

## Govt must get down on medical malpractice stringently

MEDICAL malpractice or negligence seems to be increasing worryingly. In the latest such incident, two women died in a private hospital in Sylhet on Friday as they are said to have been wrongly treated and neglected after Caesarean sections. In one of the cases, a woman, who underwent a Caesarean section to deliver a girl child on Thursday morning, died on Friday afternoon as her health failed, with no physicians being around to attend to the case. Relatives claimed that the on-duty nurse in the post-operative room was asleep when the patient died. In the other case, another woman, who underwent a Caesarean section on Thursday morning, died on Friday morning as her health failed when she was in the post-operative room. Relatives claimed that her health started failing after she had been administered an injection that morning. Again, there were no physicians around to look into the case. In both the cases, the surgeon was the same of the same hospital, DMT Safeway Hospital. The incidents took place weeks after surgeons on March 18 had severed the head of a newborn and the mother's uterus during a Caesarean section in Comilla Medical College Hospital.

Twenty-four people in their sixties on March 5 had cataract surgeries in an eye camp run by Impact Masudul Haque Memorial Community Health Centre in Chuadanga and 20 of them had infection in their eyes which caused the removal of the eyes operated on of all the 20 patients. In the Comilla incident, the High Court on March 25 summoned the Comilla Medical College Hospital director, five doctors and the Comilla civil surgeon to explain the case. On their appearance in court, the High Court ordered an investigation. In the Chuadanga incident, two committees, which include one by the health ministry, to investigate the incident. The health ministry investigation is reported to have been completed but it has not been made public as yet, as the civil surgeon said, pending ministry findings and directives. The role of the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council comes in here in that it is this agency, which has physicians, surgeons and dental surgeons registered for practice, which should look into such cases. But this is a matter of concern that such an agency being in place, no deterrent action, mostly, in cases of medical malpractice has so far been heard of.

The failure of council to take stringent action against medical negligence is believed to be lying within the functioning of the agency. The agency is not adequately strong to take steps against errant medical practitioners and the reason is more often than not put down to the partisanisation of its functioning, which keeps it weakened for practical purposes. While the government, under the circumstances, must, especially, look into the cases at hand, it must, generally, act on all such incidents of medical malpractice to stop the recurrence of such incidents. The government must keep the council above partisan interest so that it can work in the interest of patients.