

REPATRIATION

Myanmar, Rohingya leaders agree on talks

UNB, Cox's Bazar

The visiting Myanmar delegation and Rohingya representatives yesterday agreed to participate in a joint dialogue on the repatriation issues. Apart from representatives from Myanmar and the Rohingya community, representatives of Bangladesh and UN agencies would take part in the dialogue. The decision was made yesterday after a meeting between the

representatives of Rohingyas and Myanmar delegation at Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Ukhiya upazila. However, the time, date, and venue of the dialogue could not be known. Myanmar Foreign Affairs Permanent Secretary Myint Thu led the Myanmar delegation. The delegation had officials from its social welfare ministry and the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine.

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3 college boys

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the group -- Jahid and Manik -- were admitted to Enam Medical College Hospital. Anwarul Haque, commander (zone 4) of fire service, said they

were trying hard to find the missing students. The Daily Star could not reach Ideal College authorities after repeated attempts as their official contact numbers were switched off.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is being taken to the dental unit of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University for treatment yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Six-fold rise in four months

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the situation would not be this frightening," said Mahmudur Rahman, former director of the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research.

"There are some gaps. Medicines should be sprayed in proper concentration and composition. Spray should be done with larvicide and adulticide," he added.

Dengue situation has taken an alarming turn this year not only in Bangladesh, but also in other countries in the region, including Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam, according to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

In Bangladesh, at least 10,528 people have been infected with dengue as of yesterday. At least 683 new cases were reported in the last 24 hours, the highest in a single day so far this year, according to the DGHS.

The DGHS put the death toll at eight so far although hospital sources said the viral fever, caused by Ae-des

mosquito bite, claimed at least 30 lives.

The number could be much higher as many dengue cases go unreported, they added.

On July 17, the DGHS began a survey to measure the concentration of mosquito population in the capital based on samples from 1,000 homes spread over 97 wards of the two city corporations. Data collection ended yesterday.

Primary data from half the houses show the concentration of adult mosquito is 207. It was only 36 in the pre-monsoon period survey, conducted between March 3 and 12 using the same samples.

The density of larvae is also much higher.

The researchers took into account Breteau Index or BI to assess the presence of larvae. BI level beyond 20 means the presence of larvae is risky for inhabitants.

In the pre-monsoon survey, it was 26 and 21 in the south and north city corporations accordingly. The latest findings show it is 79 and 57.

Researchers found most larvae of Aedes mosquito in water collected over the ground, from abandoned tyres, plastic drums, buckets, open tanks and flower tubs.

"The number of adult mosquito and larvae of Aedes is high and so is the dengue infected patients. If rain does not stop and temperature as well as humidity do not fall, the number of dengue infected patients may rise," said Prof Sanya Tahmina, director of communicable disease control at the DGHS.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, she also recommended multidimensional and comprehensive actions before the situation worsens further.

LACK OF MANPOWER, EQUIPMENT

In the current fiscal year, the budget for mosquito control in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) is Tk 26 crore while it is Tk 21 crore for Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

Brig Gen Sharif Ahmed, chief health officer of the DSCC, said they did not have enough manpower, especially

skilled ones, to launch an aggressive mosquito-control campaign.

"We have 429 people in the mosquito control division. Most of them are unskilled people and day la-bourer. If we could ensure 12-14 people in every ward, the situation would be better," he told The Daily Star.

The DSCC spans over around 109 square kilometres and it is difficult to cover the entire area, as much of it is highly unplanned, he added.

To cover its 75 wards, the DSCC has just 416 spray machines, 349 fogging machines and 18 wheelbarrow sprayers.

Brig Gen Momimur Rahman Mamun, chief health officer of the DNCC, said they had only 280 people for mosquito control against their requirement for 600 to run the operation smoothly.

In the wake of the dengue outbreak, they deployed five day-labourers in each ward to tackle the situation.

"We are spraying regularly but we need to engage the whole community. Without their participation, it is really

difficult to contain the situation," he said.

The DNCC, which spans over 82 square kilometres, has only 459 spray machines, 322 fogging machines and 10 wheelbarrow sprayers.

"With these machines, we used to operate in 36 wards. But now we have to cover 54 wards [after the inclusion of 18 new wards last year]. So you can understand the limitation although we are trying our best," he said.

Additionally, officials say the chemicals being sprayed are ineffective against mosquitos as they had grown resistance to this particular insecticide.

"We have requested the IEDCR and the CDC to give us recommendations as to what insecticides should be used and in what composition. Once we get the recommendations, we will use it," DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam told The Daily Star.

MM Aktaruzzaman, DGHS deputy programme manager for Malaria and Aedes Transmitted Diseases, said they were reviewing the registered insecticides before making the recommendations.

