

POLLUTING HALDA DoE shuts down Asian Paper Mill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CIG

Department of Environment yesterday sealed off a paper mill in Chattogram's Khulshi area on charge of polluting the Halda, possibly the only breeding ground of natural Carp in South Asia.

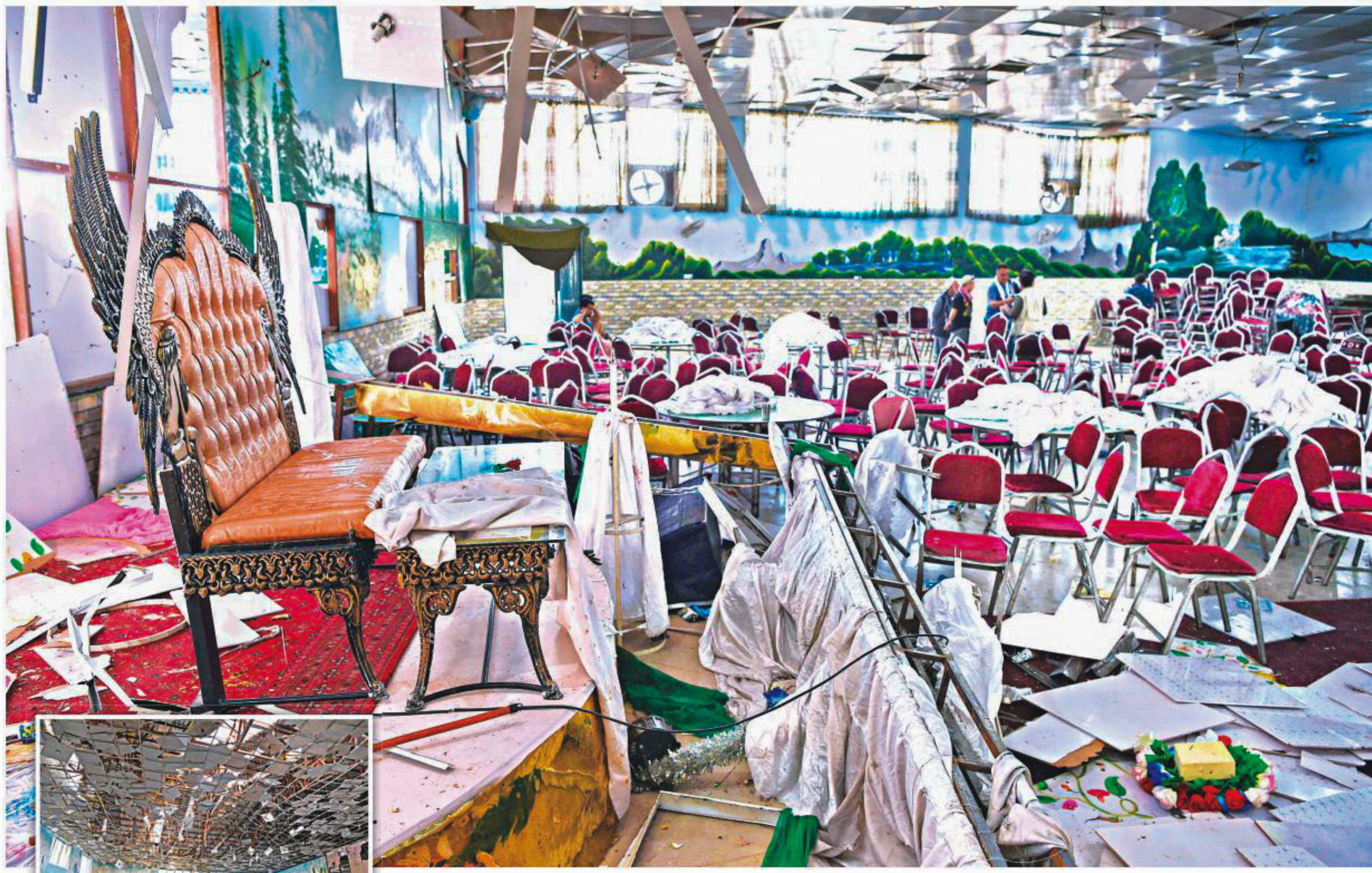
The authorities came up with the closure order after hearing a complaint filed by Ruhul Amin, upazila nirbahi officer of Hathazari. Ruhul, along with some locals, filed the complaint on August 14 accusing Asian Paper Mill of releasing untreated substances into a waterbody that connects to the Halda.

A team of DoE, led by Nurullah Nuri, director of Chattogram DoE Lab, conducted a probe into the allegation and found authenticity. Muktadir Hasan, assistant director of Chattogram DoE, said, they found proof of Asian Paper Mill's involvement in polluting waterbodies.

