



“AI has the potential to dramatically increase threats to safety... and erode public trust and faith in democracy.”

US VP Kamala Harris tells CEOs of leading tech companies



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CARDIAC TREATMENT

Patients hit hard by costly stents

MOUDUD AHAMMED SUJAN

Mohiuddin Ahmed was extremely anxious. And it was just not because his 68-year-old father was undergoing a cardiac stent implantation surgery. He had no idea how he would pay back the creditors for the funds he borrowed for the operation in March.

His worries would not have been this overwhelming had the government not hiked the price of cardiac stents by 20-35 percent from February 1 to factor in the steep depreciation of taka against the dollar, making the already expensive cardiac treatment in Bangladesh more costly at a time when the ordinary people are grappling with the rising cost of living.

“It is too much for my family,” Ahmed, a lawyer, recently said. He needed three weeks to arrange the Tk 3.64 lakh needed for the surgery at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) after the heart blocks were detected.

Each stent was billed at around Tk 1 lakh, more than double the price in India.

Take the case of the Xience Xpedition stent made by Abbott, an American medical devices manufacturer. It costs about Tk 47,000 in India and Tk 70,000 in Bangladesh.

But in Bangladesh, its maximum retail price is Tk 125,500 after the hike by the Directorate General of Drug Administration, up from Tk 108,628.

Such big differences were found in the case of stents of other companies like Boston Scientific's Promus Premier and Promus Elite, German company Biotronik's Orsiro and Medtronic's Resolute Onyx.

In India, the price of stents starts from Rs 9,842 and goes up to Rs 35,835.

The price of stents in Bangladesh is determined as per the markup set by the DGDA's price-fixing committee. The markup was set at 1.42 percent, which includes the taxes and profit margin of the suppliers as well as the dealers. It also includes an 11.5 percent “retail commission” for middlemen.

And the recent hike was made to factor in the depreciation of taka as per the markup set, said Mohammad Yousuf, the director-general of DGDA.

In the past year, the taka depreciated 23.7 percent against the dollar, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

“The stent market was in an unruly state. We tried our best to draw an accepted and transparent solution for the sake of patients,” said Afzalur Rahman, a former director of the National Institute of Cardiovascular Disease (NICVD) who led the 2017 expert committee for fixing stent prices.

The time has come to revisit the markup formula to ensure transparency in the stent supply chain, he said.

The drug administration must explore ways to bring down the price, said Abdullah Wadud Chowdhury, head of the cardiology department at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

“Otherwise, patients would prefer going to India for cardiac care,” he said.

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45,000 cardiac stents are implanted every year

Prices of stents normally higher than that in India, Nepal

DGDA hiked the prices by 20-35pc on February 1



“If the suppliers did not need to pay a commission to the physicians, health staffers and different middlemen, the price would have been much lower like in India.”

Chowdhury Meshkat Ahmed, professor at BSMMU's Department of Cardiology



The two-storey Dayaganj City Corporation Market in the capital is dilapidated and risky, but some city corporation cleaners have been living on the first floor with their families for years, putting their lives at risk. Some shops are also run on the ground floor. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Two tremors near Dhaka raise concern

Experts sound note of warning, call for preparedness

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Two earthquakes with epicentres very close to Dhaka jolted the capital in a span of just 11 days, raising concerns among leading experts about more quakes and the country's preparedness.

A 4.3 magnitude earthquake struck Dhaka and some other parts of the country early yesterday. Its epicentre was in Dohar upazila, some 30 kilometres away from the capital, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

Another 3.9 magnitude earthquake, the epicentre of which was in Bhulta of Narayanganj, about 24 kilometres away from the capital, hit Dhaka on April 25.

A total of 14 earthquakes took place within the 300 km radius of Dhaka in the last one month, says the National Center for Seismology of India.

Experts say these jolts are possible indications of a major earthquake which has not been reported in the country for a long

time.

“Our research showed that over 8-magnitude earthquake energy was accumulated in the plates in Bangladesh territory over the years and the energy can get released anytime. The recent earthquakes give indications of it,” Syed Humayun Akhter, a former professor of geology at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A 5.2 magnitude earthquake jolted Dhaka and several other parts of the country on December 5 last year. The epicentre of the quake was 520 km away from the Agargaon Seismic Centre in Dhaka.

Two major earthquake fault lines in the country are Madhupur Fault and Dauki Fault. The Madhupur fault line in Tangail is closer to Dhaka, while the Dauki fault line is in Sylhet.

Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansary, a teacher at the Buet's civil engineering department, said, “There is a possibility of a major earthquake. Before a major quake, some mild ones called

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ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Situation ‘not bad’ at Maungdaw

Says RRRC after Rakhine visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The situation at Myanmar's Maungdaw township where Rohingyas will be resettled is “not bad,” said Rohingya Relief and Rehabilitation Commissioner Mizanur Rahman yesterday.

“We did not see anything bad at Maungdaw. We have seen many Rohingyas doing trade and business there. As per my data, 80 percent of the people there are Rohingya,” he told reporters in Cox's Bazar.

He said this after returning from a visit to the township with a delegation of 20 Rohingyas to see the arrangements made by the Myanmar authorities for a planned repatriation of a group of Rohingyas by the end of this month.

The delegation was accompanied by seven government officials led by Mizanur.

“We have seen the willingness of Myanmar authorities to facilitate repatriation. The problem, which has been around for about 60 to 70 years, will not be solved overnight. We are hoping that it [repatriation] will be sustainable,” he added.

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Hasina holds talks with Sunak

Interacts with King Charles at C'wealth Leaders Event

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina held a bilateral meeting with her British counterpart Rishi Sunak in London yesterday.

The meeting took place at the bilateral meeting room of the Commonwealth Secretariat, reports UNB quoting sources.

The two leaders discussed various issues related to mutual benefits of the two countries.

This was the first meeting of the two prime ministers after Sunak took office on October 25 last year.

In the afternoon, Hasina attended the Commonwealth Leaders Event at the Marlborough House of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

During the event, the PM had an interaction with

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photo with the heads of government of the Commonwealth states at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London yesterday. She attended a meeting of the Commonwealth heads of government.

PHOTO: P10

BLAST AT N'GANJ STEEL MILL

It ran without valid papers, safety measures

RAFIUL ISLAM

The steel mill factory in Narayanganj, where an explosion killed four workers and injured three others on Thursday, had been melting iron for the last six months without approval from the authorities, said officials.

Rahima Industrial Complex Steel Mill went into production without clearance certificates from the Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE) and the Department of Environment (DoE), said officials of those departments.

Besides, a fire service official said there were no fire extinguishers at the factory. He also alleged that workers were not provided with proper safety gear.

An explosion inside the furnace of the factory spilled molten iron on seven workers on Thursday, killing three of them -- Shanker, 40, Elias Ali alias Yeasin, 35, and Niyon, 20.

Another injured worker Md Alamgir, 33, died at Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka yesterday.

He had 90 percent burns, said Inspector Bachchu Miah, in charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

The condition of three other injured is critical, said hospital sources.

The factory did not get any clearance certificate from DIFE as it lacked safety measures, Mehedi Hasan, an inspector of the department who visited the factory after the explosion, told The Daily Star yesterday.

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