

Teen dies from electrocution

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Netrokona

A teenage boy died after being electrocuted in the Khaliajuri upazila of Netrokona on Thursday night.

The incident occurred around 8:30pm in the West Para area of Mendipur village.

The deceased was identified as Sayid Hasan Naki, 17, son of Abul Bashar Talukder, a resident of the area.

According to Khaliajuri Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Mokbul Hossain, Naki went to his father's grocery shop and was electrocuted when he flipped a switch to turn on a light.

Family members and locals immediately rescued him and took him to Khaliajuri Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared him dead.

The OC said the body was handed over to the family without autopsy.



Children beat the summer heat by wading in the cool waters of a pond near their home. Their ingenuity knows no bounds, as they have even made a makeshift raft using a banana tree. Following recent monsoons, temperatures across the country have spiked once again. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Accommodation crisis grips KMCH

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Amid the ongoing intense heat wave gripping the region, Khulna Medical College Hospital is struggling to accommodate the rising daily influx of patients suffering from heat-related illnesses, overwhelming the hospital's capacity.

With no beds available, a significant number of patients, including the elderly and children, are being compelled to lie on the hospital floors, while the lack of functional ceiling fans or proper ventilation in many wards compounds their suffering.

In some areas, not even a single ceiling fan is available, leaving patients gasping for air as temperatures soar above 35 degrees Celsius.

Patients' families and attendants plead for immediate intervention from the authorities concerned to mitigate the suffering by providing at least temporary fans, extra beds, and emergency cooling measures.

Health experts have warned that prolonged exposure to such extreme conditions could worsen the health of many patients and

have urged the authorities to take immediate action.

Lima Debnath, a resident of Bajitpur village under Jashore's Monirampur upazila, was admitted to KMCH a few days ago after being diagnosed with typhoid. However, due



to a shortage of beds, Lima is being treated on the floor of the pathology department's corridor.

Her aunt, Shikha Debnath, said, "Lima's condition is very critical. She remains unconscious

most of the time. There is no vacant bed in the hospital now, so we are forced to keep her on the floor. The heat is unbearable, worsening her condition. There is no fan on this floor, so I have been trying to keep her cool using a hand fan."

"It's suffocating here amid this heat. I can hardly breathe," Taslima said.

"I purchased a table fan since there is no ceiling fan here, but I couldn't get it connected to any electrical outlet. Many others are facing similar issues. If the hospital authorities could install some ceiling fans, it would be a great relief to the patients," said Tofayel.

Hospital authorities admitted the crisis but said they are facing a shortage of resources.

Dr Sudipta Biswas, medical officer of Medicine Unit-3 at KMCH, said, "Due to a severe bed shortage, many are being treated in corridors, near the lifts, and other open spaces. The heat, coupled with poor ventilation, worsens conditions for patients with respiratory issues, strokes, heart attacks, and other critical illnesses. Children and the elderly are especially vulnerable."

At another corner of the same corridor, Taslima Begum, a patient suffering from a liver ailment who came from Narail's Kalia upazila, was seen enduring a similar situation. Her son, Tofayel Ahmed, was seen using a hand fan to ease her discomfort.

"Despite the challenges, we are trying our best to provide treatment," he added.

He also advised patients to avoid eating food from outside during their hospital stay to prevent diarrhoea and other related complications.

Despite being a 500-bed facility, KMCH often has to accommodate three times more patients than its capacity. Around 1,400 to 1,500 admitted patients received treatment at the hospital daily in April and May.

There is also a shortage of doctors. At present, there are only 268 doctors serving at the hospital against 311 approved posts.

Dr Md Akhtaruzzaman, superintendent and deputy director of KMCH, said, "We are providing treatment amid severe limitations. Patients from 10 districts of the Khulna division and neighbouring areas come for treatment here, overwhelming the limited infrastructure."

"Despite a shortage of doctors and an overload of patients, we are doing our best to provide services with sincerity and dedication," he added.

Residents suffer

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unfit for vehicular movement," said Md Idris Ali, a local rickshaw puller.

"Just commuting from one corner to another within the municipality often becomes extremely difficult as the roads are utterly damaged and vehicles charge high fares to ply the roads," said Akhinur Islam, a resident of Eidgah area beside Ataikula road.

"One needs to spend a minimum of Tk 40-50 for travelling barely half kilometre distance in the town. When it rains, it becomes even more of an ordeal as vehicle drivers simply refuse to take passengers using the battered roads. Office-goers and students suffer the most," he added.

"At least 1-km stretch along this road has long been in a dilapidated condition, making it an arduous task to take patients to the hospital. Sometimes, patient's condition worsens after such a bumpy ride," said Md Alomgir Hossain, a resident of Hospital Road.

