

600 more attacked 16 die of diarrhoea in Barisal

BARISAL, Mar 31: Diarrhoea claimed nine lives today (Tuesday) in Barisal district where the disease has been spreading since March 20, reports UNB.

Officials said the death toll from diarrhoea rose to 16 in the district till today (Tuesday) when about 600 people were attacked by the disease in eight upazilas.

A report from Pataukhali said death toll rose to six till today in the district where more than 200 people were attacked by diarrhoea.

Officials said the worst affected areas are Bakerganj upazila of Barisal district and Bauphal and Dasmina upazilas of Pataukhali district.

According to health officials, scarcity of pure drinking water is the main reason for the spread of the disease.

They also reported shortage of ORS (oral rehydration salt) and feared rapid escalation of diarrhoea in the region.

Health Directorate in the capital admitted the outbreak

of diarrhoea in Barisal. Dr Shamsul Islam, Director of Primary Health Care, told UNB Tuesday night that 47 medical teams have been working in Barisal district to combat the disease.

Explaining the main reason for the spread of the disease in the region, Dr Islam said people are used to take water from canals. During the months of March and April, water level in the canals come down to the lowest ebb thus raising concentration of diarrhoea bacteria in the water from hundreds of hanging latrines on both sides of the canals. "This is the major problem we are facing every year in those districts", Dr Islam added.

However, he said, adequate measures are being taken to combat the disease. Adequate medicines, doctors and ORS are being sent for the treatment of patients. Mobile medical teams are already working and their number will be raised to meet the situation.



Rohingya refugees at Marielha Palong camp waiting for relief with Red Crescent cards in their hands. — Star photo

PM: Eliasson

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any sort of bilateral discussion to resolve the crisis.

She emphasised that the Rohingya Muslims are the bonafide citizens of Myanmar and must go back to their homes and the UN bodies should work out the modalities. "We're trying our best, but we cannot anymore bear the burden of a huge additional population".

Referring to Bangladesh Foreign Minister's visit to Yangon, she said the Myanmar Foreign Minister had never responded to the invitation to see the condition of the refugees forced to leave their homes and health through repression.

Begum Zia alleged there was violation of human rights in Myanmar.

Eliasson expressed hope of a positive outcome to his trip to Myanmar next Thursday. "I assure you that I will do my best to turn the tide to a positive side for a solution of the problem, and it may be a beginning of the process of bilateral discussion under UN auspices".

The UN Under Secretary General, conveyed greetings from the UN Secretary General to the Prime Minister.

He said the world community appreciated the way Bangladesh was tackling the Myanmar refugee problem. "It will be a very good example for others."

Eliasson noted with concern that unless the refugees could be returned and rehabilitated before the advent of monsoon, the situation would deteriorate.

"During our visit to Myanmar, we will assess the situation and see if it could be made favourable for early return and rehabilitation of the refugees," the UN envoy told the Prime Minister, indicating that if necessary there will be UN presence on the other side of the border to monitor their safe repatriation.

Collaborators Act

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Meanwhile, the National Coordination Committee for Realisation of the Ideals of War of Independence and Resistance to the Killers and Collaborators of 1971 has decided to give a memorandum to the MPs on April 12 urging them to recognise the people's court's verdict.

"We shall lead a big procession to the Parliament Bhaban on the opening day of the next Parliament session and urge the Members to take necessary steps to identify themselves with the people's desire to try the collaborators, a senior leader of the Coordination Committee told The Daily Star last night.

Biswas

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agents' and the 'committee to preserve sovereignty and independence' against some eminent personages of the country.

DUTA urged the government to take immediate action against those who were involved with these committees.

The meeting also condemned the terrorist activities of a group of armed terrorists in the Zahurul Huq Hall premises of the Dhaka University on March 29 following the arrest of the hall union Vice President, Manjurul Alam Tokon.

The DUTA meeting demanded the trial of those responsible for the killings and terrorists activities on the Dhaka University campus so far irrespective of their party affiliation.

The meeting was addressed among others by Dr Nurur Rahman Khan, A N M Shahidullah, Dr Harun-ur-Rashid, Sharifullah Bhuiyan, Dr A K Azad Chowdhury and Dr Mustafa Chowdhury.

