

Mosquito bites as city fathers sleep

MIZANUR KHAN

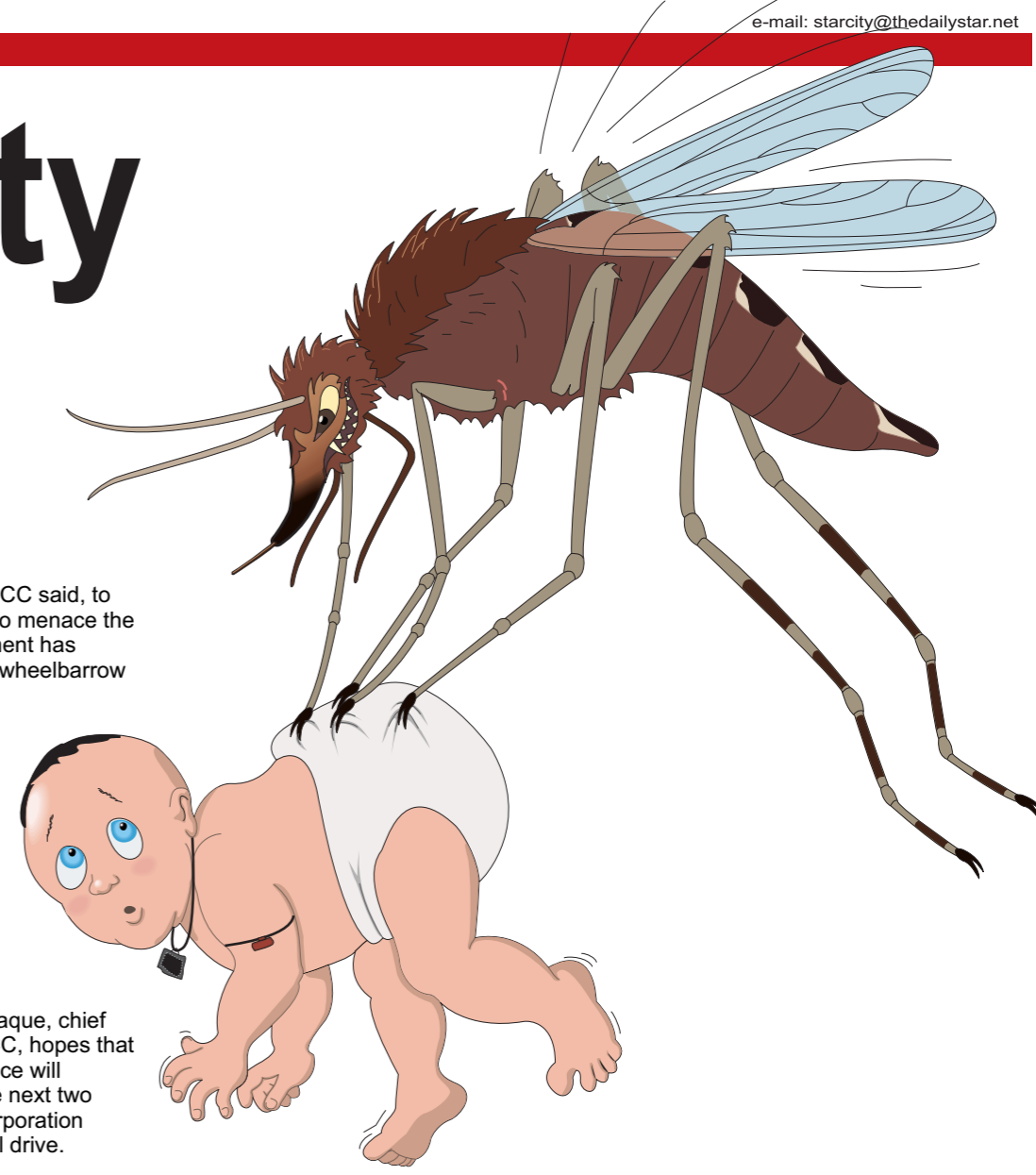
It is that time of the year when mosquitoes create havoc. But this time the little menace is really bothering more than one lakh students sitting for the higher secondary certificate (HSC) exams. And many candidates hold the Dhaka city corporation (DCC) responsible for not taking any action to relieve their suffering. "The situation is under control. We are trying our best to ease students' suffering by spraying larvicide in all exam centres. Workers visit the centres the day before an exam and spray chemicals," said Dr Naseem-us-Seraz, head of mosquito control branch of the corporation. "The mosquito menace in the city is now 20 per cent compared to last year," added Dr Seraz, who is also additional-in-charge of the

department, which is under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. City dwellers on the other hand apprehend the mosquito menace has increased in the capital over the last couple of weeks. Rashidul Alam, a resident at Mirpur, said he has to allocate around Tk 300 a month for aerosol and mosquito coils. The beneficiaries are shop owners in various parts of the city and net sellers at Karwan Bazar who said their sales had shot up over the past few weeks. Part of the problem health officials at DCC said was that they lacked adequate staff, equipment and insecticide. "The corporation has 370 spray men along with 220 crews from the mosquito control department to fight the menace. Moreover, it has 370 fogging machines, four wheel mounted sprays for