He said, "Analysing samples, we found proof that sludge produced by the mill polluted water at a dangerous level."

"This prompted the authorities to seal off the factory until it establishes a fully functional ETP [effluent treatment plant] and takes steps to

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Afghan men investigate in a wedding hall after a deadly bomb blast in Kabul yesterday. At least 63 people were killed and scores wounded in an explosion targeting a wedding in the Afghan capital. PHOTO: AFP

Suicide blast at Kabul wedding kills 63

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suffering for Afghans, the suffering will continue."

The bride's father told TOLONews 14 members of his family were killed. **BLOODSHED AND TALKS**

Wedding halls have become a big business in Kabul as the Afghan economy slowly picks up and families spend more on celebrations. Big, brightly lit halls now line some suburban streets of the city, and bombers have targeted them before.

At least 40 people were killed

in a wedding-hall blast in Kabul in November.

There has been no let-up in fighting and bomb attacks in Afghanistan over recent months despite the talks between the United States and the Taliban since late last year.

In the northern province of Balkh, 11 civilians were killed yesterday when a roadside bomb blew up their van, police said.

President Ashraf Ghani, in comments on the Kabul blast before the IS claim, said the Taliban could

not "absolve themselves of blame for they provide a platform for terrorists".

The Taliban have been fighting to expel foreign forces and re-establish an Islamic state since they were ousted in October 2001, weeks after the September 11 attacks on the United States.

Both US negotiators and the Taliban have reported progress after eight rounds of talks since late last year. But some Afghans were sceptical about the effort, amid the carnage.

US President Donald Trump has

made no secret of his desire for a US pullout from Afghanistan and an end to America's longest war.

But there are concerns among Afghan officials and US national security aides that Afghanistan could plunge into a new civil war that could see a return of Taliban rule and international militants, including IS, finding a refuge.

Some 14,000 US troops remain in Afghanistan, training and advising Afghan security forces and conducting counterinsurgency operations.

FBCCI

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they will start sale today as the government, trade bodies in the leather sector and the FBCCI decided to find a solution to the non-payment of the dues.

Humayun said the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the country's apex trade body, is scheduled to hold a meeting with the stakeholders on August 22 to resolve the issue.

There has been a big crisis in rawhide trade since the Eid-ul-Azha as a large number of merchants stopped buying rawhide from seasonal traders, many of whom dumped rawhide by the roadside in more than a dozen districts, failing to sell those.

The merchants alleged that they were cash-strapped as the tanners didn't clear their dues before the Eid.

Following the Eid, around 35 lakh pieces of rawhide out of more than one crore were thrown away by seasonal traders as they could not find any buyers, said rawhide merchants and tanners. They put the price of the dumped rawhide at Tk 100 crore.

Replying to queries from journalists, Humayun claimed that BNP men had stockpiled rawhide and later threw those away to put the government in trouble.

"When they [the BNP] failed to do well in politics, they entered rawhide business."

About rawhide export, the minister said it is a lengthy process. If the government thinks rawhide export is needed, it will decide on this later.

"The leather sector is a very potential one. Many vested quarters are out to damage this sector."

Every year, around 5,000 or 0.05 percent of more than one crore pieces of rawhide get damaged, said the minister, adding that he got the information from field-level traders.

But this year, the damage of rawhide was a bit more than last year's because of hot weather during the Eid-ul-Azha. Some 10,000 pieces or 0.1 percent of over one crore pieces of rawhide were damaged across the country, the minister mentioned.

"However, we are very pleased that the leather sector is not facing any problems. We will formulate the leather policy soon," he added.

Salman F Rahman, private industry and investment adviser to the prime minister, said, "The extent of damage of rawhide was a bit higher in some districts including Chittagong and Sylhet.

"But the number is not more than 10,000 pieces."

Fears in US of bad peace deal with the Taliban

AFP, Washington

An Afghanistan peace agreement that the US seems close to reaching with the Taliban has prompted worries that President Donald Trump's desire to quickly withdraw US troops could further plunge the country into civil war.

Trump said Friday he was pleased with talks on ending the war, 18 years after the September 11, attacks that prompted the US invasion of Afghanistan in the first place.

In recent days several US officials have suggested that an accord could be imminent in discussions with the Taliban in Qatar.

The US negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, is expected to return to the region very soon in hopes of sealing an agreement with the Afghan rebel force.

Such a potentially historic accord has raised an outcry from an eclectic assortment of critics in Washington, ranging from neo-conservatives to former Democratic administration officials to ex-military heroes.

