

Outrageous

Health minister likens mosquito population growth to that of Rohingyas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health and Family Welfare Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday compared the breeding capacity of Aedes mosquitos with that of the Rohingyas and claimed the rapid spread of mosquito population is the reason behind the increased number of dengue patients.

"Why such a huge number of dengue patients are there in our country? My simple answer is the spread of mosquito, spread of Aedes mosquito. These [Aedes] mosquitos are healthy and sophisticated," he said.

Addressing a seminar at the Shaheed Milon Hall of Dhaka Medical College yesterday, the minister said, "Somehow we could not control the mosquito population. The mosquito population and the Rohingya population are growing at the same pace."

The statement drew heavy criticism from different quarters who claimed it to be derogatory.

"When a minister makes such an unreasonable comment, then we have to think under which leaderships we are living in the country. This is unfortunate," noted rights activists Nur Khan Liton told The Daily Star.

When the prime minister showed her generosity and humanity by sheltering Rohingya people, such an irresponsible comment from one of her cabinet members is painful, he said.

"We are lauded globally for sheltering Rohingya people, but such a comment goes against the spirit of our

magnanimity," he said, adding that through such a comment the minister attempted to belittle the gravity of the current dengue situation.

During the seminar, the minister also urged physicians to ensure proper treatment to the dengue patients in different hospitals across the country.

"We can ensure that no one suffering from dengue fever is out of healthcare facility. The doctors who are providing treatment to the dengue patients were given training," he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, Zahid said as the number of Aedes mosquitos have increased this monsoon, the number of dengue patients is also on the rise, but the government is trying its best to control the situation.

Citing data of the health ministry, he said a total of 7,766 dengue patients were admitted in different city hospitals from January 1 to July 23 this year. Of them, only 94 were admitted to hospitals outside the capital.

Noting that eight people died of dengue fever so far this year, the health minister said a total of 5,938 dengue patients have received treatment from different hospitals this year, while 1,823 patients are currently receiving treatment.

About the government steps to control the dengue situation, he said about 2,000 doctors and nurses of 23 public hospitals and 41 private hospitals have already been trained on the treatment of dengue and Chikungunya this year.

Govt official's wife stabbed for 4th time

Police investigating the attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

The wife of Pirojpur Sadar upazila assistant commissioner (Iand) was stabbed again in Pirojpur town yesterday.

Aditi Boral, 27, is the wife of Ramananda Pal. She is also the daughter of Awami League leader Kalidas Boral of Chitalmari upazila, who was killed in Bagerhat town in 2000.

The victim was given primary treatment.

The incident is mysterious as the woman had been stabbed three times earlier.

Aditi came under attack in Pirojpur town on November 8 last year, Barguna's Betagi upazila on July 3 that year and Bagerhat town on December 16, 2016.

Quoting his wife, Ramananda said a man identifying him as Kamal, one

of the peons of his office, knocked at the door of their flat at government quarters around 1:30pm yesterday.

As soon as she opened the door, the man stabbed her on the left side of her abdomen and fled the spot. Hearing her screams, neighbours rushed to her flat and informed Ramananda.

As there was no electricity due to load shedding at that time, the attacker was not caught on CCTV, he added.

"I don't know who stabbed my wife and why," he said, adding that the attack could have been carried out over feuds of her wife's family with political rivals in Chitalmari.

Ramananda filed a GD with Pirojpur Sadar Police Station in connection with yesterday's incident.

Hayatul Islam Khan, superintendent of Pirojpur police, said they were investigating the attack.

'Rape victim,' family

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truth through investigation. Talking to reporters at a newspaper office in the town, the grieving mother alleged that Sub-inspector Mohammed Abul Kalam of the police station was the investigation officer of the first case she had filed on July 3 with the assistance of One Stop Crisis Centre accusing Maulvi Farid, 30, who is also a distant family member.

The SI on July 16 asked the woman, her daughter, four other members of their family, and two of their neighbours to go to the police station to give their witness statements, she said.

Talking to reporters, the 5th grader said police held them at the police station for four days and demanded Tk 1 lakh for their release.

They were released on July 19 after giving Tk 16,000 to the officer.

The 5th grader told reporters that she was tortured while they were held at the police station.

She said they threatened to hurt her with a machine used to cut metal.

"They held the machine close to my face. They slapped me and said I would be in prison for the rest of

my life. I was not even allowed to sleep. Through the physical and mental torture, SI Abul Kalam forced me to say what I had been taught to say," she said. Abu Morshed Chowdhury, president of Women and Children Protection Network in Cox's Bazar, said, "Police can do many things for the sake of investigation. But they can't confine a child without a court order. This is very concerning."

Farid Uddin Khandaker, officer-in-charge of Cox's Bazar Model Police Station, said, "The allegations against SI Abul Kalam are not true at all. He has worked hard to identify the real accused. He should be praised for unearthing the truth."

THE FIRST CASE

On July 2, the plaintiff of the case went to visit her sister's house leaving her daughter alone at home, she said.

