Dengue

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Public health expert Mushtuq Hussain described the rising death toll as a failure of healthcare policy, calling for a shift from hospital-centred treatment to community-level interventions.

He stressed the need for early diagnosis, proper patient care and secondary-level observation, with tertiary hospitals and intensive care units (ICUs) serving as the final stage of treatment.

Mushtuq said low-income people often continue working despite having a fever due to financial pressures, delaying diagnosis until complications develop.

He called for a functional three-tier healthcare system and suggested piloting free dengue testing at existing primary healthcare facilities, with vulnerable patients referred to hospitals when necessary.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said many dengue patients were arriving in critical condition.

"We are seeing a significant number of patients arriving in shock, with undetectable blood pressure and falling oxygen saturation," he said.

Ahsan said early treatment significantly improves recovery prospects for patients with dengue shock. Delays in transportation, emergency assessment and admission can cause irreversible organ damage and increase the risk of death.

Ahsan said he had observed severe complications, including liver, kidney, respiratory and heart failure, as well as myocarditis, or inflammation of the heart muscle, among dengue patients this year.

Such complications appear more common than in previous years, although further studies are needed to establish the reasons.

He said the circulation of dengue virus serotype 3 (DENV-3) could be a contributing factor, as variations within a serotype may affect disease severity.

Medicine specialist ABM Abdullah identified repeat infections and delays in diagnosis and treatment as major factors behind the rising death toll.

Many of those who died might have had dengue previously, making them more vulnerable to complications from subsequent infections, he said.

He urged people to seek medical advice and undergo testing if they develop fever and body aches rather than wait for their conditions to worsen.

Prof Kabirul Bashar of the Department of Zoology at Jahangirnagar University said dengue deaths might not rise at the pace seen in October but were likely to continue in November, with only a modest decline.

He stressed the need for intensified mosquito control, particularly indoors, where stagnant water provides breeding grounds.



Demonstrators march alongside a police officer, carrying a Godzilla effigy labelled "El Nino", during a rally in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday, to protest against ecological disasters and dirty energy policies. PHOTO: AFP

No reference to third country

FROM PAGE 1

He further said if any discussions involving other countries were necessary, representatives of those countries would have to be present at the table.

According to the joint statement, Bangladesh and Japan have agreed to upgrade the BIG-B initiative to "BIG-B for Shared Prosperity" to strengthen strategic cooperation between the two countries amid global changes, growing supply chain risks, rapid technological advances and increasing social challenges.

Tarique travelled to Japan on October 26 for a four-day official visit, during which he held bilateral talks with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi. Subsequently, the two leaders issued a "Japan-Bangladesh Joint Statement".

Humaiun urged Jamaat-e-Islami to read the joint statement issued following the visit before claiming that Bangladesh had been "sold".

"I would first say, read the joint statement. Once you read it, you will understand that nothing of that sort happened...

"Jamaat-e-Islami is a major religious political party in Bangladesh. One expects responsible behaviour, responsible communication from them," he added.

The state minister was responding to a question about remarks made by Opposition Leader and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman on Thursday, in which he raised concerns over the Matarbari deep-sea port and called on the government to safeguard Bangladesh's national interests, security and territorial sovereignty.

Responding to a question about interest rates on Japanese loans, he said Bangladesh would consider accepting investments that offer affordable interest rates, favourable terms and value for money.

Bangladesh had the flexibility to make that decision and would accept investments that align with its national interests, create employment opportunities and offer competitive terms, he added.

Humaiun said there was no scope for taking any action that went against the interests of the people and the country.

"The government will act with transparency and accountability. If any sensitive issues arise, they will be discussed in parliament. There was no scope for doing anything behind the scenes."

Japan respects this position of the Bangladesh government, and other countries would do the same. This is because a country that knows how to uphold its own dignity is respected by others, the state minister added.

Humaiun described the visit as highly productive, saying Japan had committed to continuing and expanding its development cooperation with Bangladesh, while the visit had also opened up opportunities for closer people-to-people ties.

Food preservation

FROM PAGE 12

Annual losses range from 20-25 percent for onions, 5-8 percent for potatoes, 8-9 percent for rice, 5-6 percent for pulses and 30-35 percent for mangoes.

Around four to five lakh tonnes of onions rot annually, causing losses of Tk 1,600-2,000 crore. BINA estimates that low-dose irradiation could reduce onion losses by 80-85 percent.

However, a top official of BINA told The Daily Star that the actual reduction in losses could only be determined through pilot operations and data collection.

He said a single centre would not be enough to address post-harvest losses nationwide. Further assessments would be needed to determine how many facilities should be established and where.

The Gazipur centre will accept all agricultural and food products, including those brought by small farmers. However, transportation costs could limit access for farmers and businesses far from Gazipur, he said.

The facility is expected to benefit traders, businesses handling large volumes of produce for cold storage and small entrepreneurs, particularly those near Gazipur.

