

UNSAFE FOOD WORLDWIDE

1 in 10 falls sick a year

Experts warn against food contaminated with parasites, toxic chemicals

AFP, Addis Ababa

Food contaminated with bacteria, viruses, parasites and toxic chemicals is a mounting health hazard and a crippling economic burden, a global conference on food safety has been told.

The two-day forum is bringing together government officials and health experts from 125 countries to combat the peril of unsafe food, which kills more than 400,000 people each year, according to UN estimates.

"Today, the world produces enough food for everyone," Jose Graziano Da Silva, director general of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), said at the opening of the conference on Monday.

But much of this food "is not safe",

he added.

"We estimate that each year, nearly one person in 10 falls sick after eating contaminated food," said Kazuaki Miyagishima, who heads the World Health Organization (WHO) food security department.

Of the 600 million people who fall sick from unsafe food, around 420,000 die, according to the UN's estimate.

Children under five suffer most, comprising 40 percent of those who fall ill.

According to the WHO, contaminated food is to blame more than 200 diseases, ranging from diarrhoea to cancers -- and the economic impact is huge but often overlooked.

The FAO estimates the cost for low

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An injured youth is being taken to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur around 2:30pm yesterday, hours after a clash between a group of locals and BGB men in Baharampur village of Thakurgaon's Haripur upazila over seizure of cattle. At least three people were killed and 16 others wounded in the clash.

PHOTO: STAR

Lights go out

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narrowly survived by jumping off the microbus, said his brother works as a labourer in Dubai and returned on Monday after one and a half years. He was staying with one of his relatives in Bahaddarhat area.

"We started from our home in Kamalpur area of Monoharganj around 5:00am. The driver looked drowsy all the way," Abdul said.

"After our microbus's bumper got stuck with the lorry, we had no scope for getting out as all the doors were locked," he said, adding, the fire broke out after the lorry sped up and removed the microbus.

Quoting witnesses, Sub-Inspector Sohail Sarkar, in-charge of Joranganj Highway Police Outpost, said the accident happened after the microbus rear-ended the lorry.

Police said the lorry driver had apparently not noticed the microbus immediately.

On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire, said Jashim Uddin, assistant director of the department.

However, the bodies of the dead were found completely burnt inside the microbus, he said.

"The fire might have originated from a spark triggered by the dragging and gas leakage from the microbus's cylinder," he added.

The SI said the lorry driver fled leaving the vehicle in front of Nijampur College in Mirsarai.

Both the vehicles were seized.

Our Cumilla correspondent adds: Swapan, third among seven sons of dead Abdur Rahman, said five of the brothers live in the UAE.

There were two other relatives in the

microbus. They were also being treated at the DMCH, he added.

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, at a briefing at his office in the capital, admitted that discipline has not been ensured on roads.

"Actually, discipline has not been ensured on roads. I have admitted this," he said during the briefing on several issues.

FIVE KILLED IN CAPITAL

Five people were killed in three road accidents in the city's Postogola, Jatrabari, and Khilgaon areas yesterday.

Three people died and two others were injured as a bus and a CNG-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on near Postogola Bridge around 6:00pm, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station.

All the dead were passengers of the auto-rickshaw.

The dead were Bachchu Mia, 60, his son Zubayed, 26 and Syed Ahmed, 28.

Talking to reporters at the DMCH, Zubayed's brother Masum Miah said his brother had been having severe back pain for the last couple of days. His father was taking him to a hospital when the accident happened.

The injured were taken to DMCH while the bodies were kept at the morgue there.

Police seized the bus, however, its driver fled.

In Jatrabari, Rubel Choukider, a trader, was killed as a bus rammed a rickshaw carrying him yesterday afternoon. The bus was seized but that driver also managed to escape, police said.

Besides, a 60-year-old man, Abdur Razzak, was killed being hit by a motorcycle in front of Khilgaon community centre yesterday evening. It happened when he was crossing a road.

Three killed as BGB opens fire

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had to fire in self defence as a gang of cattle smugglers attacked them at Baharampur village.

The BGB men seized five smuggled cows at about 10:20am. As they were taking those to Betna camp, the cattle smugglers intercepted them and tried to snatch away the animals, he said at Thakurgaon district BGB headquarters.

The BGB men tried to calm them in vain. At one stage, they fired blanks to scare away the smugglers. But it didn't work, and they were compelled to open fire, Masud added.

The official, however, did not say how many bullets were fired during the incident. He said he would inform the media about it later.

Replying to a query, Masud said the BGB recently stepped up its patrol to check smuggling and trafficking along the border. Being aggrieved at this, a nexus of smugglers and traffickers might have created such a situation in a planned way.

However, villagers alleged that BGB personnel from Betna Camp shot at them as they tried to prevent the BGB team from taking their cattle to the camp.

