

MY DHAKA

Empowering breast cancer patients through community support

RBR

An initiative that I am particularly passionate about is TishCAN, a humble support group dedicated to raising funds for breast cancer patients who are unable to solicit donations or raise funds on their own.

Just this mere gesture of thinking about women who are financially strapped, but cannot ask for funds to treat their cancer, is a noble thought. And being able to help any such woman in peril, in whatever small way, is a significant achievement.

"All cancer battles are difficult. Living through breast cancer myself, I am aware of the ordeal. I founded TishCAN in 2023, with the pursuit of raising awareness for cancer patients and holding hands with fellow survivors. The power of community and the strength of loved ones is so helpful; it makes all the difference in a person's life who is undergoing cancer treatment," says Nuzhat Tarannum, founder of TishCAN.

Nuzhat is courageous in facing her own battle, and in this difficult journey, she is trying to help hold the hands of fellow patients. She has created a support group with patients, survivors, healthcare professionals, and advocates for those battling cancer to adhere to a healthy lifestyle for recovery.

October marks Breast Cancer Awareness Month. To commemorate this, TishCAN raises funds to support breast cancer patients by organising exhibitions, fundraising events, and raising community support throughout the month of September.

"TishCAN Pink Carnival – Stand with Breast Cancer Warriors" is such an awareness programme to help save lives through early detection and education. At the fundraising fair, people donate items which are then sold to raise funds.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

TishCAN's next special event will be held on September 27 from 4:00pm–6:00pm at Gulshan Society Lake Park. The event will be an awareness and wellness session featuring expert on breast cancer, survivor stories, and an energizing Zumba session.

There is a registration fee for the "Cancer Awareness & Wellness" event on Saturday at Gulshan Lake Park. It aims to be a heartwarming community event filled with pink-themed ideas, love, and support.

TishCAN, this October, plans to take another bold step and go on a wellness trip to Cox's Bazar with 17 of its support group members. The trip is generously supported by the City Group.

All proceeds from these events go towards direct support for Breast Cancer Warriors in need.

"Chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation therapy, and the side effects of such a difficult treatment process are overwhelming. So, TishCAN is my humble effort to support cancer patients, particularly those who are not comfortable asking for financial help despite facing hardship.

"A patient may have been the sole earner of her family, or might have other financial responsibilities, but her earnings are stalled because of her health. Helping to ease that burden and provide financial relief along with mental support is what I strive for," says Nuzhat, saying it is the reason to initiate Pink October fundraising events by TishCAN.

Cancer is cruel and breast cancer, I think, is the hardest. Particularly because we, women, always want to feel beautiful inside and out.

The breast cancer struggle isn't just physical; it's a profound emotional journey, where recovery is a complicated process involving physical, emotional, and psychological healing. Then there is the financial aspect of the treatment and recovery, which just cannot be ignored.

Breast cancer is said to be highly treatable, especially if diagnosed at an early stage and with timely intervention. You can have healthy years or even decades after receiving treatment and keeping follow-up appointments.

However, there is always a dark cloud looming over, you can never be cancer-free. The possibility never fully disappears; late recurrences can occur even after years of remission.

"Give back. Spread hope. Be part of something beautiful. Together, we can turn simple things into something life-changing for others and yourself," is Nuzhat's only wish on her way to recovery.

JULY UPRISING CASE
'I found my brother's body among 5 others'
Sister recounts harrowing hospital scene at ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The sister of a university student killed during last year's July uprising recounted yesterday the harrowing moment she saw her brother's bullet-hit body at Suhrawardy hospital, lying among five others soaked in blood.

Testifying as the 49th prosecution witness in the crimes against humanity case against deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her two top aides at the International Crimes Tribunal-1, Sabrina Afroz Sebonti, a university student herself, said her brother Mahmudur Rahman Shaikat left home after lunch on July 19, 2024, to join protests on Nurjahan Road in Mohammadpur.

Around 3:45 pm, police shot him dead.

Sebonti said she rushed to the hospital after learning of Shaikat's death from her father, who had gone to their village home in Sandwip. "At the hospital, I found my brother's body among five others. His head was wrapped in a thick, bloody bandage. Each of the bodies bore bullet wounds either to the head, chest, or abdomen."

She further said as more wounded protesters were brought in, the floor got smeared with blood. "I even saw someone washing away the pool of blood coming from my brother's head with a bucket of water. I broke down, unable to hold back my tears."

Sebonti demanded that those responsible for her brother's death be hanged.

