

# Mosquito menace increases as floodwaters recede

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

With floodwater receding, mosquito menace has compounded the miseries of residents in the city as stagnant water in different areas has created ideal breeding scope for the insects.

"It becomes unbearable especially after dusk. Spraying insecticide or using mosquito repellent coils hardly helps. Only mosquito nets provide relief but you can not stay inside one for ever," said Nirobesh Dio, a staff of Notre Dame College in Arambagh.

Officials of the DCC's health department said they were using larvicide to curb the mosquito problem. Although they had stressed on the use of adulticide or killing of adult mosquitoes earlier, they were now more focused on extinguishing the larva.

"Larvicide is the only scientific process to eliminate mosquitoes as it destroys the breeding process," said Dr. Azizul Haque, chief health officer of DCC.

He said people think that the anti-mosquito drive is on only when they see DCC personnel using fogger machines to kill adult mosquitoes.

"But adulticide spraying fogger machines do not always ensure elimination of mosquitoes as effec-

tively as larvicide," said Haque.

The DCC has a health officer, a supervisor and spraymen in each of its ten zones to fight the mosquitoes. At least 530 spraymen are operating in 90 wards under the DCC with anti-mosquito chemicals. They go on a larva-killing drive once every week in prospective breeding spots in their respective localities.

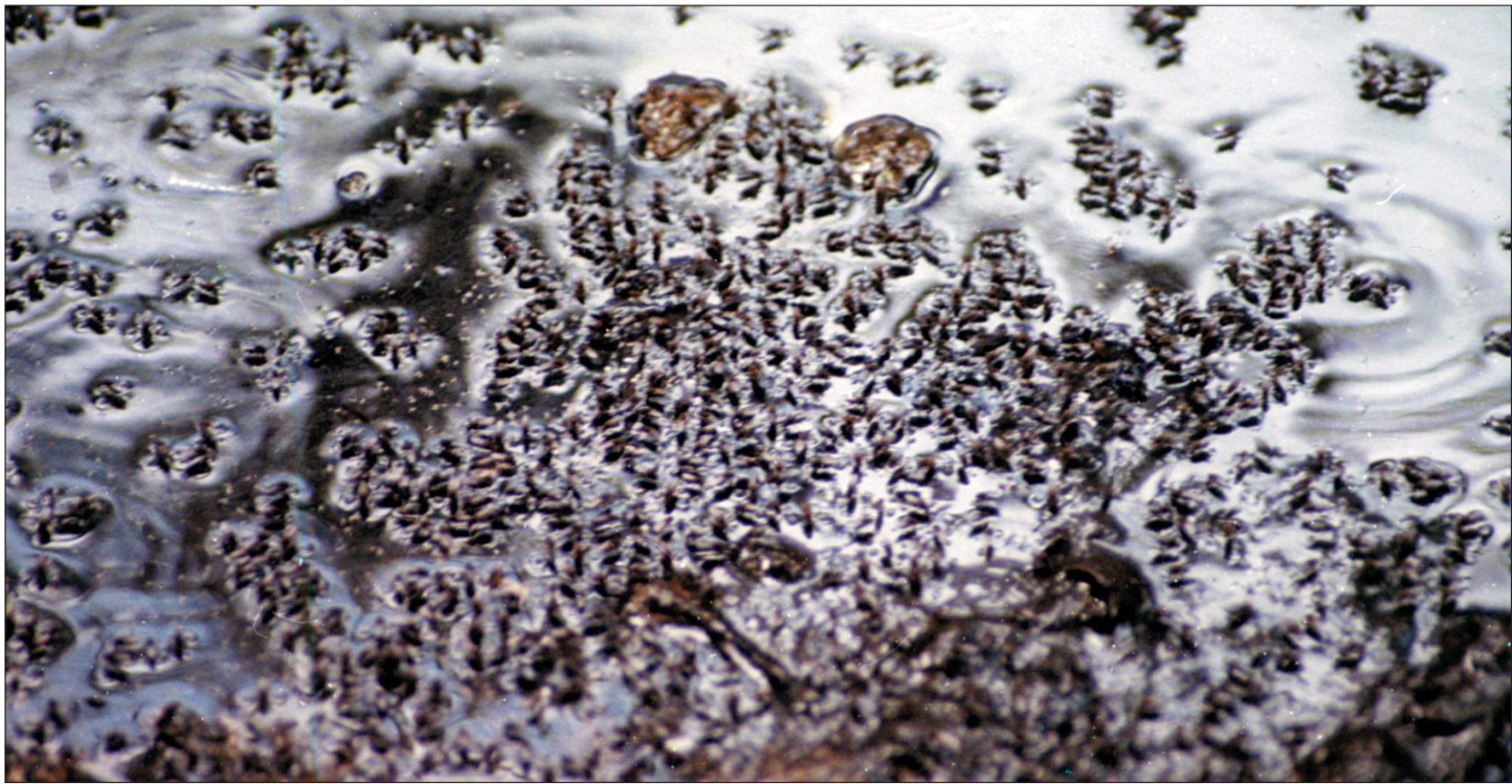
"Earlier only one chemical called Fanitox was available but now another one Limbat is also being used," the chief health officer said. He claimed Limbat to be ten times more effective than Fanitox.

"Two millilitres of Limbat has to be mixed with ten litres of water where as it required 20 millilitres of Fanitox," said Haque adding that the chemicals are imported mostly from China, Singapore and India as a health product only after technical screening and bio-efficacy tests.

When asked whether spraying once a week was good enough to quell the mosquito menace, the chief health officer said that they had taken special measures for flood-affected areas where they were spraying thrice a week.

"We have ordered more spraying in zones one and four as people in those localities were suffering more than the others," he said.