Seven in thousand suffer from rheumatic fever

By Staff Correspondent

Nearly seven persons per thousand suffer from rheumatic fever in the country and as many as 50 per cent of them become heart patients at a later stage, Director General of Health Services M A T Siddique said on Tuesday.

Briefing newsmen on the upcoming World Health Day at the local World Health Organisation (WHO) office, he pointed out that as in other developing nations prevalence of heart disease is increasing in the country and it is already the number one killer disease in the world.

Thus, he said, the theme of this year's World Health Day — Heartbeat — the Rhythm of Health — is very timely to make people aware of this deadly disease.

According to a WHO report, worldwide, heart diseases kill more people than any other single disease, and disable millions. The day will be observed throughout the country on 9 April instead of the traditional 7 April, the founding day of WHO, because of the Eid festivities.

Prof Siddique said that in recent years, nearly 40 per cent of the heart patients admitted in the hospitals and 80 per cent of those needing close or open-heart surgery turned out to be suffering from rheumatic fever, which damages heart-valves. He identified the other causes of heart dis-

ease as high blood pressure, coronary and congenital defects.

In addition to the 110-bed Institute of Cardiovascular Disease (ICVD) Hospital, he noted, there is a coronary-care unit in each of the eight medical colleges in the country and at the Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research.

He said that recent sample survey also found that 11 persons per thousand suffer from high blood pressure, which is another major cause of heart disease in the country. Most of the time this ailment goes undetected, he added.

Noting that the facilities to treat heart patients in the country is "very limited" he pointed out that plans are underway to procure advanced equipment for the existing coronary-care units in the country and in phases include such care in other district hospitals.

Speaking at the press briefing, the resident representative of WHO Dr. A N A Abeyasinghe warned "heart disease is not only the greatest killer in the developed world but also fast becoming a major killer disease in the developing countries as well".

Reiterating that cigarette smoking is directly related to heart disease, he urged people to refrain from smoking.

CMM directed to grant bail

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charges related to sedition and waging war against the state, the judgement mentioned. The complete version of the judgement was not available on Tuesday.

The Gola Adalat held a mock trial of Gola Azam, Amir of the Jamaat, now in jail on charge of violating the country's Constitution, on March 26 and passed an opinion that his 'crimes' during the 1971 Liberation War were punishable by death.

Earlier, resuming argument at around 10-45 am, Barrister Syed Istiaq Ahmed said that the accused had never talked against the state or passed death sentence on Gola Azam, they just expressed their collective opinion that Gola Azam's offences were punishable by death.

The government did not impose Section 144 prohibiting the trial. It simply issued a press note which had no basis under this law.

He also said, "If holding a rally and expression of opinion can be sedition then many people including some in the government were seditionists for what they did in the past nine years of the anti-autocracy movement."

He said that public opinion against Gola Azam could never be an opinion against the state.

He said that freedom of speech, ensured in our Consti-

Deputy Finance Secretary killed in road mishap

By Staff Correspondent

A Deputy Secretary of the Finance Ministry, M Shams-e-Tabrij, was killed on a road accident at Chankharpool in the city Tuesday morning.

The accident occurred when the 'mishuk' (auto-rickshaw) he was travelling in was crushed by a speeding minibus at Chankharpool at about 9.30 am yesterday. The driver of minibus managed to escape with his vehicle.

Shams-e-Tabrij was taken to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

'Majority of FFs ignored'

By Staff Correspondent

Former Air Force Chief AK Khandkar Tuesday regretted that the contributions of the 'sons of farmers' and the rural people, who constituted nearly 80 per cent of the freedom fighters, were largely ignored by the nation after independence.

Making his first public speech on the Liberation War at a seminar on the 'War Strategies of the Liberation War', Khandkar, Bir Uttam, who was the Deputy Chief of the Bangladesh Armed Forces during the war, said the other 20 per cent who belonged to the armed forces were given all the credit for the independence.

