

Abul Mansur Ahmad's 41st anniversary of death today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 41st death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmad, a renowned litterateur, journalist, and politician of the sub-continent. He passed away in 1979.

One of the greatest satirists of Bangla literature, Abul Mansur Ahmad was a renowned politician, lawyer and journalist. He was a pioneer of modern and progressive journalism. He worked for prominent newspapers such as Krishak, Nabajug, Sultan, and Mohammadi, and was editor of the Kolkata-based Daily Ittehad from 1946 to 1948.

He wrote about the language issue from early forties and contributed to the Language Movement as the editor of Ittehad.

Abul Mansur Ahmad played a key role in the formation of Awami Muslim League. He served as vice-president of the organisation from 1953 to 1958.

He was the author of the famous Ekush Dafa

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Return of the menace

Mosquitoes make life difficult for citizens as authorities pass the buck onto each other

HELEMLU ALAM

On a warm spring evening last week, Mohsin Ali, a resident of Mirpur-12, went to a local store to buy mosquito coils. Almost as if sensing his intentions and determined to deter him, a swarm of mosquitoes formed a cloud over his head, diving in at every chance.

"It has become almost unbearable," said the private job holder as he flayed his hands trying to swat the bugs away.

Sikandar Ali, the shop owner, was also busy doing the same. "I burn coils regularly at my store, but nothing seems to keep them away. The authorities have to take steps immediately in this regard."

After a short-lived respite, Dhaka residents are now again enduring the mosquito menace, as the number of these blood-sucking insects has been on the rise.

Residents of Mirpur, Pallabi, Gandaria, Mohammadpur, Kalabagan, Kamrangirchar, Hatirpool, Moghbazar, Manda, Dogair, Dania, Uttarkhan and Adabor seem to be some of the worst sufferers.

The issue has intensified over last few weeks, said locals.

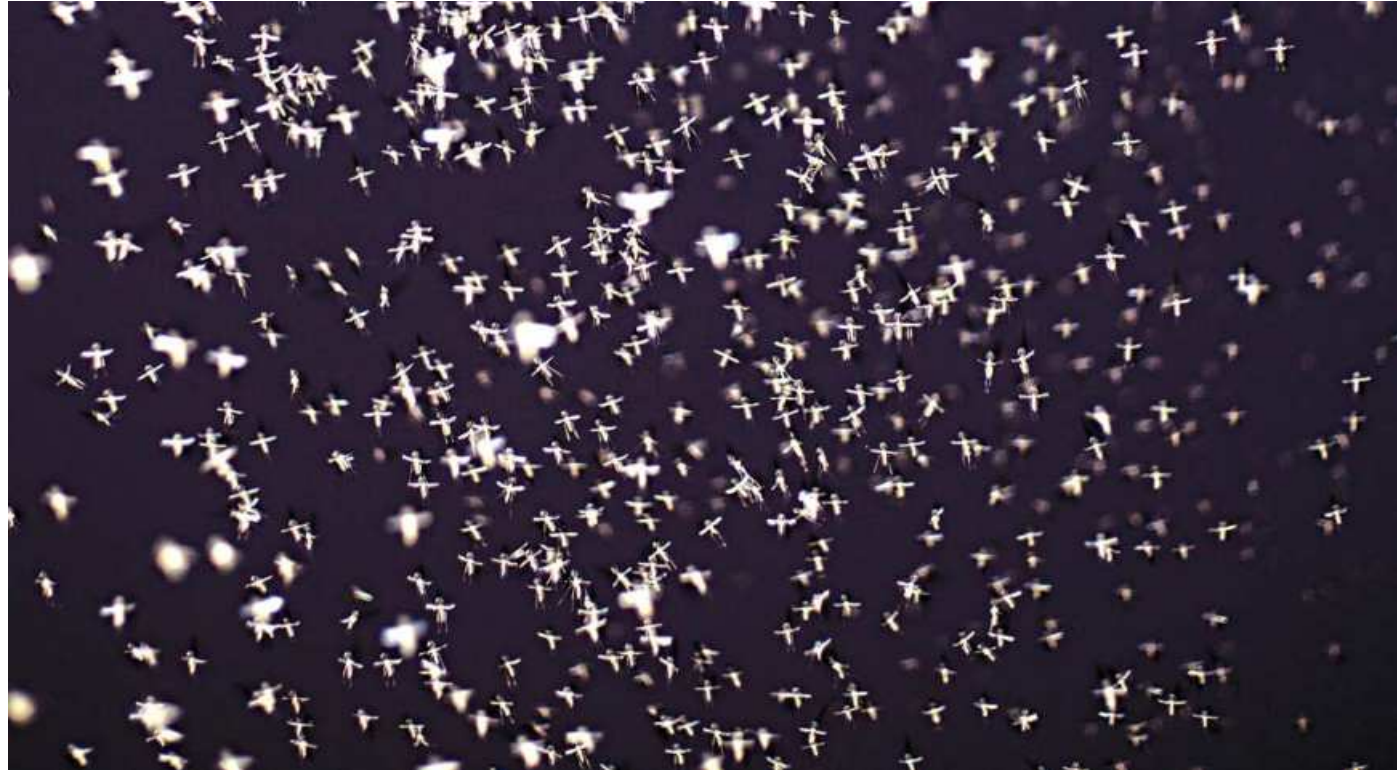
"Their [mosquito] number is just too high... we have to keep all windows and doors shut in the evening," said Shahana Azim, a resident of Kalabagan. "Even though we use mosquito net, it's not possible to stay inside the net throughout the evening," said the retired professor of Bangla.

