

DENGUE OUTBREAK

Nov saw 274 deaths, over 40,000 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of dengue cases crossed the 40,000-mark in November alone, while the number of fatalities was 274 during this time.

Usually, November is considered the beginning of a lean period for dengue cases as temperature starts to drop during the month.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, at least six people died while 468 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new deaths and cases, the total number of dengue deaths rose to 1,628 this year, while the total number of cases rose to 3,12,359.

Last year, the number of dengue patients was 62,382, while total number of deaths was 281.

GM Saifur Rahman, assistant professor of medical and applied entomology at National University, said the current weather conditions are still favourable for Aedes mosquitoes, the vector of dengue fever, to breed as the temperature hasn't

dropped significantly yet.

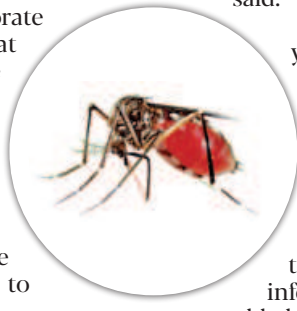
Not conducting mosquito control activities properly is one of the main reasons for the continuous rise in number of dengue cases this year, he said.

If herd immunity is developed or if temperature comes down to below 16 degrees Celsius, then the infection rates are likely to come under control, Saifur said.

To contain the spread next year, the authorities must chalk out a plan now and take necessary steps, he said.

"The absence of surveillance and initiating necessary steps outside Dhaka, especially in district towns, are causing higher infection rates this year," Saifur added.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said the death rate this year was greater among high-risk group patients — elderly, infants, obese, pregnant women, and patients with comorbidities like diabetes, high blood pressure, and complications of heart, kidney, lung, and liver.



This biker has found a new way to advertise an apartment for rent by placing the ad on the back of his motorbike as he roams around the city on it. Inset, Dhaka dwellers mostly shift apartments during yearend and scenes like a truck full of household belongings moving on Dhaka roads become a common sight in December. The photos were taken in Mohammadpur and Dhanmondi areas respectively.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Dr Razia first Bangladeshi to receive Hague Award

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dr Syeda Sultana Razia was awarded the prestigious 2023 The Hague Award at the inauguration of the 28th session of PCW annual Conference of States Parties (CSP 28) on November 29.

Razia, who is currently serving as a professor at Department of Chemical Engineering of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, is the first Bangladeshi to receive this award.

Director General of Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Ambassador Fernando Arias and Ambassador Henk van der Kwast, on behalf of the Dutch government, jointly handed over the award to her.

OPCW recognised Razia for her contributions to promoting chemical safety

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26 YEARS OF CHT PEACE ACCORD

Legal tangles still unresolved

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Twenty-six years have passed since the signing of historic CHT Peace Accord took place between Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti and the government on this day in 1997.

But some legal complexities involving the issues of CHT Regional Council still remain unresolved, as two appeals over this matter have been pending with the Supreme Court for around 12 years.

The council has been functioning under the leadership of PCJSS Chairman Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, since its formation in 1999.

Following two petitions filed by settler M Badiuzzaman and SC lawyer Md Tajul Islam on April 13, 2010, the HC declared the CHT Regional Council Act 1998 illegal and unconstitutional.

In the verdict, the HC observed that the unitary character of the state, which is the basic feature of the constitution, has been hampered due to its formation.

In 2011, the state and the council filed two appeals with the SC challenging the HC judgement, saying that the council is a statutory authority to facilitate the functions of three hill district councils and was formed in line with the constitution.

The provisions of the act, which have been declared unconstitutional by the HC, are actually protected by the constitution, as it provides for affirmative action in favour of a disadvantaged section of the population, they said in the appeals.

On March 3, 2011, the SC's Appellate Division upheld its chamber judge's stay order and allowed the state

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Full implementation remains elusive

MD ABBAS

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord is yet to be fully implemented although 26 years have passed since it was signed between the then Awami League government and leaders of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) on this day in 1997.

The full implementation remains elusive due to the AL government's unwillingness to this end, alleged rights activists and PCJSS leaders.

The UN Human Rights Council, in its Universal Periodic Review, has called upon the government to announce a time-frame bound roadmap in this regard.

This recommendation was made by Denmark to the government at the 44th session of the UPR Working Group under the UNHRC held in Switzerland's Geneva on November 13.

The government claims 65 out of the accord's 72 sections are fully implemented. In contrast, PCJSS leaders say only 25 sections are fully executed, with 18 sections partially implemented, leaving 29 sections completely untouched.

While certain clauses, like establishing the CHT Affairs Ministry and regional councils, were partially

implemented, according to Zakir Hossain, a joint coordinator of the CHT Treaty Implementation Movement, these bodies lack any real power and remain largely non-functional.