At night, Maulvi Farid came to her home and raped her daughter.

She came home the next morning and took her daughter, who was bleeding, to a hospital. She was treated at the One Stop Crisis Centre and the first case was filed that day, accusing Maulvi Farid, she said.



A doctor attends a woman at the emergency ward of the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital yesterday. The number of dengue patients has increased at the hospital.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Hospitals full to the brim

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the hospital yesterday.

The picture was similar at other government hospitals and many private hospitals in the capital, which are struggling to handle the rush of dengue patients.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said they are now handling 165 dengue patients against their capacity of 60.

Many of these patients are getting treatment, staying at the hospital's veranda and walkways, he said.

Scores of private hospitals in the capital are compelled to send back dengue patients for not having the capacity to accommodate them.

"We have to send back 10-12 dengue patients every day for a lack of accommodation at our hospital," said Dr Pradip Saha, emergency medical officer at Salahuddin Specialised Hospital in the city's Hathkhola.

"Around 10 dengue patients are coming to our hospital every day. Now 35 patients are under treatment here," said Poli Rani Biswas, nurse-in-charge of the 300-bed hospital.

Kinkar Ghosh, an epidemiologist at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, said they could not admit many dengue patients

as they don't have the capacity to accommodate more than 670 patients.

Now, 73 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at the hospital,

Advice from Prof Dr ABM Abdullah
former dean of medicine department, BSMMU

Get a Dengue test done if there is fever.

Do not take painkillers without doctor's advice.

Use mosquito nets while sleeping during the day.

Make children wear full-sleeve clothes.

said Kinkar.

Data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) show that 9,256 people were infected with dengue until yesterday. And eight people have died of dengue so far.

Sources at city hospitals, however, put the number at 28.

They said the number could be higher as many dengue cases go unreported.

In 24 hours since 8:00am on Wednesday, 547 new dengue cases were reported at hospitals, the DGHS data show.

The rush of dengue patients has created a seat crisis in the capital's hospitals, putting patients in trouble.

Quamrul Islam Tusher, who works at a telecommunications firm in the capital, said one of his colleagues had great difficulties in admitting his 40-day-old baby girl to hospital on Wednesday night.

"The baby has been suffering from severe cold. My colleague took her to the emergency section of a private hospital in Bashundhara Residential Area. He waited there for three hours, but no seat was available at the hospital. He then went to at least six more hospitals, including Dhaka Shishu Hospital, but could not find any seat vacant. Finally, he returned home at 2:00am on Thursday."

Tusher said his colleague finally managed to get his baby admitted to Samorita Hospital yesterday.

SEPARATE WARD AT CMH

A separate ward for dengue patients has been opened at the Combined Military

Hospital in the capital, Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed said yesterday.

He said this after inaugurating a mosquito eradication campaign in Dhaka Cantonment area, according to the website of the Inter Services Public Relations.

IT'S ALL 'RUMOUR'

Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday claimed the spread of news of 3.5 lakh people getting infected with dengue and the rumour of child abduction are intertwined.

Addressing a programme at a city hotel, he said, "The government will foil this conspiracy with a heavy hand."

DSSC DRIVE

The DSSC yesterday fined the owners of nine under-construction buildings Tk 2.70 lakh as it found larvae of Aedes mosquitoes inside those.

In drives for the last four days, the DSSC teams visited 243 under-construction buildings and found larvae in 31 of those.

Yesterday, they inspected 89 under-construction buildings.

Meanwhile, Sylhet and Barisal city corporations started a weeklong mosquito eradication and cleanliness campaign in the two cities.

HC for quick actions by city corporation

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holding a hearing on a suomoto (voluntary) rule issued on July 14.

The HC gave the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) four days to take effective steps to curb the menace and inform it about the progress.

"The mosquito menace was brought under control last year after the authorities used mosquito spray. This year, the situation, however, is not under control. A responsible minister has also reportedly said that the mosquito repellent is not effective this year. Earlier, nobody had confessed it," the court said.

At one stage of the hearing, the lawyers for the DSCC and the DNCC promised that the city corporations would launch a "combined operation" to kill mosquitoes.

Both the DSCC and DNCC have already taken up crash programmes in this regard and that the joint effort will work, they said.

Barrister Toufiq Inam and Advocate Sayed Ahmed Raja, the lawyers for the DNCC and DSCC respectively, told the court the existing repellent was effective and that will be sprayed two to six times every day to bring the situation under control.

Now the spray is being used two times a day, they claimed, adding that at least a month is required to import new type of repellent maintaining the

official procedures.

The lawyers prayed to the court to give three or four days to the DSCC and DNCC. It also requested the court to observe whether the combined effort was working.

In response, the HC bench asked the DSCC and the DNCC to inform the progress to the court on Tuesday when the next hearing is scheduled to be held.

