

# A victim of govt bodies' friction

## Development plans for Railway General Hospital left in the dark

Md FOISAL AHMED

More than four years ago, the government had decided to upgrade the Railway Hospital in Kamalapur, aiming at providing better service for railway staff and expanding its services to general people.

But all that has changed in effect is the name -- "Railway General Hospital".

No other significant progress has been made since Bangladesh Railway (BR) and health ministry signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015, outlining its development.

The rechristened signboard at the entrance of the hospital, located on the Outer Circular Road opposite Motijheel Ideal School, and a worn-out banner advertising that the facility is open to all, are failing to draw patients, apparently due to frictions between the railways and health ministries and dormancy of the managing committee.

Established in 1986, the hospital -- located in a tranquil setting and surrounded by trees -- has been barely functioning due to limited workforce, trivial annual development and maintenance budget from the railway ministry, and dilapidated condition of medical and other equipment.

Visiting the facility multiple times between October and late December 2019, this correspondent found doctors and staffers passing idle time with hardly any patients.

In stark contrast to other public hospitals of the capital, registers of the hospitals showed fewer than 10 inpatients and 50-odd outpatients taking services of the hospital at least twice during the visits.

Asked about the poor flow of patients, Dr Abdul Ahad, member of a joint committee for the development of the hospital, said, "The reason is lack of facilities, including pathological support and insufficient medicine supply."

"We have to send patients to other hospitals or private diagnostic centres for tests. If a patient does not get everything in one place, why would they come here?" Ahad said.

The railway divisional medical officer said they only conduct some basic tests like blood, urine and X-ray, and the hospital has no modern surgery or ICU facilities.

He said the 75-bed hospital has now been reduced to less than 40 beds due to a lack of patients.

Asked about the joint venture, Ahad said it was a good initiative, "But the health ministry has failed to fulfil expectations, by not providing the logistic support."

According to the MoU signed on April 30, 2015, a managing committee involving officials of the two ministries (health and railways) was assigned to run the hospital with a mandate to appoint a director, form a committee to prepare an inventory list of the hospital's movable



The deserted entrance to the hospital's emergency department -- an unimaginable sight at a public hospital -- bears testament to lack of patients' faith in it. The photo was taken yesterday.

and immovable properties, appoint necessary workforce and repair and replace non-functional medical equipment.

But the seven-member managing committee, headed by the additional secretary of Health and Family Welfare Ministry, has failed to make any progress as far as modernisation of the hospital is concerned, mainly due to difference of opinions between officials of the two concerned ministries over the possession of the property.

No inventory committee was formed yet, and the managing committee had not held a single meeting in the last two years.

Md Sherajul Islam, additional secretary of health service division and convenor of the managing committee, said he would convene a meeting as soon as possible to resolve the impasse. He, however, claimed that he was new at the post, and did not know why meetings of the committee was not held.

According to the MoU, moveable property of the hospital was supposed to be handed over to the joint committee for maintenance and development. It has not been done, officials of both ministries said. The stalemate has left the hospital in a poor condition, despite appointment of a director and seven other doctors in deputation from the health ministry.

Dr Firoj Alamgir, director of the hospital, blamed lack of publicity for poor turnout of patients.

He also said the hospital was yet to get any financial support from the health ministry apart from appointment of some doctors, adding that financial code under health ministry is required for disbursement of fund.

He said the committee appointed him to run the hospital without providing him necessary support.

### GOVT BODIES AT LOGGERHEADS OVER POSSESSION

Aminul Hasan, director (hospitals and clinics) of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and also a member of the managing committee, said they attached doctors to the hospital but cannot do more in terms of logistic support, unless the railways ministry gives its nod regarding the handing over of property.

Another member of the committee, Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said that they had a plan to upgrade the hospital to 500-bed gradually along with developing other facilities, but the plan has been stalled on the property possession issue.

Md Shamsuzzaman, director general of Bangladesh Railway, disputed it.

"As per the MoU, the managing committee will be the authority of the hospital where a secretary of health ministry will act as convenor. But he [convenor] has not called any meeting for a long time."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Son burnt to death in front of parents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Moazzem Hossain Nannu and Shahina Hossain were fast asleep in their room when a loud bang jolted their entire house around 5am, followed by bellows of "Fire! Help!" from their son in the next room.

Swapnil Ahmed Piash (24) had come home a few hours ago, handed the car keys to his mother and gone to his room in their 10th-floor flat in Aftabnagar.

"There were smoke all around, as fire engulfed my son's room. We told him to come out from his room, but he could not. Failing to unlock the door, he took shelter in balcony and screamed for help. From the next balcony, I was trying to help my son... but he was trapped," said an inconsolable Nannu at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday after losing his only son.

"Fire had already caught on my son's body. Piash took off his clothes. I tried to break the door of his room, but could not," Nannu said.

He brought three fire extinguishers to the balcony, and sprayed them towards his son's balcony to douse the blaze.



