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PATIENTS WITH BULLET, PELLET WOUNDS

Dhaka hospitals stretched to the limit

DIPAN NANDY, SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MASHFIQ MIZAN

Some of them are teens, some in early 20s and many are middle-aged men. The one thing common between all of them is that they have been shot either by shotgun pellets or from bullets, as police and BGB opened fire at protesters and alleged infiltrators during the recent unrest centring the quota protests.

Many claimed they had nothing to do with the violence or protests. According to them, they were either harmless onlookers or commuters who had to venture out for different emergencies. And now, they are barely surviving on hospital beds, after coming in the line of fire.

From Thursday, Dhaka hospitals, mainly Dhaka Medical College Hospital, were stretched to their limits with patients suffering from pellet and bullet wounds.

Take the case of Shafiqul Islam. He was shot in his back on Sunday evening when he went out to see what the situation was outside.

When these correspondents visited DMCH yesterday, his four-year-old daughter Fatema was peacefully sleeping beside him.

But peace was the last thing on Shafiqul's mind. He was barely awake, completely worn out after going through a life-saving surgery.

"I cannot move my body. Sometimes, the



Patients with pellet and bullet wounds at DMCH.

PHOTO: STAR

pain is so severe that I think even death would be better. I don't think I can return to normal life," he said.

Currently, 217 patients with pellet and bullet wounds are undergoing treatment at the facility.

As many as 1,071 patients, with injuries sustained from sharp weapons, pellets, and bullets, have sought treatment at DMCH from July 15 to July 22, according to DMCH Director

Brig Gen Md Asaduzzaman.

Around 60 bodies were brought to the facility during this time, while 19 died undergoing treatment, he added.

Miraz Hossain is one such patient who is still undergoing treatment.

He went out of his home to grab breakfast. When he reached Boubazar, Rampura, he suddenly heard gunshots. People were

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Healthcare limps on

AHMED DEEPTO

Private medical colleges, hospitals and diagnostic centres across the country, have been facing unprecedented disruptions due to the ongoing internet shutdown.

All online healthcare services are now out of reach for patients. Mobile internet was shutdown from 1:00pm on Thursday while broadband services came to a halt from 9:00pm the same day.

There are a total of 15,247 registered private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres and blood banks. Of them, 5,029 are hospitals and clinics, 10,021 are diagnostics centres and 197 blood banks, according to DGHS.

"The central operating system connecting every branch of our hospital has been stopped as we don't have internet. All the lab reports are being registered through typing, which takes a lot of effort and time," said AM Shamim, chairman of LabAid group.

"There is no alternative to restoring the internet for healthcare services. We don't want social media. We only need the internet," he said.

Square Hospitals authorities said they are facing six types of trouble because of the internet shutdown. Online doctors' appointments, receiving lab or investigation report through apps and emails, updating software's and high-tech equipment, online call centres - these services are off.

Many attendees used to pay their hospital and test bills through online services, which is totally off now, said Esam Ebne Yousuf Siddque, chief operating officer of Square Hospitals.

Moniruzzaman Bhuiyan, president of Bangladesh Private Clinics and Diagnostic Owners' Association, said they urged the government to restore internet to prevent further damage to the private health sector.

Nilufar Yasmin, 55, a resident of Dhanmondi, said, "I have chest pain for the last couple of days. My physician advised me to conduct an X-ray and an echo-cardiogram. Earlier, I used to get my lab report online, but now I cannot" she said.

Meanwhile, State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak yesterday said broadband services would resume by midnight on a test basis.



There is no alternative to restoring the internet for healthcare services. We don't want social media. We only need the internet.

AM SHAMIM,
Chairman of LabAid Group

DHAKA TO GAZIPUR BRT LINE Operation may get delayed further 22 escalators imported for stations burned amid unrest

TUHIN SHUBHIRA ADHIKARY

The launch of a dedicated bus service between Dhaka-Gazipur corridor may get delayed further as miscreants have damaged 22 escalators to be used for elevated stations on the route during the recent unrest.

After changing several deadlines, the authority planned to start trial run of the service on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line-3 from January next year.

"But the trial run is likely to be delayed," Md Moniruzzaman, managing director of Dhaka BRT Company, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Even if they can start trial in January, all the stations will not be ready by then due to the escalators being damaged, Ilias Shah and Mohirul Islam, two project directors, told this correspondent yesterday.

