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WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY

The doctor next door

How Daktarkhana's GP model is transforming primary healthcare

NILIMA JAHAN

For 36 year-old homemaker Tania Akter, falling ill meant anxiety over costly treatment and unreliable healthcare.

Her husband, a salesman at a motorcycle showroom, earns just enough to get by. With little financial cushion, seeing a doctor for everyday health issues – was a luxury she could rarely afford. But that changed a few years ago when Tania first visited Daktarkhana, a small general physician (GP) centre near her home in Dania, Jatrabari. Since then, it has become the family's first stop for any health concern.

"Whether it's fever, the flu, a minor injury, or managing my fatty liver -- I go straight there," she said. "The doctor knows me, listens properly, never rushes, and talks in a way that makes me feel I am heard."

Consultation fees are just Tk 300, and if she visits regularly, the doctor often waives the fee altogether.

"He also gives advice over the phone and refers to a specialist if needed."

Since its launch in Betgari, Rangpur in 2019, Daktarkhana has grown into a network of 197 centres, 13 in Dhaka and the rest across 30 districts, providing continuous, affordable care to over 1,500 patients every day.

More than 1,50,000 people have received treatment so far, delivered by 200 MBBS-qualified doctors. In metropolitan areas, consultations cost Tk 300, while in district and upazila centres, it's Tk 200.



While GP systems have long underpinned healthcare in countries like the UK, US and across Western Europe, Bangladesh lacked a formal model. That is, until a group of young doctors led by medicine specialist Dr Ratindra Nath Mondal decided to act.

"In developed countries, people first see their GP, who handles most issues," said Dr Mondal, founder of Daktarkhana and president of the Bangladesh Society of General Physicians. "They only go to specialists when referred, and always return to their GP for follow-up. This is called the 'structured referral' model."

According to Mondal, around 80-85 percent of illnesses can be effectively treated at the GP level. "When more complex care is needed, our doctors refer patients to our specialist panel," he said. "It cuts unnecessary costs, reduces suffering, and allows our overburdened

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Dismissed armed forces members demand reinstatement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of the armed forces who were dismissed or forced into retirement during the previous regime staged a protest in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding reinstatement and other benefits.

Several hundred protesters, including their family members, began gathering at the venue around 11:00am, according to witnesses.

They later attempted to march towards Jahangir Gate of Dhaka Cantonment but were stopped by police a short distance away. The protesters then returned and regrouped in front of the press club.

Additional police and a large number of army personnel were deployed in the area to maintain security, said Sub-inspector

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Biman to suspend Dhaka-Narita flight amid losses

RASHIDUL HASAN

Amid much fanfare, Biman Bangladesh Airlines resumed flights to Japan's Narita in September 2023.

Within 21 months of restarting the much-anticipated service, Biman yesterday announced the suspension of operations on this route, effective from July 1.

The national flag carrier said the decision was based on three factors: the ongoing hajj operations, shortage of aircraft in its fleet, and financial viability of the route.

However, insiders said the airline was compelled to take the decision as it has been incurring heavy losses since resuming the service.

Officials told The Daily Star that Biman has so far incurred losses of over Tk 84 crore on the route, averaging around Tk 4 crore per month.

Biman had first launched flights on the Dhaka-Narita route in 1979. After a temporary suspension in 1981, the service was resumed, but it was again suspended in 2006 due to continuous losses.

Seventeen years later, on September 1, 2023, the route was reopened without a proper assessment of its commercial viability.

Since then, the relevant departments at Biman have reviewed

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Health reform implementation lacks clear plan
Experts tell webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Health Sector Reform Commission addresses many vital issues in the country's dilapidated health sector, but the reform report lacks a clear roadmap for implementing its recommendations, health experts and economists said yesterday.

They said several issues, including integration between public and private health care, mental health and the impact of climate change on health, did not receive adequate attention in the reform report.

While acknowledging that there is room for improvement, they emphasised the need for political will and the formation of a specific taskforce to implement the recommendations.

They were speaking at a webinar titled "Health Reform Commission Report: Quick Fixes or Transformation" organised by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM).

In his presentation, Prof Shafiqur Nahin Shimul of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University said the commission was formed at a time when the country was spending less than one percent of its GDP on the health sector, marked by high out-of-pocket expenditure, a shortage and disparity in the health workforce, and weak governance and service quality.

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