Piash

"When I was about to take the fourth extinguisher, the electricity of the building went off... After 10 or 15 minutes, I could not hear Piash's screams anymore," said the sobbing father, adding that he passed out while trying to leave his balcony.

Nannu, a former general secretary of Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh who now works at Global TV, was hurt on his head and fell sick after inhaling smoke.

Half an hour into the incident, five firefighting units rushed to the spot and doused the fire, but all could they recover was Piash's body from the balcony, said Abdul Kalam Azad, senior station officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence Station in Baridhara.

"The fire might have originated from a short-circuit," said the fire official.

Piash recently graduated from a private university and started an electronics business, family members said adding that he stored some of those items in the room.

With police permission, the family took his body from the morgue without autopsy. Piash would be buried at their ancestral home in Abhaynagar of Jashore.

### Tk 70,000 stolen from finance minister's home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A house help allegedly stole Tk 70,000 from the residence of Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and went into hiding.

Salma Begum, the house help, reportedly stole the money from the drawer of a wardrobe and fled away on December 13 last year, according to police.

An official of the minister's company filed a case with Gulshan Police Station on December 31 in this connection, said Inspector (investigation) Aminul Islam of the police station yesterday.

Salma, hailing from Dinajpur, was employed at the minister's house on September 25 last year.

Her cellphone was found switched off, and police are trying their best to arrest her, Aminul Islam said.

### POSSESSING ALCOHOL

## Court accepts charges against Asif Akbar

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday accepted a charge sheet against popular singer Asif Akbar in a case filed against him for possessing alcohol.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Masud-Ur-Rahman passed the order in presence of the singer after examining the case summary and other relevant documents.

The magistrate sent the case to Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court for next course of action.

According to the prosecution, team of Tejgaon police, led by Sub-Inspector Prashanto Kumar Sikder, raided Asif Akbar's office in FDC area of Dhaka's Panthapath area on June 6 last year to arrest him in another case filed against him by lyricist and composer Shafiq Tuhin.

During the drive, the team recovered four bottles of foreign liquor.

Later, a case under the Narcotics Control Act was filed against him with Tejgaon Police Station.

After an investigation, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police submitted a charge sheet against Asif on October 21 of 2018, showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

Earlier on June 6, Asif was arrested from his studio in Dhaka in another case filed against him by Shafiq Tuhin over copyright issues and threats.

He was later released on bail on June 11.



Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a drive yesterday evicted makeshift shops occupying roads and footpaths at Nilkhet book market area. The sellers had paid no heed to previous warnings by authorities to free the spaces.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## WARI SCHOOLGIRL MURDER Lone accused indicted

JNU CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against the lone accused in a case filed over the rape and murder of Wari schoolgirl Samia Afrin Saima in July last year.

Harun Or Rashid, however, pleaded not guilty after Judge Kazi Abdul Hannan of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 in Dhaka read out the charges.

The court also set January 8 for starting the trial, through recording the complainant's testimony.

On July 5 last year, Harun took Saima to an empty flat on the rooftop of an eight-storey building in Wari. He raped the seven-year-old, and then strangled her to death.

Saima and her parents lived on their flat on the fifth floor of the building, while Harun (25) stayed with his cousin Parvez's family on the seventh floor. The nursery student often went to Parvez's flat to play with his son and knew Harun.

Saima's father Abdus Salam filed the case on July 6.

The murder triggered a firestorm of protests across the country. Many took to social media to demand justice for the little girl.

Detectives arrested Harun from his village home in Cumilla's Dabordanga area on July 7. Harun confessed to a Dhaka magistrate that he killed the girl after rape so that she cannot disclose his identity.

Inspector Md Arjun of Detective Branch of police submitted the charge sheet against Harun to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on November 4 last year.

### ATTACK ON NUR

## Protesters issue a week's ultimatum to DU VC

DU CORRESPONDENT

environment and students' security on campus.

While reading out the memorandum, Omar Faruk, an activist of Swantantra Jote, said, "The proctor did not come to the spot of the attack immediately on December 22 and evaded his duties even though he was requested repeatedly to intervene. Rather, he is indirectly speaking in favour of the attackers. Such behaviour suggests that he instigated Chhatra League and Mukti Juddha Moncho activists to launch the attack."

They also alleged that the disappearance of CCTV footage of Ducusu building could not have been possible without the administration's assistance.

Earlier, around 100 protesters under the banner of the alliance brought out a protest procession from the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture and paraded through the campus before stopping in front of the VC's office.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



### PHOTO OF THE DAY

PRABIR DAS

A worker loads sacks on a pony-drawn carriage, with a contraption consisting of metal chains, rods and rings going through the animal's back, belly, and even neck and head. The worker said they load 600 to 800 kg of goods on one carriage, with a trip from Mugda to Motijheel fetching Tk 400. Article 8 (2) of the Animal Welfare Act, 2019, prohibits carrying of excessive load or passengers by any animal engaged in transportation.

### DHAKA TODAY

#### LECTURE

Social Science Research: Experience

from a Field Survey

Organiser: Reading Club

Venue: Institute of Modern

Languages, DU

Languages, DU