Organised by the Muktijuddha Gabeshona Kendra (Research Centre on the Liberation War) and held at its Motijheel Office, the seminar was presided over by Professor Mamtazur Rahman Tarafdar. It was also attended by Salahuddin Ahmed, Maulai Hassan, Shamsunnahar Rahman, Kader Siddiqui, Rehman Sobhan and other prominent freedom fighters. Air Vice Marshal (Retd) AK Khandkar said most of the rebellions of Bengali armed forces in the beginning of the war were initiated by the junior commissioned officers (JCO) and the jawans contrary to the popular belief that mostly high ranking officers initiated the rebellions.

Refuting the contradictory claim that Major Ziaur Rahman first declared independence on March 27 of 1971, the retired Air Vice Marshal said that it was Awami League leader MA Hannan who declared independence in a radio broadcast from Chittagong on March 26 which could not be heard nationwide due to transmission faults.

Khandkar also said that the attack made on Bengales on March 25 was planned early that year and the Yahya government started mobilising Pakistani troops from West Pakistan into East Pakistan from January.

On the final outbreak of the war in December 3, 1971 which was sparked off by air raids at Chittagong and Godnail, Khandkar said those two operations were made by Bengalee air force officers contrary to the belief that they were made by the Indian Forces.

Khandkar also regretted that the nation had failed to utilise the young forces of the Liberation War.

The Retd Air Vice Marshal also focused upon some drawbacks, aspects and advantages of the war strategies of the Liberation War.

The Midnight File

Security Council okays sanctions against Libya

NEW YORK, Mar 31: The United Nations Security Council voted today to impose an air and arms embargo on Libya to take effect April 15. The 15-member Security Council approved the sanctions because of Libya's failure to cooperate with international probes into 1988 Pan Am and the 1989 Uta airplane bombings that left a total of 440 people dead, reports AFP.

UN suspends aid to Cambodian refugees

THAILAND, Mar 31: The United Nations, which has begun repatriating 3,75,000 Cambodian refugees, is suspending aid to new Cambodian arrivals in Thailand in hopes of halting the influx, a UN official said Tuesday. During more than a decade of civil war in Cambodia, the United Nations had given food and other aid to anyone reaching camps just inside the Thai border, reports AP.

Seven more killed in South African violence

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 31: Seven people including a black policeman were killed in South African township attacks, pushing the death toll to at least 26 since Saturday, police said today. A police statement detailing Monday's violence said three people were killed in apparently random attacks on black commuters in townships around Johannesburg, reports Reuter.

Joint venture

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Commissioner. She pointed out that there also existed good prospect in Bangladesh for Malaysian investment in the garments industries to manufacture special quality products.

"Malaysian entrepreneurs are now moving towards Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos for investment", she said adding, "Bangladesh should avail this opportunity to attract Malaysian investors before it is too late".

Tunku Nazhah said that Bangladesh and Malaysia maintain very good relations and there are innumerable possibilities to strengthen them further in the spirit of South-South cooperation.

Kuala Lumpur has been providing technical cooperation to Bangladesh for a long time under the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). A good number of Bangladeshis were provided technical and advanced studies under the MTCP and the programme continues.

Tunku Nazhah mentioned Malaysian assistance to Bangladesh's rubber plantation development programme. "We are ready to consider Bangladesh's request for more assistance to develop her rubber industry", she added.

Regarding recruitment of manpower from Bangladesh for Malaysia, Tunku Nazhah said that Malaysian employers should consider taking more workers from this country in view of their manpower shortage.

She mentioned that about 100 doctors, engineers and technicians along with about 3000 plantation workers from Bangladesh are now employed in Malaysia.

The Malaysian High Commissioner expressed the hope that the bilateral cooperation between the two countries will be boosted with the signing of

a new Bangladesh-Malaysia joint commission. "A new agreement for the joint commission between the two countries is now at a final stage and it is expected to be signed sometime this year in Kuala Lumpur", said Tunku Nazhah.

The Malaysian High Commissioner, who visited the Rohingya refugee camps at Cox's Bazar during the third week of March, termed the situation as 'sad and tragic'.

"It is difficult to describe", she said adding "from the humanitarian point of view, the influx of refugees from Burma is not desirable — it is causing severe strain on the limited resources of Bangladesh".

