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"They [government] repeatedly amended the constitution as part of their plot to eliminate politics from Bangladesh. Their main target is to keep only one party in the country."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR

"The government can give incentive to the tanners in another way instead of harming the interest of the poor and the orphans."
JATIYA PARTY CHAIRMAN GM QJADER

"It is better for him [Mashrafe] if he gets two months' time to think about it [retirement] and make a decision ... we are fine with it ..."
BCB PRESIDENT NAZMUL HASSAN ON HIS MEETING WITH MASHRAFE

Students, officegoers most vulnerable

Educational institutions, offices taking measures to check Aedes mosquito breeding

HELEMUL ALAM and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Students and officegoers are most vulnerable to dengue infection, according to a government survey.

In the latest survey on 420 patients, the IEDCR found 41 percent of them are students, 39 percent service holders, 13 percent housewives while the rest form different occupations.

Findings also show that most patients are aged between 5 and 35, with the number of male patients much higher compared to female patients, said Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

And with educational institutions and offices opening after Eid, experts recommended regular anti-mosquito drives at these places to prevent a further spread of the disease.

This year's outbreak is already the worst in the country, with at least 51,476 cases detected and at least 97 dead so far. The number of reported infections is five times that of last year. The actual figures are likely to be higher as many cases go unreported.

Just yesterday, four more people, including two students, died of dengue in Dhaka, Faridpur and Sirajganj, hospital and family sources said.

Students and job holders are at the highest risk as they remain outside home in the morning and evening hours, when Aedes mosquitos, carrier of dengue fever, are known to bite, said Kankar Ghosh, an epidemiologist at Dhaka Shishu Hospital.

These mosquitos usually bite people two hours after sunrise and two hours before sunset, and people of these two groups remain outside home at these hours, he said.

Children are particularly vulnerable

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DENGUE OUTBREAK

NEW CASES IN LAST 24 HRS	TOTAL DENGUE CASES	OUTSIDE DHAKA	DEATH	UNDERGOING TREATMENT
1,460	51,476	839	97 (40 OFFICIAL)	7,856

SOURCE: DGHS



DAYLIGHT SHOWS DEVASTATION ... Mangled corrugated iron sheets, barely standing pillars and ashes are all that remain after a fire reduced a slum to ashes in Chalantika area of Mirpur-7 Friday night.

Rush back to Dhaka

Hassles also on return journey

STAR REPORT

Bus and launch terminals and railway stations in the capital witnessed high number of incoming passengers yesterday as most offices and business open today after an extended Eid holiday.

Many had to wait hours at the stations and terminals for transport home while some complained about being charged exorbitantly by rickshaw pullers, autorickshaw drivers, and bus and launch operators.

Overcrowded launches were seen plying the rivers yesterday.

Although no long tailbacks were seen on the highways or near ferry terminals, traffic was slow.

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Rawhide trade into a tailspin

Merchants won't sell to tanners unless part of arrears paid; meet at commerce ministry today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although tanners were supposed to start buying rawhide at the government-fixed rates yesterday, merchants refused to sell, demanding the payment of a "considerable" portion of their arrears.

It comes after seasonal traders, farmers and madrasas across the country threw away thousands of pieces of rawhide of sacrificial animals after this Eid, failing to sell those.

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Faulty gas pipes fed the blaze

Fire officials say

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

Illegal gas connections via plastic pipes helped Friday night's fire spread faster, razing almost the entire slum at Mirpur's Chalantika, fire service officials said.

The authorities, however, were yet to find the cause of the fire.

"We found illegal gas connections in the slum when we were conducting search operation [yesterday]. The gas was supplied through plastic pipes. The plastic pipes melted in the heat, releasing the gas and helping the fire spread faster to adjacent shanties," Rezaul Karim, assistant director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence in Dhaka, told The Daily Star.

Many locals said the same when the correspondents visited the area yesterday.

Abdullah Al Amin, a local pharmacy owner, said the entire slum had the illegal gas connections running through plastic pipes instead of metal ones.

