

# EPI vaccine shortage hits Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Amena Begum, a resident of Halishahar area in Chattogram city, has been struggling to get her newborn daughter administered the second dose of Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV), Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) and Pentavalent vaccine for the past week.

The vaccines are administered to newborns under the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) to protect them from numerous life-threatening diseases, according to health experts.

"On August 6, the scheduled date for vaccination, I took my baby to Chattogram Ma O Shishu General Hospital, but officials said there was no vaccine in stock. I went to the hospital again the next day but in vain," Amena told The Daily Star.

"I also went to the CCC-run Memon Maternity Hospital on Saturday, but there was no vaccine there either," she added.

Tamanna Khanam, a resident of port city's Jamal Khan area, shared a similar plight.

"I am worried about my child," she said.

Amid the shortage of EPI vaccine, thousands of newborns across Chattogram are at risk of developing poor immunity against different life-threatening diseases if they are not vaccinated in time.

Over the past week, parents across the port city and neighbouring 15 upazilas

of Chattogram had to return from vaccination centres without getting their children vaccinated, said sources.

"EPI vaccines should be administered to newborns on scheduled dates to prevent some life-threatening diseases," said Dr Rezaul Karim, former head of child health department at Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

"In Bangladesh, we follow a 28 day interval between each vaccine dose, but in developed countries, they follow a two-month interval between the doses. So, an interval of two months is okay," he added.

Contacted, Dr Imam Hossain Rana, chief health officer of CCC, said they have not been getting an adequate supply of vaccines amid the current situation in the country.

"We get vaccines supplied from Chattogram Civil Surgeon's office. The supply has stopped since mid-July," he added.

Contacted, Dr Ilias Chowdhury, civil surgeon of Chattogram, confirmed a shortage in stock of EPI vaccines in the district.

"There is a shortage of vaccines at present as the supply is controlled centrally. The problem will hopefully be resolved by next week, as a stock of vaccines is scheduled to come from Dhaka on August 14," he said.



Several hundred protesters, including students and lawyers, gathered on the SC premises yesterday morning, demanding resignation of the chief justice and the judges of the Appellate Division. Later in the day, Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan and five more SC judges stepped down from their posts.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



## Two more die of dengue

UNB, Dhaka

Two more deaths from dengue fever have been reported in 24 hours till yesterday morning, bringing the total number of deaths from the mosquito-borne disease in Bangladesh to 64.

During this period, 204 patients have been hospitalised, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Currently, around 700 patients are receiving treatment in hospitals across the country. Since January 1, 2024, a total of 7,767 cases have been reported.

Last year saw 1,705 deaths due to dengue, marking it as the deadliest year on record.

In 2023, the DGHS recorded 321,179 cases and 318,749 recoveries.

Anti-mosquito drives have either remained completely suspended in some areas or been slowed down since the recent unrest in the country since mid-July. The situation worsened due to the power vacuum following Sheikh Hasina's fall.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Toxic and hazardous medical wastes from approximately 300 hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres in Mymensingh city have been openly dumped at Moilakanda ground in Char Kalibari area for the past 30 years, raising alarm among residents and officials.

Despite the growing concern, there is still no permanent facility for the disposal of the city's medical waste.

Dr Md Zakiul Islam, deputy director of Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), said the hospital lacks a waste treatment plant, forcing them to store both kitchen and medical waste in a shed before it is collected by Mymensingh City Corporation (MCC) trucks each evening.

Dr Zakiul highlighted that amputated body parts and materials from C-section operations are buried after disinfection with chlorine solution.

He expressed serious concern over the waste management situation at MMCH, noting that although waste is sorted into different bins, the MCC trucks collect and dispose of all waste without proper separation.

A visit to MMCH's garbage station revealed



discarded sharp medical items mixed with kitchen waste, underscoring the severity of the issue.

Dr Ranjan Kumar Majumder, a retired medicine specialist, warned that residents near the Moilakanda area are at risk of diseases such as asthma, diarrhoea, allergies, and eye irritation.

Lawyer Shibbir Ahmed Liton, secretary of Mymensingh Poribesh Rokhha o Unnayan Andolon, called for immediate action to prevent medical waste from contaminating the Old Brahmaputra river during the

monsoon, posing significant public health hazards.

