

Untreated medical waste raises health risks in Ctg

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Chattogram*

Medical wastes from different hospitals and diagnostic centres across Chattogram city are being routinely collected and disposed of without proper segregation, raising serious public health risks, including the spread of infectious diseases.

Standard biomedical waste disposal protocols require different coloured bins for specific waste types: red bins for recyclable contaminated waste such as syringes without needles; yellow bins for soiled waste like bandages and cotton swabs; white puncture-proof containers for sharp objects including needles and blades; blue bins for glassware; and black bins for non-biomedical waste.

However, most health centres in the port city are mixing all waste before disposal, as witnessed by this correspondent during visits to several private hospitals in Panchlaish, Mehedibagh and Surson Road areas.

Contacted, Dr Shakeel Ahmed, a public health expert and retired professor of the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical



directly exposing patients and the public.

According to Dr Jahangir Alam, civil surgeon of Chattogram, there are 290 registered private medical facilities in the city, including 92 hospitals and 198 diagnostic centres, alongside two government hospitals and 14 upazila health complexes.

Sources said a number of unregistered clinics and diagnostic centres have also mushroomed in the city, evading regulatory oversight.

Around three tonnes of medical waste are generated in Chattogram city every day, according to sources at the Chattogram City Corporation. However, there is no study on the volume of medical waste produced across the 15 upazilas of the district.

Only one company, Nagar Seba, currently operates in the city to collect and dispose of medical waste from hospitals, clinics and laboratories. No such service operates at the upazila level.

Pranab Sharma, deputy chief conservancy officer of the city corporation, said the company uses an incinerator set up by the corporation under a JICA project at the Halishahar landfill to dispose of medical waste.

However, officials of Nagar Seba said the company is collecting and disposing of only half of the hazardous waste generated in the city, around 1.5 tonnes daily.

The remaining medical waste is reportedly being collected by city corporation workers along with general waste, meaning half of the city's infectious waste is being improperly disposed of, further heightening public health risks.

During a recent visit to the city

corporation landfill at the Halishahar Anandabazar area, conservancy workers were seen dumping waste, while some people were collecting plastic materials from the landfill.

The incineration plant beside the landfill was not operational when this correspondent visited the site around noon. Medical waste in polythene bags was seen piled up and scattered along the road in front of the plant, with no visible signs of waste segregation.

Shimul Kanti Dey, foreman of the plant, said it usually operates for only three hours from 9:00am daily to avoid technical glitches.

"We can burn 750kg of medical waste a day in three hours, but around 1.5 tonnes of medical waste are brought in daily. The rest of the waste is kept on the ground in plastic bags," he said.

Asked about waste segregation, he said that earlier, medical waste used to be delivered after segregation at the source, but over the past eight months, waste has been brought in without any sorting.

"We have to burn all waste together in the plant at the highest 820 degrees Fahrenheit temperature," he added.

Contacted, Md Bokhtair, a director of Nagar Seba, said 150 of the 290 registered medical entities have signed memorandums of understanding with the company for waste collection and disposal.

"We collect 1.5 tonnes of medical waste daily. We realise monthly fees ranging from Tk 1,500 to Tk 20,000 from each entity for the service," he said.

He added that some public hospitals, including Chattogram General Hospital

and City Corporation Memon Hospital, have not signed MoUs with the company.

Asked about the issue, Dr Ekram Hossain, acting director of Chattogram General Hospital, confirmed that the hospital's waste is handed over to city corporation conservancy workers instead of a specialised service, adding that he would need to check records to explain the absence of an MoU.

Contacted, Dr Imam Hossain Rana, chief health officer of the city corporation, said he was unaware whether Memon Hospital had signed an MoU with Nagar Seba. "I would look into the matter," he said.

Mohammad Ismail, operations manager of Nagar Seba, said most facilities are ignoring the responsibility of waste segregation at the source.

"Waste segregation should be done at the source. However, only three hospitals -- Parkview, Evercare and Imperial -- provide medical waste after segregation. The rest of the hospitals and diagnostic centres provide waste without sorting," he said.

Dr Shakeel Ahmed stressed that waste segregation must begin at hospitals and diagnostic centres and called for greater accountability.

"If any hospital or diagnostic centre does not segregate medical waste at source, the city corporation or the collecting organisations should file complaints with health authorities against them," he said.

Contacted, Brig Gen Taslim Uddin, director of Chattogram Medical College Hospital, said medical waste segregation rules are supposed to be followed in every ward.

"I would look into whether the rules are being followed properly," he added.

Rohingya gang leader killed in gun attack at Teknaf camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

A suspected armed robber was killed in a gun attack by a rival gang at the Nayapara Registered Rohingya Camp in Teknaf early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nur Kamal, 25, leader of a Rohingya gang allegedly involved in criminal activities inside the camp. He was shot and stabbed during an attack following a long-standing rivalry over territorial control, according to law enforcers.

Additional Deputy Inspector General Md Kausar Sikder, commanding officer of the 16 Armed Police Battalion, said members of the Bangladeshi Khalique gang carried out the attack, triggering an exchange of gunfire in the area.

At one stage, Nur Kamal sustained fatal injuries and later died at an NGO-run hospital inside the camp.

Both groups have long been involved in various criminal activities, including robbery and drug trafficking, he added.

Teknaf Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Saiful Islam said police recovered Nur Kamal's body from the camp yesterday morning.

Police records show Nur Kamal was accused in at least 11 cases, including murder, robbery, abduction, and drug related offenses.

Annual urs at HC shrine held on a limited scale



DU CORRESPONDENT

The annual two-day urs at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Khaza Sharuddin Chishti located at the High Court premises in Dhaka was held on a limited scale this year as the traditional large gathering was postponed.

According to devotees, a committee comprising High Court judges oversees the urs, which usually draws followers from across the country, each year. Traditionally, the urs is observed with rituals, including full recitation of the Quran, zikr, dua, sermons, musical sessions, and food distribution among devotees. Musical events are usually held at the HC field adjacent to the shrine.

Talking to this correspondent, urs organisers said due to the upcoming national election and ongoing cases at the International Crimes Tribunal, the committee did not permit the programme to be held on a large scale.

This year, however, only the mandatory rituals were carried out in a limited capacity.

Law enforcers barricaded the HC gate on Friday, preventing followers from entering the shrine, which led to an altercation in front of the gate.

Ramna Zone Deputy Commissioner Masud Alam told The Daily Star that the decision to restrict entry was taken by the organising committee.

"We just did our job. When the followers were denied entry, they set fire in front of the High Court gate and staged a protest," he said.

Man stabbed to death while trying to prevent dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A man was stabbed to death while trying to stop a land dispute between two brothers in Barguna's Amtali upazila yesterday.

The victim, Jahirul Islam Sardar, 40, a cousin of the feuding brothers from Taktabunia village, was attacked around noon in front of their houses.

Police detained Mansur Sardar, 65, one of the brothers, and recovered the knife used in the killing.

According to police and locals, Mansur and his younger brother, Farid Sardar, had a dispute over 26 decimals of land for a long time. Several arbitration meetings failed to resolve the conflict.

Amal Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Jahangir Hossain said the dispute escalated yesterday when Mansur allegedly chased Farid with a knife. Jahirul intervened to stop the attack but was stabbed.

Locals rushed him to Amal Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

Local arbitrator Md Limon Hawlader said the dispute had persisted for decades despite repeated mediation.

Jahirul's wife and mother demanded justice. The body was sent to Barguna General Hospital morgue for autopsy, and police were preparing to file a case, the OC said.



- Hospitals, diagnostics mixing medical waste
- Three tonnes of medical waste generated daily; half disposed of improperly
- Only three hospitals segregate waste at source
- Nagar Seba incinerates 750kg daily; backlog remains
- Liquid, hazardous waste spilling near CMCH
- Experts warn of severe health risks

and Infectious Diseases, said improper segregation of medical waste poses serious health risks.

"If medical wastes are collected and disposed of without segregation, there might be a risk of contamination of diseases like Hepatitis B, C and HIV among both the collectors and common people," he said.

At Chattogram Medical College Hospital, the region's largest healthcare facility, liquid waste was seen trickling down from unsegregated heaps of garbage onto the road and spreading towards the hospital's emergency department,

Mob rule, shrinking freedom

FROM PAGE 3
members of civil society, their faces remain the same once they sit in the chair of power.

He said threats to free expression are no longer limited to formal state control. "Recently, we have seen supporters of private groups or political parties directly targeting media and cultural institutions with violence," he added.

Zillur criticised the state's inaction during arson attacks on the offices of Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, calling them among the most shameful incidents in recent history.

He also cited the demolition of the historic Dhamondi 32 residence as an example of state-enforced mob rule.

Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul said the interim government is under severe strain, revealing that three to four advisers had considered resigning due to what he described as unjust attacks, obscene abuse, and death threats.

He said they stayed on after Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus warned that even one resignation would weaken the entire administration.

Defending the government against what he termed as "heartless" criticism, Asif said it is currently the only entity without freedom of speech.

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said mob culture did not arise on its own but was enabled by the state. He said extortion, tender manipulation and land grabbing have continued since the uprising,

with political parties still relying on "money, muscle and religion".

Islam Andolan Bangladesh leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim said human rights are often shaped by ideology rather than humanity, with mob violence emerging from suppressed public opinion.

CGS Executive Director Parvez Karim Abbasi, Jahangirnagar University Professor Abdul Latif Masum, Socialist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Bazlur Rashid Firoz, Gonoforum's Golam Mostofa, Barrister Shihab Uddin Khan and CPB leader Ragib Hossain Munna also spoke at the programme.

Sara Hossain urged political parties to stop filing proxy defamation cases to silence critics.

She called for urgent reform of colonial-era laws such as the Contempt of Court Act, the Sedition Act and provisions on hurting religious sentiments.

Sara also called on the media to speak out more strongly for colleagues still in detention.

Senior journalist Muktidir Rashid Romeo said the country has moved from "freedom of expression" to "freedom of the mob".

He said the EU expects the polls to be free, fair, and competitive. The EU also wants all stakeholders to accept the results to ensure a smooth democratic transition, he added.

He said the EU delegation also assured the NCP of its cooperation during the meeting.

On the issue of a level playing field, Nahid said there is no confidence or consensus among political parties, including the NCP, that such an environment currently exists in the country. "We believe that by providing special facilities and government protocol to a particular political party, a form of signalling is taking place that may obstruct a

level playing field," he said.

They said they firmly believe domestic and foreign instigators and patrons are also backing these acts.

The signatories also said they are observing with concern that the government is repeatedly failing to conduct prompt investigations and bring those responsible for killings, attacks and arson to justice.

They placed four demands -- the immediate arrest and prosecution of those responsible for killing minority community members and attacking and burning their homes and the identification and punishment of instigators and supporters.

The signatories include Anu Muhammad, economist and former Jahangirnagar University professor; Sultana Kamal, rights activist; Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera

special measures by the interim government to protect minority homes, shops and all places of worship, including temples and churches; the issuance of special directives and increased monitoring to ensure the security of minorities and protect communal harmony; and joint initiatives by all mainstream political parties to resist such incidents by mobilising leaders, activists and supporters.

The other signatories are: Dhaka University professors Samina Lutfah and Sumaiya Khayer, Robayed Ferdous and Zobaida Nasreen; DU associate professor Tasnim Siraj Mabbub; senior Supreme Court lawyers Subrata Chowdhury and Tabarak Hossain; visiting professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science Swapan Adnan; BRAC University professor Ferdous Azim; Manindra Kumar Nath, acting general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Oikya Parishad, writer and researcher Pavel Partha; Saleh Ahmed, general secretary of Sammilito Samajik Andolok; lawyer and human rights activist Parvez Hashem; Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, executive director of Coast Trust; Shah-e-Mobin Jinnah, executive director of CDA; Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagonik Uddoyog; Saidur Rahman, chief executive of Human Rights Cultural Foundation; rights activists Sayeed Ahmed and Dipayan Khisa; social worker Joba Talukder; researcher Ishita Dastagir; indigenous rights activist Meintin Promila; and Hana Shams Ahmed, a PhD researcher at York University, Canada.

He also raised concerns about the media's role, alleging a growing tendency to lean towards one side.

"Various negative and false reports about the NCP are appearing in the mainstream media. A few outlets are deliberately targeting us," he said.

Calling for equal treatment in both administration and media, Nahid said these concerns have been repeatedly raised with the Election Commission and will continue to be conveyed.

He added that the commission would also be informed about obstacles the party is facing at the field level.

He said the Jamaat-NCP alliance is ahead in election preparations and has already begun campaigning in favour of a referendum.

Once the seat-sharing arrangement is finalised, he said, no major challenges would remain ahead of the election.

Nahid further said the EC should take firm action against loan defaulters, noting that nominations of several loan defaulters were

initially declared valid.

He also alleged violations of election laws through poster displays and other campaign activities.

On security, he said fear and insecurity persist despite government initiatives and the deployment of security personnel. "The fear remains, especially as the killers of Sharif Osman Hadi and Farhad have not yet been arrested," he said.

Regarding seat-sharing, Nahid said the NCP's position would be clear within the next one or two days.

He said the Jamaat-NCP alliance is ahead in election preparations and has already begun campaigning in favour of a referendum.

Once the seat-sharing arrangement is finalised, he said, no major challenges would remain ahead of the election.

Nahid further said the EC should take firm action against loan defaulters, noting that nominations of several loan defaulters were

A particular party being favoured

FROM PAGE 3

a meeting with an election observation delegation led by European Union Chief Election Observer Ivars Ijabs.

He said the EU expects the polls to be free, fair, and competitive. The EU also wants all stakeholders to accept the results to ensure a smooth democratic transition, he added.

He said the EU delegation also assured the NCP of its cooperation during the meeting.

On the issue of a level playing field, Nahid said there is no confidence or consensus among political parties, including the NCP, that such an environment currently exists in the country. "We believe that by providing special facilities and government protocol to a particular political party, a form of signalling is taking place that may obstruct a

level playing field," he said.

Nahid further said the EC should take firm action against loan defaulters, noting that nominations of several loan defaulters were