The dead were identified as Nabab, 35, son of Nazrul; Sadek, 45, son of Jahiruddin from Ruhia village; and Joynul Islam, 12, son of Nur Islam from Baharampur village.

Nabab and Sadek died on the spot

and Joynul on way to hospital.

Amirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Haripur Police Station, confirmed the deaths.

The injured, including three women and an SSC examinee, were admitted to Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur. Three of them were in a critical condition, said doctors.

Talking to this correspondent, a number of villagers said BGB members of Betna Camp were conducting a drive at Baharampur village and adjacent areas since yesterday morning to seize cattle smuggled from India.

Around 10:30am, Habibar Rahman from Baharampur village and several others from his area and Ruhia village were bringing cattle to Jadurani haat for selling those at the large cattle market in the upazila.

When they reached near Jadurani College, about half a kilometre from the market, BGB members seized five cows, including two of Habibar, claiming those were smuggled in.

They claimed that the BGB members didn't let go of the cattle though they were shown legal papers on the ownership of the animals.

As the BGB personnel were taking the cattle to Betna Camp by a locally made three-wheeler around 11:30pm, a group of locals, including women, intercepted the vehicle at Baharampur village, said the vil-

lagers.

At one stage, a scuffle broke out between the BGB men and locals. The BGB personnel then opened fire, leaving Nabab and Sadek dead on the spot and around 20 others injured.

The wounded, including two women -- Joynun and Nur Nahar, were taken to Haripur Upazila Health Complex.

Later, 17 of the injured, including 12-year-old Joynul, were sent to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur. Joynul died on the way.

Prof Abdus Salam, head of surgery department at the hospital, said 16 bullet-hit people, including three women, were admitted there since yesterday noon.

The condition of three of them, including SSC examinee Abdul Kashem, 18, was critical. He suffered a bullet wound in the head and was referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, said the doctor.

Salam also said several of the injured were hit by bullets in abdomen and waist.

After visiting the spot, KM Kamruzzaman Selim, deputy commissioner of Thakurgaon, told reporters that a seven-member body, headed by Additional District Magistrate Shilabrata Karmakar, was formed to probe the incident.

The committee was asked to submit a report as early as possible.

BIWTA DRIVE

118 illegal structures by Buriganga demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday knocked down 118 structures, including three two-storey buildings, in the city's Shaheed Nagar and Kamrangirchar areas as part of its ongoing drive to demolish illegal establishments along the Buriganga.

A BIWTA team, led by its Joint Director AKM Arif Uddin, conducted the drive on its seventh day in an area stretching from Balurghat of Shaheed Nagar to Betarighat of Kamrangirchar from 10:00am to 4:00pm.

As many as 1,306 structures have so far been knocked down in the drive, which will continue for six more workdays.

The BIWTA yesterday demolished three two-storey buildings, 38 semi-concrete buildings and 77 tin-shed structures.

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Ahmadiyya homes come under attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Supporters of three Islamist organisations attacked and vandalised four houses of Ahmadiyya Muslims in Ahmednagar village of Panchagarh Sadar upazila last night, officials said.

Some 500 supporters of three organisations -- Sammilito Khatme Nabuwat Shangrakhan Parishad, Iman Akida Rokkha Committee and Touhidi Janata -- blocked the Dhaka-Panchagarh Highway in Sher-e-Bangla Park area around 9:00pm.

They demanded the cancellation of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat annual conference scheduled for February 22-24, said Golam Azad, additional deputy commissioner (general) of Panchagarh.

They also demanded that Ahmadiyyas be declared as non-Muslims, he added.

Around 11:00pm, the crowd marched towards Ahmednagar village, about two kilometers away from Panchagarh town, and vandalised the houses, the ADC said.

Golam said police took position in the nearby areas as there was tension over the issue, but the crowd used a bypass to storm into the village and carried out the attack.

No casualties were reported.

Additional forces of police and Border Guard Bangladesh were deployed in the village, he said.

Singing

FROM PAGE 1

and cries of commuters and drivers and also the shrieking horns, a sound far more majestic than the imposing facades of nearby buildings originated somewhere up in the air, and kept soaring up. The distinct sound that comes in short bursts but rises up in intensity. It was a cuckoo; ignoring the ruckus coming constantly from the streets below, a male cuckoo, flashing its glowing red eyes, went on tweeting its romantic plea to woo a female in a city that has earned itself several monikers, including "the city of dust" and "the city of vertical mess".

I got off, requesting the rickshaw-puller to wait for me. I looked up and scanned the trees to locate the source of this distracting sound. Was it the first time ever that I am listening to a cuckoo sing desperately from a dusty tree top in Dhaka? Did it happen every year around this time? Was it possible that maybe I was asleep all this time like the sailors in Tennyson's "The Lotus Eaters"? Yes, there it was; perching surreptitiously on one of the highest branches of a neem tree, a black cuckoo was announcing the arrival of new beginnings.

