

DOWN WITH THE FLU

Unusual weather pattern doubles number of patients with infectious diseases; children worst affected

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With the country's temperature remaining abnormally high over the last two months, the number of patients suffering from different infectious diseases has gone up, with children being the worst sufferers and leaving hospitals struggling with an influx of treatment seekers.

Visits to three public hospitals -- Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, and MR Khan Shishu Hospital -- in the last several days confirmed a significant rise in the number of patients with flu and waterborne diseases.

Doctors at these hospitals said there has been a change in the weather pattern this year, with abnormal heat and humidity even in October. This warm weather is helping spread the infectious diseases, especially among children, they said.

They suggested taking extra care of the children, keeping them hydrated, and maintaining health guidelines to keep them safe.

Prof Dr Syed Shafi Ahmed, director of Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, said



The number of children and their guardians thronging Bangladesh Shishu Hospital has almost doubled compared to one and a half months ago. According to officials, around 400 patients are visiting the outdoors for treatment every day on average. This photo was taken recently.

the number of patients at the hospital has almost doubled compared to the flow of patients one and a half months ago.

"We are seeing a rise of at least 40 percent of patients with infectious diseases," he said.

On average, around 400 patients come to the outdoors for treatment now, said the director.

Shafi added there is a shortage of seats for children in the hospital, with all 673 seats currently occupied. "Viral disease is a common problem in our country, but there has been a sudden increase this year," he said.

The picture was similar at Dr MR Khan Shishu Hospital and Institute of Child Health, which has 230 beds.

Mohammad Jannat Ali, deputy director (hospital and admin) of the hospital, said the authorities have no alternative but to deny admitting many patients as all their beds are occupied.

He also mentioned that most of the patients undergoing treatment in the hospital have high fever.

Of the 900 to 1,000 people who seek outdoor patient service every day, almost 50 percent have this symptom, Ali added.

"What is worrying is that many of these patients come with platelet counts which are lower than the normal level," Ali said.

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KEY REASONS

- Change in weather patterns
- Abnormal heat, humidity even in Oct

ISSUES

- Rise in number of patients with infectious diseases
- Hospital struggling with pressure
- Many refused admission due to bed scarcity

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES

- Taking extra care of children
- Keeping them hydrated
- Maintaining health guidelines

MAYHEM AT RANGPUR



We're trying to know whether the Rangpur incident was a motivated and planned attack. Those involved will be brought to justice.

HOME MINISTER ASADUZZAMAN KHAN



Communal forces carried out the attacks with an intention to make the government questionable. I am urging all to build a united resistance.

INFORMATION MINISTER HASAN MAHMUD



BNP has resorted to conspiracy to spoil the communal harmony. Forces backed by BNP carried out the mayhem in a planned way.

ROAD TRANSPORT AND BRIDGES MINISTER OBAIDUL QUADER

CU teacher's solo protest against communal attacks

A CORRESPONDENT, CU

A teacher of Chittagong University (CU) yesterday stood in front of the Joy Bangla sculpture on the campus, wearing a blindfold, to protest the countrywide violence and attacks on temples, puja mandaps, and Hindu communities during and after the Durga Puja.

Md Atikur Rahman, associate professor of Department of Geography and Environment, covered his eyes with a black cloth and stood in front of the sculpture from 10am to 11am.

During the protest, he held a sign reading, "Protest and condemnation against countrywide attacks on people, houses, and temples of the Hindu community".

"I protest and condemn the recent attacks on Hindus and request the government to ensure proper safety for them, and bring those who were involved in the attacks to book," he told The Daily Star.



Associate professor Md Atikur Rahman stood at this spot alone for an hour in protest.

PHOTO: STAR

3,710 attacks on Hindu community in last 9yrs

Reports Ain o Salish Kendra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 3,710 attacks on the Hindu community took place in the last nine years, between January 2013 and September 2021, according to a compilation of annual reports by human-rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK).

The attacks included vandalism of and setting fire to Hindu families' homes, shops and businesses. Vandalism of and arson attacks on Hindu temples, and incidents of grabbing land and properties of Hindu people were also reported during the period.

ASK prepared its compilation based on news reports published in nine print and online newspapers and its own research. The recent incidents of attack on the Hindu community in Cumilla, Feni, Noakhali, Chandpur, Rangpur and other districts were not included in the report.

According to the report, at least 2,016 houses, shops and businesses came under attack in this period.

At least 1,677 cases of vandalism and arson attacks on Hindu temples, idols and places of worship were also reported.

Besides, 26 incidents of grabbing land and properties took place.

The Hindu community faced the worst situation in 2014, when they were targeted in the post-election violence after January 5, according to the ASK report.

As many as 761 Hindu homes, 193 businesses, and 247 temples and places of worship were attacked that year, and one person died.

The lowest number of attacks were recorded last year; 11 households and three businesses came under attack amid the pandemic. But temples still saw violence, with 66 facing communal attacks.

The report mentioned that at least 10 people from the Hindu community died in these incidents in the last nine years, and 862 were injured.

NINE YEARS OF COMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN NUMBERS

- 2,016 attacks on houses, shops, businesses
- 1,677 cases of vandalism, arson incidents
- 26 incidents of grabbing land, properties
- 10 Hindu people died, 862 injured

Seven Hindu people were killed in 2016. Two Hindu women were raped in 2014, and another four were sexually assaulted.

Among other religious minorities, 17 houses and four businesses belonging to people of the Ahmadiyya sect were attacked in 2019 and 2020, and at least 50 people were injured.

