



PHOTO: STAR

As dengue infection rages through the city, absence of the Dhaka City Corporation's drive forces conscientious people to organise awareness programmes. The picture shows an innovative way of teaching both dengue prevention and treatment methods.

## DENGU ALERT

# Idle DCC mocks mayor's 'anti-mosquito' agenda

NAIMUL HAQ

As the city hospitals and clinics are getting deluged with dengue patients, the Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) inaction has made a mockery of Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka's budget declaration to keep mosquito eradication at the top of his agenda.

A section of DCC officials led by its Chief Health Officer Dr Ashraf Ali now try to justify the decision not to spray larvicide on the ground that it would be 'too costly' to do that.

"Even if we have to destroy all the Aedes larvae or eggs in one-fifth area of the capital, we would need 300,000 litres of larvicide, costing Tk 10.5 crore. It is impossible because we have no budget," said Dr Ashraf Ali, DCC's chief health officer.

"Outdoor larvicide spraying will not help much and it is not possible to visit every house to spray. So, we thought it is no use importing larvicide," Dr Ali said in support of his decision.

But The Daily Star talked to entomologists and city planners and found out facts quite contrary to his claims.

First, if the DCC has to spray all the household areas in the city, the total area to cover comes to around 7,200 hectares or one-fifth of DCC's total territory of 36,000 hectares.

Secondly, the total cost of adulticide spraying or fogging would be Tk 2,55,60,000 at the rate of Tk 355 per litre. According to experts, if the DCC sprays the entire households in the city twice a month, it would require just Tk 5,11,20,000. And the DCC's budget

announced on June 11 this year allocated Tk 19.27 crore exclusively for mosquito control. This is almost double the last year's Tk 10.5 crore allocation.

To bring the crisis under control, the DCC requires about one-fourth of its annual budget for mosquito control. Although it has that much of fund ready, the authorities have not taken any decision to go for such an action.

Experts and even some DCC health officials point out that it is possible to bring down the mosquito population to a size through larvicide spraying, which will no longer be a threat to public health.

And Thirdly, the DCC does not have to spray inside all houses. All it has to do is to spray the stagnant waterbodies, which are few in numbers in the city, and the drains

with little flow. This is because the Aedes mosquitoes grow in clear stagnant water.

They have expressed concern that the dengue situation will further deteriorate unless the DCC finally wakes up and goes for a speedy programme.

"So, if we plan and carry out spraying in just two consecutive large-scale phases, we can achieve our target to a great extent," said a leading entomologist requesting anonymity.

"It is just a matter of seriousness to tackle the problem. There is a lot of corruption involved in the mosquito control programme and the DCC was never serious in mosquito controlling," said a DCC official also requesting anonymity.

The Daily Star probe also found

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## Presidential polls on Sept 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The presidential election will take place on September 16, according to a schedule of the Election Commission Secretariat released yesterday.

The acting president yesterday summoned the eighth Jatiya Sangsad at 5:30pm on September 12. The parliament will elect the 17th president of the republic in its fourth session.

The Election Commission will receive nomination papers at the office of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) from 9:00am to 4:00pm on September 4 and the papers will be scrutinised the next day. Candidates can withdraw from the race till 4:00pm on September 8. The voting will take place from 2:00pm to 5:00pm in the parliament on the election day.

The office of the president, a constitutional figurehead in parliament, will be vacated on September 16.

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## 7 killed in road accident near Meghna Bridge

UNB, Munshiganj

At least seven people were killed and 70 others injured when a Chittagong-bound bus hit a microbus and a baby taxi before tumbling into 8 feet of water at Jamaldi, 500 metres south of Meghna Bridge at 3:45pm yesterday.

Police Super Lokman Hakim told UNB from the spot that three persons including the baby taxi driver, pedestrian Shamsul Islam, 45, and a bus passenger died instantly.

Four other bus passengers including a woman were declared dead when taken to nearby Bhabar Char health complex.

Of the other injured, mostly rescued from the sunken bus, 12 were rushed to hospitals in Narayanganj and Dhaka in serious condition. The rest were taken to nearby health complexes and private hospitals.

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## No hike in urea price

STAR REPORT

The government has backtracked on its plan to raise fertiliser price, anticipating a negative impact on the country's agriculture, specially in the wake of floods in some areas.

The cabinet committee on economic affairs yesterday discussed the price-hike proposal of the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), but decided to shelve it for sometime, according to sources.

The meeting, chaired by Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, concluded that the price increase would hamper post-flood cultivation.

"This is not the right time to take such a decision specially when the country is facing floods. The price increase will affect the farmers and the agriculture sector. We are a

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# Price to pay for 'family feud'

### Little girl slaughtered at Sabujbagh in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Yet another child has been killed in the city.

Five-year-old Ratna was slaughtered on Friday night at North Manda in the city's Sabujbagh thana, only four days after the killing of eight-year-old Bappi.

The body of Ratna, daughter of one Md Enamul Khan, was found on the first floor of an under-construction building in the area yesterday afternoon.

Police received an anonymous telephone call on Friday afternoon and went to the under-construction building owned by one Montu Mia. They recovered the girl's body from there and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The victim's father alleged that his daughter was killed following a quarrel with the members of a neighbouring family on Thursday. The trouble centred children's play.