Bhuiya said operational data, regional production volumes and the quantity of produce saved would help determine the need for additional centres. He also identified Belabo in Narsingdi as a target area under the project.

According to BINA, irradiation can extend the shelf life of onions from 30 days to four months, garlic from three months to 12 months, rice from 3-18 months to four years, papayas from 15 days to four months, strawberries from five days to three weeks, and mangoes and bananas from 10 days to three weeks.

Md Mahbubul Hassan Sohag, senior scientific officer and head of the electronics and health physics section at BINA, said gamma irradiation does not make food radioactive, as the radiation used lacks sufficient energy to induce radioactivity under the treatment conditions.

Instead, the process damages the biological cells of microorganisms, including bacteria and other pathogens, he said.

Sohag said the technology could also help Bangladeshi producers meet quarantine requirements for exporting high-value agricultural products to markets such as the United States and Europe.

According to BINA, food irradiation has been approved for 50 food items in more than 60 countries, with China and the United States being the largest users.

The technology is primarily used for vegetables, spices, meat, herbs and fresh fruits. Its use is also growing in Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam.

Since 2007, India has used irradiation as a mandatory pest-control measure for mango exports to the US, while Australia uses it for summer fruits and vegetables exported to New Zealand.

Nearly four decades ago, two gamma irradiation plants were established at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment in Savar under the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission. They currently provide limited commercial services to producers and marketers of export-oriented pharmaceuticals and spices.



The radiation-based food preservation centre at the Bangladesh Institute of Nuclear Agriculture (BINA) Regional Research Station in Gazipur. PHOTO: COLLECTED



Smoke rises as the Israeli military demolishes the homes of two Palestinian gunmen who killed two Israeli soldiers at a West Bank checkpoint the previous week, in the Israeli-occupied city of Hebron, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Three more years to finish homework

FROM PAGE 1

conflicts and disruptions to international trade and energy supplies," plus jitters over migrant jobs, remittances and tourism.

Then came the line that summed up Dhaka's argument: "Meeting the graduation criteria does not eliminate structural weaknesses overnight."

Fair enough. Nobody sensible wants a country to graduate straight into a recession. The General Assembly's president, Khalilur Rahman, himself a Bangladeshi, framed the decision as a response to "the exceptional circumstances related to ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, disruptions to energy supplies and supply chains, global trade uncertainty and persistent structural vulnerabilities for both Bangladesh and Nepal."

He also said that recent political transitions in both countries had made things worse.

Now listen to the rest of the room. The European Union, which buys more Bangladeshi clothes than anyone, said it supported the extension. It then spent the rest of its speech explaining why nobody should get used to this. Such deferrals, the EU said, are "exceptional time-bound measures," not a departure from the established graduation criteria.

It warned that "a system in which countries remain in the category for prolonged periods, despite meeting the criteria, risks weakening the credibility of the framework." It reminded everyone that, under the UN's own rules, "domestic political transitions do not constitute grounds for extending preparatory periods," before conceding that Bangladesh's recent upheaval might merit some consideration. The EU also said the extra time must come with "concrete, measurable domestic actions, effective monitoring and continued engagement."

Canada, speaking also for Australia and New Zealand, was politer but no less clear: the extension "should serve as a catalyst for reform."

France skipped the diplomatic padding: "It is critical that these responsibilities be fulfilled by Bangladesh."

The message, in plain English: you may have your three years, but we will be checking your homework.

Bangladesh is not a hard-luck case. Past deferrals went to places like Samoa and the Maldives after tsunamis flattened coastlines. Bangladesh, by contrast, passes all three of the UN's graduation tests, on income, health and education, and economic vulnerability, by a comfortable margin. The UN's Committee for Development Policy said as much, and backed the delay only if Bangladesh makes "significant progress" on reform. The country did not ask for more time because it failed the exam. It asked because it was nervous about life after passing.

That nervousness is understandable, and also revealing, because much of what makes Bangladesh vulnerable is homegrown. Its tax take is among the lowest in the world for a country of its size and income. Its banks are clogged with bad loans, many handed out to the politically well-connected and never repaid.

Its exports lean on a single crutch: ready-made garments make up roughly 85 percent of the total, leaving the economy exposed to every change in Western fashion, tariffs or buyer sentiment. Investors complain about red tape, slow customs and unpredictable rules. The pandemic did not cause any of this. Neither did the Middle East. Those shocks simply hurt more because the foundations were shaky.

At the UN in July, Bangladesh promised to use any extension to shore up economic stability, raise domestic revenue, fix the financial sector, build productive capacity and diversify exports. All correct. Bangladesh has written a smooth transition strategy, and it reads beautifully. Let's accept that time by itself will not improve our readiness.

Graduation means giving up WTO-sanctioned export subsidies and, gradually, cheap concessional loans. A state that collects so little tax will struggle to support industry in other ways or to pay the higher cost of borrowing. The government should now publish a credible, year-by-year plan to lift the tax take, starting with the exemptions and special treatments that mostly benefit the rich.

