

Why are dengue cases still rising in November?

HELEMUL ALAM

Under normal circumstances, November's dry weather was supposed to cause the Aedes mosquito population to decline. But this year, around 150 dengue patients are still being hospitalised daily, illustrating a concerning picture of the vector-borne disease.

According to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), this year, around 25,774 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country till yesterday, with the death toll for the year at 97. Both infection and deaths are second highest since the first outbreak in Bangladesh in 2000.

At least 140 patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, of whom 30 are from outside Dhaka.

Experts pointed to late rain showers, and high humidity and temperature in October as main causes behind this situation.

Entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said normally, the population of Aedes mosquitoes depends on rainfall, as the insects breed in water that collects in containers after rainfall.

He said the situation will not drastically change in the next 15 days, since the capital experienced rainfall in the last week of October and in the beginning of November. Even if further rainfalls do not occur, the mosquito population will remain the same till the end of November, he said.

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EXPERTS' TAKE

» Situation not improving due to late rainfall, high humidity, temperature in Oct

» Condition will not drastically improve

» Climate change exacerbating problem

» Dhaka city corporations failed to take effective steps

RECOMMENDATIONS TO PREVENT DENGUE

» Anti-mosquito drives all year round

» Children have to wear clothes that fully cover, hands, legs

» Doors, windows must be kept closed in evening

» School have to fog premises in weekends

» Residential premises must be cleaned regularly

Khulna's mosquito problem refuses to go away

Residents blame lack of proper initiatives by city corporation

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The mosquito problem of Khulna city is becoming more and more menacing by the day. Right after sunset, the insects start swarming the city's ponds, bushes, water bodies, and drains. Soon enough they start thronging households too.

But despite repeated complaints to the city corporation, residents are yet to find respite from this recurring issue that, in the dengue season, poses a threat to their lives.

According to the Khulna City Corporation, the city has seen a yearly increase in its allocation to deal with mosquitoes, which includes buying larvicides, bleaching powder, and more.

From Tk 2.1 crore in 2014-2015 fiscal year, the budget increased to Tk 3.18 crore for 2021-2022. This is doing little to contain the issue.

Beyond households, the situation especially affects those who live out on the streets. Aina Bibi (72), a homeless woman living at Khulna Rail Station premises, said she doesn't remember the last time she had a good night's sleep due to constant nagging of mosquitoes.

"Almost every night passes



The situation is especially worse for those who live near drains or garbage dumps -- the breeding ground of the deadly insects. PHOTO: STAR

without sleep, especially during summer. This is worse for me as I don't own a mosquito net to protect myself," she said. "I'm forced to spend Tk 10 on mosquito coils instead, which is a big burden on my meagre earnings."

In a recent visit to different public places across the city, including the rail station, BIWTA ghat, Sonadanga

customers avoid visiting his shop in fear of mosquito bites.

Contacted, Md Abdul Aziz, chief conservancy officer of Khulna City Corporation, said, "We've already spent Tk 90 lakh this fiscal year to buy insecticides. Every day, 31 permanent staffers spray in 31 wards, while 31 temporary employees also help them," he said.

"But only insecticides are not sufficient to eradicate mosquitos, people need to be aware and clean their premises too," he said.

Mohendranath Sen, convener of social organisation Jano Uddog, alleged that KCC is not committed to city dwellers.

"The budget keeps increasing every year, but the effects are yet to be seen," he said.

Out of alternatives, city dwellers are using anti-mosquito products, such as repellent creams, which contain poisonous chemicals harmful for the body.

Contacted, KCC Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque said though 553 staffers are working to clean the city's dustbins and drains, this is nowhere enough for a city with over 1.8 million city dwellers.

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2 held for killing ex-BWMRI official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) claimed to have arrested two persons over the murder of former chief scientific officer of Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute (BWMRI) Anwar Shahid.

The two arrestees -- Zakir Hossain (37) and Mohammad Saiful Islam (26) -- were held from Gabtoli bus stand area in Dhaka on Sunday night. Rab said they killed Shahid with an intention to embezzle money and land.

On November 11, Shahid (72) was stabbed on a street near Shyamoli area around 7:15pm. He died at Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital around 11pm.

"Zakir, a rice trader and land broker, planned the murder as Shahid was pressing him for the Tk 12 lakh that Zakir owed him. As part of the plan, he hired Saiful, a worker at his rice depot, to kill Anwar," said Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, at a press briefing at Karwan Bazar yesterday.

Shahid, who had no family of his own,

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Govt to build three new satellite cities

Says state minister Sharif Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken plans to build three new satellite cities as part of decentralisation and meeting the housing demand of the growing population of Dhaka, Sharif Ahmed, state minister for housing and public works, told the parliament yesterday.

Replying to a lawmaker's query, the junior minister said Rajuk will implement the projects under the supervision of the housing and public works ministry.

The three new satellite model town projects are Keraniganj Model Town Project; Flood Flow Area, Water Reservation and Compact Township Development Project and Keraniganj Water Front City Project.

Keraniganj Model Town Project will be implemented on a 960-acre (approximately) land in Keraniganj upazila ensuring all civil facilities, said Sharif.

Flood Flow Area, Water Reservation and Compact Township Development Project will be implemented at the adjacent area of Turag river.

Keraniganj Water Front City Project will be implemented on around a 5,000-acre land in Basta union in Keraniganj upazila.

Hydrological and environmental studies for the projects have been completed by China Road and Bridge Corporation, said the state minister.