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A top official in one of the zonal offices of DCC said that sometimes larvicide does not stay as effective as half of the larva goes down into the water when chemical is sprayed in a particular area.

"By the time spraymen return to the same spot, the living larva underneath the water become adults and the problem remains," he said.

But the chief health officer said that spraymen have been directed to stir the water while spraying chemicals. "Not a single larva can survive if they stir the water while spraying," he said.

Haque informed that the DCC is importing larvicide worth Tk 17 crore to fight the mosquitoes. However, he admitted that more manpower, machinery and fund was necessary to make the city totally mosquito-free.

"We need larvicide chemical of Tk 50 crore for the population of 1.5 crore in the city," he said.

Haque hoped that despite the limitations, the DCC drive would see success.

"We have even warned the health officers, supervisors and spraymen at zonal offices that they risk losing their jobs if they fail to prevent mosquito breeding in their areas," he said.

## Flood shelter people in turmoil

Schools want them to leave, but they have no money to restart



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Victims of flood taking refuge in the Armanitola Government Primary School.

KAUSAR ISLAM AYON

Flood-hit people taking shelter in city schools have been asked to leave the premises by the school authorities as early as possible although many houses still reed under water.

Most victims are not yet ready to leave the shelters because they do not have money to support them once they go back.

"I could not go to work for days since the floods hit us. If I leave the shelter now empty-handed how could I feed my family of five?" asked Abdur Rahim, a day labourer who took refuge at Khilgaon Model School and College.

He requested the authorities to

allow him more time so that he can earn some money to repair his house before he moves in.

The worst floods in six years overwhelmed the capital a month ago making some 225,000 people flee to shelters including 50,000 children who took refuge in 160 schools and other centres in the city.

Some victims do not want to leave because they may forego any relief that would be granted.

"I don't think I will get relief if I go back home," said Merunnessa from the Khilgaon Community Centre. "At least we get some aid here, no matter how little it is."

Madina Begum, a refugee at Provati Uchchya Bidyaniketon, said

she is receiving food and medical support at the camp for her sick child. She is afraid of losing this support once she leaves the shelter.

"My youngest daughter is suffering from fever and cough and I'm getting medical support here. I can't give her medical care once I go back home," she said.

Many educational institutions, which turned into flood shelters suspending classes a month ago, are now thinking of reopening between August 15 and 20.

"We can understand the plight of the refugees, but they should leave the camp as water in this area has already receded," said AKM Abul Bashar, headmaster of Provati

Uchchya Bidyaniketon at New Eskaton.

"We have already missed the pre-test deadline. If we cannot open by August 20, our students will be affected," he said, adding they would need about a week to restore the school environment.

Although guardians are worried about their children's education, many of them do not want forced eviction.

"The authorities must not evict them with force, but try to recover the loss in education after the schools reopen," said Kamrul Islam, a guardian of two schoolchildren.

## Wholesalers cash in on artificial crisis

AVIK SANWAR RAHMAN

Rice hoarders and wholesalers are creating an artificial crisis in the market to increase prices though there is ample stock of rice in the country.

Wholesalers at New Market claimed that the price might rocket in 1-2 weeks as the crops in northeast and northern districts were destroyed by floodwaters.

But the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) and Consumer Association of Bangladesh (CAB) do not think that a situation of rocketing prices of rice is necessary, unless it is done artificially by hoarders.

According to the TCB, the demand for rice a year is 2.26 crore tonnes and last year's production was 2.66 crore tonnes and another 10 lakhs tonnes had been imported.

There is 40 crore tonnes surplus production of rice this year. So why should there be a price hike for the lack of production," said TCB's chief officer Abdur Rob Shikder.

"It is not true that paddy fields were destroyed in the northern districts because of floods. The floods actually affected the western districts, and had no effect on production in northern districts. Some chatal owners could not dry paddy because of the heavy rains, but the quantity is minimal," said Shikder.

"But the cost of transportation could affect prices, but that too very minimal," he said.

According CAB prices of rice have gone up by one or two takas this year compared with last year's prices. In July 2003 prices of Pajjam was Tk 16.5 per kg whereas in July this year it was Tk 18 and by August 9 the price rose to Tk 19 per kg.

The prices of Kataribhog remained the same this year while prices of Jhinga increased from Tk 19 to Tk 20. The price of Nazirshail and Miniket saw most changes increasing from Tk 19 to Tk 21 per kg this year, as most middle class

people consume these varieties.

According to the TCB market research sources the wholesale price of rice from Badamtoli and Mohammadpur Krishi market is within limits. The wholesale price of Nazirshail is Tk 18.25 per kg, ordinary rice is Tk 13.25 which is now sold between Tk 14.10 to 14.50 and medium rice is Tk 14.5 to 15.7 in the wholesale market and Tk 17 in the retail market.

The retail price of miniket is Tk 21. TCB sources said that miniket comes mainly from Kushtia and Nazirshail from Dinajpur and

Savar. The supply is ample at the Mohammadpur Krishi Market and Badamtoli, said Shikder.

CAB sources said that this year Aman crops were been destroyed in the Sylhet area. A few crops were destroyed in the northern districts but the season is still on for cultivation. A major portion of Ropa Aman rice produced in Barisal was not affected by flood either, and IRRRI was harvested before the flood. Dinajpur and Barisal are the main sources of rice supply in the country.

"Peasants have already started

to cultivate paddy. The flood will make a bumper harvest this year," said Shikder.

But the problem peasants' face is the crisis in raw paddy. Though the Prime Minister declared to arrange five kg of paddy per peasants and 25 kg fertiliser, CAB experts think this is not sufficient.

"Farmers need one to two maunds seeds depending on paddy field. Lack of supply may leave farmers from ripping the maximum fertility of soil offered by flood," said an official CAB.



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