

Pneumonia still a major cause of child mortality

Says Save the Children's Global Childhood Report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When eight-month old Hasabullah's apparently-ordinary cold turned into pneumonia, his mother Mukta could not afford a doctor visit.

Even if she did have money, there was no hospital or recognised doctor nearby. "I felt I could do nothing but cry," said Mukta.

Pneumonia continues to be a major paediatric health threat in the country, claiming lives of two children -- under the age of five -- on an average every hour, according to the "Global Childhood Report 2019" by Save the Children.

Some 16,960 children, aged under five, died in 2016 due to pneumonia, accounting for 16 percent of all deaths in the age group.

Dr Sabbir Ahmed, pneumonia centenary commitment adviser of the organisation, presented the report at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Save the Children prepared the report based on data collected from "recognised and reliable sources" like government's demographic health survey, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), and different UN agencies.

In last 20 years, although Bangladesh has been ahead of other South Asian countries in overall reduction of child deaths -- an impressive 63 percent, the

report says pneumonia is still one of the leading causes of morbidity and mortality of children in Bangladesh.

The ranking of Bangladesh in the Global Childhood Report 2019 has also improved, as it moved three notches up to 127 out of 176 countries.

Singapore topped the rankings, with eight Western European countries and South Korea completing the top 10.

Central African Republic ranked last, with Niger -- despite recent progress -- and Chad rounding out the bottom three countries.

The child mortality rate within poverty-hit population is double that in rich population, the report also said, referring to the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation.

Embracing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), economic investment, capacity-building, policy implementation, and decreased discrimination are the reasons why Bangladesh is improving on the ranking, said Dr Ishtiaq Mannan, deputy country director of Save the Children in Bangladesh, at the event.

The report also mentioned that global displacement due to conflict is the only one on the rise, with 30.5 million more forcibly displaced people now than there were in 2000, an 80 percent increase.



With unrelenting heat this month making life difficult for people, local summer fruits can provide much-needed refreshment, hydration and energy. Traders were seen stocking up watermelons and mangoes at the wholesale fruit market in Chattogram's Kotwali area yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN



'Raudha gave in to despair'

PBI in final report says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Maldivian model and medical student Raudha Athif gave in to despair when she discovered her boyfriend was cheating on her, Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) said in the final report yesterday.

Sub-inspector Saidur Rahman, investigating officer of PBI, submitted the report to a Rajshahi court, ruling out the possibility of murder.

Rahman told The Daily Star that PBI gathered evidence that proved her death was by suicide, and it was due to her "utter despair" over the breakup with her boyfriend.

Her Maldivian boyfriend is currently studying in the UK, added the report.

Raudha, 20, who was featured as a Maldivian model in a Vogue magazine cover in 2016, was a second year student at Islami Bank Medical College in Rajshahi. On March 29, 2017, she was found dead at her college dormitory room.

PBI learnt about the affair after analysing photographs in her phone and laptop, and conversations between them on social media, the

report said. On the night before her death, Raudha somehow accessed Facebook messenger account of her boyfriend and discovered that he was cheating on her, the PBI official said.

Aggrieved, she tried to end her life by taking sedative pills and was treated at her medical college's hospital.

The next day, she wrote him a note, mentioning how upset she was at his behaviour and took her life, the report said.

PBI was not bringing any allegation against Raudha's boyfriend as he is not a citizen of Bangladesh and they were not asked to do that, said the official.

After Raudha's death, her father filed a murder case, accusing her classmate

on April 10, 2017. The case was investigated by local police, Detective Branch and Criminal Investigation Department -- who came up with reports suggesting that she died by suicide.

Her father rejected those and filed a no-confidence petition with a Rajshahi court. Following a court order, PBI had been investigating the case since December 23, 2017.



One to die for killing gold trader in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced jewellery shop owner Pintu Devnath, 42, to death for killing his business partner and friend Prabir Kumar Ghosh last June.

The court also sentenced Pintu's employee Bapen Bhoomik, 28, to seven years' rigorous imprisonment and fined him Tk 50,000.

Judge Anisur Rahman of District and Sessions Judge Court of Narayanganj passed the verdict, 11 months after the sensational murder, said Public Prosecutor (PP) Wazid Ali Khokon.

The court dropped another accused

Abdullah Al Mamon's name from the case.

According to the case statement, Pintu and Bapen killed Prabir at the former's flat in Amalpara area on June 18, 2018, and dismembered the body before hiding it in an abandoned water reservoir.

Dispute over money led to the killing, said the PP, citing the FIR. Police arrested Pintu on July 9 and recovered Prabir's remains from the reservoir.

Khaleda's condition better now: BSMMU

UNB, Dhaka

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) authorities yesterday said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's health condition is now much better than before.

"Her (Khaleda) condition is gradually improving and she's much better now," BSMMU Director Brig Gen AK Mahbulul Hoque said at a press briefing.

He said it will take some time for significant improvement in the BNP chief's health condition as she was admitted to the hospital with some chronic diseases.

"There has been improvement in her diabetes, arthritis and some other health issues. I can say she's doing very well, considering the various problems at this age," the BSMMU director said.

He also claimed that the BNP chairperson is happy with the treatment and she has not shown any annoyance over anything.

Refuting BNP's allegation that Khaleda Zia is being pushed towards death without treatment, Mahbulul Hoque said wrong information has been spread about her health condition.