Hasanul Huq, a resident of Mohammadpur, said mosquito presence has intensified in his neighbourhood over the last month. "I have to use aerosol every night and put up mosquito nets for protection. Otherwise, it's impossible to sleep at night in peace," he said.

Adabor resident Sagar Hasan echoed him.

Residents alleged that as both Dhaka city corporations have failed to clean the waterbodies in time, many areas have been riddled with severe mosquito problem.

In the absence of clean-up initiatives,



Swarms of mosquitoes hovering in the air at public gathering spots has become a common scene in recent weeks. The photo was taken recently near the 300-foot area in the capital.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

waterbodies have become mosquito breeding grounds, they added.

A recently published survey of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) shows that several wards under both city corporations are at risk of mosquito proliferation.

'INITIATIVES FALL SHORT'

Even though the primary responsibility of controlling the mosquito population lies with the city corporations, the only step they are seen taking is occasional spraying of insecticide around households and into a few drains and waterbodies.

Ward-12 Councillor Md Iqbal Hossain

Titu under Dhaka North City Corporation said they have ramped up their monitoring and anti-mosquito drives to keep the number of mosquitoes in check.

Ward-2 Councillor Sazzad Hossain said, "It's true that the number of mosquitoes have increased over last couple of weeks but we are trying our best to contain it."

He said his ward (Kalshi area) is almost three times bigger than other areas and it gets quite difficult to conduct anti-mosquito drives properly. "We have requested the authorities to double the amount of insecticide so that we can conduct drives properly."

The councillor also said there are many waterbodies of different housing companies and government agencies, which remain uncleaned and eventually become a source of mosquito breeding grounds.

"We have already issued letters to those companies to clean the waterbodies. We will go for legal action if they fail to do so," he assured.

Meanwhile, Ward-61 Councillor Mohammad Jumman Mia of Dhaka South City Corporation blamed lack of manpower and insufficient altidicure for not being able to conduct regular drives.

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'Don't go to mosques if you have symptoms'

Islamic Foundation says amid coronavirus scare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islamic Foundation yesterday advised people who are returning home from abroad -- suffering from coronavirus-like symptoms such as fever, cold and cough -- to avoid going to mosques and public gatherings to contain the spread of the virus.

A special situation is prevailing across the country now as the coronavirus took an epidemic turn worldwide, said a press statement issued by the government body.

Flight operations on international routes has been suspended, and there are reports of deaths every day across the world while new people are getting infected with coronavirus, the statement added. As part of the cautionary measures, Bangladesh has closed all educational institutions and advised people to avoid public gatherings. Under these circumstances, the Islamic Foundation advises people who are returning home from abroad with coronavirus-like symptoms and are suffering from fever, cold and cough not to come to mosques for prayers, it said.

The Islamic Foundation also advised imams to discuss the issue, putting adequate heed to raise awareness on preventing the spread of coronavirus.

Youth organisation disinfecting public transport in capital



PHOTO: COLLECTED

A volunteer jet-sprays a hand-rail of a human haulier with disinfectant.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bidanondo Foundation, a voluntary organisation working primarily for education of underprivileged children, yesterday started spraying disinfectants in public transports as a preventive measure against possible spread of novel coronavirus.

Six volunteers of the foundation sprayed disinfectant-mixed water inside some 30 buses and 15 human hauliers at Mirpur-11 bus stand in the capital, said Salman Khan Yessin, Dhaka branch head of the organisation.

"Public transport is one of the risky places for infection of coronavirus. So, we have sprayed disinfectants at different parts of vehicles where people touch frequently," he told The Daily Star last night.

"We are doing this as a public service. We actually want that authorities will come forward to the same thing for people's safety," he said. Amid new cases of the virus being confirmed every day in the country, authorities have asked

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CORONAVIRUS DETECTION

Gonosasthaya developing affordable kit

Says it's ready to start production 'in a month'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team of Gonosasthaya-RNA Biotech Limited, a concern of Gonosasthaya Kendra, has been developing a kit to detect the novel coronavirus at an affordable price.

Issuing a press release yesterday, the team said they are ready to go in production "in a month" if the government approves.

They hoped to produce the kit at a cost of Tk 200, and people will be able to diagnose the virus with it for Tk 300.

The team consists Bijon Kumar Sil, the lead researcher; Nihad Adnan, Raed Jamiruddin and Firoz Ahmed. Bijon was among the researchers who developed a kit to diagnose SARS in 2003, said the press release.

