Diarrhoea kills at least 4 Rohingya on remote Bangladesh island

Bangladesh officials say they have contained a diarrhoea outbreak that has killed four Rohingya refugees and infected 1,500 others, alarming rights groups and the United Nations about conditions on the island camp.

Bangladesh has shifted 18,000 refugees to the low-lying Bhashan Char island from cramped settlements on the mainland.

But many of those relocated say they were coerced, and that health and other facilities on the silt island, in an area frequently hit by deadly cyclones, are poor.

Officials and Rohingya sources said diarrhoea broke out early this month after the first heavy monsoon rains.

At least four people have died over the last two weeks, two officials on the island told AFP news agency, including a 20-year woman and three children.

Rahat Tanvir Anwar, a doctor at the sole 20-bed clinic at the island, said at least 1,550 people – nearly 10 percent of those on the island – had been infected and some 600 needed hospital treatment.

"The situation has improved. We have added 10 more beds in the hospital to treat patients. On Thursday, there were only 14 diarrhoea patients in the hospital," he told AFP.

A regional health chief said the outbreak was contained after authorities quickly distributed 33,000 water purification tablets and 35,000 doses of oral rehydration solution.

"We have also imparted quick health education to them so that they don't drink any water other than the one extracted from deep tube wells," said Masum Iftekhar, the local district health chief.

One Rohingya man on the island, who declined to be named, said doctors only gave his three-year-old son saline solution, and told him to take the boy home.

"(The doctor) told me to buy the medicine from a pharmacy. But it takes money to buy medicine. Where can I get money? Later, I went to a pharmacy. But there is no medicine there. My baby is still sick," he told AFP.

Saad Hammadi from Amnesty International blamed the "hurried relocation of thousands of Rohingya refugees to the island without letting rights and humanitarian groups carry out independent assessment of the conditions on the island".

The UN earlier this month said although the island "has some potential", people there needed "access to meaningful livelihood opportunities, skills development, education, health and access to cash to facilitate their daily lives".

Bangladesh has rejected allegations that Rohingya have been relocated forcibly and says conditions on the island are much better than on the mainland, where 850,000 refugees are crammed into camps.

Authorities plan to eventually move 100,000 of them to Bhashan Char.

Most of the Rohingya living in Bangladesh fled a brutal military offensive in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017 that UN investigators concluded was executed with "genocidal intent".

Aljazeera

Assessment of Afghanistan's ...

From P3

This center was established in the year 1363 with assistance from India and under the structure of the Department of Music of Ministry of Information and Culture. In this center, in addition to Afghan musical instruments, Indian musical instruments such as Sitar, Tabla and singing were also taught by Indian teachers. Afghan musical instruments were taught by Afghan teachers. This center was active for 6 years and fortunately, myself, the writer of this article, was a student in this center and learned classical music under the guidance of Ustad Irfan Mohammad Khan theoretically and practically and in the year 1367 I started job as Sitar training teacher in the Department of Music of Faculty of Fine Arts.

Names of the Orchestras that have been active during the last 100 years:

1- Military Orchestra of Afghanistan

2- Pashto Orchestra of Radio Kabul

3- Classical Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan

4- Keliwali Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan

5- Jami Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan

6- 38-person big Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan

7- Military Ensembles (Army Ensemble, Ministry of Interior Ensemble, Laala Group related to Directorate of Security)

8- Red Rose Ensemble

9- Sada (Voice) Orchestra

10- Bahar (Summer) Orchestra and Nargis Ensemble

11- Saman and Baran Orchestras

12- Jazz (Number 2) Orchestra of Radio Afghanistan

After the year 1371 and victory of Mujahiddin and the beginning of internal war, most of the artists fled the country. The television would only show pictures of these artist while broadcasting their songs.

Interesting part was that the department of music was named department of Islamic songs and was later removed from the structure of Ministry of Information and Culture.

During Taliban regime, the artists were humiliated, and their musical instruments were broken which forced the remaining artist to flee the country and this continued for 6 years.

Music art situation in the recent 20 years has not been satisfactory as well, as with the development in technology, most of the unexperienced youth started to re-sing the old songs with assistance from technology and without any professional assessment of these songs, they are broadcasted by media.

These songs are very low in quality and are not up to international standards and need to be revisited.

In addition, music groups continue to perform without any specific license and in a way, evade tax payment. This has further deteriorated the situation of music in the country and with their high-volume loudspeakers, they create nuisance and noise pollution. It is necessary that such these groups, music courses and production entities are registered with the department of music so that on one hand their activities are standardized and on the other hand, considerable revenue could be generated from it.

Khalida's story: Playing football ...

From P5

When I got permission to stay in Denmark - I was still in the refugee center and I was playing football in a football club - I decided to start my own organization, where the main focus was empowering women, refugees and immigrants, or ethnic minorities, to gain an informal education. My organization is Girl Power Organization, which is more about empowering and supporting, connecting and making bridges between the local community and the refugee community, where like-minded people meet each other, share their stories and experiences and build a network.

