

# No one to own up to chikungunya, measles, but the victims?



PLEASURE IS ALL MINE  
SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

**C**HIKUNGUNYA in Dhaka and measles in Sitakunda, Chittagong have combined to highlight public health mismanagement at its height.

A retired judge strongly expressed his disapproval of the civic body's role in its management of chikungunya. The state minister for health reportedly endorsed a similar viewpoint. The DNCC mayor who initially set the ball rolling to the citizens' homes in terms of responsibility to combat chikungunya later regretted if any public misgiving had been created by his comment. Saying "sorry", he added that he fully empathised with the sufferers.

The reappearance of measles even on a small scale at Sitakunda is astonishing in the wake of claims of a hundred percent success rate in child immunisation programmes. Some vaccination officials have been sent out on "punishment" posting. But isn't there a footprint of dereliction of duties by higher, supervisory authorities having regard to these facts: First, the inoculation drive had ceased to be undertaken in the area for the last seven years! How could it have happened under the watch of the designated officials? Secondly, it has been claimed that the intended beneficiaries were resistant to the vaccination drive. The question arises as to what was done to sensitise the parents of children about a life and death issue concerning their wards?

Rampant undernourishment has been reported from the area. In fact there are pockets of malnutrition or undernourishment in the country. They must be identified and brought under safety nets on a priority basis.

For all its strange and exotic phonetic, chikungunya is perhaps the



PHOTO: STAR

most pronounced word in Bangladesh today. Not obviously for any amusing ring to the name but for the scary consequences it holds out to the victim. Originating in a dialect spoken by a small ethnic community of Tanzania in Africa, chikungunya literally means cramping pain. But surely the etymology of the word would have been of the least academic interest had it not travelled inter-continentially over to Dhaka creating a public health crisis for us.

But importantly it has occurred neither suddenly nor without any notice. Alarm bells have been ringing for half a decade to obliterate the

grounds where carriers of the viral disease spawned. Looking at the Institute of Epidemiology and Disease Control Research (IEDCR) website, you will find that in 2011 chikungunya struck Dohar in Dhaka and Shibganj in Chapainawabganj districts, respectively. Blood samples taken from 640 persons at Dohar indicated a 25 percent incidence while the survey at Shibganj showed the rate of infection at 20 percent.

In the following year, in 2012, a joint survey by IEDCR and IEDCR in Tangail put the incidence at 18 percent. Subsequently, based on a study carried out in 2013 at Sutrapur, Dhanmondi,

Motijheel and Adabar thanas in Dhaka, experts prophesied that ten percent of Dhakaites run the risk of contracting the disease.

It is common knowledge that the WHO keeps its antenna high on any massive public health disaster in the making and it predicted last year that a chikungunya epidemic would hit Bangladesh.

The results of ignoring such warnings are before us. A *Prothom Alo* online survey has pointed out that if chikungunya enters a home it will attack another inmate. Of the families surveyed, those afflicted reported an incidence of about two

persons per family.

This data is attributed to the pace and girth of the spread: The Aedes mosquito, of a strain that causes the disease, has a life cycle of some three-four months but it requires fresh blood every three days to survive. So as the carrier bites a person, it draws fresh blood from the bitten one. Then off it goes to prey on another person—the cycle goes on and on till the end of its 3-4 month longevity.

The virus fearfully has no antidote. So the high fever and excruciating joint-pain or just trauma will have to be endured between six and eight weeks or more, in some cases. Standard pain killers are used for relief but in case of unremitting pain steroid may have to be applied though for not more than three weeks. The caveat must be respected to keep out of harm's way.

The Aedes mosquito, which causes chikungunya, thrives in clean water collected in pots and cans, tyres, flower tubs or the back-side of air conditioners and fridges.

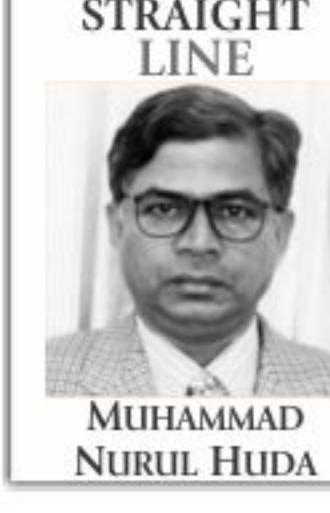
The construction sites around many buildings are so full of tiny pockets of water. Some people are also apt to collect rain water.

While a new surge of attention to detail needs to be spurred on and precautions put in place, the revelation that 59 percent of those contacted online said they didn't see any anti-mosquito spraying activity in the last two months, requires a clarification from the city corporations. More than that a fair measure of redemption ought to be there.

To end on an interesting note, chikungunya has not been reported from the countryside. One hopes that this remains a tribute to the rural environment.

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## Honouring a young hero



STRAIGHT LINE  
MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

WITHOUT delving into the mystery of the virtue we call courage, we may perhaps say that courage is ubiquitous and is widely talked about and universally held in high regard. Sir Winston Churchill described courage as the "first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all the others". Even Plato, ever the rationalist, suggested that courage is the ability to face your fear and "stand and fight". The courage to be is also the courage to step outside one's comfort zone—even in the face of fear, doubt, or alienation.