Md Amirul Islam, a trader at Pabna BSCIC,

echoed him. Roads in Radhanagar, Shalgaria, and Arifpur areas were also seen in deplorable state.

"Accidents regularly happen on the roads across the municipality as vehicles often overturn due to deep potholes. One needs to start keeping considerable time in hand to reach destination timely," said ABM Fazlur Rahman, president of Consumer Association of Bangladesh.

He urged the municipality authorities for prompt steps to repair the roads.

Md Obaidul Haque, assistant engineer of Pabna Municipality, said more than 130-km out of total 240-km roads within municipality area need urgent repairs.

"Due to the lack of fund, we are unable to conduct any repair work at this moment. We have already submitted a number of project proposals to repair and upgrade more than 100-km road at cost of Tk 100 crore. A few of those got approval. Once fund is allocated, we will begin tender process after June," he added.

Erosion threatens

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Locals warned that without immediate protection measures, the embankment would not only fail to serve its purpose but would also result in a waste of government resources if damaged by future tidal waves.

Nusaeir Hossain, executive engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) in Pirojpur, acknowledged that the embankment lacks

sufficient protection due to a funding shortage.

"We have asked the contractor to replace the displaced geo bags," he said, adding that a proposal seeking Tk 24 crore has been sent to higher authorities for reinforcing the embankment with concrete blocks.

"If our proposal is approved, we'll be able to begin work to strengthen the embankment," he added.

Yunus urges UK

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for oceanographic and hydrographic data collection, which is being procured for the Bangladesh Navy.

The UK team explained the ship's capabilities and various operational roles. Prof Yunus expressed interest in how the vessel could strengthen Bangladesh's capacity to map, survey, and collect data from its waters to support science, research, and knowledge building.

He requested the UK's assistance in providing additional equipment that could enhance the country's capabilities and knowledge in areas such as maritime domain awareness, new resource exploration, climate change research, mangrove preservation, fisheries studies, and biodiversity research.

The chief adviser also stressed the importance of bilateral research collaboration between Bangladesh and the UK using this vessel, and particularly emphasised the need to involve young students in maritime education to fully benefit from this acquisition.

Prof Yunus said the vessel would help Bangladesh better understand its oceans and resources for the benefit of its people.

In 2021, Bangladesh agreed to purchase five naval ships from the UK as part of its Forces Goal 2030, which aims to modernise the armed forces in line with the country's goal to become a developed nation by 2041.

The then foreign minister AK Abdul Momen had said the purpose of the procurement was to help monitor and protect Bangladesh's vast maritime territory from foreign encroachment for fishing or other activities.

Meanwhile, Prof Yunus had a phone conversation yesterday with former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Their discussion focused on Bangladesh's ongoing

economic recovery and the urgent need to improve educational opportunities for Rohingya refugee children.

Gordon Brown, currently serving as the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, praised the chief adviser's leadership in managing the country's economic challenges and promoting inclusive growth.

Both leaders expressed deep concern over the educational plight

of Rohingya children residing in Bangladesh's refugee camps. With more than half a million children lacking access to formal education, they stressed the importance of providing learning opportunities to prevent a "lost generation".

"We must ensure that Rohingya children grow up with hope and the tools to build a better future," said Prof Yunus, reiterating the government's commitment to supporting the Rohingya community.

Brown expressed interest in collaborating with Bangladesh to expand education programmes in the camps and said he hoped to visit Bangladesh in the coming months to assess the situation and explore ways to help.

The conversation also covered other topics of mutual interest, including the interim government's reform agenda and its role in ensuring a peaceful democratic transition.

Yesterday, Prof Yunus also attended an interactive session with students at his hotel in London.

He is scheduled to return home today after a four-day visit to the UK.

Unregulated tourism threatens Vanishing rivers of Patgram

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20-km/hr speed limit on the Sreemangal-Kamalganj road running through the park, he also said.

"Excessive tourist activities will never do any good for Lawachara; it will only cause serious damage to its endangered wildlife and natural forest ecosystem," said Muntasir Akash, assistant professor of Zoology at Dhaka University.

"The Forest Department has put a cap on how many tourists will enter daily. Otherwise, one day there will be no wildlife in this forest," he added.

Satir Ali, a tourist from Dhaka, said, "I came to Lawachara with my family to see wildlife. However, we came out of the park soon after entering as it is too crowded noisy, so much so that it hardly seems a forest. If I had known about such

a situation beforehand, I would not have come."

"In almost every country in the world, even in our neighbouring India, Nepal, and Bhutan, the canning capacity – the optimal number of tourists that can be allowed to a site daily – is determined based on the size and importance of the national park. Based on the number determined, that many tourists have to book their entry in advance on a particular day," said Marjan Maria, a wildlife researcher and animal care co-ordinator at Plumploris e.V.