Asked when Khaleda may be taken to jail as her health condition is improving, the BSMMU director said the jail authorities have not informed them about it.

On April 1, Khaleda was shifted to BSMMU from Old Dhaka Central Jail with severe pain in the joints of her hands and legs, insomnia, weakness and high sugar level.

Uphold image of the country

President Hamid urges peacekeepers

BSS, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday asked Bangladeshi peacekeepers to uphold the country's image in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions through their heroic work, talent, and prudence.

"I expect your (peacekeepers) work will establish Bangladesh as a peace-loving country by upholding its national flag in the global arena," he said.

The president was addressing a programme at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in Dhaka on the occasion of International Day of UN Peacekeepers yesterday.

President Hamid

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Workers of an RMG factory torched this bus, protesting death of a colleague in a road accident in Ashulia yesterday. They also blocked Tongi-Ashulia-DEPZ road and vandalised at least five more vehicles.

PHOTO: STAR

DEATH OF COLLEAGUE RMG workers vandalise, torch vehicles in Ashulia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Workers of a readymade garment factory blocked Tongi-Ashulia-DEPZ road in Ashulia yesterday, protesting the death of a colleague in a road accident. During the agitation, they vandalised at least five vehicles and torched two buses, according to witnesses.

A number of workers of Magpie Sweater Ltd blocked the road in Zirabo bus stand area around 1:30pm after a worker named Nur Alom, 30, was killed in a road crash, said Javed Masud, inspector (investigation) of Ashulia Police Station.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, he added.

About the accident, police said two pedestrians, including Nur Alom, got seriously injured as a speeding bus hit them and fled the scene.

The two were taken to a local hospital, where doctors declared Nur Alom dead.

Father confesses to killing stepson

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A man yesterday confessed to a Rajshahi court of killing his seven-year-old stepson at Rajshahi's Puthia.

Police arrested Mohammad Ali, 35, of Solonga in Sirajganj district from his in-laws' house at Puthia on Tuesday night, said Shakil Ahmed, OC of Puthia Police Station.

Police produced him before a judicial magistrate's court in Rajshahi yesterday, as he agreed to record a confessional statement.

Following his statement, police recovered the body of Md Rifat, from a banana plantation at Senbag area of the upazila, and sent it to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Several years ago, Mohammad Ali converted to Islam. He married Buli Khatun six months ago, after she was divorced from Rifat's father Jahangir. Since their marriage, Ali used to stay at his in-laws' house.

In recent months, Ali had been

misbehaving with the family members over trivial issues, and thought other family members were ignoring him, Buli Khatun told journalists.

"Besides complaints of being ignored by his in-laws, he told us that he wanted to have a child of his own, but his wife was not on board with the decision," the police officer said quoting Mohammad Ali.

He confessed that he killed the boy, thinking that if the boy was not there anymore, his wife would agree to have another child, the OC said.

Ali abducted Rifat on Tuesday evening after he came out of a local mosque after having iftar and offering prayers. He took him to the banana field and strangled him.

Buli Khatun said Ali looked "abnormal" when returned home without Rifat on Tuesday night.

As Rifat was missing and he could not answer where the boy was, the family informed police, she said.

Mass awareness must for reducing air pollution

Speakers say at DoE seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

Speakers at a seminar yesterday emphasised mass awareness for reducing air pollution, saying the current situation is alarming for the nation.

Around 82,000 people die every year of different diseases related to air pollution in the country, they said at the seminar on air pollution, organised by Department of Environment (DoE), Chattogram at its conference room.

In the keynote presentation, Dr Mosharraf Hossain, professor at institute of forestry and environment sciences of Chittagong University, named multiple causes behind air pollution including construction sites, burning fossil fuels, brick kilns etc.

"Air pollution has a large impact on human health and the ecosystem, and it contributes to rise in temperature," he said.

"Planting trees both indoors and outdoors, using renewable energy and reducing biomass burning will improve the

situation, and mass awareness about this issue is a must," he added.

Prof Mosharraf said industrialisation also contributes to air pollution, so this must be tackled at a policy level.

Md Shamsuddoha, chief executive officer of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), said although CCC started door-to-door garbage collection, people in many areas still dump their garbage in drains or adjacent canals, polluting air and water.

Almost 25 percent of waste in the city is dumped in drains and canals by irresponsible citizens, he said, adding that CCC will announce a prize for rooftop gardening this year to encourage indoor plantation.

Azadur Rahman Mallick, director of DoE Chattogram region, presided over the seminar.

Dr Monir Uddin, professor of chemistry at Chittagong University, also spoke at the event.

Ihsanul gets 3-yr extension as PM's press secretary

UNB, Dhaka

Ihsanul Karim has received a three-year extension as press secretary to the prime minister.

The public administration ministry issued a notification in this regard on Tuesday.

It said the service contract of Ihsanul Karim has been extended by three years from June 18, 2019 or the date of his re-joining.

Ihsanul Karim, former press secretary to the president, was first appointed as the press secretary to PM Sheikh Hasina on June 15, 2015, and received a three-year extension on June 16, 2016.

Earlier, he was the managing director and chief editor of BSS.



BIWTA knocks down an embankment, built encroaching on Meghna river, in Gajaria upazila of Munshiganj yesterday afternoon. As part of an ongoing drive to free the river, the officials also dismantled 30 illegal structures and cleared illegally piled sand and stones from the river, which were later auctioned off.

PHOTO: STAR