

DENGUE SITUATION

Nurses struggle as outbreak worsens

14 more die; 1,594 hospitalised

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

In the corridors of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), amidst the relentless wave of patients, Shapla Biswas, a nurse and a mother to an eleven-month-old, finds herself navigating the balance between duty and motherhood.

As the facility grapples with an overwhelming influx of patients, Shapla, like her fellow nurses, shoulders the weight of an extraordinary workload, particularly exacerbated by the ongoing dengue crisis which has taken 528 lives so far this year.

And she has no scope to be lenient. The mosquito-borne disease killed at least 14 people yesterday. 1594 people were also hospitalised, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Juggling her responsibilities as a nurse with the demands of her child and the absence of her husband due to work abroad, Shapla's days are a delicate dance of professional commitment and maternal devotion. Often, she entrusts her child's care to a domestic help while she takes on the night shifts.

"Sometimes my child resists staying with the maid and breaks into tears, but

the relentless pressure of my duties leaves me with no choice," she shares with this newspaper.

Within the hospital's wards, the challenges are palpable – merely four nurses per shift tend to the needs of around 100 patients daily, with the number even reaching 200 at times, she says.

Often, two nurses are occupied overseeing the process of patients' admission, while the remaining two administer essential treatments such as cannula insertions and other similar care.

Ashish Kumar Ghosh, a male nurse of ward-701, in DMCH medicine unit said there was huge pressure on Friday night as it was the date of new patients' admission in their ward.

"Among the roughly 200 patients already on the ward, we have administered an additional 38 dengue patients. It is quite difficult to give adequate care to them with so minimal resources. But we do our best," said Ashish.

Echoing the same, Md Shahed Mia, another male nurse, said even amidst such a huge workload, they cannot afford to lose their cool for a single moment as

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Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader waving at party leaders and activists at their peace rally organised in front of the ruling AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DESOLATION in Daulatdia

Brothel workers going through tough times amid scarcity of clients since the opening of Padma Bridge

SUZIT DAS and NAZIBA BASHER

The opening of the Padma Bridge promises an economic boon, but for the sex workers of the country's largest brothel, right next to Daulatdia ferry terminal, it spells doom.

Only a few ferries now operate between Daulatdia and Paturia, and it means a drastic decline in the number of clients for them.

Having suffered a huge blow to their source of income, these women face the challenge of integrating back into a society that is not ready yet to accept them.

Forced into a life of despair, the women of brothels are among the most neglected and ostracised people in the country.

In most cases, they were forcefully taken and sold there at criminally young ages. Many of them have spent their entire life at the brothel and know little about life outside.

Daulatdia brothel in Rajbari has been "home" to over 1,000 such women.

Julie Akhtar, 25, has been there for four and a half years. Every month, she has to send her family of five at least Tk 10,000 from whatever she earns at the brothel.

However, her life has taken a difficult turn since the opening of the Padma Bridge.

According to the Paturia-Daulatdia terminal authorities, before the Padma bridge opened, around 20-22 ferries would ply the route; now the number has come down to 11 or 12.

The number of vehicles using the ferries too has decreased by 75 percent.



How are we to expect that a society, which has always shunned and stigmatised sex workers, will help them get integrated back into it again? We can't. It's sad to say so, but if these women come out of Daulatdia in search of alternative work, they will have to starve.

Jahanara Khatun, Naripokkho

Most of Julie's customers were those who took the ferries. And now, like her, hundreds of them are without clients – none of them knows what the future holds.

During a recent visit, one of these correspondents saw most of the women sitting idly in front of their rooms. Some were seen cooking, the others roaming about.

They all had the same thing to say – the Padma Bridge will likely move the country miles forward, but it came as "a curse" to them.

Farida Parvin, 36, said, "I have been working here for 16 years and I have never seen such a situation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, we had a lot of help from different individuals, organisations and the government. But now nobody comes to help us.

"I have to pay Tk 200 per day for house rent. I have to send money back home, where my mother and daughter, a 10th grader, live. The situation has become so dire that I don't know how to pay for even the basic necessities."

Moni Begum, general secretary of Daulatdia's Helpless Female Unity Organisation, said, "It's true the situation is grim. It isn't just because of the Padma Bridge, but people of the low-income brackets [who account for most of the customers] are also facing financial woes due to rising commodity prices.

"Some of the workers have already left the brothel in search of an alternative income source."

