

ROHINGYA CAMPS

# Chickenpox outbreak causes concern

9,972 cases reported last month

PORIMOL PALMA

A chickenpox outbreak in Cox's Bazar Rohingya camps has raised a public health concern in the region, officials say.

The number of patients with chicken pox, also known as varicella, reported last week was 5,376, which is more than double the number reported the week before, according to a World Health Organisation report published on Thursday.

Chickenpox cases had earlier been reported on several occasions, but more and more cases kept coming since the second week of January. As many as 10,240 cases were reported between January 2018 and January 31 this year. Of them, 9,972 cases were reported last month.

The highly contagious airborne disease is caused by an initial infection of varicella zoster virus, which results in skin rash that forms small, itchy blisters and eventually scab over.

"Yes, there is a chickenpox outbreak. It affects the children the most. The danger is that the refugee camps are overcrowded, which is perfect for fast spreading of the disease," said Abdus Salam, deputy director at the divisional office of the Directorate General of Health Services in Chattogram.

The outbreak may become a public health emergency if not contained, he warned.

He said one might suffer from a fever, pain and itching if infected by the germ. No medication is needed for this disease and it is cured in 15 days. But the infected ones must be isolated.

Paracetamol can help if one suffers from fever due to the disease, he said, adding that the disease was not fatal, but the sufferings and the cost of treatment are significant.

"In the first seven days, the rashes spread over the body and in the next seven days they dry down," Salam said.

The authorities had begun to address the outbreak, he said.

"We need to ensure that the affected children do not go outside," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

The health ministry and the Institute of Epidemiology, Diseases Control and Research have requested the health partners to report all varicella cases on a daily basis.

An inter-agency committee led by the civil surgeon of Cox's Bazar has been formed to finalise the varicella case management guideline for the refugee population.

"The WHO and the health sector are working in collaboration with community health working groups, education sector and risk communication group for multi-prong responses," the WHO report said.

Some one million Rohingyas are living in the camps in Cox's Bazar. Of them, around 750,000 fled the brutal military crackdown by the Myanmar military in Rakhine state since August 2017. Others had earlier fled the waves of violence in Myanmar since 1980s.

The congested shanties and crowded living are conducive to rapid spread of air and waterborne diseases like acute respiratory infection, diarrhoea, diphtheria and chickenpox.

The WHO report says varicella, acute watery diarrhoea and unexplained fever were the diseases with the highest proportional morbidity in the last week of January.

Thirteen new suspected diphtheria patients were reported last week, bringing the total cases of diphtheria to 8,403, which include 202 cases from Bangladeshi community near the Rohingya camps.

The total number of deaths reported due to diphtheria has so far been 45. No death has been reported from the host community, according to the WHO report.



Four recipients of this year's Bangla Academy Literary Award pose with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and other dignitaries at the inaugural ceremony of the month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair yesterday. The award winners are Kazi Rosy for poetry, Mohit Kamal for literature, Syed Mohammad Shahed for essay and research and Afsan Chowdhury for research on the Liberation War.

PHOTO: PID

## Know your history well

FROM PAGE 1

just selling and buying books, the PM gave importance to translating local and international literature books for knowing the world literature and letting others to know the Bangladeshi one. "To know the world literature, it's urgently needed to do the transliteration."

Hasina said although the world was advancing fast and books were now very much available in digital format, the attraction of printed books will never end. "The joy of turning book pages is something else. It can't be compared with anything else."

She also underscored the need for establishing a digital library for accessing any book from any part of the world.

The PM regretted her inability to roam around the Ekushey Book Fair freely, saying that she was now living some sort of a "captive life".

"When I was not in power, I used to come at the book fair and roam around freely. But now, I'm living some sort of a captive life. I don't have the scope to come here. If I want to come here it causes problems for others due to security reasons. Considering people's sufferings, I've to suppress my desire to come here, but in reality, my heart always stays here."

