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## PATIENT REFERRAL SYSTEM

# Still elusive after all these years

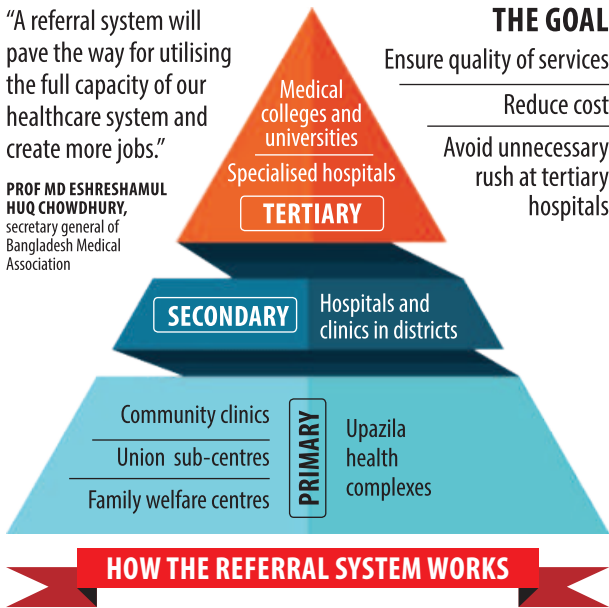
Lack of political will to blame

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

In 2014, then health minister Mohammad Nasim at an event in Rangpur Medical College Hospital officially announced the inception of a patient referral system for Rangpur division.

"A referral system will pave the way for utilising the full capacity of our healthcare system and create more jobs."

PROF MD ESHREHAMUL HUQ CHOWDHURY, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association



There are well-defined and established practices of referral systems in many countries. But the policymakers fail to understand it when they speak about the referral system.

MUHAMMAD ABDUS SABUR, adjunct faculty at the IHE of DU

It, however, fell flat due to inadequate logistic support and unavailability of qualified physicians and auxiliary workforce at primary healthcare centres.

Two more attempts to get the referral system going in 2016 and 2019 too failed. Both fizzled out after discussions among high-ups.

Under a referral system, a patient first goes to a nearby primary healthcare centre, public or private. If need be, that healthcare centre will send the patient to hospitals that are better equipped to treat them.

Major hospitals, on the other hand, will not see any walk-in patient, unless the patient is in critical condition. They will treat only patients referred by the smaller hospitals and healthcare centres.

The larger hospitals can send patients back to smaller hospitals for follow-ups.

The system creates a link between the hospitals of three tiers -- primary, secondary and tertiary -- to ensure quality of services, reduce cost, and avoid unnecessary rush at tertiary hospitals.

For years, the government could not prepare a protocol for the referral system, let alone introduce it, resulting in anarchy in the country's health sector, health experts said.

Currently, patients bear on average 68.5 percent of all healthcare costs. If the referral system was in place, this cost could be slashed as they would not be paying for the inefficiency of the healthcare system, they said.

Health officials said if the system were in place, pressure on large tertiary hospitals could be halved. Presently,

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**HOT ASHES FOR TREES? ... Hills being razed to make way for a brick kiln in Bandarban's Lama upazila. While brick kilns are a major contributor to the debilitating air pollution in the country, hill cutting, according to Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act, is a punishable offence if done without the approval of the authorities concerned. Despite growing concerns among the locals, the authorities concerned remain silent.**

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

# Avoid middle-income trap at all costs

Advises WB MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should be careful about falling into the middle-income trap, said Axel van Trotsenburg, the World Bank's managing director of operations.

"Middle-income status is a hard struggle and in fact, it is a difficult task to go to the higher-income status," he said, citing the case of Argentina and Greece, which fell into the trap.

Some Latin American countries went the reverse direction after reaching the middle-income status, van Trotsenburg said in an event to mark 50 years of partnership between Bangladesh and the World Bank.

From this perspective, Bangladesh needs to look at how countries like Korea and Singapore succeeded in levelling up to the higher income

bracket.