Mohabbat Ali, conservation inspector of MMC, reported that around five tonnes of medical waste are produced daily in the city, presenting a significant challenge for the MCC.

He admitted that the MCC has been using traditional methods for disposal due to a lack of expertise in medical waste management.

MCC is working to establish a medical waste management plant at Moilakanda by the end of the year, said Md Arifur Rahman, MCC's chief waste management officer.

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## RECENT VIOLENCE BNP to write to UN for probe: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said his party will send a letter to the United Nations calling for a probe into the "genocide" carried out by the Awami League government and forces on protesters "prior to the victory" on August 5.

He said this at a press conference at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

Fakhrul said the party also plans to send a letter to the chief advisor of the interim government in this regard.

"At the same time, we will also send a letter to the [interim] government urging them to take steps for the release of about 50 of our workers who have been imprisoned in the UAE for supporting the movement," he said.

About the resignation of judges, Fakhrul said, "This is excellent news for democracy..."

Fakhrul also criticised some media outlets for spreading misleading news about the current situation.

"The news highlighted attacks on minority communities and a deterioration of the law and order situation, which we believe is entirely incorrect. These incidents are not communal or religious; they are political," he said.

Fakhrul also expressed gratitude to the interim government for its efforts to stabilise the country.

"On behalf of the party, we thank Chief Advisor Yunus and other advisors. After the revolution, there may be some problems. Restoring normalcy will not be an easy task," Fakhrul said.

"We sincerely thank the interim government for beginning their work with dedication," he added.

# MORE THAN JUST NUMBERS

**A tenth-grader shot dead in Narayanganj. A father dies of bullet wound in Faridpur. A husband fatally shot in Mymensingh. A university student shot dead in Mirpur. A tailor killed in Adabor. At least 400 lives (the actual number could be much higher) were lost when law enforcers opened fire on protesters during the recent unrest. But these victims are not just statistics; they are children, parents, and friends. In this report, we try to know the stories of five such names among these tragic numbers.**



### Adil wanted to join the army

Says mother of 16-year-old who was shot dead by law enforcers

SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM, Narayanganj

Md Adil, 16, a tenth grader, was having lunch with his family at his home in Bhuighar area of Narayanganj on July 19 when a friend knocked at their door and informed that law enforcers were firing at student protesters nearby.

Adil immediately went outside and rushed to Dhaka-Narayanganj link road to join other protesters, despite being urged by his parents to stay home.

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### When will father return?

Asks daughter of Shamsu, 62, who died of bullet wounds

SUZIT DAS, Faridpur

Shamsu Mollah, 62, was going to a market near Faridpur's Kotwali Police Station to buy toys for his daughter on August 5, as she had been asking for one for quite some time.

However, instead of bringing a toy from the market, his lifeless body returned home.

Following Sheikh Hasina's resignation, people in different areas of the country

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### We got married only a year back

Says wife of Jobayer, 22, who was fatally shot

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The world has turned bleak for Marzina Begum, 20, after her husband Jobayer Ahmed, 22, died of bullet wounds sustained during a clash between police and protesters demanding quota reform in Mymensingh's Gouripur upazila on July 20.

"We got married only a year back. Jobayer was the lone earning member of the family. How are we going to manage

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### Shakil was vocal against injustice

Says brother of 23-year-old who died of bullet injury

TAHIRA SHAMSI UTSA

Zulfikar Shakil, 23, who died after being shot during the anti-government protest in Dhaka's Mirpur 10 on August 4, was a student of fine arts in the capital's University of Development Alternative.

He used to bear the family's expenses by doing tuitions. He was shot when Awami League activists and law enforcers opened fire at protesters, and died on August 7 while being on life support at the National

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### How will we survive now?

Asks wife of Bachchu, 47, who was shot dead in Adabor

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Kohinoor Begum has been finding it hard to grapple with the reality that her husband Bachchu Howladar, 47, is no more.

"My husband was the lone earning member of our five-member family. Where shall I go with our three children now? How are we going to survive?" she said.

Bachchu, hailing from West Sharikkhali

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