Talking to the newspaper, Nihad Adnan said they are at development stage, and are preparing a prototype of the kit.

"We have the formula, and we are ready to develop the kit. If the government approves, we will go in production and start a trial," said Nihad.

In the press release, Gonosasthaya said a high-level skilled team of Gonosasthaya-RNA Biotech Limited has started working to design and develop the process of production of the kit since February.

"We applied for an approval from Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA). With their permission, we will be ready for production in one month," reads the press release.

"We hope to produce the diagnostic kit at a cost of Tk 200. The govt should take regulatory measures so that the people can do the test within Tk 300," it added.

Dhaka residents leaving city

Bus, train terminals see extra rush after govt closes edu institutions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid growing concern over the novel coronavirus, a huge number of people, mostly students, are leaving Dhaka as the government on Monday announced all educational institutions closed from March 17 to 31.

Bus terminals and railway stations were crowded with homebound people on Monday afternoon and yesterday. The rush is expected to continue for one or two more days.

Two new individuals were diagnosed with COVID-19 in Bangladesh yesterday, raising the current number of confirmed cases in the country to seven. However, three people who were infected previously have made full recoveries, officials said.

Although the transport sector, especially bus operators, is facing a decline in business across the country as the number of passengers have dropped to avoid crowds, bus and railway stations in Dhaka witnessed different scenes.

Tasin Ferdous, a college student, along with his sister left Dhaka from Kalyanpur Bus Terminal on Monday night, on a Hili-bound Hanif Paribahan bus.

"There was a big crowd there, and they charged Tk 50 more than the usual price, citing scarcity of tickets," Tasin told The Daily Star yesterday.

Contacted, Mosharref Hossain, general manager of Hanif Paribahan, said the number of passengers increased after the government announcement of closing educational institutions.

Asked about the allegations of over-charging, Mosharref said, "It is



A large number of people were seen thronging bus and railway terminals yesterday. The photo was taken from Tejgaon Rail Station. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

not supposed to happen. If we find the allegation to be true, we will take action against staff [at the counter]."

Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, chairman of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners' Association, said a growing number of people may leave Dhaka for next one or two days.

Asked about their steps to prevent coronavirus infections, Romesh, also the managing director of Syamoli Paribahan, said they were providing passengers with hand sanitisers.

Abdus Sattar, general manager of Green Line Paribahan, said their flow of passengers had dropped 50 percent over the past one week. However, the number shot up on Monday.

"However, it would be difficult to operate buses if the coronavirus

situation does not improve soon," he added.

A staffer of Shimulia-Kathabari Ferry Terminal also said the number of private vehicles doubled since Monday afternoon.

Meanwhile, a large number of passengers thronged the Kamalapur, Airport and Cantonment stations in Dhaka since last two days.

Maron Chandra Das, manager of airport railway station, said trains bound for northern districts witnessed relatively more crowd.

However, Sadarghat Launch Terminal witnessed normal crowd in last two days, said Shahid Ullah, deputy director of Bangladesh Inland Waterways Transport Authority, yesterday.

MUJIB BORSHO

DU inaugurates celebration with 100-pound cake

BSS, Dhaka

Dhaka University (DU) authorities yesterday started celebration of Mujib Borsho, marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The programmes include placing wreathes at Bangabandhu's portrait, holding discussions, cutting a hundred-pound cake, releasing balloons and offering prayers.

Teachers, students and officials of the university, led by Vice-Chancellor Dr Akhtaruzzaman, placed a wreath at the portrait of the great leader at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum in Dhanmondi.

Paying rich tribute to Bangabandhu, Dr Akhtaruzzaman inaugurated the series of programmes through releasing a hundred balloons on the premises of the university's Memory Eternal monument.

Later, a discussion was held on the Memory Eternal premises, attended by administrative high-ups of the university, representatives of Duusu, teachers and students.

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The roads of Dhaka were unusually empty yesterday, even after considering that it was a public holiday. It seems residents are resisting the urge to go out amid the spread of coronavirus, which is the right measure to take. This photo was taken from Farmgate. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DNCC

Hand-washing facilities opened at 25 key points

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) yesterday launched a hand-washing campaign for pedestrians in the capital, to contain the spread of coronavirus infection.

Atiqul Islam, recently elected DNCC mayor, and Jamal Mostafa, DNCC panel mayor, jointly inaugurated the campaign at Gulshan in the morning.

As part of the campaign, DNCC set up hand-washing facilities with adequate supply of soap and water at 25 points -- in front of different establishments and markets, and beside roads of different locations, including Rabindra Sarani, Rajlaxmi Complex, Khilkhet Bus Stand and Mirpur Sony Cinema Hall.

The campaign will continue for at least a month with support of zonal executive officers of the city corporation.

After inaugurating the campaign, Atiqul said there is no alternative to washing hands to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

He further said DNCC's newly constructed market at Mohakhali will be utilised for coronavirus patients if necessary.