Hospitals struggling

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-- with her daughter in tow. Unfortunately, she got the same response.

As a last-ditch effort, she took Alia to the Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital (ShSMC) around 7:00am. Doctors there were initially reluctant to take her in, but seeing Alia's blood pressure dropping fast, they finally admitted her.

"I could manage a place on the walkway of the hospital. Alia is doing better now," Shahjadi told The Daily Star yesterday.

Alia's predicament sums up the grim picture of how medical centres in the capital are struggling to accommodate a growing number of dengue patients.

This year, hospitals have seen a record number of dengue patients, unmatched in the past 18 years.

A total of 10,528 people have been infected with the mosquito-borne disease till July 27. Last year, the total number was 10,148, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The number of dengue patients exceeded the 10,000 mark only twice in the last 18 years: in 2018 and this year, according to a DGHS report. The previous highest was 6,232 in 2002.

Meanwhile, authorities of different hospitals in the capital said at least 30 dengue patients have died so far. But the DGHS maintains that only eight have died of the disease.

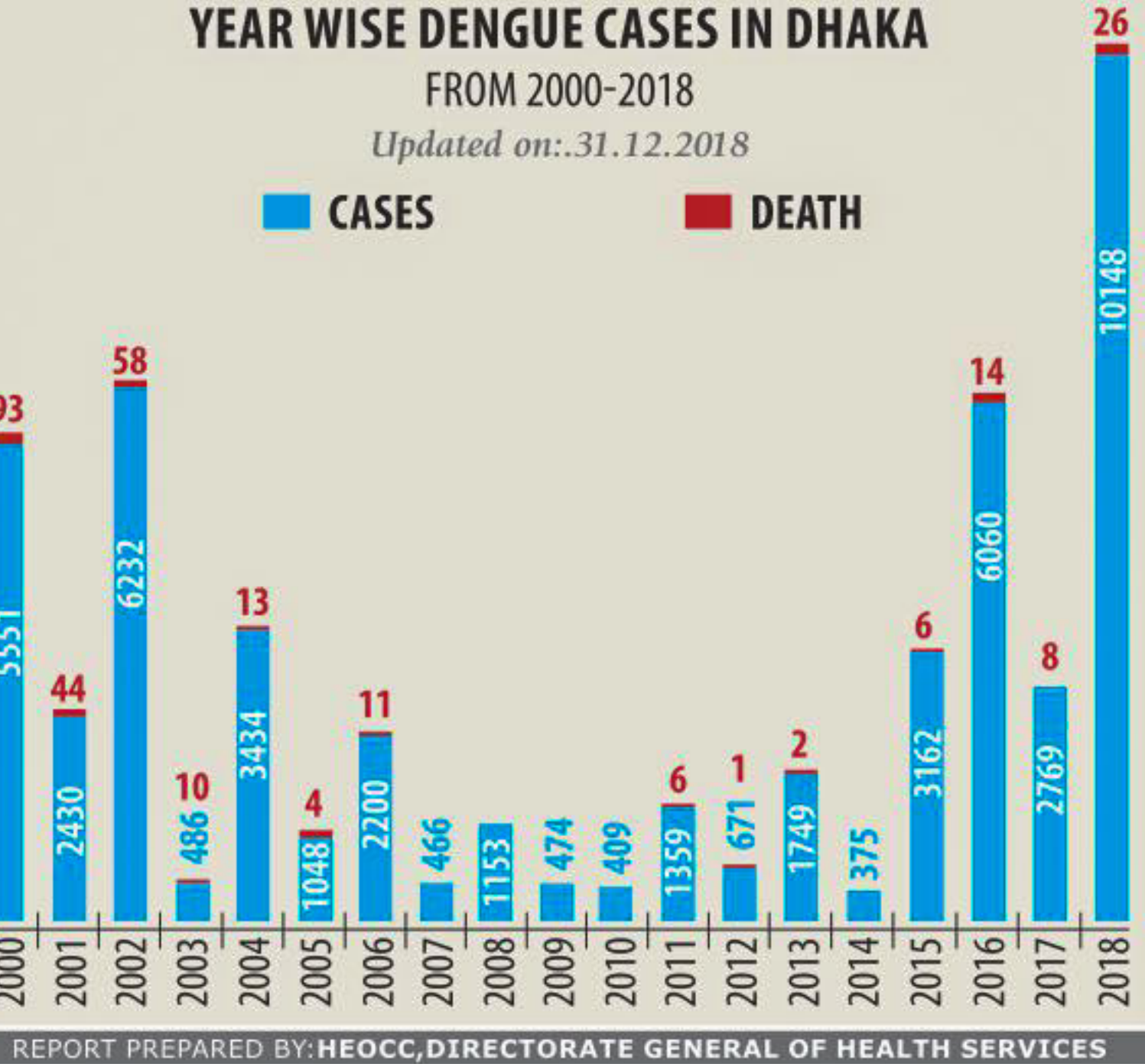
Explaining the disparity in the number of deaths, Prof Dr Meerjady Sa-brina Flora, director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) and also the head of death review committee of the government, said after a patient dies, they collect information, as well as blood samples, of the deceased to confirm the cause of the death. Only after getting all those, they can declare whether it was dengue-related or not.

