



P5 **Illegal extraction**
'Legalising' illegal sand mining



P7 **'This is apartheid'**
UN expert on Palestine slams Israel's occupation



P11 **'Time to raise the bar'**
Jayed urges pacers to level up



B1 **More US cotton**
Textile millers want direct shipping

Germs winning over drugs

Experts raise alarm; overdose, self-prescription are to blame

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Drugs that used to successfully fight diseases are gradually becoming ineffective due to decades of malpractice: intake of over-prescribed or self-prescribed medicines.

As if it's not enough of a grave news, germs that cause diseases are now becoming all the more powerful having been fed with wrong dosages of drugs, according to multiple research and studies in Bangladesh.

Most of the microorganisms -- viruses, bacteria, fungi and protozoa -- have been found to be resistant to a good number of drugs available in the market.

"Forget bacteria, even the fungi (like candida, mucor and the aspergillus), which cause common skin infections, have now turned difficult to treat with conventional drugs," laments Prof Ahmed Abu Saleh, of the Department of Microbiology and Immunology (DMI) at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU). A pioneer in the field of research

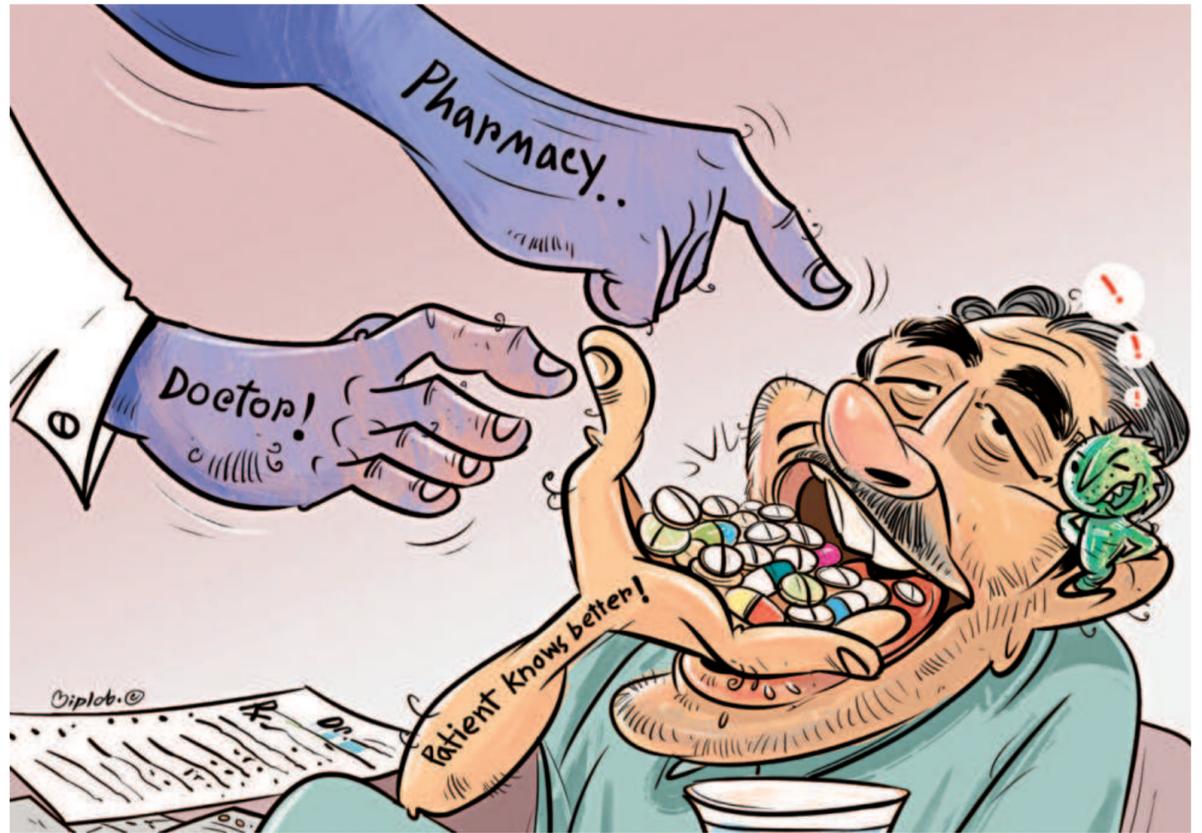
on "superbugs", the drug-resistant germs that kill some 3,500 people around the world every day, Prof Saleh explained to The Daily Star how the typhoid germ (Salmonella Typhi) is threatening to break loose again at community level.

Co-trimoxazole was the main antibiotic to cure typhoid 20 years ago and replaced by ciprofloxacin, as it became ineffective following indiscriminate uses. This replacement drug too turned almost ineffective against the water-borne disease. Then came the ceftriaxone, which is still working well. But there is no alternative to this drug in the pipeline as yet.

"If ceftriaxone loses efficacy, typhoid will break out in the community. The only way we can prevent this disaster is by refraining from prescribing high-end antibiotics outside hospitals," he said.