Two foreign guests -- Indian poet Shankha Ghosh and Egyptian writer and poet Mohsin Al Arishi -- graced the opening ceremony and spoke as distinguished foreign guests. Due to his illness, the speech of Shankha was read out by Ramendu Majumder.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid attended the opening ceremony as a special guest. Bangla Academy Director General poet Habibullah Siraji delivered the welcome speech with its President National Professor

Anisuzzaman in the chair.

AWARD

Hasina also distributed the Bangla Academy Literary Award (Sahitya Puroshkar)-2018 at the ceremony.

Four writers and researchers won the award this time. They are poet Kazi Rosy for poetry, Mohit Kamal for literature, Syed Mohammad Shahed for essay and research and Afsan Chowdhury for research on the Liberation War. The winners received a cheque for Tk 2 lakh each.

The PM also unveiled a book titled "Secret Documents of Intelligence Branch on Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" (Volume-2).

Later, Hasina visited different book stalls.

The fair will remain open from 3:00pm to 9:00pm (Sunday to Thursday) while it will remain open from 11:00am to 9:00pm on holidays.

On February 21, the fair will be open from 8:00am to 8:00pm.

Seminars will be held at the fair venue at 4:00pm every day from February 2 to 28 followed by cultural events.

Like the previous years, the venue of the fair was extended to nearby Suhrawardy Udyan with huge changes.

Some 770 units have been allocated to 499 organisations this year.

The authorities allotted 150 stalls to 104 organisations on the Bangla Academy premises and 620 stalls to 395 organisations at the Suhrawardy Udyan.

The book fair began informally on the Bangla Academy premises in 1972. In 1978, the academy officially took the responsibility for organising the fair every year. The fair venue was extended to Suhrawardy Udyan in 2013 to accommodate more publishers and book lovers.

## SSC student murdered



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Criminals killed an SSC candidate by slitting his throat in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila on Thursday night.

The victim, Nirob, 16, son of Nayeem Khan of Kumarbhog village, was a student of Medenimandal Anwar Ali High School.

Quoting the victim's family, Monir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Louhajang Police Station, said Nirob

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

## Murder, not suicide

FROM PAGE 1

for provoking suicide. The possibility of murder was ruled out by the autopsy report received from the forensic department of Sir Salimullah Medical College in Dhaka.

"Death was due to asphyxia resulting from hanging which was ante-mortem and suicidal in nature," read the post-mortem report. Asphyxia is a condition where the body does not get enough oxygen, causing unconsciousness or death.

On the signs that experts look out for while examining a body of similar condition, Akteruzzaman Talukder, a retired forensic specialist, said in many cases, it is difficult to ascertain whether it is a murder or a suicide.

Forensic specialists might say in such instances that "the case is suicide unless proved otherwise," Akteruzzaman said, adding that police investigation and circumstantial evidence should help in getting to the conclusion.

In such cases, autopsy reports are not conclusive, suggested Akteruzzaman.

According to the PBI, police, based on autopsy reports, had submitted final reports in nine out of the 13 cases, seal-

ing the chances of trials. Final reports suggest that police had not found any evidence of the allegations brought in a case.

In some cases, police had stated that there were factual errors in case statements.

The PBI in its report in Nilufa's case said the autopsy report had influenced the CID investigation so much that a murder case was transformed into a case of suicide. When the complainant of the case rejected the CID report, the court ordered further probe in 2017.

"The inquest report [done by police] mentions many visible marks of injury but the doctor [who conducted the post mortem] didn't consider them," said the PBI report.

It also pointed out that the injury marks on Nilufa's forehead, left side of her abdomen, and neck should have raised suspicion.

In many other cases, evidence found at the scene, like the victim's hands being tied while the body was hanging, injuries to victim's head, and thorns and twigs of plants in a victim's hair, were ignored and investigators completely depended on the autopsy reports.

The PBI findings are feared to have caused "distrust" in police investigations or credibility of autopsies, said PBI Chief Banaj Kumar Majumder.

What the PBI tried to do was to bring the issue under the spotlight so that authorities were prompted to act in ensuring justice for victims like Nilufa, he added.

The number of such cases might be higher. Between January and June last year, 3,874 cases were recorded in which victims were primarily thought to have died by hanging themselves.