Director of Shishu Hospital Prof Syed Shafi Ahmed said 87 children were taking treatment in the hospital, and they were given free dengue tests and treatment to 25 to 40 patients every day at the outdoor.

Around 400 patients have so far taken dengue treatment at the 664-bed hospital since March.

"Round the year we have a shortage of seats due to the large number of patients, but even then we have kept 87 seats in the hospital for dengue patients," he said.

Shafi said they did not allow patients to stay on the floor as it was difficult to manage.



professor at ShSMC, said that considering the present dengue situation, they do not refuse any dengue patients despite having a capacity to handle only 60 patients.

Many patients are taking treatment at the hospital's veranda and walkways, he said.

In DMCH, of the 800 beds in its medicine wards, 561 were occupied by dengue patients yesterday morning. The number was around 200 last week. At least 233 dengue patients were admitted to the hospital yesterday.

DENGUE-RELATED DEATHS

In Narayanganj, a man died of dengue on July 11 in the city's Isdair.

His father Kaykobad Siddiqui said his son Sawon Kabir Salehin, 38, was diagnosed with dengue on July 11 and died in Islamia Heart Centre in Narayanganj.

Elsewhere, a first year student of Jahangirnagar University died of den-gue yesterday, while she was on her way to Chattogram Medical College from Cox's Bazar.

The victim U Khein Nu, a first year student of Pharmacy department, hailed from Cox's Bazar.

DENGUE OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL

According to the DGHS, 373 people have been infected with dengue outside the capital since January.

Of them, 72 are in Dhaka division, 142 in Chattogram division, 71 in Khulna division, 40 in Rajshahi division, 35 in Barishal division and 13 in Sylhet division.

Most of the hospitals outside Dhaka, however, are struggling to diagnose dengue patients due to a

lack of NS1 kits, which are used to do the diagnosis at the initial stage.

Saiful Ferdous, deputy director of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, said they did not have the kits, but they were using the old method to diagnose patients.

Akhterul Islam, deputy director of Chattogram Medical College Hospital, said other than the blood separation machine, the hospital did not have any facility for dengue diagnosis.

"We can provide treatment to patients already diagnosed with dengue, but cannot diagnose a new patient. The tests have to be done elsewhere," he said.

Bandarban civil surgeon Aung Shwe Prue Marma said no dengue pa-tient was detected in the district so far. Besides, the district had no laboratory for diagnosing the virus, he added.

Talking about the doctors dealing with dengue patients outside the capital, DGHS officials said the physicians did not have the NS1 kit to diagnose dengue instantly.

IEDCR's Flora said they were yet to provide dengue diagnosing kits as the number of cases outside Dhaka was still comparatively very low.

The NS1 antigen test (nonstructural protein 1), is a test for dengue, introduced in 2006, which allows for rapid detection of the disease on the first day of fever, as antibodies appear some five or more days later.

DSCC FINES BUILDING-OWNERS FOR SPREADING INFECTION

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) yesterday fined eight owners of under-construction buildings Tk 2.70 lakh as they

found Aedes mosquito larva at the structures.

The mobile court visited 78 under construction buildings and found Aedes mosquito larva in eight of them.

Executive Magistrate of DSCC Mizanur Rahman said they fined them under section 269 of the penal code-1860, which has a provision for awarding six months' imprisonment and fine or both for anyone who "unlawfully or negligently does any act which is likely to spread the infection of any disease dangerous to life."

DENGUE GUIDELINES ISSUED

The government yesterday issued a statement to raise awareness of the steps needed to stop the spread of dengue and the measures to protect themselves from being infected by the mosquito-borne disease.

Dengue peaks in the monsoon (April-October) season. Be alert during this period, a press release issued by the Press Information Department (PID) said.

It further said, "The carrier of the dengue fever, Aedes mosquito, breeds in clear water," adding that one must not let water accumulate around their office, house or in neighbouring areas. It suggested changing accumulated water in containers every three days.

