

India 'loses 10m female births'

BBC ONLINE

More than 10m female births in India may have been lost to abortion and sex selection in the past 20 years, according to medical research.

Researchers in India and Canada for the Lancet journal said prenatal selection and selective abortion was causing the loss of 500,000 girls a year.

Their research was based on a national survey of 1.1m households in 1998.

The researchers said the "girl deficit" was more common among educated women but did not vary according to religion.

The unusual gender balance in India has been known about for sometime.

In most countries, women slightly outnumber men, but separate research for the year 2001 showed that for every 1,000 male babies born in India, there were just 933 girls.

The latest research is by Prabhat Jha of St Michael's Hospital at the University of Toronto, Canada, and Rajesh Kumar of the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Research in Chandigarh, India.

10 killed in road crashes

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soon after the state minister for home affairs had visited the terminal.

The deceased are Kawar Ali, 15, an employee of Kabir Restaurant at Topkhana Road, and Liton, 23, an employee of a rice wholesaler shop at Lalbagh. Both hailed from Barisal.

Witnesses said the police sealed the entry gates of the terminal when State Minister Lutfuzzaman Babar visited the terminal yesterday afternoon.

Hundreds of passengers gathered at the gates as the police kept one gate shut during Babar's visit. As the state minister left the terminal at about 6.30pm, hundreds of people rushed to board three Barisal-bound launches that turned into stampede, witnesses said.

The victims were crushed in the stampede. The witnesses however claimed that two other persons dropped into the river, but could not give any detail.

Meanwhile about 50 launches had to suspend their trips to the capital yesterday due to dense fog hovering over the rivers giving rise to a mad rush at the launch terminal in the capital.

In Bogra, five people were killed and eight others injured in three separate

Re-probe

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further investigation by the Investigation Officer Abdul Hamid, now officer-in-charge of Khulna Police Station.

Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of Dainik Janmabhumi and president of Khulna press club, was killed in bomb attack on June 27, 2004 in front of his office-cum-residence.

Eight extremists were named as accused of the murder in the FIR lodged with Khulna Police Station.

Trial of the case began under Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal on October 25 last year and 11 out of 27 prosecution witnesses so far gave testimony.

Human bird flu

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disease among birds has already been confirmed, officials said.

Turkish laboratories identified four of the new cases as children from three northern provinces, confirming that the virus is steadily advancing from remote, rural eastern areas to the more urbanized west, with three H5N1 carriers already hospitalized in the capital Ankara.

The European Union sought to bolster its defences, announcing new import bans on six countries surrounding Turkey and confirming that EU experts were accompanying a World Health Organization (WHO) team currently assessing the situation in the worst-hit areas in the east.

The new cases bring to 12 the number of people currently under treatment, all but one of them small children and teenagers.

Two children from the same family died in eastern Turkey last week after playing with sick chickens, becoming the first human fatalities outside the virus' eastern Asian origins.

A third sibling also died but she tested negative for the bird flu virus.

Of the new cases, two siblings aged four and five, currently hospitalized in Ankara, have not yet shown any sign of illness, senior health ministry official Turan Buzgan told the Anatolia news agency.

A five-year-old boy from Corum, initially treated for pneumonia, was brought to the same hospital in Ankara and is now improving.

A 12-year-old is undergoing treatment in Samsun, on the Black Sea coast, Buzgan said.

The fifth patient, aged 18, was hospitalized in Van, where the three siblings perished last week and four other children infected with H5N1 are currently undergoing treatment.

As the emergency cull of fowl continued across the country, officials said the agriculture ministry was drafting legislation to ban outdoor poultry breeding, largely blamed for the spread of the virus, Anatolia reported.

Most of those infected come from impoverished rural areas, where people breed poultry in their homes and often take them indoors during the winter, providing ideal conditions for contami-

Principal secy Kamal awaits 5th extension

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They found that there was an increasing tendency to select boys when previous children had been girls.

The sex ratio is so skewed in some states, men cannot find brides.

In cases where the preceding child was a girl, the ratio of girls to boys in the next birth was 759 to 1,000.

This fell even further when the two preceding children were both girls. Then the ratio for the third child born was just 719 girls to 1,000 boys.

However, for a child following the birth of a male child, the gender ratio was roughly equal.

Prabhat Jha said conservative estimates in the research suggested half a million girls were being lost each year.

"If this practice has been com-

mon for most of the past two decades since access to ultrasound became widespread, then a figure of 10m missing female births would not be unreasonable."

Sex selective abortions have been banned in India for more than a decade.

Experts in India say female foeticide is mostly linked to socio-economic factors.

Criminal killed

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On information that Jamal had been staying in Rampura in disguise and frequented the Kakoli area regularly, a team of Rab 4 waylaid him in front of a motor club at 5.30pm Sunday, a Rab press release said.

During interrogation, Jamal told Rab men that his cohorts were hiding and preparing for an attack in a den at Baburtek in Damalkot area of Kafrul.

Rab 4 team went to the area to arrest his accomplices and recover firearms at around 4.30am yesterday. As soon as they reached the spot, unknown criminals opened fire on the elite force suddenly, prompting them to retaliate, the press release said.

"Taking advantage of the suddenness of the incident and darkness, Jamal ran in an attempt to flee and fell in the line of fire," the release reads.

After the shootout, Rab team found Jamal lying bullet-hit and dead, while his accomplices fled. The deceased are Monir Hossain, 35, an army person who was on his way to Rangpur from Comilla to celebrate Eid with his family, Mizanur, 20, who hailed from West Shimul Bari under Jhalakha upazila in Nalipahar and an unidentified person of 35 years of age. Identities of the injured could not be known immediately.