Echoing her, Hassan Al Razi, a Ph.D Fellow (wildlife research and conservation) at University of Western Australia, said no such system has been seen anywhere in Bangladesh.

"Higher tourist numbers mean higher revenue, which

is seen very positively in our country, even though it endangers our forests and wildlife. We need to determine the canning capacity of our forests to save the forests and wildlife from the pressure of tourism. A policy should be made so that tourists cannot go everywhere. Also, tourist guards should be trained to serve as forest and wildlife conservators," he added.

Contacted, Dr Md Jahangir Alam, divisional forest officer of the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department in Sylhet, admitted the crisis.

"A huge number of tourists visit the park almost every day during Eid holidays, threatening its biodiversity. We have discussed the matter in some meetings. Steps will be taken in this regard," he added.

Jhumur Akter, filed a case with Banani Police Station on February 4.

CID also discovered that another group of 10 victims is currently stranded in Saudi Arabia.

After learning about the forced recruitment, they refused to go to Russia. The traffickers then took away their passports, leaving them unable to work or return home.

CID said Fabia's brother, Tuhin – now in Russia – played a key role in persuading the victims to join the war.

CID is working with the government and NGOs to repatriate the victims, the official added.

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According to insiders, syndicate members colluded with local authorities by paying the officials around 10 percent of their daily earnings from stone extraction operations.

On average, about 4,000 cubic feet of stones are lifted daily using dredgers, with each cft selling for Tk 60-70 at the extraction site, thereby producing a daily turnover of at least Tk 2.4 lakh. Of this, roughly Tk 24,000 is allegedly pocketed by local officials, according to political insiders and syndicate sources.

However, not all 400-500 dredgers in operation are paying the cut. In some areas, influential political leaders reportedly shield their favoured groups, allowing them to bypass such payments.

"Earlier, leaders from the then ruling Awami League controlled the business. Now, local BNP leaders have taken over," said a local source involved with the syndicate, requesting anonymity.

Rashedul Islam, general secretary of Patgram upazila Jubo League unit and former municipality mayor, was allegedly overseeing the syndicate's operations at one stage, the source claimed.

Rashedul could not be reached for comment, as his phone was found switched off.

Asked about BNP's alleged involvement, Shafiqar Rahman, president of Patgram upazila BNP unit, refuted the allegation.

"None of our leaders are involved in this syndicate.

In fact, we have consistently urged the administration to take action against illegal stone lifting during law-and-order committee meetings. But the administration ignored our concerns and instead shifted the blame onto political leaders while continuing to receive a share of the profits from syndicate members," he claimed.

WHAT OFFICIALS SAY
Officials concerned of the government institutions admitted that the crisis is severe.

"The three rivers in Patgram are on the verge of death due to relentless, illegal stone lifting," said Shunil Kumar, executive engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board in Lalmonirhat.

"A team from the environment ministry visited the rivers recently and saw the crisis firsthand. We expect restoration steps to follow," he added.

Patgram Upazila Nirbahi Officer Jilur Rahman said, "Stone lifting is officially banned. We act on every report and send out mobile courts. We've destroyed over 100 dredgers and fined many, even faced attacks. Still, some operations continue at night in remote areas."

The UNO also denied involvement of any local administration officials in the illegal trade. "Instead, we are vigilant and taking strict action against these syndicates," he said.

HM Rakib Hayder, deputy commissioner of Lalmonirhat, said, "We've marked a four-km stretch of the Dharla for dredging. The survey is complete.

Work will begin soon."

"No matter how powerful the syndicates are, we'll take firm action," he added.

LAWS, CONCERNS IGNORED

In Bangladesh, stone extraction without a license is a criminal offense as per the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992.

The Water Act, 2013, also criminalises unapproved interference with waterbodies, while The River Protection Commission Act, 2013, bans unauthorised damage, pollution, and occupation of riverbeds.

Despite the legal framework, enforcement has remained sporadic and inconsistent, resulting in a slow collapse of rivers, livelihoods, and lives.

Between January to April this year, the local administration has filed six cases and arrested two over illegal stone mining.

The situation, however, hardly changed, as these actions appear to have little effect in preventing the mining.

"They still extract at night," said Moslem Uddin, 65, of Bangkanda.

"Sometimes it goes on all day – with loud music and scenes like parties. These greedy men have ruined the rivers. The damage is evident – in farming, nature, and even the climate."

Shafiqul Islam, president of Lalmonirhat River Rakkha Songram Parishad, echoed him.

"If urgent, sustained action is not taken, the rivers of Patgram may soon be beyond saving," he said.

PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 14

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:05	12:45	5:00	6:50	8:15
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-55 8-45				
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				