



Finding no vacant beds at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, many patients can be seen lying on the floor with oxygen cylinders beside them.

PHOTO COURTESY: RAZU AHAMED

'Painful to watch patients gasp for air'

A nurse's account of dire situation at RMCH

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

"They groan and cry out just to get some oxygen. Most of them can do nothing but wait for a patient to get better and be released from the hospital, freeing up a bed. Watching the patients gasping and struggling to breathe is painful. Unfortunately, we can do nothing but watch them suffer."

This is how Dulal Hossain, a senior staff nurse at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), described the hospital's grim scenario. The quiver in his voice was evident over phone.

While Covid-19 patients keep surging, beds with oxygen supply are becoming scarce at RMCH, officials said.

Critical patients who are coming to the hospital with low oxygen saturation levels have no other option but to wait for an empty bed, they said.

Dulal, who has been stationed at the Covid-19 unit, detailed the situation when The Daily Star interviewed him on Monday afternoon.

"It hurts to see a Covid-19 patient waiting for a bed," Dulal said while sharing his experiences at the workstation in the unit's ward 29 and 30.



Dulal Hossain

The wards where Dulal works have 48 beds. The hospital's entire Covid-19 unit was treating 291 patients till yesterday, 20 more than its bed capacity of 271.

The Covid-19 unit's 271 beds were supported by the hospital's central oxygen supply line. However, authorities could manage only 55 nasal cannulas to ensure high-flow oxygen, and 18 ventilators at RMCH's intensive care unit (ICU).

RMCH is one of the country's major hospitals, and the number of deaths and infected patients skyrocketed since May 24.

Yesterday, at least 12 patients died; seven of them were Covid-19 positive, and the rest were suspected of being infected, raising the death toll to 271, since May 24.

For the 48 beds at Dulal's wards, there are only 17 nasal cannulas.

"None of the nasal cannulas at his wards remain idle," he said. "Most patients come in critical condition, needing high-flow oxygen."

After getting his degrees from Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Council in 2011, Dulal served at different

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UNIVERSITY RANKINGS

Do they matter? Should you care?

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

The Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings for 2022 were unveiled on June 8. Like the previous edition (2021) of the rankings, University of Dhaka (DU) and Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) failed to climb into the top 800 positions, as both institutions were placed in the 801-1,000 bracket again. Two private institutions, Brac University (BracU) and North South University (NSU), were placed in the 1,001-1,200 bracket.

The metrics echo the state of performance of these universities. To make matters worse, Bangladesh has more than 150 universities (public and private) that are nowhere near the rankings, let alone a position in the top 500 or 1,000.

QS evaluates universities based on six unique metrics: academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty-student ratio, citations per

faculty, international faculty ratio, and international student ratio.

Among the four Bangladeshi universities, NSU has the highest scores in international faculty ratio, international student ratio, and employer reputation. BracU scored highest in terms of faculty-student ratio. DU has the highest academic reputation, whereas Buet has more citations per faculty.

But do these rankings matter to the students? And do they care about such rankings at all?

"I believe rankings are just a general idea of where that university falls in comparison to all other universities," says Abdullah, a final-year student at the Department of Computer Science and Engineering at BracU. "Universities with more funds will have better facilities and are also most likely to have a higher number of publications. But a rank

is not necessarily reflective of the education quality in the institute."

Although it is an easy way to determine which university is generally doing better than the rest, Abdullah believes that one must also evaluate certain other factors before choosing a university. He adds, "A student should not take admission decisions with rank in mind. Instead, they

should look at the programmes and course structures the universities offer, their alumni history, facilities that students can enjoy, faculty members and their qualifications, and so on."

However, recent graduate and software engineering intern Afia Fahmida Rahman from BracU argues, "In my opinion, it may matter when it comes to getting recognised by international universities or organisations. For a company that has not heard about

my locally high-ranked university at all, looking at the QS rankings may give them a rough idea of how the university actually is and how it might have nurtured me to become a potential employee for them."

For a higher rank, universities need to invest in certain areas, especially those that impact rankings. Institutional research is a major area that requires attention as well as funding. And a lot depends on the research output by these universities.