He liked the country's vision to double its per capita income by 2031 and in this way become an upper middle-income country.

But the country needs to continue with its reforms to strengthen its institutions so that they can serve the needs of a higher-income economy.

"We will support Bangladesh as it navigates through challenging and uncertain economic times brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the heightened climate challenges," he said.

Bangladesh can achieve long-term growth by strengthening reforms in the areas of macro-fiscal management, export diversification, financial sector, energy and climate resilience.

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## There can be falling-out in a family

Says WB MD on Padma Bridge issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank's withdrawal from the Padma Bridge project over allegations of corruption was just a minor blip in what has so far been a smooth-sailing relationship, said its managing director of operations yesterday.

"If at one stage, one of your family members has a different view on something, that doesn't mean that you don't get along with him -- you are basically family," said Axel van Trotsenburg, the WB's managing director of operations, at a programme to mark 50 years of partnership with Bangladesh.

In 2011, the Washington-

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## TRANSPORT SECTOR PROJECTS When coordination authority fails to coordinate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, also at the helm of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority, yesterday admitted the government agencies implementing transport sector projects in the capital lacked coordination.

The problem appears to be so serious that the DTCA governing council had to form a committee to coordinate the transport sector projects.

Quader's admission came after the 16th meeting of the council yesterday. The previous meeting was held almost one and a half years ago.

The committee is led by LGRD Minister Tazul Islam, and the other members include representatives from the Road Transport and Highways Division, two city corporations, Rajuk, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, shipping ministry, Water Development Board and DTCA.

Transport experts have repeatedly pointed out how the lack of coordination among project implementing agencies often became an impediment to implementation, necessitated changes in plan, and escalated cost.

The construction of the Hanif flyover was the main obstruction to the original route of Mass Rapid Transit

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## Court bins BNP's case against police chiefs

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A BNP leader's case against top police officers was summarily dismissed by a Dhaka court yesterday.

A BNP executive committee member filed the case accusing the chiefs of Detective Branch and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police and others of vandalising the party's Nayapaltan office and looting valuables on December 7, 2022.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury dismissed it hours after Nazim Uddin Alam filed it in the morning, said a court employee, adding that the magistrate found no grounds to take cognisance of the case.

Accused in the case are DB chief Mohammad Harun-Or-Rashid, CTTC chief Md Asaduzzaman, DMP Additional Commissioner K Mohid Uddin, joint commissioners

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

An elderly man weeps during prayers as the second and final phase of the Biswa Ijtima ended on the banks of the Turag yesterday. Tens of thousands of Muslims attended and prayed together for the peace of the Ummah. The photo was taken on the Tongi Station Road. Story on page 3.

## 7YR-OLD MURDER MYSTERY Turns out it's honour killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) has solved the mystery surrounding the murder of a young girl seven years ago.

Law enforcers recently arrested the girl's father, Kuddus Kha, as well as the man who aided him in the murder of Parul Akter, then a 10th grader.

PBI chief Banaj Kumar Majumder shared the findings during a press conference at the its headquarters yesterday.

In 2012, Parul left her Tangail home to get married to Nasir Uddin, 19. The newlywed couple moved to Ashulia on the outskirts of Dhaka and started working as garment workers.

However, Parul's father Kuddus never accepted this marriage.

As time went on, Parul started getting into fights with her husband. She would tell her father about this.

Kuddus then began trying to get his daughter to leave her husband. He told her that he would arrange her marriage again and that she would have a better life.

On July 18, 2015, Nasir went to see his grandmother. Parul called his father and as per his instructions, went to Tangail the next day, the PBI chief said.

On July 19, 2015, Nasir filed a general diary with the local police station, saying his wife was missing.

Kuddus also filed a case with a Tangail court accusing Nasir, his uncle, and his mother over her daughter's disappearance.

After failing to locate the girl, four investigation agencies, including PBI's Tangail unit, submitted a report to the court stating that the incident occurred in Dhaka.

Kuddus filed a no-confidence petition after the final report was submitted.

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