Four attacks on the Buddhist community took place in the last eight years and nine months.

Hindus across the country were still reeling from the shock of communal attacks during the Durga Puja, when zealots ran amok, vandalising Hindu idols, temples and shops in several districts, after word spread that "the Holy Quran was demeaned" in Cumilla.

Talking to The Daily Star on Saturday, Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad, said the attacks on religious minorities, and their temples, homes and businesses, are part of a blueprint to force them to leave the country.

"It is unfortunate that the majority of grassroots leaders of the ruling Awami League are also seen joining them in the attacks," he alleged.

Rana also said, "Awami League chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is sincere to maintain religious harmony in the country. But for mysterious reasons, it does not reach the grassroots activists of the party."

'Shall we leave, then?'

Asks victim of Pirganj arson attack



PHOTO: COLLECTED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

"So many people entered the village and attacked us with sticks and sharp weapons. Didn't recognise anyone. My house was looted and the store was set on fire. How do we survive now? Shall we just leave then?"

Jagdish Chandra Das, a fish trader from Majhipara in Rangpur's Pirganj upazila, said this yesterday -- after the arson attack in Pirganj on Sunday night.

"I have been fearing an attack in the area since Sunday evening. It started around 9:30pm. I bought a new fridge a day before, it was also burnt with the rest of my belongings," he said.

The same situation was faced by Nani Gopal, of the village. All his belongings were looted and his house

was also set on fire. He could not save anything.

"Seeing the situation worsening fast, I hid in a paddy field for an hour and came back when the situation eased. My house was also looted and burnt down," said Purnima Das of the village.

"We were being verbally abused. They (the attackers) were saying they won't allow us to live in this country. The attackers were mostly 20-25 years old," said Sudarshan Das, another villager.

The village was attacked centring a Facebook post by Paritosh Chandra Das (18), son of local Prasanna Chandra Das, said the victims. Fearing for life, Paritosh's family fled the area. Their house has been looted and the adjacent paddy field was set on fire.

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BNP forms two committees

UNB, Dhaka

BNP has formed two committees for, what it said, standing beside the victims of recent communal attacks and investigating the incidents to find out the facts.

BNP standing committee at a virtual meeting on Sunday formed the committees, said a press release signed by party secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday.

He said one of the committees was headed by BNP standing committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy while another was led by Supreme Court Bar Association secretary Barrister Ruhul Quddus Kazal.

Fakhru said the Gayeshwar-led committee will visit the violence-affected temples and puja mandaps in different areas of the country and solace the victims on behalf of BNP.

The other committee, led by Kazal, will look into the incidents of vandalism and arson attacks to find out the facts, he said.

"The two committees will visit the affected areas very soon and submit a report to the party high-command. The decision was taken at our standing committee meeting. They will start their work in a day or two," Fakhru said.

He said the meeting expressed deep

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What began as a drizzle in the morning soon turned into full on showers in the capital yesterday. For more than once, its busy streets were washed away, leaving commuters stranded by the roadsides. But given the swelter of the last few days, this was still welcomed, as were the clouds that loomed heavy for the rest of the day. This photo was taken from Adabar's Ring Road area.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

172 more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 172 more patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, of which 42 are from outside Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With the new cases, a total of 3,377 patients were diagnosed during the current month out of a total 21,574 infected. Of the total infected, 3,024 are from outside Dhaka.

At least 7,841 patients were diagnosed in September, 7,698 in August, 2,286 in July, 272 in June while 43 were infected in May and rest are from January to April.

According to the DGHS, 83 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year. Twelve people died in July while 34 have died in August, 23 in September and 14 in October so far.

Among the deaths, 77 have died in Dhaka division, four each in Chattogram, Khulna, Rajshahi and Mymensingh.

11-year-old killed for 'witnessing theft' in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

An 11-year-old boy was allegedly killed in Ashulia's Baipail area in Savar early yesterday after witnessing a theft of Tk 500.

The deceased was identified as Ferdous (11), son of Roich Uddin of Munsipara village in Sherpur district.

Police have detained a 15-year-old bus helper in connection with the incident.

Samiul Islam, sub-inspector (SI) of Ashulia Police Station, said the incident took place in Baipail area around midnight. They recovered the body around 4am and detained the teenager from the spot.

After primary investigation, police came to know that Ferdous was killed as he witnessed the theft of Tk 500, said the SI, adding that preparations are underway to file a murder case in this regard.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital morgue for autopsy, he said.

Police are trying to detain the prime accused, Parvez (21), who went into hiding after the incident, added the SI.

According to police, Ferdous' father is a bus driver of Ashulia Classic Paribahan, and Ferdous used to work as a helping hand for the bus company.

The detainee and prime accused also worked as helper and conductor with the same company, said the SI. On Sunday night, all three of them fell asleep on a bus. After a while, the detainee woke up and found Tk 500 missing from his pocket. Ferdous informed him that Parvez had stolen the money.



Army chief off to South Korea

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Bangladesh Army General SM Shafuddin Ahmed left Dhaka on Sunday night for South Korea on a five-day official visit.

He is leading a five-member team of Bangladesh Armed Forces, according to an ISPR press release.

During the visit, the army chief will meet the South Korean Minister of National Defence, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Army Staff and the Air Force, and other senior military officials.

General Shafuddin will also discuss bilateral military relations between the two countries.

The army chief is scheduled to return home on October 23.