Tunku Nazhah informed that she has recommended to Malaysian government for providing some form of financial assistance for the Rohingya refugees.

"Malaysia will continue to play her due role to find an amicable and permanent solution of Burmese refugee problem", she added.

UN assures

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Eliasson on his return to the UN headquarters.

The Foreign Minister at the meeting today expressed satisfaction over the quick response of the UN to Bangladesh's call for exercising its influence in bringing about early solution of the problem.

Mostafiz assured the government's fullest cooperation with the mission.

At the meeting, the Foreign Minister was assisted by Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and Additional Foreign Secretaries Farooq Sobhan and A H Mahmood Ali.

The UN envoy was aided by chief of UNHCR mission here Oariouh Bayandou and Resident Representative of UNDP Charles H Larsimont.

Disenchanted people

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nege its pledge, they argue. "The promise was with the Kashmiris, not with Pakistan."

Two operations continue to fuel anti-India feeling. One is the cordoning of localities for flushing out militants. The security forces have to surround large areas because the houses in the city sit upon each other on the edges of lanes and by-lanes. Searches are close and severe. Even when some suspects are arrested, the combing process affects the innocent and leaves a trail of bitterness behind.

The other operation is the questioning of suspects. Interrogation centres have their own rough and ready methods to find out who is a militant. There are instances where the suspects have been for more than 15 days at a stretch, although the farthest limit is only three days. Still worse is the treatment meted out to hundreds of visitors, including women and children, who wait outside the interrogation centres for hours to get a five-minute interview with the detainees.

I visited one of the interrogation centres, ironically overlooking the picturesque Dal Lake. I was literally mobbed. Everyone had the same tale of woe to tell: somebody's husband had been picked up, somebody's brother, somebody's son or somebody's father. All of them wanted their relations back and pleaded innocence on their behalf. Some alleged they had been turned back, even when they had been intimidated about the day and time for the interview, because they had refused to pay money.

Several thousands have been detained and released in the last two years. Some 3,500 are still in jail without trial. Nearly 40 have died in custody and as many as 62 remain unaccounted. No amount of orders by the state high court has elicited the names of detainees from the authorities. In fact, there are scores of verdicts which remain unimplemented because the government is reluctant to comply with them. The judgements by the high court bench in Srinagar are called by some "the Lahore bench judgments."

However murky the atmosphere, one silverlining is the desire of the intelligentsia,

who constitute the braintrust of militants, to have peace. Their one formulation asks New Delhi to issue a statement that "all must seek a peaceful and final settlement of the Kashmiri problem which must be acceptable not only to India and Pakistan but above all to the people of Jammu and Kashmir." The formulation also underlines that "when we talk of the people of Jammu and Kashmir we mean not only the people of the Kashmir Valley but also the people of Jammu and Ladakh regions."

For the first time, I found the Kashmiris conceding that the people in Jammu and Ladakh are different and whatever the solution for the valley, it need not be applicable to them. Probably, the migration of 1.25 lakh Pandits from the valley has made the Kashmiris face the facts. Indeed, the migration is a black spot on the Kashmiris' secular outlook. I was told that Jagmohan, former Governor, and some BJP-like organisations made the Hindus leave.

It is difficult to believe that the people would quit their houses and hearths on mere exhortations. Persons like H N Wanchou, an activist, are doing a strenuous job to span the distance between the Muslims and the 20,000 Kashmiri pandits still living in the valley. But even today the vacant houses of the Kashmiri pandits are being set to fire.

Where does New Delhi go from here? Holding elections may be yet another farcical exercise. In fact, the situation obtaining in the valley is because of rigged elections in the past. Had even the polls in 1987 been fair, probably the story would have been different. But the ifs of history are at best hypothetical and at worst subjective.

Maybe, the best course is to release all political leaders and others, who have not committed any serious violence. Simultaneously, bunkers from the municipal limits of Srinagar and other towns should be removed. This will enable the Kashmiris to hold talks among themselves. At a later stage, Pakistan will have to be associated for a permanent solution. It is a pity that trials and tribulations of Kashmiris will not be over for a long time to come.

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