Ratna was playing with Imon, 7, son of the neighbour at around

6:00pm Thursday. At one stage, Imon slapped on Ratna and the girl also scratched Imon. During the squabble, Imon's brother Rubel came and slapped Ratna.

"At one stage, members of the two families had a scuffle," said the duty-officer at Sabujbagh Police Station.

The local people intervened at this stage and they scolded Rubel for hitting the girl. The matter appar

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# AL plan to defy flag law puts govt in dilemma

NAZMUL ASHRAF

The government is weighing several options in the face of main opposition Awami League's (AL) decision to defy the official ban on hoisting the national flag at half-mast on August 15, the death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The AL, like in the past, will observe the day as national mourning day. The opposition party plans to lower the national flag at its central office, the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum and the residence of party President Sheikh Hasina in the capital.

Ministries concerned said they are taking political implications into account should the government act against the planned AL defiance.

"Action against the planned defiance of the government order will be

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## Launch 'silver revolution' in fisheries sector: PM

UNB, N'ganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday made a clarion call for initiating a 'silver revolution' in the country's fisheries sector that has tremendous potential for enhancing self-employment and alleviating poverty.

She made the call inaugurating the "Fisheries Fortnight 2002", with "Fish Cultivation can Eliminate the Curse of Poverty" as this year's theme, at a ceremony held at Murapara Degree College ground yesterday afternoon.

The prime minister said

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## WHEATGATE SCAM

# Probe finds unpalatable truth at Bogra

ANWAR ALI, from Bogra

A committee of the food ministry to probe the wheat scam visited the Local Supply Depot (LSD) in Sadar upazila of Bogra yesterday and found unpalatable, insect-infested, low quality Indian wheat at two of the 12 warehouses in the LSD.

The probe committee examined official documents and collected more than three dozen bags of wheat samples from all the 12 warehouses where at least 5161.370 tonnes of wheat are stored. The wheat was procured at about Tk 4.65 crore allegedly between July 25 and August 3.

The probe body members found insects in the samples taken from warehouse Nos.2. They also found differences in quality in the wheat samples taken from other warehouses. The probe body also tested moisture of the

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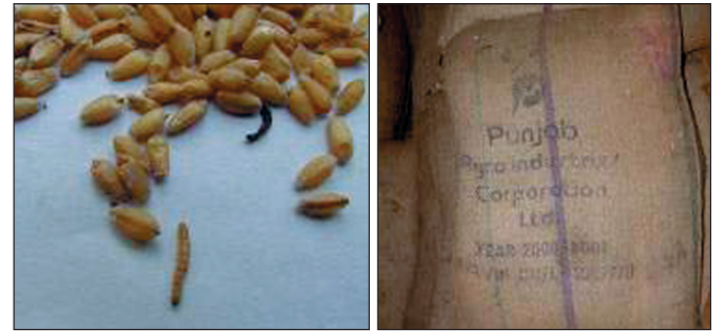


PHOTO: STAR

Tell-tale signs of mischief... worms crawl out of low-quality wheat collected from a Bogra silo (L); a sack shows seal of Punjab Agro Industries Corporation, proving Indian wheat purchased at the cost of local grains.

# Probe into bank swindling by Marwari trader begins

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The disappearance of Marwari businessman Om Prakash Agarwal with crores of bank money through fictitious accounts has whipped up storm at the highest level of the administration. The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday gave instruction to probe the scam on an emergency basis.

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday went to the PMO and informed Prime Minister Khaleda Zia the 'whole situation'.

The finance minister informed the PM that special security measures have been taken in different banks and police have been instructed to trace Om Prakash Agarwal, according to sources.

After Saifur Rahman's meeting with the PM, the finance ministry instructed the five private commercial banks to submit all information regarding credits taken by Agarwal and his accomplice Giridhari Lal Modi.

Om Prakash Agarwal took about Tk 300 crore in loans from five private commercial banks through forged letters of credit (LCs) and mortgaging the same enterprise to different banks and disappeared.

According to different sources, the whole amount has been sent outside the country through hundi.

Sources said, one Giridhari Lal Modi, also a Marwari businessman, introduced Agarwal to different banks. Modi also took loans from different banks for his spinning mill. Modi is well known to many bank officials and has good contact with a number of private bank directors and chairmen.

Agarwal took loans from Mercantile Bank, Dhaka Bank, One Bank, IFIC Bank and National Credit and Commerce Bank.

Meantime, the banks yesterday evening sent to the

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## Dengue claims one more, 55 others fall sick

STAR REPORT

Dengue infection claimed another life on Friday while 55 more patients were admitted to different city hospitals yesterday.

Saima, 26, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at around 6:30pm Friday. She was admitted to the hospital in the morning the same day with dengue shock syndrome.

With the latest victim, a total of 22 people have died since the outbreak of dengue fever this season.

And the total number of dengue-infected patients rose to 1,445, according to the control room for

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# Jubo Dal men, police fight gun battle over arrest

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Rampaging Jubo Dal activists put up barricades on roads in the town, fought gun battles with police and compelled the administration to release its top cadre David yesterday morning, about six hours after his arrest.

David was arrested from Fatullah DIT Math area at about 1:30 am and released at about 7:30 am.

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Police said he was arrested for questioning in connection with some general diaries (GDs) against him.

As the news of his arrest spread, Jubo Dal activists, joined by those of ruling BNP, started came out on roads from daybreak.

By 5:30 am, they put up barricades on the main roads and entry points of the town by placing buses