Banaj said his agency had investigated many more such cases since its inception and concluded that they were murder cases. He, however, could not provide a specific number.

The PBI suggested forensic training of doctors who conduct autopsies and the use of modern equipment and infrastructure.

Senior forensic experts also do not engage in examining bodies to avoid the obligation of court appearance as witnesses, it said.

In this regard, the CID wrote to relevant authorities in September 2016 saying CID forensic experts should be

exempted from testifying in court. Their signed reports should be enough, it said.

On the role of the police, the PBI said they should sincerely investigate cases like Nilufa's and only experienced officials should prepare inquest reports.

In Nilufa's case, the wound marks, accounts of the witnesses who had bathed and dressed the body and her children's accounts led the PBI to bring murder charges against the accused. The case is now under trial.

## Ex-BCL leader

FROM PAGE 1

up and were trying to find the missing man.

Missing Jamil was facing seven cases filed with the police station. Of those, one was filed under Special Powers Act, one over arms dealing and five others for extortions and fights, the OC added.

Jamil was a nomination seeker from the ruling Awami League for the chairman post in the upcoming Natore Sadar Upazila Parishad election. He was known as a follower of Natore-2 lawmaker Shafiqul Islam Shimul.

## Home minister meets Hefajat chief Shafi

UNB, Ctg

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday met Hefajat-e Islam Ameer Shah Ahmed Shafi at Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Ullum Moinul Islam, also known as Hathazari Madrasa.

He paid the courtesy call at the Hefajat chief's office in the madrasa around 3:30pm.

Before visiting Hathazari Madrasa, the minister visited the graveyard of late lawmaker Nurul Alam at Nanupur in Fatikchhari upazila for offering fateha, and later, he went to Nanupur Jamia Islamia Obaidia Madrasa.

After the meeting with the Hefajat chief, Asaduzzaman told reporters that it was purely a "personal" visit. "I have come here to take part in the annual congregation of Nanupur Madrasa to keep a promise."

"Visiting Allama Shafi was a coincidence and I sought his blessings. He prayed for the country, countrymen

SEE PAGE 13 COL 1

ABUSING WORKERS

## Malaysian firm to face 42 charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Malaysian company that reportedly abused Bangladeshi and Nepali workers would face 42 charges, said the country's Human Resources Minister M Kulasegaran yesterday.

WRP Asia Pacific, the Malaysian gloves-making company, would be charged for failing to provide proper living conditions and not paying its Bangladeshi and Nepali workers in time, he added.

Around 2,000 staff members of the company went on a strike protesting the abuses last week, reported Malay Mail, a Malaysian newspaper.

"The living condition is terrible. We are enforcing it strictly," Kulasegaran told reporters after presenting aid to villagers of Kampung Tai Lee.

The ministry investigation since August last year revealed the company had breached labour law and there are 42 cases against them, he said.

The minister said there were 10 more companies that have caught the government's attention for its deplorable treatment of workers, but declined to reveal their names pending completion of investigations.

Kulasegaran urged employers to treat their foreign labour with the

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

**TIMELINE**

**FEBRUARY 29, 2016**  
Case was filed on behalf of Philippines' AMLC with a court for confiscating five bank accounts.

**MARCH 11, 2016**  
Philippines' AMLC lodges complaint with the Dept of Justice against Rizal Bank's branch manager Maia Santos-Deguito for money laundering.

**MARCH 15, 2016**  
BB files case with Motijheel Police Station under Money Laundering Prevention Act against unidentified persons. After this, CID was tasked with probing the incident.

**MARCH 17, 2016**  
Maia Deguito, former branch manager of RCBC, held responsible in Rizal's internal probe.

**MAY 11, 2016**  
The NY Fed, BB and SWIFT issue a joint statement to bring the perpetrators to justice.

**NOVEMBER, 2016**  
Philippines sends back \$14.54m.

**JANUARY 10, 2019**  
A court in the Philippines convicts and sentences Maia Deguito.

**FEBRUARY 1, 2019**  
BB files case with a New York court over the cyber heist.

## Legal battle begins

FROM PAGE 1

and bring the culprits to book.