Yesterday, the court also exonerated DSCC Chief Health Officer Brig Gen Md Sharif Ahmed and DNCC Chief Health Officer Brig Gen Md Mominur Rahman Mamun from personal appearance in connection with the rule.

The two appeared before the HC bench yesterday morning as per its July 22 order to explain the steps the DSCC and DNCC have taken to prevent the mosquito menace.

Brig Gen Sharif told the court that the menace was a global problem due to climate change and the country has experienced it due to heavy rain, among other issues.

He said there were 75 wards in 10 zones of the DSCC where more than one crore people live, but only 439 people had been working to prevent the menace.

Brig Gen Sharif claimed that their repellent was tested at two laboratories after its import and the results were satisfactory.

The court said dengue fever was a health concern and the health ministry along with the DSCC and DNCC

should look into the matter.

Brig Gen Md Mominur Rahman Mamun told the court that the DNCC had planned to import new repellent to prevent the mosquito threat.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam also told the court that the dengue was a health concern for all and the matter should be taken seriously.

Meanwhile, another HC bench yesterday wanted to know whether private hospitals and diagnostic centres were charging extra for dengue tests.

The court also wanted to know whether government hospitals were conducting the tests for free.

The bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahsan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader asked Deputy Attorney General Abdullah-Al-Mahmud Bashar to inform these to the court on Monday after communicating with the director general of the Directorate General of Health Services.

Private hospitals and diagnostic centres cannot charge extra for the examinations and the public hospitals must carry out the tests for free, it said.

The bench passed the order on a suomoto move following a report published in Bangla daily Prothom Alo yesterday.

Advocate Mushtaque Ahmed Chowdhury placed the newspaper report before the HC bench for necessary order. The court fixed Monday for passing further order on this issue.

RIFAT MURDER

SC lawyer for transferring case to CID or PBI

Moves petition before HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking its directive on the government to transfer Barguna's Rifat Sharif murder case to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) or the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) for proper investigation.

Advocate Eunus Ali Akond submitted the petition requesting the HC to cancel the remand order against Rifat's wife Aysha Siddika Minni and the statement given by her in court in connection with the case. The petition also requested Minni's immediate release.

In the petition, he also prayed to the HC to order the government to form a judicial inquiry committee to probe into the killing of Sabir Hossain Nayan alias Nayan Bond, the principal accused in the case, in a "gunfight" with the law enforcers on July 2.

Citing from the petition, Eunus told The Daily Star that the local police do not have enough professionalism and expertise to investigate sensitive cases like Rifat Sharif's murder.

The CID and PBI are professional departments of the police for the investigation of such major cases, and so the Rifat Sharif murder case needs to be transferred to one of those two departments, he said.

The lawyer alleged police have reportedly taken Minni on remand and forced her to give a confessional statement to the magistrate, which is illegal.

Besides, the incident of Nayan Bond's death in a "gunfight" with the law enforcers is an extrajudicial killing, which is contradictory to the constitution, he said, adding that a judicial inquiry should be conducted in this regard.

Eunus said the HC may hold a hearing on the petition on Sunday, July 28.

On June 26, Rifat Sharif, a 25-year-old internet service provider, was hacked by a group of young men in broad daylight.

In a footage of the incident that went viral on social media, the victim's wife Minni was seen screaming and trying to save her husband from the assailants.

Although Minni was named as a witness in the case, police later showed her as an accused. They claim they found her involvement in the murder during investigation.



A fisherman taking a basket of fish on a boat in Fishery Ghat area of Chattogram city yesterday. Following the end of a 65-day ban on fishing in the Bay of Bengal on July 23, fishermen have returned to the sea.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

RMG worker

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had closed for the day on Wednesday.

Around midnight, a local saw someone throwing out T-shirts from a window of the factory and informed factory security guards of the matter, the police official said.

The deputy commissioner quoting garment workers said an office assistant and three to four security guards caught Delwar on the fifth floor. "They severely beat up Delwar and kept him inside the factory building," the DC said.

Factory workers and police rescued Delwar around 11:00am and took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died around 1:00pm.

As the news spread, angry workers took to the streets in Rampura around 2:00pm.

They vandalised some vehicles and chased policemen. An assistant commissioner of the DMP and the Hatijheel officer-in-charge were injured. Police fired tear gas canisters and shots in the air to control the situation. Traffic movement on both sides of the road was halted for hours.

Police detained three admin officials of Easy Fashion in connection with the killing, Anisur said.

US plans new Russia sanctions over support for Venezuela's Maduro

AFP, Washington

The United States is considering imposing new sanctions on Russia over its support for Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, the White House representative for the South American nation said Wednesday.

President Donald Trump's administration has continued to increase punitive measures against Venezuela since January, when Washington -- along with 50 other countries -- recognized opposition leader Juan Guido as the crisis-ridden country's interim leader.

Russia, North Korea and Cuba continue to support Maduro.

"The pressure will continue, we'll have more sanctions tomorrow," said Elliott Abrams, the White House's pointman on Venezuela.