Hasty move helped no one

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university, slowing down its administrative work.

Since 2017, the university has not appointed any new exam controller to manage the affairs of the 2.5 lakh college students.

"No new deputy exam controller or assistant exam controller has been appointed since 2015," said a deputy exam controller recently. "Only a few section officers were hired last year," he added, refusing to give his name.

Another deputy exam controller, who oversees the seven colleges, said about 20-25 administrative officers were recruited in the last fiscal year. "But we need at least 15 more to do the work smoothly," he said, requesting anonymity.

The DU has five deputy exam controllers, 15 assistant exam controllers, and 26 section officers.

Apart from exam controllers, the university needs college inspectors who check on the activities of the colleges and make visits to report the situation first-hand.

The university right now has only one college inspector, one assistant college inspector, and one section officer.

The assistant college inspector, Abdul Kuddus, said no new appointment was made in his office yet, but the university is at the final stage to create 10 posts of college inspector.

Meanwhile, then vice chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique denied that the reaffiliation decision was taken

hurriedly. He said it was a government decision which they implemented.

Asked why the DU authorities did not appoint required staff in the last two and a half years, Vice Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman said that the then administration could have done it. "Many things happened unscientifically," he added.

"We are working on the issue. We have formed a committee to resolve the crisis."

When Prof Arefin was asked the same question, he said some extra people were needed, but the university could manage the situation with the existing workforce.

"We have an adequate workforce because the university used to have the same workforce when the colleges were affiliated with DU before 1992."

In August 2014, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the education ministry to reaffiliate the colleges with respective public universities. But differences of opinion between National University and some public universities delayed the process.

In November 2016, the education ministry decided to start the process by handing over the seven colleges to DU with the president's approval.

The goal was to improve the quality of education, reduce pressure on the NU, and put an end to session jams at the colleges.

The NU was established in 1992 to take over the affiliated colleges of the public universities in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Chittagong. At the time, it was said NU would help break the cycle of

session jams and improve education standards.

It now oversees 2,300 educational institutions with more than 20 lakh students.

PROTEST, COMMITTEE FORMED
Students of the seven colleges first took to the street in July 2017, demanding publication of results, exam schedules, and re-evaluation of answer scripts. Since then, they organised street protests on at least seven occasions.

Abu Bakar, a student of Bangla at Dhaka College, said their third-year final exam results were published on July 10, after seven months of the exams. "We were supposed to complete the bachelor programme by July 2018."

"Dhaka University authorities also delay publication of exam schedules. Students of every session are facing a minimum of one year's session jam."

Some also alleged that the DU teachers did not evaluate the answer scripts properly. Amalendu Paul, a degree (pass course) student of Kabi Nazrul College, said, "All 300 students of the 2014-2015 session failed at least in one course."

Asked about this allegation, DU Business Faculty Dean Prof Shibli Rubayat Ul Islam, who coordinates the seven colleges, said there was no lax in evaluating answer scripts. "But performances of the college students were poor."

According to a deputy exam controller, DU teachers evaluated all the exam scripts of the college students for the first six to seven months. "But now they handle 10 percent of the

scripts at best."

The DU students also took to the street in July, and locked all academic and administrative buildings for three days from July 22. They demanded cancellation of the affiliation.

"Usually, we have to wait for a long time to get any administrative work done. Now the burden of additional 2.5 lakh students has aggravated our sufferings," said Lisa Hossain, a student of world religion and culture department at the DU.

Ayesha Siddiq, a student of political science, said, "Our classes and examinations were suspended several times because the teachers have to conduct the viva voce of the college students."

The university students suspended the protest after a 10-member committee was formed to resolve the crisis. They would not resume demonstration until the report arrives.

The committee first sat on July 29, and sought one month's time to submit the report.

There are 43,385 students and 2,010 teachers at the DU. The university has 116 constituent or affiliated institutions including the seven colleges.

In most cases, the DU's responsibility is limited to issuing certificates and inspection of these institutions. But in the case of the seven colleges, the role is much bigger -- the university conducts most of their exam-related activities.

In 2018-19 fiscal year, Dhaka University earned Tk 21 crore from the sales of admission forms at the seven colleges.

Now alarming also outside the capital

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put dengue patients in more trouble.

In Faridpur, for example, only three of the nine upazila health complexes have pathological test facilities, said district Civil Surgeon Enamul Haque.

The 500-bed Faridpur Medical College Hospital is now handling 751 patients, 277 of them dengue patients, said Kamoda Prosad Saha, superintendent of the hospital.

The hospital has half the required manpower, and the current flow of dengue patients has increased their burden, he said.