During cross-examination, state defence counsel Md Amir Hossain argued that Hasina and Kamal were innocent and had not issued any orders to kill protesters.

Earlier in the day, Amir cross-examined the 48th prosecution witness, Ali Ahsan Zanaed, convener of United Peoples Bangladesh, arguing that the July uprising was a "meticulous design to overthrow a legitimate government" and that protesters themselves were conspirators.

Zanaed rejected the claim outright.

The lawyer further insisted that on July 16, 2024, no students were killed in attacks carried out by Chhatra League activists and police.

"This is not true," the witness countered again.

Amir also pointed to programmes Zanaed mentioned in his testimony and said campaigns such as changing Facebook profiles to red, "March for Justice," "Remembering Our Heroes," "March to Dhaka," the symbolic extension of July into "32 July," and the one-point demand to oust the government on August 3 were "proof of a carefully plotted strategy".

Zanaed dismissed the argument as baseless. His cross-examination was held yesterday, a day after his testimony was recorded on Sunday.

Late admission leading cause

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"If the disease cannot be diagnosed in time or treatment cannot be started early, suffering and deaths increase. Public awareness is imperative here," said DGHS Director General Prof Md Abu Jafor.

"Whatever steps we take will not be fruitful if we cannot make people aware of them," he said, seeking journalists' cooperation in this regard.

The country has seen a sharp year-on-year surge in dengue, with cases up 81 percent and deaths 43 percent, raising concerns over the worsening outbreak this year.

Two more people died and 678 more were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the total death toll to 181 and caseload to 42,509.

Prof Halimur Rashid, of the DGHS Communicable Disease Control Programme, said most deaths were among patients aged 20 to 30 (19 cases), followed by those in the 0-10 and 40-50 age groups, with 16 deaths reported in each.

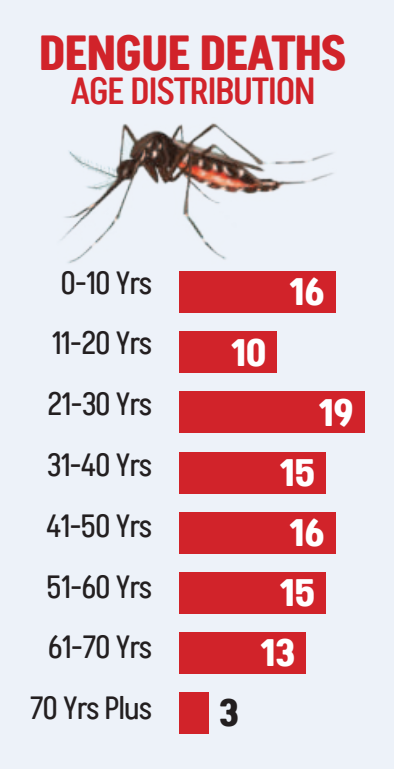
Of them, 53 percent were male while the rest were female.

According to a DGHS official, who preferred anonymity, those aged 20-30 make up the highest share of deaths as they are more active outdoors and less cautious during the early stages of fever.

The DGHS collected the addresses of 111 dengue patients who died. Of them, Dhaka recorded the highest number with 17 deaths, followed by Barguna with 12 and Narayanganj with eight.

Dhaka Medical College Hospital saw the highest in-patient deaths with 33, followed by Kurmitola General Hospital with 14 and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital with 12, said Prof Halimur.

Meanwhile, 66 patients died within 24 hours of hospital admission, 18 died within 48 hours, five within 72 hours and 25 after 72 hours, he added.



Forty-seven people were admitted to hospital with a fever persisting for three to six days, 25 were admitted with fever running for six to 10 days, and another 16 were admitted after nine days of fever.

Only 21 patients were admitted in the recommended time -- one to three days of fever, he said.

The average hospital stay was around 2.5 days.

Among 90 patients whose preconditions were available, 39 had comorbidities, the professor added.

At least 56 patients died from DSS, while 36 died with Expanded Dengue Syndrome (EDS).

A DGHS official, preferring anonymity, said DSS is a severe form of dengue haemorrhagic fever, which occurs when excessive plasma leakage from blood vessels causes a critical drop in blood pressure, pulse and urine, leaving patients in critical

condition. EDS is another severe form of dengue fever which affects multiple organs.

Prof Halimur said that the dengue fatality rate, which stands at 0.42 percent, is still lower than last year's 0.57 percent.

Citing 2024's caseload and deaths, Prof Abu Jafor said it was predicted that the number of cases would increase in September.