Out of over 100, over 85 antibiotics are available in the Bangladesh market for treating around 40 minor or life-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



IRRIGATION WATER CRISIS IN BARIND Small farmers in A VICIOUS TRAP

ANWAR ALI

Amid lax monitoring by the authorities, many deep tube well operators have been depriving small farmers in Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Naogaon of their fair share of water for irrigation.

Those operators delay releasing water from their pumps, which leads to frequent crop loss for the farmers. Thrown in a situation they simply cannot cope with, the farmers are then forced into selling their land or leasing out land to others.

Many of them leave farming for good and become day labourers to survive. In many cases, the tube-well operators, who have money and political connections, buy those land or take them on lease to grow their own crops. The Daily Star has learnt after talking to several such farmers as well as experts and development activists in the Barind region.

On the other hand, the well-off

farmers, who pay the operators extra money, are supplied with the irrigation water on time, they also said.

On Wednesday, two farmers drank pesticides standing beside a deep tube well in Issoripur village of Rajshahi's Godagari upazila. One of them, Abhinath Mardi, 36, died later that night while the other, Robi Mardi, 27, passed away on Friday. They were cousins, who belonged to the Santal community.

Abhinath's wife Rozina Hembrom filed a case with Godagari Police Station on Friday night, accusing the well operator, Sakhawat Hossain, of abetting the suicide of her husband.

In the case statement, she alleged that Sakhawat did not supply water to Abhinath's field for 12 straight days. The water came, but only after news spread that Abhinath had died.

Talking about the incident, Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan of Rajshahi University's geology and mining

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

DHAKA-TORONTO FLIGHT Commercial viability up in the air

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines' decision to operate direct flights between Dhaka and Toronto may not be commercially viable, feared multiple aviation experts.

The high ticket prices, load factor and other issues like not following proper flight operation procedures raised concerns among them.

The first experimental commercial flight on the route departed Dhaka last night with 110 passengers.

Of them, around 50 were government officials and their family members who travelled to Toronto at the cost of public money.

Talking to The Daily Star, several senior pilots and some Biman officials questioned the logic behind such experimental commercial flights.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Mother killed in front of kids

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was hacked to death in her home in the capital's Sabujbagh yesterday.

Police suspect the victim, Tania Akter alias Mukta, 26, was murdered in front of her infant son and toddler daughter.

Asgar Ali, inspector (operation) of Sabujbagh Police Station, said that on being informed by neighbours, they recovered the body from the first floor of a four-storey building in Battala area around 6:00pm.

He said the killer(s) tied the hands and shut the mouths of Mukta's three-year-old daughter and 10-month-old son with duct tapes. After the killer(s) left, the toddler, with her mouth and hands still tied with duct tapes, managed to walk next door and alert the neighbours, he said.

After police arrived at the scene, they saw the body lying face down in a pool of blood. There were hack wounds in the neck and back. The son was found next to the body, and the main door of the flat was open.

The body was taken to the Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Tania lived with her two children at the flat. Her husband, a technician at Faridpur Medical College Hospital, lives near his workplace and would visit his family once or twice every month.

Asked about the motive behind the murder, Monotosh Biswas, assistant commissioner of police (Sabujbagh zone), said, "The AC was found disassembled on the floor, and the almirah was open

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



No one can play with nation's fate: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday firmly said that no one would be able to play with the fate of the people of Bangladesh from now onwards.

She was addressing the opening ceremony of the four-day "Joy Banglar Joyotsob" at the historic Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital. She joined the event virtually from the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

3 children killed as hill collapses on them



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Three children died as part of a hill collapsed on them in a rubber plantation at Bhatara union of Moulvibazar's Kalaura upazila yesterday afternoon.

The dead were identified as Sumon Mia, 15, Nahid Ahmed, 14, students of Saiful Tahmina Alim Madrasa, and Abdul Kabir, 9, a student of Kabir Hossain Badrul Nurul Ibtedai Madrasa.

Quoting locals, Binoy Bhushan Roy, officer-in-charge of Kalaura Police Station, said the three had spotted baby birds at the foot of the Ghagrachhara hill and went there to catch them when a big chunk of the hill collapsed on them. He added that the hill was already weak as an organised syndicate had been extracting and selling mud from its base.

The children died on the spot, he said. Safar Uddin, village council chief of West Islamnagar, said nearby locals rescued them and took them to Fenchuganj Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared them dead.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Girls from a college in Gazipur wearing red and green bandanas and face masks paying tributes to the martyrs on the Independence Day yesterday at the National Memorial.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BUSINESS

Forex crisis deepens

Bangladesh Bank seems to be indecisive whether it would go for gradual depreciation of the local currency or execute a quick devaluation. The situation has been created by the dwindling flow of foreign exchange.

The BB injected a record \$3.78 billion between July 1 and March 23 this fiscal year to contain the freefall of the Taka, but the initiative has hardly resolved the crisis faced by dollar-strapped banks.

STORY ON B1