Taken in November 2012, the project, formally known as Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport



Remains of burnt escalators in Uttara's Abdullahpur area.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Project, was originally planned to be completed by December 2016 at a cost of Tk 2,037.9 crore.

But long delay was caused by issues relating to land acquisition, relocation of utility services, design changes, contractors running out of money, and the pandemic. Moreover, physical work was suspended twice.

As a result, the total project cost is now estimated at Tk 4,268.3 crore and the deadline is December 2024.

The 20.5 kilometre bus corridor, the country's first dedicated rapid bus service, will allow people to reach Dhaka from Gazipur in 35-40 minutes, which now takes between 1.5 and two-three hours. There will be 25 stations.

Moniruzzaman said all construction works under the project is supposed to be completed within September and they have already floated the tender to procure buses for the dedicated bus service.

According to the progress report, 94.61 percent of physical work of the project was completed by May this year.

He, however, said at least 22 new escalators, which were kept on the project site, were burnt down either fully or partially during the unrest centring the quota protests.

Cost of each escalator is around Tk 50 lakh to Tk 60 lakh, he said.

He said they were now checking whether these

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Travel agents face EXISTENTIAL CRISIS

Says ATAB president; activities of 4,000 agencies remain halted since Thursday

RASHIDUL HASAN

The travel agents are facing an "existential crisis" due to the countrywide internet blackout as all activities of around 4,000 travel agents have remained halted since Thursday night.

Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (ATAB), a platform for travel agents, said ATAB is incurring a loss of around Tk 100 crore as all kinds of air ticket sales, rescheduling and hotel bookings have remained halted since July 18.

Besides, travel agents also couldn't realise money from different corporate and regular clients from earlier sale of tickets, as monetary transactions remained suspended due to the closure of banks and other financial services, said ATAB.

"Our existence will be in danger if internet service does not resume immediately. We need to start our activities as soon as possible," ATAB President Abdus Salam Aref, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We assume bitter days are awaiting us due to the ongoing situation," he added.

ATAB fears that travel agencies



Passengers, especially migrant workers, continue to suffer at the Dhaka airport due to cancellation or delay of flights.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

will fail to pay International Air Transport Association (IATA) bills if the current situation continues for another day or two.

Different foreign airlines collect money against ticket sales from IATA, as it acts as a mediator between travel agents and foreign airlines.

Travel agents pay airlines through IATA every 15 days. The next payment date falls on July 30, said the ATAB president.

"Besides, if we cannot collect the ticket sales money from buyers and organisations, we won't be able to pay arrears to respective airlines," he added.

"We have not been able to contact any airlines in the last five days due to the internet shutdown," he said, adding that global distributing system, ticket booking - everything entirely depends on online

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'Arrest, detention of students deeply concerning' Say 22 former, current DU IR teachers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two current and former teachers of International Relations department at Dhaka University yesterday expressed grave concern over "large-scale arrests and detention of students" for participating in the quota reform protest and demanded their immediate release.

In a statement, the teachers said the students have merely exercised their rights to freedom of assembly and expression, guaranteed in the constitution.

They alleged that Rashidul Islam, a third-year student of DU IR and a co-coordinator of the protest, has been missing since July 18, and demanded that the authorities find him and ensure his security.

"There have been news reports of involuntary disappearance of student activists, with some being subsequently found abandoned in isolated places with severe bodily wounds. We urge the authorities to take appropriate action against the perpetrators and ensure that everyone is treated in accordance with the law," said the statement.

The signatories are Prof Akmal Hossain, Prof Ramjul Haque, Prof M Shahiduzzaman, Prof CR Abrar, Prof Ashequa Irshad, Prof Ehsanul Haque, Prof Rashed Uz Zaman, Prof Tanzimuddin Khan, Prof ASM Ali Ashraf, Prof Rozana Rashid, Prof Abdul Mannan, Prof Niloy Ranjan Biswas, Associate Prof M Obaidul Haque, Associate Prof Bushra Hasina Chowdhury, Asst Prof Sayeda Akhter, Asst Prof Mohammad Ali Siddiquee, Assistant Prof Anwarul Azim, Asst Professor Lamea Momen, Lecturer Samia Zaman, Lecturer Tanvir Habib, Lecturer Iffat Ara, and Lecturer Saddam Hossain.

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