"Aedes mosquito usually bites during the day. Cover your body, as much as possible, with your clothing to protect yourself from possible mosquito bites," the release added.

"Use mosquito nets even while sleeping in the day time," it advised.

Dengue-affected persons have been advised to identify it by not only the symptoms of fever, headache, muscular pain or red skin rash, as lately it has been observed that there are some exceptions, the release noted.

It advised dengue patients from taking any other medicine except paracetamol. The patient should be given plenty of fluids, it said, requesting a dengue test at the first sign of a fever.

It cautioned patients that even after remission of fever, one can have severe complications due to dengue.

INFORMATION MINISTRY MEDIA CELL

The information ministry introduced a media cell to provide necessary information to make people aware of the necessary guidelines about dengue treatment through both print and electronic media.

It would also give out information regarding flood, relief and shelter and spread awareness over the recent child kidnapping rumours.

Questions over

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programme by some local youths. Some of them said they did not even know why it was organised.

Many others denied that they were there that day.

"I attended the human chain after being asked by some local youths. I did not know why it was taking place," a fruit seller in Barguna Bazar told this newspaper yesterday.

Another youth who repairs mobile phones in the area echoed his statement. He said he was approached by a group of youths and that he had to take part in the programme, or otherwise he could not run his small shop.

Arifur Rahman Maruf Mridha, senior joint secretary of Barguna Awami League, was also seen at the programme.

He said Rifat's father Abdul Halim Dulal Sharif and some youths re-requested him to join the programme when he was passing through the area after dropping off his son at a school.

"I did not know what the demand was. I was really surprised when I came to know that they were calling for Minni's punishment," he said.

He also said, "Minni might have a hand [in the murder], but I believe those who attacked Rifat were involved in narcotics trade and are backed by some local influential people."

He did not name anyone.

Despite being showed photographs of the human chain, several of the participants denied that they attended it.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of those who joined the pro-gramme said they were invited on social media by some associates of Sunam Devnath, son of local lawmaker Dharendra Debnath Shambhu.

One of the youths, Shateek Rubel, also uploaded a post on Face-book urging locals to join the programme, which was addressed by Sunam, among others.

The human chain came a day after Rifat's father, while speaking at a press conference at the Barguna Press Club, for the first time pointed to his daughter-in-law's involvement in his son's murder.

Sunam was present there as well.

Asked, Rifat's father Dulal Sharif said he did not organise the hu-man chain. Neither did he invite anyone. He, however, said he paid Tk 800 as rent for a loudspeaker.

Contacted, Janata Mike Shop Proprietor,

Heavy rains

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"Basically, flash floods in Chattogram division and heavy showers in northern districts aggravated the flood situation. The country's rivers could contain only one twelfth of the water that came from up-stream this year. The rest of the water caused the flood," Shah Kamal, senior secretary to the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry, told The Daily Star.

Arifuzzaman Bhuyan, executive engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board, said this year's flood hit at least 12 districts at the same time.

"Flood usually hits Sylhet division and then gradually affects other parts of the country. But this year's flood had affected the northern, Chattogram and Sylhet regions at the same time," he said.

Kabir Bin Anwar, secretary of the Ministry of Water Resources, said, "Due to heavy siltation, rivers have become shallow, causing floods every year. We have taken a project of dredging 448 small rivers and canals. We hope that the flood situation will improve within the next three or four years."

The office of the UN Resident Coordinator's estimates that 5.3 million people were directly affected, 419,336 houses damaged, and 287,513 people were displaced in this year's flood.

EROSION LOOMS

Meanwhile, experts said although flood waters would continue to recede in the next few days, rivers might start eroding their banks.

Gaibandha, Kurigram, Jamalpur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, and Faridpur are likely to be erosion affected, they said.

"Flood situation has started improving and we are hopeful that by August 3, the situation will be normal unless there are more heavy showers," Arifuzzaman told The Daily Star.

Earlier this year, the Centre for Environmental and Geographic Information Services predicted erosion at 22 locations in 13 districts by the Padma and Jamuna rivers.

The report predicted that about 2,860 hectares, including 500 hectares of settlements, might be eroded.

It also predicted that 420 metres of embankments, 8km of roads, 35 educational institutes, five mar-kets, and five health care centres might be devoured by the rivers.

"Erosion will be worse than predicted, especially in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Jamalpur and Bogura," said CEGIS Deputy Executive Director Maminul Haque Sarker.

Congratulations

Prof. Dr. Mani Lal Aich Litu

for his achieving FRCS degree from Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow, UK for his outstanding expertise in ENT surgery.

Best Care ENT centre

Kudrat-E-Khuda Road, Dhaka-1205