Multilateral measures to ease Dhaka's traffic jam

Says Taposh

Bss, Dhaka

Dhaka South City Corporation has undertaken measures, including reviving naval routes, constructing new roads and modernising the existing traffic system to ease the city's traffic congestion, said mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday.

The city authority is also focusing on developing existing roads, widening 53 intersections, registering non-mechanical vehicles, rationalising bus routes, ensuring adequate places for parking and removing illegal occupants on roads, he told the news agency at his Nagar Bhaban office.

It's disrespectful to women

26 rights orgs express concern over Raintree rape case verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Forum for the Prevention of Violence against Women, a platform of 26 human rights and development organisations, have expressed grave concern over the acquittal of five accused in the Raintree rape case.

The forum also said it found the observation made by judge Mosammat Kamrunnahr to be one-sided, and beyond the constitutional rights of women.

On November 11, Kamrunnahr acquitted the five accused in the case and recommended police to not accept a rape case after 72 hours of the incident.

This came despite there being no corresponding provision in the criminal law, the forum observed through a press statement released yesterday.

The statement also saw the observations made about the character of the victims in the verdict as disrespectful to women.

According to the forum, women do not get the opportunity to file cases for the sexual violence they face, while those who are able to file a case do not get justice at the right time.

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COURT CORNER

HC orders govt, ACC not to sell Babar's properties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government and ACC not to sell the properties of former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar till disposal of his appeal in connection with a corruption case in which he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment.

The HC bench of Justice Md Salim also stayed a part of the trial court verdict that also fined him (Babar) Tk 10,000 and ordered for confiscating Tk 26.42 lakh, allegedly earned by him illegally.

However, the bench upheld part of the lower court verdict, which ruled that 10 lakh US dollars deposited to a bank in connection with the case will remain confiscated.

Man gets life term for killing cop in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

A Chattogram court on yesterday sentenced a man to life-term rigorous imprisonment in a case filed in connection with killing assistant sub-inspector Md Idris Mia in 2006.

The convict -- Md Jaker Hossain alias Jakir Hossain (30) of Noakhali -- was present at the court. The court acquitted seven accused in the case.

As per case statement, Jakir stabbed Idris of Noakhali district police to death on December 27, 2006 while mugging him in Chattogram city's BISIC Industrial Area.

MORE NEWS

4,150 public univ teacher posts vacant: Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 4,150 teacher posts are vacant at 43 public universities of the country, Education Minister Dipu Moni told parliament yesterday.

The minister placed the statistic in the House while responding to a tabled question from Awami League MP Didarul Alam from Chattogram-4.

In a scripted answer, the education minister said the highest 410 posts of teachers are vacant in Chittagong University, 346 in Rajshahi University, 314 in Sust, 310 in Islamic University in Kushtia and 303 in DU.

Jute mill workers besiege BJMC office over arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Hundreds of Jute mill workers besieged the zone office of BJMC (Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation) in Khalishpur of Khulna city yesterday, demanding payment of their arrears as per the 2015 wage commission at five closed state-run jute mills including Khalishpur Daulatpur.

They also demanded resumption of the mills and announcement of government announced pay scale for workers. Speakers at the event also said the government should have introduced jute products in all sectors but they did not do it.

Indian high commissioner visits Kantajew temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Vikram K Doraiswami, the high commissioner of India to Bangladesh, visited the historic Kantajew Temple in Kaharol upazila of Dinajpur yesterday.

Manoranjan Shill Gopal, lawmaker of Dinajpur-1 constituency, and Sanjiv Kumar Vatti, assistant high commissioner of India in Rajshahi, accompanied him during the visit.

Ranjit Kumar Singh, the agent of Rajdebattar Estate in Dinajpur, and his committee members received the high commissioner upon his arrival.

The dominion of Sahebs

Despite rise in revenue, Sundarbans fishers still find themselves tangled in web of oppression by local influential group

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, back from Dublar Char, Sundarbans

Reaching deep inside the Sundarbans, one will be taken aback to see mobile banking agents at such a remote place. But their set-ups inside the forest do a lot to help thousands of anglers, who build temporary houses there during fishing season.

During November every year, at the onset of winter, the remote island of Dublar Char -- located at the southern border of the Sundarbans, facing the Bay of Bengal -- becomes vibrant with the footprint of around 30,000 deep-sea anglers and people engaged in fish drying. They stay in the island for five months, braving natural disasters and other hardships.

Over the last three years, their numbers have only risen, thanks to the surrender of 32 robber gangs in 2018. On November 1 of the same year, the Sundarbans was declared "robber-free" by the government. During this time, the anglers' and fish driers' business have steadily increased.

However, a new hurdle impedes further growth of their trade.

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“The anglers can finally move freely inside the forest now that the robbers are gone. And all this has been possible because of my contributions.”

KAMAL UDDIN
Leader of the Sahebs

- » During November's fishing season, 30,000 people come to the island
- » Revenues increased every year since robbers surrendered in 2018
- » But Sahebs force fishers to take out loans and sale fish to them
- » They also extort local entrepreneurs in name of forest department

With robbers gone, their place has been taken by a group of influential people, widely known as "Saheb". Currently, the situation at the island is so grave that no one dares to sell a single fish or fishing boat without the Sahebs' permission, alleged locals.



After the last couple of days' light rainfall, the mercury has dropped across the capital, hinting at the first signs of winter. At Buriganga river, fog shrouded the skyline for a large part of the morning yesterday, making life a tad bit difficult for the vehicles that ply on it.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN