



Measles' unseen toll on the poor

Families face financial strain; 9 more children die; 424 have died so far

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Titu Nakti is relieved that his 11-month-old son, Tamzid, is finally going home to Madaripur after a week-long battle with measles at a Dhaka hospital. Yet, a newly acquired debt casts a shadow over the relief.

Titu, a battery-run rickshaw van driver in his mid 30s, said he had to borrow Tk 25,000 from his neighbour just to cover his son's medical expenses, leaving him saddled with a monthly interest payment of Tk 2,500. Locked out of the formal system, Titu is paying a punishing 120 percent annual interest rate, compared to the 14 percent he might have secured from a traditional bank.

"It's a huge relief that my son is recovering, but I'm really worried about repaying the money I borrowed," Titu said at the DNCC Dedicated Covid Hospital in Mohakhali, recently converted to treat measles patients.

Titu's struggle reflects how a nationwide outbreak is pushing vulnerable families into their absolute limits.

Around 58,500 confirmed and suspected measles cases and 424 deaths linked to the disease, including nine yesterday, have been reported.

If the outbreak continues, it could add to the various financial challenges people are already facing, said Prof Shafiun Nahin Shimul, director of the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University.

Interviews with a dozen parents over the past three days at the DNCC



- Income disruption worsening hardship
- Ambulance fares, food cost draining family savings
- Parents selling valuables for treatment
- Informal lenders exploiting desperate families
- Debt fears delaying critical treatment

hospital and the Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH) in Dhaka revealed a recurring pattern: families travelling to the capital after local facilities fail to handle severe complications.

For poor households, the health emergency quickly turns into financial trouble.

Many of the children have had diseases prior to measles that cost these families their savings.

After contracting measles, many parents had to turn to neighbours or informal lenders to pay for ambulance fares, medicines, and food in Dhaka.

According to what the families told this paper, treatment costs range from Tk 20,000 to Tk 40,000 at government hospitals. For those needing ICU support at private hospitals, the cost is in lakhs.

The burden is twofold for low-income families. They are not only spending heavily on treatment but also failing to earn while caring for sick children.

Tamzid developed a fever on May 1, only days after recovering from pneumonia and a three-day stay at Madaripur Sadar Hospital. When his condition worsened the next day, he was readmitted.

The family later consulted a doctor acquaintance and rushed him to a private hospital in Khulna, but doctors there refused admission, saying his condition was too critical. Desperate, the family travelled to Dhaka and finally secured a bed at the DNCC hospital on May 6.

"I had to pay Tk 16,500 for the ambulance alone," Titu said, adding that he had already spent around Tk 14,000 during the two hospital stays in Madaripur.

The DNCC hospital, which was treating 443 measles patients yesterday, including around 100 children in Tamzid's ward, supplies most medicines. But other expenses keep mounting. Titu estimates the family spent another Tk 6,000 on food, transport, and supplementary medicines in Dhaka.

"In the last month, I could not run my auto-van as I was busy taking my child from one hospital to another," he said.

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US TRADE AGREEMENT 'I think we can review the deal at govt level'

Says Zahed Ur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is reviewing the trade agreement signed with the US instead of moving immediately towards cancellation, said Zahed Ur Rahman, the prime minister's information and broadcasting adviser.

"If we look at the agreement, we will see there is an option to cancel it. It can be cancelled with a 60-day notice. That is one aspect," he said at a press conference on the progress of various government activities in the Press Information Department conference room at the Secretariat.

Another condition in the agreement is that the two countries can modify different provisions through discussions. "From my position, I think we can at least first review the agreement at the government level."

Referring to public discussions on the agreement, he said newspaper columns and video commentaries highlighting possible problematic aspects should

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Panic grips Bangladeshis in Lebanon

2 more presumed dead after Israeli strikes

PORIMOL PALMA

Panic has gripped the Bangladeshi community in Lebanon after two migrant workers were killed Monday afternoon while two others were reported missing and presumed dead later that night following Israeli air strikes in the southern city of Nabatieh.