In Barishal's Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, 186 dengue patients were taking treatment yesterday, said Bakir Hossain, a physician there.

If the number of patients continues to rise, it will be a huge challenge for the authorities, he added.

Another doctor at the hospital said that not all the nine upazila health complexes in Barishal had the facilities to conduct dengue tests such as NS1, IgG, IgM and CVC. As a result, patients from different areas are forced to go to their hospital, which creates a huge pressure.

The current spell of dengue started from Dhaka and is now spreading fast to outlying districts as a huge number of people travelled from the capital to different districts during Eid vacation, health experts said.

Given the inadequate health facilities in rural and remote areas,

experts suggested a set of preventive measures.

"As there is a huge number of Aedes mosquitoes outside Dhaka, using mosquito nets is very important. Or else, it will spread further," said Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University.

If a dengue patient does not remain under mosquito nets, and if a non-infected Aedes mosquito bites him, that mosquito will also be infected and will spread the virus, he warned.

During an epidemic-like situation, a disease can quickly spread outside the affected areas, he added.

A huge number of people travelled outside Dhaka during Eid vacation, which contributed to the spread in other parts of the country, he noted.

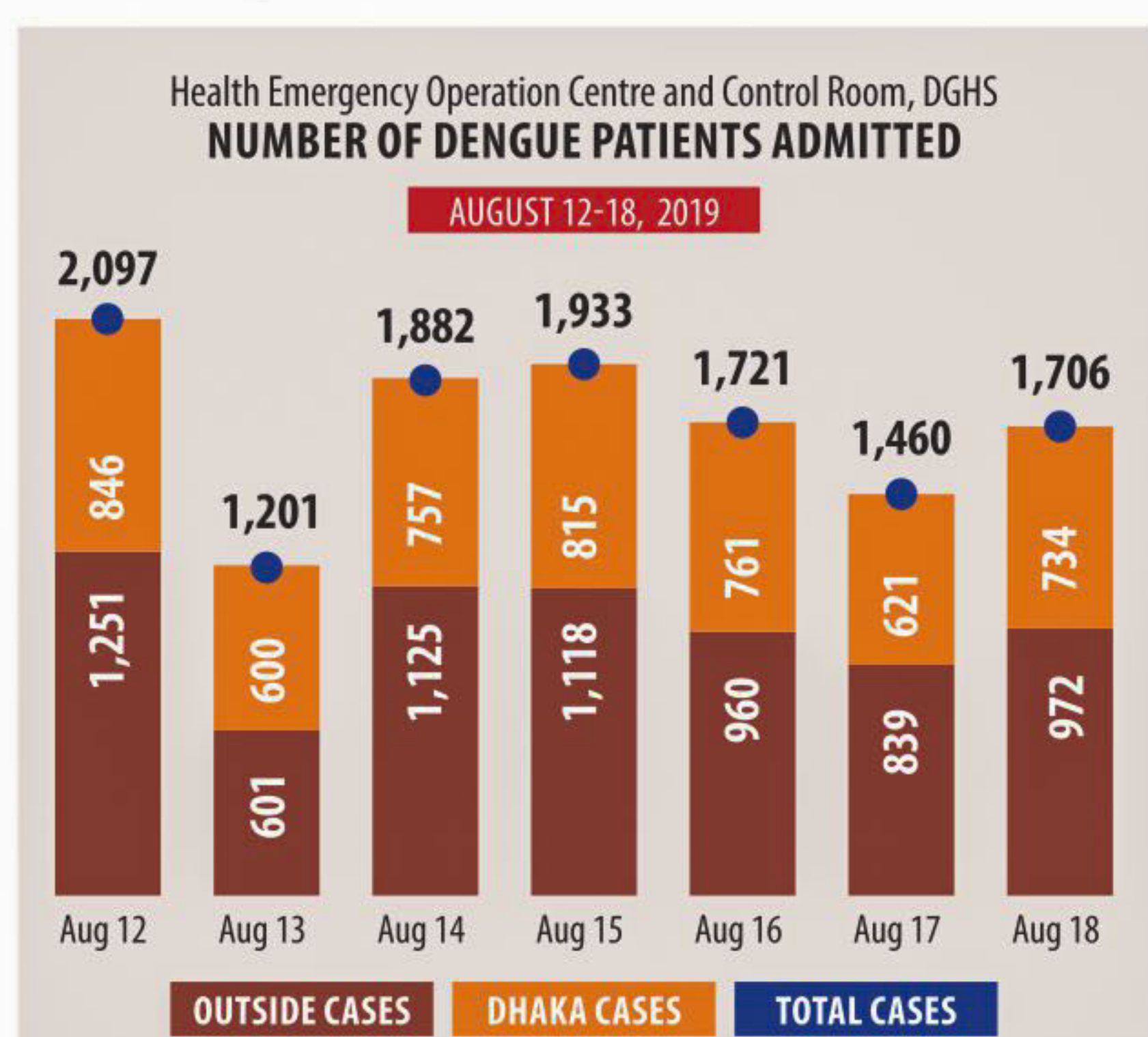
Mahmudur Rahman, former director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), echoed his views and recommended taking preventive measures.

Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora of the IEDCR said controlling Aedes mosquito at source is the key to reducing the number of dengue patients.

Testing kits are not a problem now, as the government has supplied those everywhere, she said.

Doctors outside Dhaka have also been trained, she added.

Prof Kabirul warned that Aedes mosquitoes are now out of control and everyone should come forward and take effective measures to destroy all



breeding sources.

"It will require a social movement to control the situation," he said.

Meanwhile, a Kishoreganj man died of dengue at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital yesterday, said Dr AB Md Shamsuzzaman, assistant director of the hospital.

Russell Mia, 35, had gone home on Eid vacation from Dhaka and had been diagnosed with dengue at Kishoreganj General Hospital, said Dr Sultana Razia, deputy director of the hospital.

[Our Barishal, Faridpur and Mymensingh correspondents contributed to the report]

Stay alert

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exchanging Eid greetings with officials at the Prime Minister's Office.

Dengue is not only seen in Bangladesh, but also in many neighbouring countries in South Asia and even South East Asia, the PM said.

In other countries like the Philippines, it has turned into an epidemic, forcing them to declare emergency, Hasina added.

The PM thanked her office as it has always been active over the dengue issue.

She said the health and local government ministries and all other agencies concerned remained active in dealing with the dengue problem.

The city corporations have also been trying to rein in the dengue. Hasina said, adding that all the authorities concerned have taken proper measures to deal with the problem.

About the country's economic progress, the PM said the GDP growth reached 8.10 percent and the government has fixed a target in the budget for the current fiscal year to achieve an 8.2 percent growth. The government has a target to reach the double digit, she added.

Mentioning that it is tough to accelerate the GDP growth from 8 percent, Hasina directed the government officials to work harder to do that.

The PM stressed the need for the revival of some pro-people programmes like "Ghore Phera" Project, "Shanti Nibash" Project, and "Oboshor" Project introduced by her previous governments.

"We had taken these schemes for the welfare of people. But their tenures have expired. So, we'll have to re-launch the projects in the public interest."

While talking about her government's steps for curbing corruption, the PM said those who take and give bribes both are equally guilty. "We could have accomplished many work faster if steps had been taken keeping that in mind."

She asked her office to strengthen its monitoring so that the work on development projects can start right after floodwaters recede.

"Since we've a good set-up, I think our office will have to strengthen the monitoring so that every ministry can prioritise work holding meetings right now and we can start the physical work [on the development projects taken for this fiscal year] immediately after floods," she said.

Hasina said the PMO should give special attention to taking preparations so that the projects can be implemented timely.

Mentioning that the government has undertaken various development projects in the current budget, the PM said different ministries should now prioritise work as per the development projects, keeping it in mind that they get time to take preparations during floods.

Hasina said the country witnesses flood every year right after the national budget is placed. "So, paperwork on the development projects can be completed during the period of flood."

PM's advisers HT Imam, Mashiur Rahman and Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, Principal Coordinator on SDG Affairs at PMO Abul Kalam Azad, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim, and PMO Secretary Sajjadul Hassan were, among others, present at the function moderated by PM's Principal Secretary Nojibur Rahman.

HC slams

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secretaries of two city corporations to take necessary action.

The HC bench said chemicals had been sprayed without any proper test year after year. But those did not work.

The officials and employees concerned were not discharging their duties properly and were shifting the responsibility onto people by asking them to clean their houses.

Bashar submitted the DGHS report before the court, saying that the government was very sincere in preventing the mosquito menace.

The holidays of doctors and officials at the government hospitals has been cancelled. Import of anti-mosquito chemicals from abroad has been made tariff free, he added.

Ten surveillance teams have been formed and mobile courts have raided 14 hospitals to ensure proper treatment of dengue patients.

The court said it would not pass any order on the DGHS report at this moment.

Meanwhile, the HC bench asked journalists to prepare reports on the court proceedings cautiously.

In response to media report about its comment over the government officials, the court said it had earlier observed that the government officials are servants of the state. But the observation was misinterpreted by the media, the HC bench said.

Media is free, but it should write news ethically. It should not write anything which can send the wrong message to the people and demean the court.