Replying to a question, he said the role of the Local Government Division is crucial in controlling mosquitoes and curbing dengue cases. "We're already in touch with them, but there may be some gaps in coordination."

To another question, he responded that despite a shortage of health workers, they have been mobilising additional doctors in areas that require them the most, such as Barguna.

Asked whether district and upazila-level hospitals were sufficiently prepared to handle dengue cases, as many patients reportedly come to Dhaka for treatment, he claimed they were.

DGHS Director (Hospital) Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan said they have already issued directives to all government hospitals to set up separate wards and medical teams dedicated to handling dengue cases and ensure better treatment, adding that the hospitals are already equipped with adequate test kits and fluids for dengue patients.

Responding to a question, he said, "We regularly update the dengue treatment protocol and train doctors and nurses accordingly."

Moinul added that they have been investigating the death of a dengue patient in a private hospital in Chattogram despite a long hospital stay, which was unusual.

Two additional director generals of DGHS, Prof Khair Ahmed Choudhury and Prof Sheikh Sayidul Haque, were present at the briefing.

Support growing for a Palestinian state

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health authorities. In recent weeks, Israel has begun a long-threatened ground assault on Gaza City with few prospects for a ceasefire.

Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, yesterday said that "the recognition of a Palestinian State doesn't mean much if there isn't a ceasefire."

"The recognition must be followed by a genuine commitment to a peace process in the region," Lazzarini said in an interview before a UN General Assembly meeting.

His comments came as at least 37 more Palestinians were killed yesterday in Israeli attacks across the enclave.

More than 140 world leaders will descend on New York this week for the annual United Nations General Assembly, which will be dominated by the Palestinian issue.

One world leader who will miss the gathering is Mahmud Abbas, the Palestinian president whom Washington denied a visa, along with his officials.

That earned a rebuke from the General Assembly, which will be the focus of world leaders' speeches and protest walkouts this week. The assembly voted 145 to five to exceptionally allow Abbas to speak via video link.

Experts say the recognition by

Western nations is a symbolic boost to the Palestinians. It is a diplomatic and political milestone that could increase international pressure on Israel.

However, realities on the ground may not change, they said.

Some diplomats fear Israeli reprisals over the Western push to recognise a Palestinian state.

German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul yesterday said "a negotiated two-state solution is the path that can allow Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace, security and dignity."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated on Sunday his position that there would be no Palestinian state and vowed to accelerate the creation of new settlements.

Two far-right Israeli ministers, Itamar Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, went further, calling for the annexation of the West Bank.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan yesterday chided those Israeli politicians.

"We call on the Israeli government to cease settlement construction and expansion," he said, citing the so-called E1 settlement project as fragmenting the West Bank. "We oppose ongoing attempts to create new facts on the ground which undermine the prospects for a two-state solution."

More details on the sanctions would be released at a later date, he said.

Meanwhile, Scottish First Minister John Swinney urged the British government to go beyond its recognition of a Palestinian state by imposing sanctions and halting arms sales to Israel.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told AFP Friday, "We should not feel intimidated by the risk of retaliation."

All eyes will be on Netanyahu when he speaks on Friday.

On the ground, the Gaza health ministry said two Gaza City hospitals have been taken out of service due to the escalation of Israel's ground offensive and damage caused by continued Israeli bombing.

The ministry said in a statement that Al-Rantissi Children's Hospital had been badly damaged in an Israeli bombardment a few days ago. At the same time, it reported Israeli attacks in the vicinity of the nearby Eye Hospital, which forced the suspension of services there, too.

Yesterday, residents said Israeli tanks had advanced deeper into the Sheikh Radwan area and Jala Street in northern Gaza City, where the two hospitals are located, while in Tel Al-Hawa in the southeast tanks had pushed deeper in the direction of the western parts of the city.

They said Israeli forces had used explosive-laden vehicles, detonated remotely, to blow up dozens of houses in the two areas.

Hasina's voice matches 'shoot' order

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The Daily Star has the full recording of the conversation, and in July this year, this newspaper ran its own investigation titled, 'Shoot directly': Hasina's order and deadly aftermath, to verify the recording.

During our investigation, the audio was provided to Tech Global

Institute (TGI) -- a technology nonprofit -- for technical analysis, which showed the call recording was authentic.

According to the documents obtained by this newspaper, the call took place on the night of July 18, 2024, and the receiver's phone number is registered with the Prime

Minister's Office. Hasina had been using the number since at least 2019, including during her foreign trips.

The phone number of Taposh, who initiated the call, was verified from official documents, including the PID Telephone Guide 2021. Other official documents also confirm this.

