



Interim govt's missteps behind measles crisis

Say experts and officials; 294 children die of measles, symptoms; more than 45,000 suspected, confirmed cases

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The interim government's ineptitude and apathy that eventually led to a measles outbreak has so far left 294 children dead, say experts and officials.

The death toll, which includes suspected cases, continues to rise, just as the contagion spreads. As of yesterday, there were over 45,000 cases, confirmed and suspected, across 61 districts of Bangladesh.

The outbreak is largely attributed to the Yunus-led government's mishandling of a successful vaccination programme that had been recognised as a model for poor countries. The 18-month government that ran the country had attempted to change the method of procurement and funding source which caused procurement delays leading to a vaccine shortage and eventual stockout. This, in turn, led to an outbreak. Discontented health workers and intermittent strikes further compounded the situation, they said.

Although experts had alerted about a declining coverage and urged



BASKET OF BROKEN DREAMS... A farmer, visibly distressed, holds up a basket of unhusked paddy threshed from wet stalks that are already sprouting and no longer fit to be milled into whole-grain rice. The photo was taken yesterday in Dekhar Haor of Sunamganj.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Haor harvest stifled by rain, labour shortfall

SUKANTA HALDER, TAFSILUL AZIZ and JAYDUL ISLAM

Continuous rainfall over the past week has triggered a severe labour shortage in the haor region, compounding the challenges for farmers already racing against time to harvest their Boro crops.

Even after offering daily wages as high as Tk 2,000, farmers said they are struggling to find workers amid worsening waterlogging, torrential rains, and deadly lightning strikes.

Boro accounts for nearly 55 percent of Bangladesh's annual rice output, with the season running from

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for action, the government failed to carry out a campaign at any point of its 18-month tenure. The government was, in fact, due to run a special measles campaign in mid or late 2024, which never happened.

World Health Organisation (WHO) blamed this crisis on measles and rubella (MR1 and MR2) vaccines being out of stock in Bangladesh between 2024 and 2025, combined with routine immunisation gaps and the absence of nationwide supplementary campaigns since 2020.

The Daily Star spoke to a dozen experts, current and former officials of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI), the health directorate and the ministry to understand how a well-established system broke down during the Yunus government.

READ PROF SAYEDUR RAHMAN'S FULL INTERVIEW ONLINE

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'Form permanent media commission'

Say journos at Editors' Council-, Noab-organised event; Info minister suggests advisory committee for setting up the panel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists yesterday called for the establishment of a permanent media commission to enforce codes of conduct and ensure accountability.

Speaking at a seminar organised on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day at the CIRDP auditorium, Information Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon said the government would "definitely" move ahead with the plan.

The Editors' Council and the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab)

organised the seminar.

"The government is always a party in the media world, and at times, an overbearing one. Historically, we have seen that governments themselves can commit offenses. Therefore, in such an environment, a media commission or a similar authority is essential."

Developed countries have created such authorities that can treat everyone, including the government, as a party and bring them under a framework, he said.

Swapon suggested forming a consultative

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BB readying Tk 20,000cr factory revival fund

MD MEHEDI HASAN

The central bank is likely to introduce a Tk 15,000 crore to Tk 20,000 crore low-cost fund to help revive closed factories in the country.

Industries and factories that have been shut down due to unavoidable reasons and are willing to repay their loans will be able to access low-interest working capital loans from this fund. In some cases, firms may also receive term loans.

The interest rate on the loans could be set at 13 percent, with a possible 5 percent subsidy, The Daily Star learned this from Bangladesh Bank officials involved with the proceedings.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is expected to

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PHOTO: PMO

Newly elected members for the reserved women's seats taking the oath of office in the parliament building last night. The ceremony was administered by the Speaker of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad, Major (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed.

NEXT FISCAL YEAR'S BUDGET Tk 35,000cr likely to be set aside for new pay scale

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

About Tk 35,000 crore is likely to be allocated in the upcoming fiscal year's budget for the partial implementation of the new pay scale for government officials, pensioners and MPO-listed teachers and staff.

The finance ministry has already prepared a draft of the proposed budget factoring in the increased expenditure for the enhanced pay structure. The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings. The draft will be finalised soon after a meeting with the prime minister.

Two options are under consideration for implementing the pay scale: one involves a three-year plan and the other option is to implement the pay structure over two fiscal years in several phases.

Under the first option, 50 percent of the recommended basic salary would be hiked in the next fiscal year and the remaining portion in the following year; the house rent and other allowances would be paid in two phases in the third year.

A committee led by the cabinet secretary has been formed to

Full implementation of the pay commission's recommendations would require Tk 106,000 crore, of which Tk 80,000 crore would be needed for government officials and employees. The rest would go towards pensioners and MPO-listed teachers and staff.

examine the proposals in light of the government's financial capacity and inflationary pressures.

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The upcoming fiscal year's budget is likely to be 18 percent higher at Tk 930,000 crore, with the revenue budget

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UNBOWED

On the occasion of **WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY** (May 3), The Daily Star continues its exhibition on the brutal attack on its Dhaka office on December 18, 2025. We invite you to walk through these scarred spaces and bear witness to what was endured. The exhibition remains open until **May 15 (11:00am to 8:00pm)** at The Daily Star Centre.

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