"Besides, the CHT Land Commission remains non-operational due to the absence of any regulations in line with the amended CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act," he said.

But what have we seen after 26 years of the treaty? Only 25 out of 72 clauses were fully implemented. The key clauses have remained unimplemented.

SANJEEB DRONG
General secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum

According to him, a draft of rules formulated for the act remains pending with the ministry concerned as the authorities are unwilling to make the land commission effective.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary

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244 aspirants for 20 Dhaka seats

Independents outnumber AL candidates

ASIFUR RAHMAN

A total of 244 aspirants, either with a party ticket or independently, will fight in the 20 constituencies of Dhaka, according to the data of two Returning Offices of the district.

This means every constituency has got around 12 candidates.

A total of 46 independent aspirants, primarily from the Awami League, are contesting across all 20 constituencies, with The Daily Star identifying at least 25 AL independents inside Dhaka.

Jatiya Party nominated the highest 32 aspirants while AL, Zaker Party and National People's Party 20 candidates each.

Bangladesh Sangskritik Muktijote nominated 17 party men in different constituencies while Trinomool BNP 14, Bangladesh Supreme Party 13 and Bangladesh Nationalist Front 12.

A total of 23 parties fielded candidates in Dhaka. Dhaka-5, covering Demra and part of Kadamtali, has the highest aspirant count with 21, including six independents and two from the lesser-known Bangladesh Congress party.

The AL candidate for Dhaka 5 is Harunor Rashid Munna and Jatiya Party nominated Mir Abdus Sabur.

Workers Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Islamic Front Bangladesh and Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon have one candidate

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Patients bear the brunt of blockades

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Sagar Hossain came to Dhaka from Munshiganj with his unwell mother on November 23 to avail treatment for her at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Due to public transport being sparse amid blockade, they were forced to take CNG-run auto-rickshaws for the journey.

"It was a journey filled with anxiety amid an eerie shutdown," he recalled.

Like Sagar's mother, many in need of medical care from remote districts as well as across the capital are braving obstacles to access treatment at major hospitals like Dhaka Medical College Hospital, amid the ongoing spate of hartals and blockades called by BNP and its allies.

With most vehicles staying off roads, patients seeking treatment are facing trouble reaching hospitals. Even when they could manage transport, they are being burdened with excessive fares as vehicles are charging higher fares in fear of possible violence.

Selim Sheikh, who came to Dhaka Shishu (Children) Hospital and Bangladesh Institute of Child Health from Narayanganj for his three-month-old son's treatment, said the trip to Dhaka cost him Tk 10,000 just for transport, but he had no other option as the doctors in his locality could not treat his son.

Robin Sardar, 32, who came from

Chandpur to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) on November 22, said, "I have been suffering with unbearable pain in my right leg but had to delay coming for treatment by two weeks due to hartals and blockades. The Tk 8,000 ambulance fare was unaffordable, so I risked a bus journey even in my physical condition."

With most vehicles staying off roads, patients seeking treatment are facing trouble reaching hospitals. Even when they could manage transport, they are being burdened with excessive fares as vehicles are charging higher fares in fear of possible violence.

Due to hartals and blockades, patient turnout for both outdoor and indoor services at government hospitals have dropped by around 50-65 percent, compared to regular days.

At DMCH the number of outdoor patients plunged by 32-50 percent — from 2,200-2,800 daily to 1,500-1,900 — during recent hartals and blockades, said Shaikat Ali Munna, assistant ticket officer of the

hospital.

At other major hospitals like Shishu Hospital, National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor), NICVD and Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, the situation is the same.

While the number of patients visiting the emergency department at Shishu Hospital has decreased slightly, the outdoor unit patient footfall dropped significantly, said Abdul Hakil, the hospital's public relations officer.

On blockade days like October 29, November 1 and November 19, the outpatient unit treated 680, 666 and 755 patients respectively. In contrast, the daily average is usually between 900-1,000, he informed.

Shariful Islam, a staffer at NICVD outdoor unit, said normally 900-1,100 patients come to the outdoor unit for treatment daily. However, the number decreased to 400-600.

Besides, around 140-170 patients get admitted to the hospital daily, but only 120 were admitted last Wednesday.

At Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, the number of patients also declined — from 2,500-3,000 daily outdoor patients on normal days to 1,500-2,000 amid hartals and blockades, said the hospital's statistics officer Kamruzzaman.

Many are opting to postpone treatment, despite worsening health conditions, due to risk associated with travel amid the political tensions, he added.

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Applications should include a cover letter, curriculum vitae, and the names and contact information of five professional references. Review of applications by BRAC University shall take place at the end of every month beginning on **25 December 2023**, and continue thereafter till the position is filled. Applications should be emailed to vcruitment@bracu.ac.bd. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.