"One Bangladeshi woman was killed in Beirut in early April, and now more Bangladeshis have been killed. The latest attacks and the killings have created panic in the community. We don't feel safe

"So far, around 300 people have registered to return to Bangladesh. Hopefully, they will begin flying home within the next two weeks."

Anowar Hossain, first secretary at the Bangladesh Embassy in Lebanon

living in Lebanon right now," Milon Khan, a Bangladeshi migrant who works at a petrol station in Beirut, told The Daily Star yesterday over the phone.

The Bangladesh Embassy in Beirut confirmed that two Bangladeshis -- Shafiqul Islam and Nahidul Islam of Satkhira -- were killed Monday afternoon in an Israeli drone strike in Zebdine, Nabatieh.

Later that night, more Israeli drone strikes were reported in Mayfadoun, also in Nabatieh, following which two more Bangladeshis

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PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Pacer Nahid Rana celebrates one of his five wickets on the final day of Bangladesh's first Test against Pakistan in Mirpur yesterday. Thanks to a fiery spell from the 23-year-old quick in the final session, Bangladesh romped to a 104-run victory, taking a 1-0 lead in the two-match series. The win also marked the Tigers' first Test triumph against Pakistan on home soil.

A false shooting claim; living man shown dead

PBI unearths 14 fake cases over incidents linked to July uprising

TOUSIF KAIUM

What began as a mother's demand for justice -- claiming her son was shot during the July uprising -- was in fact a scripted plot driven by vendetta.

An investigation by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) found that Shihab Uddin, then a Class-X student whose mother filed an attempted murder case against local political leaders in Sylhet's Companiganj, was not shot at all. Instead, he was injured in a road accident elsewhere, hours after the alleged attack.

In a separate case, a living person was shown dead. While it was alleged that the 20-year-old man was killed in the capital's Uttara area during the uprising, the PBI found that the man was alive.

These were not the only such cases. The PBI has identified at least 14 fake cases while investigating 195 Complaint Register (CR) cases filed with courts nationwide over incidents linked to the July mass uprising.

According to PBI headquarters data, the motives behind the filing of false cases ranged

- 1,855 cases filed across the country (till April 4, 2026)
- PBI completed probe into 113 of 195 Complaint Register cases
- Evidence found in 89 cases
- 6,844 accused named; evidence found against 1,343

from previous enmity to family disputes. Of those, 10 were filed on attempted murder charges, three over attacks and physical assault, and one on murder charges.

Moreover, the agency could not find any evidence to substantiate the allegations in 10 more cases.

"We thoroughly verified the allegations multiple times but found no evidence to support them. Final reports have been submitted in those cases, and petitions have been filed with courts, seeking the discharge of the accused," PBI Superintendent of Police (Legal and Media) Md Abu Yusuf told The Daily Star last week.

The agency has so far completed investigations into 113 out of 195 CR cases. It found evidence in 89 cases -- nine of which involve murder charges and the rest involve offences such as attempted murder. In these cases, 6,844 individuals were named as accused, but evidence was found against 1,343 of them, the data show.

When contacted, Khondaker Rafiqul Islam,

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Politicisation in hiring hurt DU's global standing

Tarique says in first visit to the campus since taking office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said Dhaka University's low standing in international rankings is largely due to politically influenced teacher recruitment, insufficient emphasis on academic performance, and a lack of research.

"If we recruit teachers based on merit and academic results, I think this condition can be changed."

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman



"Unfortunately, the kind of image we associate with Dhaka University is not reflected in international rankings," he said, responding to a question from a student during a views-exchange programme at the university's Muzaffar Ahmed Chowdhury Auditorium.

He added, "One of the key reasons is that teachers were probably not recruited in the way they should have been in the past. From what we have heard and read in newspapers, political bias seems to have received more priority."

"In good universities around the world, from teacher recruitment to becoming a dean or taking charge

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