Besides, many slum-dwellers used gas

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Ravaged by fire, buried in despair

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

The scenes at Chalantika slum resemble those from a wasteland in a dystopia.

Surrounded by tall buildings in a strange juxtaposition of the sheltered and ones that are not, thousands of people pick through the remains of what used to be their entire lives, salvaging charred valuables and fragments of once-happy memories.

Friday night's fire in Mirpur's Chalantika slum did not just raze houses, it engulfed the dreams of a people, most of them marginalised.

Soheli Begum, in her 50s, came to the slum in Dhaka around 27 years ago with her husband and four children. They were picking up their lives after their home in Bhola was eroded by the river.

Hard work changed their luck and despite the loss of her husband a decade and a half ago, Soheli felt that she was ready to beat all odds.

But one single fire took away everything they had, including their prized possessions such as the grocery shop Soheli used to run, two fridges, a television, a showcase, almirahs and whatever cash they barely managed to save.

"I have grown old. All our savings are gone. Now how will my family survive?" Soheli said.

Of the around 3,000 families affected according to locals, the anxiety over what the future may hold is shared by almost every one of them.

Three siblings -- Dulal, 55, Rafique, 40 and Liton, 35 -- who arrived at the slum from Barguna 30 years back, had just begun seeing better days.

Dulal used to work as a carpenter with his father Salam Musalli. Later, the three joined the same profession and built three shanties of their own.

Days before Eid-ul-Azha on Monday, all three brothers put new corrugated tins worth around Tk 20,000 on their houses. The shiny new additions were something that reminded them of how far they had come.

But within days, the last vestige of their successful struggle turned to ashes.

"I loaned money from people. How will I pay them back now? Where will we even stay?" Dulal, who had a sleepless night, said.

He was still staring at the burnt remains of what once was their home.

Md Mamun, 30, a garbage van puller, had lived there since childhood. He said he had furniture worth around Tk 60,000 in his two rented rooms, where he lived with his wife and two-and-half-year-old son.

He sold the charred remains of his belongings at Tk 1,200 to a scrap collector.

"I still feel blessed that we are alive and could come out of the devastating blaze," Mamun said.



Domingo Tigers' new coach

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) officially announced the appointment of former South Africa coach Russell Domingo as head coach of the Bangladesh national team during a press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

The first assignment for the 44-year-old South African, who has agreed on a two-year term with the BCB, will be to guide the Tigers during their one-off Test against Afghanistan, which will be followed by a triangular T20I series involving hosts Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Zimbabwe next month. Domingo will arrive in Dhaka on 21 August.

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Indian security personnel stand guard as a Kashmiri woman walks past them in Srinagar yesterday. Seventeen out of around 100 telephone exchanges were yesterday restored in the restive Kashmir Valley after an almost two-week communications blackout.

India eases some curbs in Kashmir

Some land phone links restored; Pakistan, India trade heavy fire

AGENCIES

Indian authorities eased restrictions on movement and restored landline telephone links in some parts of Kashmir on Saturday, the biggest relaxation in a crippling lockdown since New Delhi announced it was removing the region's special status on Aug 5.

The ease of restrictions comes despite India and Pakistan exchanged "heavy" cross-border fire yesterday, a day after a rare meeting of the UN Security Council on the Kashmir issue.

The two foes regularly fire potshots over the Line of Control (LoC) in the disputed Himalayan territory, which is divided between the two countries and poisoned their relations since independence in 1947.

"The exchange of fire is going on," a senior Indian government official told AFP, calling it "heavy".

One Indian soldier was reportedly killed. Pakistan made no immediate comment on the violence.

Late Friday, Pakistan and China succeeded in getting the UN Security Council to discuss Kashmir -- behind closed doors -- for the first time since the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971.

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday hailed the gathering, saying that addressing the "suffering of the Kashmiri people & ensuring resolution of the dispute is the responsibility of this world body".

New Delhi insists the status of the territory is a purely internal matter.

"We don't need international busybodies to try to tell us how to run our lives. We are a billion-plus people," India's UN envoy Syed Akbaruddin said after the meeting.

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