

DENGUE OUTBREAK

Women fatality high despite fewer cases

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Tania Aktar, 32, had been awaiting her delivery date on October 7. But a sudden diagnosis of dengue on September 21 changed everything, leaving both her and her unborn child in grave danger.

"She was admitted to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital on September 22. I don't know what to do now. We are not financially stable, and her condition is serious," said her husband, Mohammad Shaheen, a rickshaw-van driver.

Meanwhile, Bristi Adhikari, 19, is also fighting for her life in Suhrawardy Hospital after being diagnosed with dengue.

Her father, Amal Adhikari, a farmer from Lakshimpur, said, "She first fell ill on September 11 and was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. But they discharged her when she seemed to improve. We later rushed her to a clinic in Lakshimpur when her condition worsened. Now she is in critical condition."

The ongoing dengue outbreak in Bangladesh has disproportionately affected women. Data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) reveals that while men comprise 62.9 percent of reported infections, 52.5 percent of



Female patients are vulnerable. If infected with dengue during menstruation or pregnancy, they require special attention. If left untreated or brought to the hospital late, they risk developing dengue shock syndrome, which can be fatal.

DR HM NAZMUL AHSEN
Associate professor at Suhrawardy Hospital

dengue-related deaths are female.

"Late hospitalisation, malnutrition, a weakened immune system, and social taboos contribute significantly to the higher female death rate," experts say.

Among those hospitalised this week is Sumaiya Aktar, 19, a resident of Adabor, whose platelet count has dropped to 40,000. "We are very worried as her platelet count keeps dropping," said her mother, Parvin Aktar.

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Bangladesh Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi exchange pleasantries on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly at the UN Headquarters in New York yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

HEALTH SECTOR
Yunus seeks support of Gates Foundation

UNB, New York

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus urged the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the world's leading charitable organisation, to come forward with an enhanced support for the health sector of Bangladesh.

Global CEO of the Gates Foundation Mark Suzman shared the foundation's burgeoning engagements and vision for wider engagements in healthcare, nutrition, youth technologies and agriculture in Bangladesh with Yunus in New York on Wednesday.

"Chief adviser has requested the Gates Foundation to increase its cooperation in health and other sectors in Bangladesh," Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam told the news agency.

Mark Suzman responded positively to SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

IMPLEMENTING RTI ACT

Youth's role key to ensure transparency

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The youth can play a pivotal role in implementing the Right to Information Act, ensuring transparency and accountability of service-providing agencies, speakers said at a discussion yesterday.

The event, titled "Promoting Constructive Civic Engagement: Access to Information and Practising Social Accountability," was organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at the MJF Tower in the capital.

Sheikh Manjur E Alam, regional director for Bangladesh and South Asia at ARTICLE 19, said youth involvement in assessing social needs is vital.

"They can implement the RTI Act by addressing these needs. Proper application of the act ensures transparency in social security projects," he said.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, presided over the programme.

She highlighted the significance of the youth in civic engagement, citing recent student movements as an example.

Youth involvement in governance ensures transparency and accountability. Coordinated



efforts are essential for good governance through citizen participation," she added.

Barrister Manzoor Hasan, executive director of the Centre for Peace and Justice at BRAC University, called for institutional and constitutional reforms to increase citizen involvement in government institutions.

"Public institutions become ineffective when controlled by state power. A strong opposition party is vital for citizen participation in governance.

An absolute majority of a single party cannot serve as the moral shield of a constitution," Hasan said.

Sheikh Sabiha Alam, editor of the Global Investigative Journalism Network (Bangla), noted the challenges journalists face when using the RTI Act.

"Authorities are only interested in providing harmless information. In most cases, they refuse to release information citing security and sovereignty concerns," she said, adding that journalists rarely apply for information.

Md Ziaul Karim, senior programme coordinator of MJF, delivered the keynote speech, highlighting the importance of

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WORLD TOURISM DAY

TOURISM IN TURMOIL

Polls, political unrest, floods, unfavourable weather deal a heavy blow to the sector



An almost empty Kuakata beach.

PHOTO: STAR

SUKANTA HALDER and JAGARAN CHAKMA

The tourism sector of Bangladesh has been hit hard by the 2024 national elections, unfavourable weather, recurring floods and anti-discrimination movement in the current year compared to last year, as people are unwilling to travel for fear of violence.

Amid all this crisis, Bangladesh like the rest of the world will be observing World Tourism Day today.

Meanwhile, despite offering heavy discounts and various facilities, the industry is not getting the expected number of tourists during the peak travel season.

As such, hotels, resorts, restaurants and other allied industries of the tourism sector are facing difficult times this year, and if the situation continues, their losses will widen in the days ahead.

The sector accounted for three percent of the

country's gross domestic product in fiscal 2018-19, according to the Tourism Satellite Account 2020 of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Additionally, the sector accounted for eight percent of the total employment that year.

Bangladesh is home to the world's longest sea beach as well as the world's largest mangrove forest, alongside numerous places of outstanding natural beauty.

Although tourists travel throughout the year, the peak season in Bangladesh begins in September and continues till March.

Motaleb Sharif, general secretary of Kuakata Hotel-Motel Owners Association, said traders are facing huge losses this year compared to 2023.

Countrywide political unrest on the eve of the national elections, severe heat waves during March-April, heavy rains starting from June

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Shibir holds press briefing at DU amid politics ban

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite a ban on partisan politics on the Dhaka University campus, the DU unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir yesterday held a press conference at the Teacher-Student Centre of the university.

Dhaka University Syndicate, during an emergency meeting on the night of September 19, decided to suspend partisan politics by teachers, students, and staff on campus until further notice.

Contacted, DU Proctor Saifuddin Ahmed said the university authorities are yet to make a formal announcement regarding the decision to suspend partisan politics on campus.

"Besides, we were not aware of the press conference as they (Chhatra Shibir) did not take permission from the university," he added.

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Cartoonist Mehedi Haque addresses participants during a public lecture on "Political Cartoon in Bangladesh: Past, Present & Future" at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday. The event explored the evolution and societal impact of political cartooning in Bangladesh, engaging youth in discussions on this art form.

JETnet-BD launched to promote just energy transition

Network comprises experts, CSO, green activists, dev partners, media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The largest energy network in Bangladesh, Just Energy Transition Network Bangladesh (JETnet-BD), has been launched to promote a sustainable and just energy transition in the country.

The network, comprising over 70 civil society organisations (CSOs), local and international development bodies, energy experts, environmentalists, and media representatives, was formally introduced at a discussion programme titled "From Ask to Reality: Shaping the Energy Future" held at a hotel in Gulshan yesterday. A 23-member advisory panel has been formed to guide the network.

Key advisers include Prof Mohammad Tamim, dean of the Faculty of Chemical and Materials Engineering at Buet; former Buet Prof Ijaz Hossain; Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of Centre for Policy Dialogue; and Shafiqul Alam, lead energy analyst at Institute for Energy Economics & Financial Analysis.

JETnet-BD aims to focus on energy governance, promoting green and affordable energy, creating green jobs, increasing women's participation in the transition, improving energy efficiency, and conserving energy. The network will also work to protect the environment and local communities, as well as strengthen regional cooperation on these issues.

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