In the case statement, the BB said the RCBC and its senior personnel had full authority and control over the fictitious accounts used in the crime.

The first paragraph of the 103-page complaint reads, "This litigation involves a massive, multi-year conspiracy to carry out one of the largest bank heists in modern history right here in New York City."

Cozen O' Connor, a large US law firm, filed the case on behalf of Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, the RCBC has hired another US law firm to defend the case, claiming the lawsuit was "nothing more than a political stunt" to try to shift blame on the corporation.

On February 4, 2016, hackers broke into the central bank's system and generated 70 fake payment orders to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York amounting to \$1.94 billion.

The NY Fed's security system flagged the payment orders but only five of them fell through and \$101 million was released.

Of the amount, \$81 million was wired to an RCBC branch in Manila, from where it disappeared into the casino industry in the Philippines. The rest \$20 million made its way to Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka sent back the entire sum immediately after the heist was exposed while the Philippines returned \$14.54 million in November 2016 -- meaning \$66.46 million is yet

to be retrieved.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Razee said the case was filed to recover the money and realise the legal and other costs.

Asked about the fee of the law firm, he said it had to do a lot of things before filing the case and the BB bore all the costs.

"We also have to pay the firm when it will move the case," said the head of BIFU.

Asked, he said the firm had assured them of recovering the money as per the international laws.

Razee, however, could not say how much time would be needed to get back the money.

Another BB official, involved in the process, said many such money laundering cases were dissolved within three years and the money was recovered during that period.

However, there are also instances that some cases took years to be disposed of, said the official, wishing not to be named.

On the reason for the delay in filing the case, Bangladesh Bank Governor Fazole Kabir on January 30 told reporters that the process of case disposal with the Philippines was a lengthy one.

He hoped that less time would be required to have the case dissolved by the NY court.

On this January 10, a court in the Philippines convicted Maia Deguito, a former branch manager at the Manila-based RCBC, of money laundering, in the first conviction over the

BB heist.

The Makati Regional Trial Court sentenced Deguito to a jail term ranging from 32 to 56 years, with each count carrying four to seven years. She was also ordered to pay a total of about \$109 million in fine.

Later on January 28, a BB team, including Debaprasad Debnath, a consultant of the central bank, flew to New York.

RCBC'S LAW FIRM

The RCBC has hired top US law firm Quinn Emanuel to defend the lawsuit. The Philippines bank revealed this in a stock exchange filing yesterday.

"We will show that this suit is nothing more than a political stunt by the Bangladesh Bank to try to shift blame from themselves to RCBC," Tai-Heng Cheng, Quinn Emanuel's lead attorney in the case, was quoted as saying in the filing.

"Not only are the allegations false, they don't have the right to file here since none of the defendants is in the US," Cheng said, reports the Philippine Daily Inquirer.

RCBC had nothing to do with the theft of the funds and has cooperated fully with every investigation into the matter, he said, adding that, "This suit is nothing more than a blatant attempt by Bangladesh Bank to shift blame and cover up their own liability."

BB, NY Fed to work together

A joint statement by BB and NY Fed yesterday said, "To further the recovery effort, the New York Fed and BB have entered into a Resolution and

Assistance Agreement, where the New York Fed will provide technical assistance to BB in its litigation against those who were complicit in the fraud to recover the stolen funds."

Among others, that technical assistance includes a joint meeting of the two organisations with relevant agencies or parties in Philippines to encourage assistance in the recovery of stolen funds, it added.

The banks also termed the fraud on Bangladesh's account at the NY Fed as "a threat" to the international fund transfer system.

## Myanmar using 'oppressive laws' against peaceful critics: HRW

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The Myanmar government under Aung San Suu Kyi has continued using oppressive, military rule-era laws to prosecute peaceful critics, quashing hopes the country's first democratic leader in decades would safeguard free speech, according to a damning new report by a prominent rights group.

Freedom of expression has been worsening since the Nobel peace laureate's administration took office in 2016, with prosecutions creating a "climate of fear" among journalists, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday.

SEE PAGE 13 COL 5