"I think research output at our university is quite good," comments Samin Rahman Khan, a fourth-year engineering student at Buet. "Recently, we are working on solutions for significant real-world problems in our labs, which makes our research very impactful. Aiming for a more thriving research culture is evident from our citations score."

The question now is whether universities should concentrate on

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The brawl over Ivermectin

Health authorities, experts worldwide divided over use of antiparasitic in Covid-19 treatment

ZYNA ISLAM

As Covid-19 cases are on the rise in the country, doctors are once again mulling over Ivermectin as a possible answer. However, controversy continues to follow this drug.

Ivermectin is a pocket-friendly anti-parasitic drug that has for decades been used to treat head lice and river blindness in humans and heartworms in animals.

The drug first came to notice with regards to Covid-19 treatment on April 3, 2020 when laboratory experiments done by researchers at Monash University of Australia found that ivermectin in vitro [performed outside of a living organism] had an inhibitory action on SARS-CoV-2, reducing the load of viral RNA by 5,000 times in 48 hours.

The ivermectin dose used in the study was 5 microgrammes (mcg) and the research was published in the journal Antiviral Research.

On Tuesday, the Indian government's Union Health Ministry dropped Ivermectin from the list of medications approved for the treatment of Covid-19, in its revised guideline.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Health in



Dr Tarek Alam



Dr Rubaiul Murshed

Malaysia started an Ivermectin trial for high risk Covid-19 patients five days ago

On the other hand, American Journal of Therapeutics published a meta-analysis of 18 ivermectin-related studies in their May/June 2021 issue, which concluded that the 18 studies found "large, statistically significant reductions in mortality, time to clinical recovery, and time to viral clearance."

The research was conducted by physicians from University of Wisconsin Health University Hospital and University of Texas Health Science Center, among others.

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8 killed, 8 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Eight people were killed and eight others injured in road accidents across the country during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents.

A five-year-old girl was run over by a speeding bus on Panchagarh-Atwary road in Atwary upazila of Panchagarh yesterday.

The victim was identified as Mitu Akhter, daughter of Nuruzzaman.

Atwary Police Station Inspector Dulal Uddin said the accident occurred while the girl was crossing the road to go to her mother, who was harvesting maize nearby.

Meanwhile, a pickup and a covered van collided on Panchagarh-Banglabandha highway in Tentulia on Wednesday, leaving two people dead and another injured.

Pickup driver Md Rubel (20) died on the spot, said police, adding that Swapan (18) succumbed to his injuries at Panchagarh Sadar Hospital.

Tentulia Highway Police Station OC Rabiul Azam said Sujon (19), who was critically injured, was undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Police seized both vehicles but the van driver and his helper fled, said the OC.

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INSTALLING ILLEGAL GAS LINES

ACC arrests Karnaphuli GM, manager

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Members of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday arrested Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Limited (KGDCL)'s general manager (GM), and its manager in a case filed on charges of installing illegal gas connection to residences and changing gas connections' holder name to another, violating government directions.

GM Md Sarwar Hossain of the organisation's Engineer Service Division, and Mojibur Rahman, the manager (load dispatch), were arrested from port city's Agrabad area, said sources.

Earlier, Deputy Assistant Director Sharif Uddin of ACC, Chattogram office, filed the case, accusing five, including four officials of KGDCL.

The two other accused are KGDCL's former general manager (sales) Mohammed Ali Chowdhury and technician Didarul. Apart from that, ACC sued Mujibur Rahman -- managing director of Sanowara Group and son of Nurul Islam, former minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment.

The others have not been arrested yet.

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MIGRANT WORKERS

Empower them with technology: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proper steps should be taken to end exploitation and torture of Bangladeshi migrant workers at both home and abroad, said speakers in an online discussion yesterday.

They said introducing technology-based know-hows such as mobile-based applications on labour migration could be a way forward to build awareness among migrant workers to ensure their due rights.

The online discussion was part of launching of the app "SafeStep", and was organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

RMMRU with support from Winrock International, Elevate Hong Kong Holdings Limited and Diginex Solutions has developed the app, which aims to promote awareness on basic information of safe and orderly labour migration, and fair, ethical, and responsible overseas recruitment.

