

Diarrhoea, pneumonia cases on rise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cases of diarrhoea and pneumonia in last three weeks have shot up in most of the country including the water-logged areas of the capital, triggering a sudden influx of patients into hospitals.

The number of people died of diarrhoea across the country in last eight days has risen to 18 and of them, at least two died on Thursday, said the Health Directorate control room.

From July 12 to September 23, about three lakh people have been affected with the disease while 143 of them have died, said the control room sources.

Three children died of pneumonia yesterday raising the death count since August 1 to 203. In the same period, over 32 thousand cases of pneumonia have been reported.

People who have contracted skin diseases so far across the country number more than 24 lakh and 67 thousand, according to the Health Directorate control room.

Sources at the International Centre for Diarrhoea Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR, B), popularly known as Mohakhali

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Lightning kills 7 in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Lightning killed seven people, four of a family, at Peergacha and Gangachara upazilas of Rangpur yesterday.

Nuru Mian, 45, his wife Kapasula Bala, 40, their 25-year-old daughter and grand daughter were struck by lightning while taking breakfast at their house at village Ramnishan under Peergacha upazila at around 8:45am.

Two other people -- Makbul, 35, of Gaburchar village and Koksana, 30, of Harirampur village under the same upazila--were also killed in lightning at noon.

Besides, lightning killed a woman named Amena, 30, at Gazaghanta village under Gangachara upazila at around 9:00am.

Rab nabs aide to Shibir Nasir in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Chittagong on Thursday night arrested an accomplice of notorious criminal Shibir Nasir.

A Rab team acting on a tip-off raided the city's Chawk Bazar area at around 7:00pm Thursday and arrested Salim Uddin alias 'Deg-dega Salim', sources said.

Salim, son of Mohammed Ismail of Hathazari upazila, stands accused in six criminal cases including two murder cases. Reportedly a close aide to Chittagong's top-notch terrorist Shibir Nasir, he was handed over to Hathazari police.

Earlier the same day, the Rab members picked up Kamal, 20, from Badurtala area for suspected links with abduction of a schoolboy.

Tonmoy, 14, a student of Municipal Model High School, went missing on way home from school on July 15 this year. He could not be traced till date.

Kamal was handed over to Kotwali Police Station and placed on a two-day remand yesterday.

A team of Kotwali police yesterday in a dawn raid on Alkaran area arrested Md Jamal Uddin. His name is on the terrorist list of Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

In another drive, Detective Branch (DB) of CMP raided Momin Road area under Kotwali Police Station and held two people with a gun at around 12.30am yesterday.

The arrestees are Md Salim, 18, and Sri Suman Methar, 20.

MORE AREAS GO UNDER WATER IN SATKHIRA, JESSORE

Cry for relief, drinking water in flood-hit dists

STAR REPORT

Raging floods swamped fresh areas in three upazilas of Satkhira and two in Jessore yesterday as water from upstream India further swelled some rivers in the region.

Miseries of flood-hit people in many areas are mounting in the absence of any relief operations even after 10 days. Scarcity of drinking water has worsened their sufferings as most tubewells have gone under water.

Flood situation however improved in four upazilas of Jessore.

Our Satkhira correspondent reports: More than two lakh

marooned people in Kalaroa, Tala and Sadar upazilas still remained marooned and thousands among them, particularly the poor are facing acute sufferings as no relief activities started till yesterday.

Surging waters from the Betrabari and Ichhamati rivers inundated fresh areas in Chandanpur union of Kalaroa upazila.

The Kapotakkha river overflowing its banks submerged Ahsan Nagar, Salimpur, Kamari, Alaipur, Talundia and Bamanali villages in Kalaroa upazila as a sluice gate at Joynagar caved in yesterday.

Over 3,000 people in Tala and Sadar upazilas have taken shelter

on high land. Their sufferings increased as the local administrations have not opened any flood shelters for them. "They are living in the pen," said Deara Union Parishad Chairman Anowarul Islam.

"We are almost starving for the last 10 days," said Azizul Kha, 70, of Deara union.

Kalaroa Upazila Nirbahi Officer Laxman Chandra Debnath however said 45 tonnes of rice has been sanctioned for the flood affected in the upazila but distribution of it is yet to start.

Day labourers in the flooded

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Major population control targets still beyond reach

Govt spends Tk 3,384 crore between 1998 and 2003

NAIMUL HAQ

Despite spending Tk 3,384 crore on family planning during 1998-2003, the government has failed to achieve major population control targets, experts said.

They pointed out that because of the absence of door-to-door family planning services during the period, rural population grew unexpectedly, total fertility rate (TFR) remained stagnant at around 3.0 and contraceptive acceptance (prevalence) rate (CPR) declined.

Withdrawal of 'domicile family planning services' at the grassroots level in 1999 badly affected healthcare services for pregnant

women before and after delivery, vaccination programme for newborn and children up to five. Other family planning interventions also suffered due to unplanned launching of community clinics (CCs) without carrying out appropriate feasibility study, the experts thought.

A top official of the family planning (FP) directorate termed the adverse effect on family planning during the five-year period as, 'time penalty to the nation and financial penalty to the country'.

During the period, the FP directorate had targeted 14 lakh sterilisation (tubectomy and vasectomy) for permanent birth control across

the country but investigations show it accomplished only about two lakh sterilisation.

"In the name of bringing reforms, policy makers have done a great damage to the population control sector, impact of which would be evident in the years to come," said Md Fazlur Rahman, director general of family planning.

He told The Daily Star, "For decades more than 44,000 family welfare visitors (FWVs) used to make door-to-door routine visits for counselling on reproductive and child health care and merits of various contraceptives to offer choices. But withdrawing them from

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8 telecoms workers kidnapped in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Eight telecoms employees became the latest victims of Iraq's kidnapping epidemic yesterday.

The life of British engineer Kenneth Bigley, meanwhile, was still hanging in the balance yesterday, as London stood firm and refused to negotiate with his Islamist captors despite heart-rending pleas from the hostage's family.

Two Egyptian engineers named as Mustafa Abdel Latif and Mahmud Turki, working for Egypt's telecom giant Orascom, were snatched at

gunpoint from their central Baghdad office on Thursday night, an interior ministry spokesman said.

"Last night at 10:00 pm, armed men in a BMW drove up to their offices in the Harithiya district and kidnapped them," the spokesman said Friday.

A foreign employee with Orascom said it was possible they were taken from their home.

The employee told AFP that another six technicians working for the local Iraqna operator licensed by

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Three killed in Baghdad blast

AFP, Baghdad

Three people were killed and 14 wounded in an explosion on Palestine Street in central Baghdad yesterday, medics said.

"We have received the bodies of three men and 14 wounded, all of them men," said Dr. Ahmed Rashid at al-Kindi hospital.

The blast was in front of a restaurant and a court house on the eastern side of the Tigris river.

It was not immediately clear what caused the blast but some witnesses said it was an exploding shell.

Meanwhile, five mortars exploded near the Italian embassy here yesterday, wounding two Iraqi women and damaging homes, said an Iraqi neighbour whose building was hit.



PHOTO: STAR

One of the 36 new species of butterflies that the researchers of Jahangirnagar University have claimed to have spotted on the campus.

JU researchers spot 36 new species butterflies

EMRAN HOSSAIN EMON

Researchers of Jahangirnagar University (JU) have claimed to have spotted 36 new species of butterflies on the campus, raising the number of the genus to 162 from 126 in Bangladesh.

MA Razzak, a student of zoology, in research on the species under the supervision of Assistant Prof Monwar Hossain identified the new species for the first time in the country in 2003. With this, 80 species of butterflies

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One more house devoured in Basila

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Buriganga yesterday devoured one more house in Basila, bringing 41 the number of houses destroyed by the river in the last 41 days.

Locals of Basila said the village is on the verge of extinction due to the second phase of destruction by the river following heavy rains. If the government does not take any effective measure, the river will devour the entire village, they added.

As many as 20,000 people of the village are living in a tensed situation, while at least 500 people have so far left their own houses.

The government has only made an attempt to demolish a dyke surrounding three brick kilns by dredging the area. The owners of the brick kilns had built the dyke to protect those from the Buriganga, diverting the course of the river that caused the erosion.

Khulna Jubo Dal split over Monday's grand rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Intra-organisational feuds have finally split Khulna Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal into three factions centring a divisional grand rally scheduled for Monday in the city apparently as a showdown against the main opposition Awami League.

Three factions have formed three grand rally implementation committees, each vowing to make the rally to be held at Circuit House maidan a success.

According to Jubo Dal sources, a 101-member committee was formed on September 19 with Assistant Organising Secretary (central) Md Fakhru Alam as convenor and district Jubo Dal President Moniruzzaman Mamun as member secretary.

Two more committees have been formed protesting formation of the 101-member committee.

District Jubo Dal President Moniruzzaman Mamun has formed a committee comprising 40 members.

Moreover, Sonadanga thana Jubo Dal Convenor Gausul Azam has formed a 71-member committee.

Formation of the 101-member committee prompted sharp reaction among leaders and workers who went on the rampage and assaulted four leaders at a meeting

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Five feared drowned in Magura boat capsized

UNB, Magura

Five people were feared drowned in a boat capsized in the river Kumar in Sadar upazila on Thursday.

Witnesses and locals said the ferryboat of Alokdia-Ghospdanga ghat, carrying 35 passengers, sank when it was crossing the river amid strong current in the afternoon.

Thirty of the passengers managed to swim ashore after the incident. But five others, including three women, remained missing till yesterday noon.

A large number of people thronged both banks of the river in search of the missing people.



PHOTO: STAR

Mother wails over the death of her daughter Rahela Akhter Lima, inset, at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital yesterday.

Rape victim Rahela gives up fight for life

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Savar rape victim Rahela Akhter Lima has finally lost her 33-day fight for life at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

The 19-year-old garments worker, who was mugged, raped and left with her throat slit on the leafy Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus on August 22, died yesterday.

Her relatives took her body to their village home in Faridpur for burial.

She was returning home along the JU premises on August 22 when her former

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Lanka detains 61 Bangladeshis heading for Italy

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan police yesterday arrested 61 Bangladeshis for overstaying their visas amid suspicion that they were planning to leave the island illegally and travel to Italy, a police officer said.

The men were taken into custody in a pre-dawn raid on a lodge in Colombo, the official said, adding that police were trying to find those who arranged a possible people-smuggling racket.

Sri Lanka has been a frequent staging ground for fishing trawlers packed with young men who pay up to 3,000 dollars to reach better lives in Europe, Japan or Australia.

The boats are often detected on the sea or turned back when they reach their final destination.