoing first phase of the government allocation. We are yet to get other staff members, which will be assigned to us in a total of three phases," Dr Samanta Lal Sen, national coordinator of the burn institute, told The Daily Star yesterday.

During a recent visit, the institute looked almost deserted with only a

handful of patients at the outdoor unit. There was no one at the reception, while many pieces of equipment were seen still in their packaging.

Dr Partha Sankar Paul, resident surgeon (outdoor) of the institute, said they have started treating patients regularly since September 15 this year.

"Once we start the emergency service, we'll be able to treat and admit more patients," said Dr Paul, who used to be the resident surgeon at DMCH burn unit (outdoor).

"We have some 200 patients admitted currently," Dr Sen told this newspaper yesterday, adding that some 40 to 50 patients are taking treatment there every day.

"With the manpower we have, it's

plastic surgeons to meet the country's requirements, said the eminent surgeon.

This institute will ease the pressure on DMCH when the two will start operating simultaneously, he said.

The burn specialist also said for the last couple of months, they had been treating dengue patients to help DMCH out.

Contacted, Dr Md Belal Hossain, director (admin) of the Directorate General of Health Services of the health ministry, yesterday told this newspaper that the recruitment process of a few hundred third- and fourth-class employees has already been started, and more recruitment will be done eventually.

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