Addressing the discussion, Kamal Uddin Ahmed, full-time member of National Human Rights Commission, said Bangladeshi migrant workers have been contributing to build big structures in host countries, but they are deprived of due rights.

"It is shocking," he said, adding, in reality, they face torture and exploitation often. Bangladesh needs to speak loud against torturous incidents against its migrant workers.

Referring to a reported incident in which a Bangladeshi woman migrant worker returned home with a five-month-old baby from abroad recently, Kamal said they will take steps for filing a case over the incident.

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ABUSED IN SAUDI ARABIA

Gross violation of migrant workers' rights, says MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) yesterday expressed grave concerns and anger over the return of female migrant workers from Saudi Arabia after being abused physically and mentally.

The organisation, in a written statement, termed these incidents "gross violations of the human rights of female migrant workers."

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said, "The government should consider the remittances sent by the female migrant workers and give priority to their lives, livelihood, dignity, and security."

"At the same time, the government must ensure punishment for those involved in such criminal offense," she added.

MJF further said the embassy of Bangladesh should have taken legal action to find out the details of the employers, and ensure compensation for the abused women.

However, in most cases, the labour attaché does not opt for filing a lawsuit, or if filed, the cases become inactive since the abused women return to the country, it said.

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HARASSING PATIENTS

24 'brokers' at DMCH jailed by mobile court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court assisted by Rab yesterday jailed 24 "brokers" for harassing and deceiving patients at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The convicts -- including staffers of private hospitals, diagnostic centres and people carrying patients on trolleys and ambulances -- were sentenced to highest one month in prison.

"People from across the country come to this important hospital for treatment. But these brokers prevent them from receiving healthcare services and take them to different private and unauthorised hospitals, promising them of good service," said Palash Kumar Bosu, executive magistrate who led the drive.

Many patients are

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A bus driver takes the wheel with a lit cigarette between his lips, violating not only a ban on smoking in public vehicles but also in blatant defiance of mask-wearing directives to contain the spread of Covid-19. The photo was taken yesterday from the capital's Kamalapur area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MINI BYTES



Microsoft Excel is now an e-sport, watch out for the Excel World Cup

ZARIF FAIAZ

The e-sport arena has a new unlikely contender. It's Microsoft Excel. For the first time ever, Microsoft Excel, the software used for crunching numbers around the globe, is being considered an e-sport and Microsoft is even organising a Microsoft Excel Financial Modeling World Cup. The global competition is currently underway, starting June 8, featuring 8 participating countries: India, Malaysia, Canada, Poland, Australia, South Africa, the USA and the UK. 8 champions are representing the 8 countries in the Multiplayer Battle Tournament, called '888 Battle', which is being streamed live on the official YouTube channel of the Financial Modeling World Cup.

"We are back with another live financial modeling battle! This time, 8 top modelers from 8 different countries will be competing against each other. You have the opportunity to sit in the front-row seat and watch how they build the models that have earned them the top-ranking positions. After the battle, we will make sure to share the financial models with the viewers. Use this opportunity to learn some tricks used by some of the greatest minds in financial modeling," said Microsoft in a statement.

While financial modeling competitions have been held before,

it is the first time that the competition is being labeled as an 'e-sport'. A financial model is essentially a strategic tool created using Microsoft Excel or other spreadsheet softwares where data is arranged in a manner that is used later on to predict the financial performance of a business. Creation of the model requires in-depth understanding of the software that is being used, in this case, Microsoft Excel.

"The competition consists of case studies consisting of a range of real-life problem-solving questions solvable through the use of Financial Modeling. Each stage will normally include 2 to 5 cases, with the possibility of additional cases or alternative relevant activities," says the Financial Modeling World Cup Website.

In the competition, the participants are given 40 minutes to create a Microsoft Excel model to solve a given financial problem. Then follows the judges' question-answer session. While a prize of USD 20,000 is being split into various categories, the final winner will receive USD 5000 as the champion.

Registration for this year's Financial Modeling is closed and the competition is already underway. However, the competition is open for everyone and anyone in the world can register and participate in the next iteration of the event.