

COUNTRYWIDE OXYGEN GENERATORS

99 promised, none completed

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

None of the 99 oxygen generators the government planned for health facilities across the country at different times last year has been set up yet.

In April 2021, the minister had said, "We will import machinery... to set up small oxygen plants at different hospitals."

This was a time when hospitals were struggling to meet the demand for oxygen support amid rising numbers of Covid patients, and India, which is a major source of medical oxygen for Bangladesh, banned the export.

By July, the daily demand for medical oxygen in Bangladesh reached around 400 tonnes a day, up from the usual 110-120 tonnes.

The government later planned to procure 99 oxygen generators in phases: 40 with its own funds, 30 with the Asian Development Bank's Covid-19 response assistance funds and 29 from the UN.

But setting up of the generators has not been complete anywhere, said Farid Hossain Mian, director (hospitals) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The number of Covid cases remained low for a while and has risen again, but the generators have yet to be operational at any of the hospitals.

An oxygen generator can produce up to 500 litres of oxygen per minute. It can provide uninterrupted supply to at least 50 Covid-19 patients needing 10 litres. Compared to liquid oxygen supplied in tanks, the generators are much more efficient.

While the generators to be procured with the ADB and UN funds still exist only on paper, health officials make conflicting claims about the current status of the 40 generators that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved through a direct purchase method in May last year.

Only last month, officials made a list of 99 hospitals where generators can be set up. All the public medical colleges, district town hospitals

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A parrot pecks at Palash flowers on a tree in the capital's Central Shaheed Minar area yesterday. The blooming of this flower, also known as the flame of the forest, heralds the arrival of the Spring or Basanta (Phalgun-Chaitra). The photo was taken two days before the first day of Phalgun. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

‘No trust’ in search panel

Major opposition parties refuse to submit names for EC appointments

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Almost all major opposition parties have refrained from submitting names to the search committee for forming the next Election Commission, citing a lack of confidence in the committee.

Five years back, 26 out of 31 registered political parties had sent names to the then search committee. The BNP were among

the 26.

But this time 24 parties have put names forward out of 39.

In 2017, the then search committee sought five nominations from each political party for the posts of a chief election commissioner and four election commissioners.

This year, the parties have been asked to file 10 names, two for each of the five posts.

The BNP and its alliance

partners as well as left leaning CPB and Bangladesh

Samajtantrik Dal have not sent names this time. They are also

among seven political parties who did not participate in the president's dialogue (December 20 to January 17) on formation of the EC.

Political parties who did not submit names said they have little or no confidence in the

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31ST ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS

The Daily Star has been bringing out a series of diverse and informative supplements around this time of the year for quite some time. This year too, we are pleased to bring out a five-part 200-page special supplement series, beginning February 13, on the occasion of the newspaper's 31st anniversary. Renowned experts from various fields have enriched these supplements with their insightful contributions.

The five segments are:
“BLUEPRINT FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW”

which features a collection of articles on how Bangladesh's economy has recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic and the way forward.

“FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION”


which covers how our everyday lives are changing forever due to giant leaps in technology.

“ENTERTAINING A NEW WORLD” which sheds light on the future of entertainment in a shifting world.

“DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC BANGLADESH” which focuses on the challenges that Bangladesh must overcome for a democratic and inclusive future.

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