spraying different chemicals," the source said. As part of its mosquito control budget, the DCC allocated Tk 14 crore this financial year compared to Tk 19 crore in 2002-2003. "Since the corporation has unused funds from last year that is why the budget has been trimmed," a source said. But city dwellers not only suffer in terms of the many countless sleepless nights due to mosquito bites, there is also a financial side as well. Prices of coils and sprays have increased by 100 per cent over the years. Residents once upon a time bought a pack of coils for Tk 10 and spray for Tk 80. Nowadays they pay Tk 20 and Tk 200. "The DCC men have underhand dealings with the spray and coil producers. That's why they are so soft on mosquitoes," said an angry Rahmat Ali, a resident of

Arambagh. The mosquito menace is so bad that that they even bite in the daytime as well. Posh areas like Dhanmondi, Gulshan and Banani are not spared properly. "The DCC doesn't have time to listen to our woes," complained Shamima Yasmeen, a Dhanmondi housewife. Experts said no larviciding in breeding grounds is the main cause of increased mosquito activity. "Presently we are attaching importance to larviciding. A ward-based approach for larviciding is underway in ten zones of DCC," said Dr Seraz, a senior entomologist of the corporation. "A ward has been divided into four parts and we spray larvicide every four days. This programme includes all 90 wards of the capital. Local commissioners will also take part in the drive," he

added. Sources at the DCC said, to control the mosquito menace the concerned department has decided to buy ten wheelbarrow machines and has already floated tenders for the purpose. As a part of its mosquito control programme, every year DCC cleans water bodies, lakes, ditches and other derelict water-bodies. Colonel Azizul Haque, chief health officer of DCC, hopes that the mosquito menace will decrease within the next two weeks once the corporation launches its special drive.



Blues of teen music lovers

FAIZUL ATANIM

Modern auditoriums in Dhaka seem off-limits to concert organisers, as the venue authorities allege that the chaos created by such events wreck property. But musical bands and organisers said the management holds a security deposit for such wreckage. Damage is not regular, an organiser said. The city has a few acoustic and soundproof auditoriums, but most managers do not allow musical gigs (practices). Some venues are the Shishu Academy, Engineers' Institute Auditorium, BCIC, Russian Cultural Centre and Osmani Memorial Hall. Although the Russian Cultural Centre holds frequent musical events, others are reluctant to do so. "The crowd's unruly behaviour during musical shows causes damage to the seats. They jump and hop around creating havoc," said the official in charge of a renowned venue in the city. "If we want to organise a

Teenagers go through delicate phases of life. This frustrated community must have something they can hold onto. Proper musical exposure can keep them away from many illegal activities

concert at the Russian Cultural Centre, we have to pay Tk 12,000 in rent and an additional Tk 5,000 in security deposit," another organiser said. "Whether or not there is any damage, about Tk 2,000 is always retained after each event," he said, adding that it has become mandatory to pay, even if the hall was in perfect condition. The Dhaka Medical College auditorium is not rented out to concert organisers for political reasons. When the DMC was approached, the person in-charge said permission from a minister or other government high-ups or a political party leader was necessary to use

the venue. Music lovers rush to places such as the Dhaka Billiard Centre or the Gulshan Community Clubs in Gulshan 1 and 2 areas. These venues lack capacity to absorb heavy sound, as they are not soundproof. The echo is tremendous and brings about disarray of noise, causing disturbance to local residents. "Listening to music at such inappropriate venues causes hearing problems. The restaurants are not well air-conditioned, the room becomes extremely stuffy and Tk 150 for each show is simply a waste of money," said Rashed, a concert lover.

Open-air venues like Women's Complex in Dhanmondi and Army Stadium on Staff Road do not permit such concerts. Approached, the army cited no specific reason but disagreed to allow such events. "Teenagers go through delicate phases of life. This frustrated community must have something they can hold onto. Proper musical exposure can keep them away from many illegal activities," another organiser said. A non-professional, yet good musical band can earn up to Tk 8,000 for a single event and earn more on the successive release of its album. "The city lacks parks and entertainment for adolescents who are now diverting their attention to drugs, mugging and other illegal activities. The government cannot provide these youngsters with job or allowance, letting them take part in antisocial activities," an organiser said.

NANDAN WATER WORLD

Play with water, have fun at Nandan Water World. The Water World that began its journey May 12 spans eight bighas of land inside Nandan Park at Baroipara on the Nabinagar-Chandra Highway, just an hour's ride from the city. Set up in collaboration with Nicco India, the rides include Wave Pool, Tube Slide, Wave Runner, Family Slide, Dome Slide, Water Fun Plaza, Water Fun and Mist and the Multiplay Zone. The Water World remains open from 11:00 am to 9:00 pm.



SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN