

LOST LIVES AND ABANDONED HOMES

East Jurain hit hard by dengue, locals blame city corporation for negligence, unplanned dev works

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Hafiza, a mother of two children from East Jurain's Khaja Mahbub Ali Road, has been suffering from dengue fever for more than 20 days. Her 12-year-old son, who was also infected, recently recovered after 13 days of a life or death struggle at a local hospital.

"I couldn't care for my son, as I'm also extremely sick. Doctors suggested we both get admitted to a hospital. But we couldn't afford that and decided to admit our son. He is still very weak and cannot eat at all," a weeping Hafiza told The Daily Star recently.

"Last year, my daughter got infected with typhoid. In 2019, my mother, who came to visit my place, also got infected with dengue and had to be admitted to a hospital. I asked my husband to move from this place, but we couldn't afford to rent a house in a better place," she added.

There are no tenants in the building next to Hafiza's. According to her husband Md Shultan, all the families moved after almost all of them got infected and two people died of dengue last month.

"One of them was Jishan, a boy of around 10. Jishan's parents went almost insane after losing their only child," said Shultan.

Md Mijanur Rahman, a permanent resident of East Jurain and a social worker, said, "Actually, you will not find any house along this road where there is not a single dengue patient at this moment. Many people have already left, and many are in the process of leaving this neighbourhood, as the disease is still spreading like wildfire."

"Those who are currently living here are either permanent residents or can't afford a better place to live," he added.

According to locals, most of the houses in East Jurain neighbourhood, which is under ward-53 of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), have someone who is infected with dengue.

This correspondent visited at least 20 houses on East Jurain's Khaja



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Every family living in East Jurain is in fear of losing one of their loved ones to dengue. The situation is so grim that many are packing their belongings to escape this seemingly accursed place, leaving behind their homes full of memories. With the streets getting higher due to DSCC's development work, the people of East Jurain suffer even more, as rainwater rolls off the roads and floods the lower floors of buildings, creating a haven for mosquitoes to breed.

Mahbub Ali Road, Commissioner's Road, Nurani Masjid Road, and at Shobujbagh and Khalpar areas recently, and he indeed found all the houses with at least one dengue patient.

DSCC does not have any data on the current number of dengue patients or deaths in the ward. However, during the visit, this correspondent learnt about the death of at least nine dengue patients just in August.

A REGULAR PHENOMENON
Severe outbreak of dengue infection and high prevalence of waterborne diseases every year has become a regular phenomenon in East Jurain. And the reasons behind this annual

epidemic is quite apparent if anyone visits the area.

Sewage water from a dilapidated sewerage system choked with solid waste overflowed the streets, creating stagnant pools here and there.

Besides, according to locals, one of the biggest reasons behind waterlogging in East Jurain is authorities increasing the height of roads in an unplanned manner.

As it is a low-lying area, DSCC has been heightening roads there for more than a decade, but without taking the height of adjacent buildings into consideration.

Many lanes such as Nurani Masjid Road and Commissioner's Road have been heightened up to 10 feet in the last five years.

As a result, bases of a large number of buildings in the entire area are actually lower than the heightened road, and so, these buildings get flooded quickly even after a rain shower.

According to DSCC, these roads will be further heightened up to five feet in the near future.

Local resident Md Ferdous said, "The ground and first floors have become unusable in most of the buildings in East Jurain due to unplanned heightening of roads by DSCC."

"After every drizzle, runaway water from these roads floods the ground floor and even the first floor, leaving them submerged for days, as we don't have any way to remove so much water. In these stagnant waters, mosquitoes breed in millions."

Due to continuous heightening of roads, many landlords have abandoned their buildings, as these structures have already become half-buried under the roads.

Large volumes of trapped rainwater with countless numbers of mosquitoes floating on top were seen inside these abandoned, ruined structures.

"We often purchase sand and earth to cover up the trapped water, but for how long can we do this at our own expense? Most of the families in this neighbourhood are very poor."

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2 die, 265 hospitalised in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two more dengue patients have died while 265 new patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday.

Among the 265 new cases, 33 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, a total of 1,145 were diagnosed so far this month, out of the total 11,501 infected. Of the total infected, 983 are from outside Dhaka.

At least 7,698 were diagnosed in August, 2,286 patients were hospitalised in July, 272 in June, and 43 were infected in May, according to DGHS.

According to the DGHS, 51 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year, all of whom died in July, August, and September.

Twelve people died in July, 34 have died in August, while five have died in September so far.

Though most of the hospitalised patients have been released, 1,273 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, while 136 are under treatment outside the capital, the DGHS data show.

Meanwhile, Dhaka North City Corporation mayor Md Atiqul Islam directed to file a case against the executive engineer of Mirpur-1 Wasa Iqbal Ahmed yesterday, as a DNCC mobile court found huge numbers of Aedes larvae at different places of the Wasa Bhaban in Mirpur-1.

"Earlier, we took legal

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Bangladesh-India flights resume today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The flight operation between Bangladesh and India under air bubble arrangement will resume today after a four-month recess due to Covid-19 pandemic.

"The flight operation between Bangladesh and India under air bubble agreement will be resumed from September 5," said Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) in a circular yesterday.

The air bubble agreement will be in effect until the resumption of scheduled international passenger flights between the two countries, it added.

Under the arrangement, the countries' airlines can operate international flights with certain restrictions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines and private airline US-Bangla have already announced their flight schedule to India from today.

Another private airline -- Novoair -- said they will not operate flights to India under the air bubble agreement.

Biman will operate two flights per week on Dhaka-Kolkata-Dhaka route and two weekly flights on Dhaka-New Delhi-Dhaka destination while US-Bangla airlines will operate three weekly flights on Dhaka-Chennai-Dhaka route.

Three Indian carriers -- Air India, Spice Jet and Indigo -- will also operate flights between Dhaka and New Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai.

Except for individuals with tourist visa, all can travel to

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Tofail's condition improves

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health condition of senior Awami League leader Tofail Ahmed, who is undergoing treatment at Medanta Hospital in India's Gurgaon, has improved.

"He had suffered a mild stroke, but his condition is now better. He has been shifted to the cabin from the ICU [intensive care unit]," Shaban Mahmood, Minister (Press) of Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Doctors are treating his neurological and neurology-related problems, he said.

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'A man of originality, versatility, genius'

Speakers remember Abul Mansur Ahmad's life and works on his 123rd birth anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abul Mansur Ahmad, a man of versatile genius, devoted a large part of his work to analysing the question of identity of Bengali Muslims, said renowned poet, novelist and director general of Bangla Academy Mohammad Nurul Huda.

"His work is a testament to the many aspects of his knowledge, wisdom and experiences," he said at a discussion titled "Originality of Abul Mansur Ahmad's Thoughts", organised on a virtual platform on the occasion of his 123rd birth anniversary.

Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad organised the event on Friday night.

Nurul Huda also said apart from his identities as journalist, litterateur, and politician, Abul Mansur Ahmad was also an astute cultural critic.

A successful politician, Abul Mansur Ahmad was the provincial education minister in the United Front cabinet under Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq in 1954 and the central commerce and industries minister in the Awami League government of the then prime minister Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy in 1957.

He was known for his strong stance on matters of

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Speakers at a virtual event, marking the 123rd birth anniversary of renowned litterateur, journalist and politician Abul Mansur Ahmad. Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad organised the programme on Friday night. As in previous years, to mark his birth anniversary, an essay competition was held this year, where 10 participants won in three different categories.

"Abul Mansur Ahmad was a multi-talented man. We can learn a lot from his life and work. It is undoubtedly a great initiative to organise an essay competition on his achievements. I hope this endeavour will inspire future generations to grow an interest in history."

Prof Bishwajit Ghosh
Former VC of Rabindra University

PARLIAMENT PANORAMA

Stop marriage between working individuals!

MP Bablu's bizarre solution to unemployment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rezaul Karim Bablu, an independent lawmaker from Bogra-7 constituency, yesterday raised a bizarre demand in the parliament -- calling for stopping marriage between working men and women in the country to solve the unemployment problem.

He also proposed to the law minister that a law be enacted in this regard while discussing a bill.

He told the law minister that there are four crore unemployed individuals in the country at the moment.

"But this unemployment problem is not being solved as working men are marrying working women and vice versa. As a result, those who are unemployed are still unemployed," he said.

MP Bablu also said such marriages should be stopped as children of both working parents are often abused by domestic workers.



The whole parliament burst into laughter after hearing his comments.

In reply, Law Minister Anisul Huq flat out rejected Rezaul Karim Bablu's proposal, saying it was not constitutional.

"There is freedom of speech in the country, so anyone can speak. You can say whatever you want. Even if a member of parliament enjoys that right, we as representatives of the people cannot do or say whatever we want," the law minister said.

Later, taking part in another discussion, MP Bablu wanted to raise the issue again but he couldn't as Speaker Shirin Sharmin Choudhury, who was presiding over the sitting at that time, asked him to speak on the specific topic that was being discussed.

This is not the first time MP Bablu made such questionable comments.

Last year in November, he was widely criticised for blaming feminists for the increase in rape incidents around the country.

Delimitation bill passed replacing ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bill titled "The Delimitation of Constituencies Bill, 2021" was passed in parliament yesterday, aiming to formulate an act to replace a military regime-era ordinance, in line with a court judgment.

Law Minister Anisul Haq placed the bill, which was passed by voice vote.

The proposed law was designed to replace the existing Delimitation of Constituencies Ordinance 1976, which was promulgated during the military regime of Ziaur Rahman.

As per the bill, for the purpose of elections to seats in parliament, Election Commission shall divide the country into as many single territorial constituencies as the number of members to be elected, according to the constitution.

The constituencies shall be delimited into compact areas, having regard to administrative convenience and population.

Several lawmakers -- including BNP's Harunur Rashid and Rumeen Farhana, and Jatiya Party's Shemeem Haider Patwari -- opposed different provisions of the bill, including one which states that no question can be raised in court centring delimitation of constituencies.

HIGHWAY BILL

The Highways Bill, 2021 was placed in parliament yesterday, aiming to adopt a full-fledged law in this regard in place of a century-old inadequate one.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader placed the bill. It was later sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry for further scrutiny.

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Bar council bill gets JS nod

Govt now can form committee to hold the polls during 'unusual situation'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bill titled "The Bangladesh Legal Practitioners and Bar Council (Amendment) Bill, 2021" was passed in parliament yesterday with a provision of allowing the government to form an ad-hoc committee for a maximum one-year tenure to arrange the Bar Council election in an "unusual situation".

Law Minister Anisul Haq placed the bill in the House which was passed by voice vote.

The proposed law was placed in parliament on Friday.

The law minister placed the Bangladesh Legal Practitioners and Bar Council (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 in the House on Wednesday.

It was approved by the Cabinet on July 26, and later, the president promulgated the ordinance on July 28.

The ordinance was promulgated as parliament was not in session at that time.

Several lawmakers including BNP's Harunur Rashid and Rumeen

Farhana strongly opposed the bill alleging that the government introduced it to put control on the bar council.

They submitted the proposal to elicit public opinion on the bill and withdraw it for further amendment.

According to the bill, if the regular Bar Council election cannot be held by May 31 after every three years, the government can form a 15-member ad-hoc committee for a maximum of one year, within which time the committee will have to arrange the election.

In the existing Bangladesh Legal Practitioners and Bar Council Order, 1972, there is no alternative provision in case regular elections cannot be arranged in time due to any natural disaster or "acts of God".

As per the bill, elections to the bar council shall always be held so as to conclude on or before the "31st day of May" in the year in which the term of the Bar Council expires.

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Hotlines for expats in Malaysia launched

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh High Commission in Malaysia has introduced three dedicated mobile phone numbers for the migrants to better address their problems related to passports or other welfare issues.

The numbers are 0104303110 and 0104303020 where the migrants can call for getting updates on passports. They can call at 01126206701 for labour welfare related issues during 9am to 5pm from Monday through Friday, said Bangladesh High Commission in a circular on Friday.

"The High Commission will take prompt action if any request or information is received through these calls," it said.

"There will be additional and dedicated staff to attend the calls of Bangladeshi migrants. We will try to serve them better," said Khorsheed Alam Khastagir, deputy high commissioner of

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