Even during this Eid-ul-Fitr, when many people are expected to use the Daulatdia ferry terminal, the number of customers remained scanty.

"Some people did come by during the few days of Eid, but the numbers weren't that high."

Mukta Akter, also 50, said, "Before the opening of the bridge, thousands of

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IOM urges support for Rohingyas, local hosts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) yesterday called on the international community to ensure much-needed humanitarian assistance and long-term support for Rohingya refugees and their host communities.

"As the Rohingya crisis marks its sixth year in Bangladesh, the plight of nearly one million refugees remains unchanged, trapped in a cycle of uncertainty and vulnerability," IOM said in a statement.

On August 25, 2017, hundreds of thousands of people fled violence in Rakhine, Myanmar, to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Since then, Cox's Bazar has been home to the world's largest refugee settlement, hosting almost one million refugees – half of whom are children, IOM said.

This year, humanitarian organisations have appealed for \$876 million in aid for around 1.47 million people, including both Rohingya refugees and local communities.

However, the funds raised for this Joint Response Plan had only reached nearly 29 percent of the target as of the middle of this year.

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Of shattered dreams and life under tarpaulin

Rohingyas yearn for dignified return to 'homes'

MOKAMMEL SHUVO and PORIMOL PALMA

It was October 2017. A 13-year-old Kahed Ullah had to leave his home in Buthidaung, Rakhine with 13 other family members in the face of a brutal crackdown by the Myanmar military.

The memories of brutalities are still fresh in Jahed's mind, who is 19 now.

Though once owners of fertile lands, destiny forced them to be refugees.

After crossing the border, they first took shelter at a makeshift camp in Teknaf. "We had to depend totally on relief for food, water, medicine. I never lived in such a vulnerable situation, but I had to accept it," Jahed told The Daily Star.

Jahed was in sixth grade when they had to flee. Now, he finds himself in the role of a volunteer for an NGO within a Teknaf camp.

"I wanted to be educated and do a job to pursue a good living. That dream is now shattered. Now our only aim in life is survival," Jahed said.

"I still want to return to my homeland, reclaim our lost property, and rebuild for a better future. We are all anticipating the arrival of that hopeful day," he added.

Although the government has taken some initiatives to improve the Rohingya refugees living conditions, their struggle still persists.

According to UN officials, about 300,000 Rohingya children in the camps have been enrolled for education under the Myanmar curriculum.

The government has recently launched vocational training to develop skills of the Rohingya youths so that when they return to

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Homemaker answers DU emergency calls!

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Imagine if you are a student of Dhaka University. It is the night before your application deadline, and you are confused about how to complete the online examination form. You call the designated helpline numbers from the DU website and to your surprise a housemaker living in Sunamganj, who has no idea what you are talking about, greets you.

This might sound too absurd to be true, but some students have actually gone through the experience recently.

In 2019, DU introduced some digital services for the convenience of students.

In one such attempt, the exam controller's office listed three emergency contact numbers on its website for troubleshooting. If any student faces problems with academic issues like collecting admit cards, transcripts, or filling out forms, he or she could dial the numbers to seek online solutions.

However, students allege that, when they call the first listed emergency number, a woman from Shalla of Sunamganj receives, instead of a DU official.

The second number is unresponsive and the third number is not in service.

As none of the numbers work, students said they have to visit offices on the campus to get the jobs done.

One such student, who wants to collect his transcripts for his study abroad, said he called the numbers failing to fill up the form online.

Requesting anonymity, he told this correspondent,

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A DANGEROUS TURN... A CNG-run auto-rickshaw topples over after attempting a swift turn near the roundabout on Minto Road in Dhaka yesterday. The vehicle had three passengers in the back while one sat with the driver. *Inset*, Police and locals rescue the driver and passengers from the vehicle.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



IFJ condemns assault on two journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) yesterday condemned the alleged assault on two journalists in separate events on August 21 by Bangladesh Chhatra League activists and urged authorities to launch an immediate investigation.

In a statement published on its website, IFJ said university-based journalists in Bangladesh have been subjected to an increasing number of attacks and threats while on campus.

"Student organisations have been responsible for a growing trend of assaults, threats, and abuse against university journalists and media workers," it said.

It urged authorities to investigate the assaults of these journalists and to guarantee the safety of journalists and media workers in Bangladesh.

According to the statement, several Jahangirnagar University

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