The injured were admitted to Sherpur Thana Health Complex and Mohammad Ali Hospital in Bogra.

In another incident Raja Chowdhury, 55, was killed when a bus ran him over at Gohail area under Shahjahan upazila at noon.

Imamul, 20, a helper to a truck driver was killed when he was run over by a truck while standing beside his parked truck at Matidhali of the Sadar upazila at 4.00am.

Both bodies were sent to Mohammad Ali Hospital for autopsy.

Sweepers lay

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an influential ruling party lawmaker allegedly manhandled a sweeper on Sunday morning for not cleaning the street in front of his house in Shahjahanpur, sources said.

Yesterday morning they laid siege to the residence of Mirza Abbas, who is also the local MP, and demanded justice.

The sweepers went back to join their work after two and a half hours, when the minister assured them of looking into the matter.

When contacted, Mirza Abbas told journalists that some sweepers came to him as they come every year before Eid.

A local BNP leader, however, said this time the sweepers came to Mirza Abbas to seek justice.

14-party

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High Court (HC) order.

"The CEC has shown his disrepect to the HC and is continuing the preparation of the controversial voter list," Jalil said adding that the CEC is acting as the main conspirator to hold the next parliamentary polls in favour of ruling BNP and Jamaat.

In protest against the 'autocratic' CEC, the opposition parties will march towards the Election Commission (EC) secretariat in a bid to lay siege to the EC on January 19, he said.

The 14-party meeting however cancelled the January 30 grand rally in Chittagong but kept the schedule for the grand rally in Sylhet on January 31 unchanged.

Presided over by AL presidium member Abdus Samad, the meeting was also attended by Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, AL Joint Secretary Obaidul Quader and Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon.

Bangabandhu

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Pakistani jail the following day.

After a nine-month struggle for independence, the nation achieved victory on December 16, 1971 and the then Pakistani authorities were eventually compelled to free the founding father of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, the Awami League (AL) and its front organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to observe the day. AL hoists the national flag and the party flag at the AL central office and at the Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city and party offices across the country at 6.00am.

A senior WHO scientist, Klaus Stoehr, said Sunday in Germany that the outbreak in Turkey did not mean increased risk for humans and blamed the spread on insufficient health controls in this vast country.

But Guenael Roidier, the head of a WHO delegation currently in eastern Turkey, told AFP in Dogubeyazit that Turkish officials had handled the crisis well.

"They reacted rapidly... and their reaction was structured," he said. "The problem is the scope of this man-animal frontline - it must be reduced."

The authorities, already overwhelmed by the vast territory of contamination, were also having difficulties persuading people in impoverished rural areas of the scale of the threat.

Many families, reluctant to part with what are often their sole livelihoods and most precious belongings, were hiding their birds from slaughter teams.

The statement said, "January 10 of 1972 is a historic day and a Bangabandhu himself had described his homecoming as a journey from darkness to light."

Many people in the mainly Kurdish east are also illiterate and do not speak Turkish, further complicating efforts to raise their awareness.

Rush home mired

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Kushtia regions where mercury has dropped below 10 degrees Celsius. The lowest temperature was recorded at 8.3 degrees at Chaudangayesterday.

Dhaka's lowest temperature was 12.7 degrees Celsius.

Sources at the flight information centre at Zia International Airport said arrivals and departures of six international flights were delayed and four domestic flights of different airlines were cancelled due to poor visibility between 3:00am and 9:00am yesterday.

A UNB report says: The home ministry yesterday advised all vehicles bound for southwestern districts from the capital and the eastern region to use Jamuna Bridge and Lalmon Shah Bridge as dense fog disrupted ferry services at Paturia and Mawa.

The launches that left Dhaka for Patuakhali, Barisal, Barguna, Bholia, Jhalakati, Khulna and Pirojpur on Sunday night reached their destinations eight to nine hours late. Dense fog disrupted movement of river craft in the rivers Dhalashwari and Meghna.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) sources said around 50 launches could not come back at the Sadarghat in the capital in time which forced thousands of home-bound people to wait at Sadarghat for hours.

The disruption caused untold sufferings to thousands of home-bound people from 15 districts of the southwestern region. Five ferries loaded with 18 passenger buses were stranded for the whole night in the middle of the river Padma.

The passengers, especially female, old and minor, suffered from shortage of food and drinking water coupled with sanitation problems.

To avoid the disrupted ferry services on Doulatdia-Paturia

route, most bus operators have changed their route and started moving towards Jamuna Bridge to reach the southwestern districts via Paksey in Pabna, which takes a long time.

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Ship stuck at Karnaphuli for silting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An ocean-going ship ran aground in the river Karnaphuli yesterday due to silting in the mouth of the river.

According to sources, the Bangladeshi flag carrier MV Bangaboti was supposed to enter the Karnaphuli channel from the outer anchorage to dock at the Chittagong port but it failed as it ran aground.

The Bangaboti with its 500-container load is waiting for the next high tide in the hope of freeing herself. The area where the ship got marooned was declared a safe zone by the port authorities, the ship captain said.

The Bangaboti has become dangerous for ships as they run aground quite often. Several ocean-going ships last year had the same fate and waited for days to enter the channel. The shipping experts suggested regular dredging in the channel to keep the port operational.

US urges BNP, AL

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believe that your military knows that," said Steve Engelken, director of the office of Bangladesh and Pakistan Affairs, during an internet chat with some Bangladeshi journalists.

"Democracy takes constant effort by all, if it is to be maintained. We call on both the major parties to act responsibly and put the interests of the nation ahead of everything," he said, adding: "Bangladesh's international friends, including the United States, support broad participation in the next general elections which should be free and fair."

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