



ANTIBIOTICS RESISTANCE

It's worsening amid pandemic

Researchers find irrational use of the meds surging during Covid outbreak in the country

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Different bacteria have already developed resistance to most life-saving antibiotics, but widespread irrational use of the drugs during the pandemic have raised fears of even more drug-resistant germs.

Researchers say many drugs might have lost their effectiveness due to over-use during the Covid-19 outbreak.

"We assume that around one crore people in Bangladesh had suffered Covid-19-like illnesses, and almost all took antibiotics and other drugs... This way, these drugs lost their effectiveness against the germs," Prof Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), told The Daily Star yesterday.

The day no antibiotic will be effective has come closer, he feared.

"Very soon, we will have no drug to treat bacterial infections. But in the coming years, there will only be three new drugs."

The preliminary result of an ongoing surveillance study published on November 24 last year said 17 antibiotics were becoming ineffective in killing the 10 types of bacteria that cause urinary tract infection, septicaemia, diarrhoea, pneumonia, and wound infection among other diseases.

The study being done by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), found, for example, the widely-prescribed ceftriaxone ineffective in combating E-coli, proteus spp, non-typhoidal salmonella and Acinetobacter complex and other bacteria in many cases.

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A visitor puts her shoe into a bucket of disinfectant while some others wait for their turn to do so before entering the National Museum in the capital's Shahbagh yesterday. A notice put up there says: "Wearing mask is a must." Inset, temperature screening goes on using an infrared thermometer.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



Make people wear mask

PM says in cabinet meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in yesterday's cabinet meeting asked the authorities concerned to make people wear facemasks outside home to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

"The prime minister has asked them to increase awareness campaign and make people use masks," said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam while replying to a query at a press briefing at the secretariat after the cabinet meeting.

"If we do not use masks, no vaccines or medicines would be fruitful in protecting us," he said.

Hasina joined the meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban while

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INCOMING PASSENGERS

Ensure no entry without Covid-free certificate

Nat'l technical advisory committee asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With coronavirus transmission on the rise, the National Technical Advisory Committee on the virus has urged the government to immediately bar airlines from bringing in passengers on international flights without valid Covid-19 negative certificates.

The committee also recommended making the checking Covid-19 report mandatory in all land, air and sea ports across the country.

They made these recommendations at a time when the government is spending Tk 1,000 per passenger for institutional quarantine on a daily basis.

"There is a rule in place that passengers must come with Covid-19 negative test reports done within 72 hours before departure. Many passengers, however, are coming without [Covid-19] tests and reports. For their 14-day quarantine, the cost of the government is Tk 14,000. Besides, it is difficult for the passenger [to stay in quarantine]," said a press release signed by Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, president of the NTAC.

According to the NTAC press release, they recommended that a "bar be imposed on all airlines from carrying passengers without Covid-19 negative certificates based on tests done within 72 hours prior to journey".

The NTAC also suggested that the cost

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The art of cargo theft

How a syndicate kept stealing imported goods from containers at Mongla Port



MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

A syndicate has long been stealing imported goods after breaking the locks of containers at the Mongla Port and selling those in the local market, a DB investigation found.

At least a dozen port staffers -- including three traffic inspectors, two crane operators and two tally men -- and 15 C&F (customs and clearance) agents and five to six labour leaders are involved in this racket, investigators said.

Officials came up with these findings after investigating a complaint of a businessman based in Dhaka's Islampur, Russell Rahman, regarding around 25,000kg of fabrics going missing from the Mongla Port.

Russell, owner of Aziz & Sons, told The Daily Star yesterday that he had ordered around 31,940kg of Torre fabrics from China in mid-August.

On September 6, when his C&F agents went to the port to unload the fabrics from the container, they found only 6,140kg of it and the rest had just vanished.

In the meantime, Russell found a shop owner in Islampur area of Dhaka selling same kind of fabrics, which he ordered from China.

"I got suspicious and sought support from the DB police in Dhaka. DB officials went to the shop and seized the cloth as the shopkeepers failed to provide any valid documents against the item," he said.

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SECRET SAUDI VISIT

Israeli PM met MBS, Pompeo

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held secret talks in Saudi Arabia Sunday with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, several media said, in the first reported trip by an Israeli premier to the kingdom.

The meeting, reported yesterday by Israeli public broadcaster Kan and other outlets, comes weeks after the Jewish state reached historic deals to normalise ties with two Saudi allies, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Those deals, known as the Abraham Accords, were brokered by the administration of US President Donald Trump, who leaves office in less than two months.

"The very fact the meeting happened, and was outed publicly, even if half-officially right now, is a matter of great importance," Israel's Education Minister Yoav Gallant told Army Radio when asked about Sunday's visit.

However, Saudi Arabia yesterday denied the media reports. "I have seen press reports about a purported

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COVID-19 MEDICAL FRONTLINERS

Incentive not reality yet

List not finalised four months into announcement; process for insurance coverage slow too, BMA representatives point to red tape

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government has failed to provide a special honorarium to healthcare professionals more than four months into its announcement of rewarding medical frontliners in the war against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The finance ministry issued a circular on July 9, announcing special incentives equivalent to two months' basic salaries for all healthcare professionals in public hospitals dedicated for Covid-19 treatment.

Tk 100 crore was earmarked to this end.

The honorarium will be additional to any other government allocation for them.

In the circular, the Directorate General of Health Services was asked to send a list of all such doctors, nurses and other healthcare staffers to the health ministry.

DGHS, however, has not been able to finalise this list till now.

"We are pressing [the health directorate] time and again. We have sent a letter three months ago to send us [the list] after

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Siblings Nasim and Sabina eat a meal during a sit-in in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday by the injured victims of Tazreen Fashions fire. While their mother is away to earn a living, a fellow victim, in yellow scarf, is looking after them. The victims have been staging the protest for about two months demanding proper compensations and treatment. The deadly factory fire had killed at least 112 people eight years ago.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

TAZREEN TRAGEDY

'Got neither a penny, nor a fistful of rice'

NILIMA JAHAN

Since the Tazreen Fashions factory fire on November 24, 2012, former senior sewing machine operator Shilpi Akter has left no stone unturned to support herself and her family of five, even though she had lost her ability for labour-intensive work.

Shilpi, the sole breadwinner of her family, cannot remember when last she ate meat.

"I didn't even buy fish for nearly a month. I never buy fresh vegetables from the market and instead depend on leftover or rejected ones. For the past two months, I have not been able to send money to my 11-year-old daughter who lives in the village with my mother and two sisters -- one is mentally

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