

Acid attack victim looks forward to near-normal life

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It was after a decade the acid attack victim from Dhanbad district, Jharkhand, Sonali Mukherjee's hope to regain a near-normal face and better life got wings as she underwent a reconstruction surgery at BLK Super Specialty Hospital and Radiant Life Care here this week.

Sonali, 27, weighing 35 kg, was in a very bad state and severely malnourished when she was brought to the hospital on August 15 following the

long campaign carried out by Headlines Today and an NGO, Beti, which, along with the hospital, will bear the expenses of her treatment.

Since 2003, when she had suffered 90 per cent burns and was left with a charred face and damaged organs, she has undergone 22 reconstructive procedures but not until this time the treatment outcome had been convincing after the intervention by six teams of specialists, comprising 18 doctors who will perform six more surgeries. "It took us two weeks to prepare Sonali pre-operatively with her nutrition

Attacked by three boys for opposing their advances, Sonali had suffered 90 per cent burns and was left with a charred face and damaged organs

status being very poor. Nutrition is a challenge; she was admitted with poor levels of vitamin D, D12, calcium and had thyroid deficiency. Four days ago, she underwent the first surgery in which her scalp, forehead and eyes were redone," said CEO and Dean of Radiant Life Care Dr San-

jeev Bagai.

"She came with multiple deformities, so we are using innovative techniques by putting tissue expanders in her scalp for reconstructing it," said HoD of plastic and reconstructive surgery at the hospital Dr AS Bath who is heading the surgical team.

"In phase II, the ear, eyelids and cheeks will be fixed up, followed by reconstruction of neck and contractures. This will follow with correcting her deformed breasts and back and so on. Between each phase we have to wait for four to eight weeks and allow the skin to heal. She will stay for another 10 days and is kept under special care as burns patients are predisposed to infections. It is a long battle for her and we will try our best to help rebuild her life," said Dr Bagai.

Sonali had petitioned the government for euthanasia in July but now looks forward to

a near-normal life something she didn't imagine after the inhuman attack by three boys who avenged on her for complaining against eve-teasing. Support from her family has helped her to sail through even as her aspiration of becoming an NCC cadet was brought to a naught by the horror that she recounts, while thanking doctors: "Severe burns in the eyes and intense pain. After that dark phase of psychological and physical trauma I can yet again dream of a new life - this is the most generous blessings that I could have got from God."