Trade is where graduation bites hardest. When LDC preferences fade, Bangladesh will need the EU's GSP+ scheme, which comes with core conditions on labour rights, human rights, the environment and governance.

Bangladesh must now show progress on these reforms and report it to the UN every year. What's more, Bangladesh must get serious about signing trade deals with other big markets.

And Brussels monitors compliance.

Bangladesh must now show progress on these reforms and report it to the UN every year. What's more, Bangladesh must get serious about signing trade deals with other big markets. Rivals such as Vietnam already have them, while Bangladesh is still largely at the negotiating stage.

Nepal's homework looks different, though the subject is the same. Battered by floods in late August and heavily dependent on remittances and tourism, it was asked for "a clear time-bound plan to adjust and reprioritise its smooth transition strategy."

Bangladesh's task is to broaden its existing export base. Nepal's is closer to building one from scratch. Both face the same temptation: to treat a postponed deadline as a problem solved.

To his credit, Khalilur Rahman seemed alert to that risk. "Three additional years is not a retreat from graduation, but an investment in making it succeed," he said.

"This extended time is not time to stand still. It is time to act decisively."

Bangladesh's first checkpoint comes sooner than 2029. Next year the UN will hold a mid-term review of the Doha Programme of Action, its ten-year plan for the world's poorest countries.

Rahman has asked the UN to come to that meeting with a map of how graduating countries are faring on wider development goals, not just whether they clear the statistical bar, and has suggested the findings inform a rethink of the rules for leaving the group. That puts Bangladesh under the spotlight barely a year into its extension. Dhaka would do well to arrive with progress to show, not just reasons for more patience.

One more point for the government's diary. The goodwill that delivered a consensus this week is not a renewable resource.

Bangladesh has spent the past five decades confounding pessimists. It turned a country once written off as a "basket case" into one of Asia's steadiest growth stories. It has every chance of graduating with flying colours. But the extra three years are borrowed time, and borrowed time, like borrowed money, has to be repaid.

Jamaat eyes advisory council beyond party ranks

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Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, assistant secretary general of Jamaat and chief of its central publicity department, said the proposed council would provide expert advice to party leaders, including Ameer Shafiqur Rahman.

"Different individuals already advise the party on various matters. Having a formal platform would give those contributions institutional recognition. It would also make the individuals feel valued," he said.

Under Jamaat's constitution, individuals must become Rukon, or oath-bound members, to formally join its organisational structure. This limits opportunities for the party to formally engage people who support its political positions but remain outside the organisation.

Party leaders said the council would allow experienced professionals to advise on policy and other important matters without assuming organisational responsibilities.

Asked about the initiative, Abdul Halim said, "If someone can offer guidance that benefits the country, it will be a gain for us, for the party and for the country as well."

Party leaders said the proposal was part of broader constitutional reforms following the July uprising.

According to party sources, discussions have also covered greater transparency and accountability in financial management and revisions to organisational provisions.

The proposed amendments are being reviewed by the amendment committee, executive council and Majlish-e-Shura.

Stage set for tough coalition dialogue

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camp spent Thursday amplifying unproven allegations that Arab-Israeli groups received foreign funding to influence the vote, accusations rejected by both Arab-majority lists and Qatar.

Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service said it was investigating suspected irregularities, but stressed the probe was not intended to "cast aspersions or place blame on an entire sector that went out to vote in a democratic and lawful manner".

The electoral commission also sought to calm tensions, with its acting director general Dean Livne saying any suggestion of widespread issues was "entirely groundless".

The controversy centred on allegations that Raam received money from Qatar, the energy-rich Gulf powerbroker that has channels to Hamas, to finance vote-buying operations.

"The Raamgate scandal is a political earthquake. Israel's elections have been stolen!" Netanyahu's Likud party said on Thursday.

Houthi drone downed in Makkah region

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sparked a fire in the tanker's engine room that temporarily disabled the vessel, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said yesterday.

The crew were safe, there was no environmental impact and the fire had been extinguished, UKMTO said in an advisory note, adding that the vessel was continuing to its next port of call.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said two oil tankers had been halted after encountering unspecified "incidents" while attempting to transit what Tehran considers an unauthorised route in the Strait of Hormuz.

Falling veggie prices bring relief to buyers

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He said he had bought beans from the same market for Tk 120 per kg last week but paid Tk 80 yesterday. He also bought radish, eggplant, okra, and taro for Tk 40-60 per kg.

"Even last month, all vegetables except papaya and bottle gourd were priced above Tk 100 per kg. I had to buy smaller quantities then. I found today's prices reasonable," he said.

Meanwhile, Shafiqul Islam, a grocery shop owner at Mirpur-1 kitchen market, said despite the drop in prices for many early winter vegetables, tomatoes and new potatoes were still selling for more than Tk 150 per kg.

Sohag Mia, a wholesale trader at Karwan Bazar, said supply currently exceeded demand and it was difficult to make a profit.