I turned around to see a middle-aged woman standing with her teen-aged son and daughter. Distracted just like me, they too were scanning the trees. I pointed towards the neem tree and the mother shouted, "There it is! Kids, can you see it?" Her son had taken out his mobile phone by then to take a snap. Before I could help him locate the bird, a crisp breeze blew over our faces, raising specks of dust here and there. Yes, there was spring in the air!

Soon these tweets combined with new leaves sprouting up from every tree branch will touch us all. Injecting a new wave of life into everyone around, the youth will lead us out in droves onto the streets to march towards where people from all walks of life gather up to celebrate life, to get drunk on the ceaseless flow of crisp spring breeze.

All the cities and towns will dress up in bright yellow and red. The whole of Bangladesh will rise up in sync with the tweets sung by cuckoos, spreading message of the youthful spirit that never fades!

The writer is a contributor of The Daily Star

Crazy pills flying in

FROM PAGE 1

in her body and luggage. No one was arrested in August and September, but in November, 19 people were arrested and 14 cases were filed with the Airport Police Station.

Eight people were arrested in December and four more in January from the airport, according to the AAPBn database.

"The smugglers have chosen the new route as they think it is safer than the Dhaka-Chittagong highway for quick movement," he told The Daily Star on Sunday.

"We are now trying to detect the syndicate members and the masterminds behind this."

Some of these yaba consignments were supposed to go to Narail and Munshiganj from Dhaka airport via road, said additional SP Alamgir.

At least 15 syndicates are involved in the smuggling of the pills to the capital from Cox's Bazar.

This is not the first time that some yaba smugglers changed their conventional routes to dodge law enforcers.

Earlier in April last year, officials found syndicates using another route. Consignments first reached Teknaf after crossing the Naf River and then went to Patuakhali's Kuakata on fishing boats. The pills then made their way into the capital via Barishal, smuggled in cars, buses or trucks.

In July last year, law enforcers found yaba being smuggled from Myanmar into Bangladesh through the Indian border in three districts of greater Sylhet. India's Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam were the conduit routes for the clandestine operation.

FROM ADDICTS TO CARRIERS

Alamgir Hossain, additional SP of AAPBn, said as the airport had no machines to detect non-metal objects, such as yaba pills, law enforcers depend on information to detect carriers.

Sometimes they verify the background of passengers to gauge whether the person can afford a

MONTH	ARREST	YABA RECOVERED (IN PIECES)	CASE FILED
Jul 2018	01	3,843	01
Nov 2018	19	37,200	14
Dec 2018	08	14,500	07
Jan 2019	04	8,355	04

SOURCE: AAPBn

flight.

"Once we detain someone, we take them to nearby hospitals for x-rays to determine where they are carrying the drugs," said Alamgir.

About the techniques used to avoid detection, Alamgir said that around 50 to 100 pills are wrapped in sticky tape and inserted inside bananas which are then swallowed by the carriers before they board their flights.

"They excrete those out after reaching safe places in the capital."

Male carriers also insert small packs of the pills inside their rectum, while their female counterparts wrap them in plastic materials -- such as condoms -- and hide them in their cervix to dodge law enforcers.

Earlier, yaba smugglers used orphans to smuggle the drug. Besides, the pills were also found being smuggled inside watermelons, jackfruits, tyres, motorcycles fuel tanks and shock absorbers, petrol containers, mobile phones and inside books.

AAPBn officials said all 26 carriers arrested in the last four months claimed to be addicted to yaba from before. They took up the work after their traders convinced them that it was an easy way to make some money.

"Majority of the arrestees are between 20 and 26 year old. The yaba traders target unemployed addicts first and lure them by paying a sum of money in exchange for being a carrier," said a high official of AAPBn, requesting anonymity.

During interrogation of the recent arrestees, investigators were told that the carriers were paid Tk 20,000 to Tk 25,000 for each successful delivery, apart from the cost of the plane fare, hotel and food bills.



A microbus in flames after it hit a truck in Nizampur area of Chattogram's Mirsarai upazila yesterday morning. The accident left three people dead and as many others injured.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Tigers' Kiwi challenge

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Zealand against the hosts. The last time Bangladesh toured the country in 2016-2017, the Tigers were at the receiving end of whitewashes in all three formats as they were thrashed 3-0 in ODIs, 3-0 in T20Is and 2-0 in Tests.

Bangladesh, however, last met New Zealand during the group stage match of the ICC Champions Trophy in 2017 at a neutral venue in Cardiff and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza's men brought

up one of their most memorable wins. Two stalwarts, Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib, had strung together a 224-run fifth-wicket partnership -- Bangladesh's highest ever partnership -- to stage a heroic come back as the Tigers won that contest by five wickets and 16 balls to spare.

New Zealand, coming off a 4-1 ODI home series thrashing against the India, will certainly look to bounce back and rediscover their winning touch in the format.