As long as the passage from youth to adulthood is measured by the milestones of courage, the challenges of moral courage will continue to remain important and, to a great extent, attractive. It is in such a context that we need to recollect and gratefully remember the exemplary courageous act of Faraaz, a young Bangladeshi, during the infamous Holey Artisan Café attack of July 1, 2016. Without a doubt, Faraaz took risks on behalf of others, despite the possibility of dying or suffering serious physical consequences. We need to appreciate that his moral courage resulted in physical violence leading to death.

Faraaz's bravery and sacrifice are both saddening and inspirational. It is

sad because in him we see an extraordinary young man whom we have lost but whose outstanding courage and fortitude makes us infinitely proud in the country and beyond. While feeling sorry and guilty for the horrendous acts of the zealots, we have stood tall and dignified owing to Faraaz's unprecedented moral courage and bravery.

Let us remember that Faraaz was not in the military, which trains individuals for physical courage. Significantly, there is nothing unusual in a medal winner telling an audience that he was "trained" to do what he did, or the sentiment expressed by medal recipients that anyone in their unit or platoon would have done the same thing if they were placed in the same situation. It is thus astounding as to how this young man displayed admirable military traits in such a frightening scenario.

Faraaz displayed love that does justice. It is the love that gives meaning and purpose to our lives. Mahatma Gandhi put it this way: "A coward is incapable of exhibiting love." Love, he writes, "is the prerogative of the brave". For Faraaz courage was perhaps an attachment, a yearning, a desire for something that extends beyond our radically autonomous selves.

Field Marshal William Slim says that "Courage is not merely a virtue; it is the virtue. Without it there are no other virtues. Faith, hope, charity, all the rest don't become virtues until it takes courage to exercise them. Courage is

not only the basis of all virtues; it is its expression. True, you may be bad and brave, but can't be good without being brave".

Faraaz may have been in an emotional state that prompted him to risk death; he also staked his career, happiness, his whole future on his judgment of what he thought was right and worthwhile—quite clearly admirable moral courage.

We need to know that there are men in high positions who have had distinguished physical courage but lacked moral courage, and conversely there are morally courageous people who would not face bodily danger. Faraaz displayed both physical and moral courage and we need to appreciate that moral courage is higher and a rarer virtue than physical courage.

A society which dwarfs its men will find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished. The Bangladeshi State that owes its creation to the supreme courage of Bangabandhu should not fail to honour one of its bravest sons by conferring, posthumously, the highest civilian award, may be the Swadhinata Padak (Independence Day Award), on Faraaz. We definitely long to live in a world where it is easier, not harder, to make tough moral choices. Finding ways to establish and enhance a culture of moral courage is surely one of the noblest goals of humanity.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former IGP and columnist of *The Daily Star*.



Garden of the Righteous, a commemorative garden, set up in the Tunisian capital Tunis in the honour of five Arab and Muslim righteous individuals, including Bangladeshi Faraaz Ayaaz Hossain. President of the City Council of Milan, Italy, Lamberto Bertolè is seen paying tribute to the memory of Faraaz.

COURTESY: ITALIAN EMBASSY, TUNISIA

## QUOTABLE Quote



DONNA TARTT (THE SECRET HISTORY, 1992)

American writer

*It is better to know one book intimately than a hundred artificially.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

### ACROSS

- 1 Endangered
- 7 Authentic
- 11 Snoopy, for one
- 12 Lake near Buffalo
- 13 Declaration signer
- 15 Cobblerfruit
- 16 Gasp for air
- 18 Bugler's evening call
- 21 Soda choice
- 22 Spot for an X
- 24 Mine find
- 25 Knight's title
- 26 High card
- 27 Leipzig language
- 29 Karoke need
- 30 Order to Spot
- 31 Swindles
- 32 Fancy events
- 34 Declaration signer
- 40 Lotion additive
- 41 Surfer's car
- 42 Sugar source
- 43 It's always dawn-ing
- 45 It's a six-pack
- 48 Bugler's evening call
- 51 Soda choice
- 52 Spot for an X
- 53 Mine find
- 54 Knight's title
- 55 High card
- 56 Leipzig language
- 57 Karoke need
- 58 Order to Spot
- 59 Swindles
- 60 French article
- 61 Church feature
- 62 Tiny holes
- 63 Watchful
- 64 Un-adorned
- 65 Laundry pairs
- 66 Gear part
- 67 Storage site
- 68 Casual shirt
- 69 Doc's request
- 70 It's attractive
- 71 Kremlin setting
- 72 Kayak's cousin
- 73 Mowing site
- 74 Quick punch
- 75 Bullfight call
- 76 Weed whacker
- 77 Strange
- 78 Spy grp.
- 79 Anthem author
- 80 Loft
- 81 Bowe
- 82 Onice
- 83 Stern
- 84 Dylan
- 85 Edgy
- 86 Lit
- 87 Showoff
- 88 Comot
- 89 Tailed
- 90 Apart
- 91 Trove
- 92 Tinker
- 93 Eden
- 94 Stutters
- 95 Asp
- 96 Hear
- 97 White
- 98 Basic
- 99 Lunar
- 100 Opera
- 101 Stars
- 102 Oscar

## BEETLE BAILEY



## BABY BLUES



## by Mort Walker



## by Kirkman & Scott