Through Girl Power Organization, we organize sports activities in the refugee centers, where we have the young leaders, the women with different cultural backgrounds, they go and coach the refugees and then we offer them education, or leadership academies.

Football for Unity project

Then I also started working with FC Nordsjælland, where my main responsibility is community projects and also women's football, because the club has women's and men's football within its structure. I'm very proud and happy that this year we are working with streetfootballworld and with the UEFA Foundation for Children through the Football for Unity project that supports this vision and mission, that connects the different stakeholders, different organizations, together through one common project, and that is the power of football, which brings unity.

I'm thrilled that I'm leading this project, where our main focus is youth empowerment, where we have young people who we call 'community champions'. They are from all cultural backgrounds. We have Danes and people from different ethnic minorities, boys and girls together. And it's done through a leadership program where we organize different educational workshops, where it's more of a discussion, like a youth forum. We talk about inclusion, integration, and the impact of sport in people's lives, in young people's lives, and also the impact of sport and unity in society. It's fantastic, and football is part of those activities.

We need to bring people together to support each other, . If I'm a refugee living in Denmark right now – I have the status of a refugee in Denmark – it was not by choice. I didn't say 'Let's have some fun and let's go and be a refugee.' Nobody wants to leave their country, nobody wants to leave their dream, their family, their heritage and everything to which they belong. But there are situations where people are forced to become refugees. It's not the refugees' problem – it's the world's problem. And it's all of our responsibility to take care of each other, because today we have refugees from wars, we have refugees from environmental crises; there will be many, many more.

So, how can we have a socially responsible world where we are taking care of each other, a world where everybody supports each other, and everyone is nice to each other? Like in football. When you walk onto the football pitch, it doesn't matter how rich or poor you are, how white or how black you are, or how brown you are, you play the same game. All that matters are the team and the goals. That's why football is a good lesson to everybody in the world. You just need to think about the pitch, about the team and about the goal, to just have a wonderful world together, where people accept each other, people respect each other, and they are role models to each other, too.

The best thing is that Football for Unity is not a 'refugee project', it's a unity project where we have, for example, kids who were born and raised in Denmark, but who are second generation immigrants. It's like a common ground where they come together under one umbrella.

I really love the idea of not just being focused on one group, but adopting more of a [collaborative] approach. The main focus is, of course, on supporting and empowering young people. One of the challenges in society in Denmark is that there's a lot of negative media around the refugee topic, where they talk about: 'Refugees are coming to take our social benefits. They take our money. They take our places.' But these types of activities and projects help to connect people, to share their stories: 'Why am I here? Why am I in Denmark? I'm a refugee, what does it mean to be a refugee?'

Refugees need role models

That's part of why I give back. When I stand up and lead this project and also, for example, lead some of the workshops, so that refugees and non-refugees see me as a role model, so that refugees see me and say, 'Oh, she could do it, I can do that, too.' Then non-refugees see me and say, 'She's not taking the money, she's not living here for free, she's not coming here to take our money, but she's actually contributing to give back to society. She needed protection, but she's also working at paying tax, working, getting a salary. That's how she's contributing to society.'

I think the role-modelling and empowering of youth from all cultural backgrounds is very important because the next generation sees them as positive role models and then they can say, 'Okay, I can do it. I can be part of it.' And it will also change the mindset in society to one of, 'Yes, refugees come, but they don't come to take our money, they also come to contribute because they are in our country, because their life was in danger, or because there were certain social or political problems.' So, that's why we need a lot of role models in Europe, especially.

My wish for EURO 2020

If the pandemic has given one lesson to everybody then it is about how difficult it is to be isolated, how difficult it is to miss dearest ones, the people you like, how it is to not have access to the things that you want, how it is to not have the freedom you want. So, I really hope that during this UEFA EURO 2020, people will feel more respect, acceptance, and just enjoy the unity, and just enjoy the inclusion and fun of the game. This article has earlier published in UEFA weblog.

North Korea's Kim vows to be ready for confrontation with the U.S.

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered his government to be prepared for both dialogue and confrontation with the Biden administration — but more for confrontation, state media reported Friday. The move came just days after the United States and others urged the North to abandon its nuclear program and return to talks. Kim's statement indicates he'll likely push to strength his nuclear arsenal and increase pressure on Washington to give up what North Korea considers a hostile U.S. policy, though he'll also prepare for talks to resume, some experts say. During an ongoing ruling party meeting Thursday, Kim analyzed in detail the policy tendencies of the U.S. under President Joe Biden and clarified unspecified steps to be taken in relations with Washington, the Korean Central News Agency said. Kim "stressed the need to get prepared for both dialogue and confrontation, especially to get fully prepared for confrontation in order to protect the dignity of our state and its interests for independent development and to reliably guarantee the peaceful environment and the security of our state." In 2018-19, Kim held a series of summits with then-President Donald Trump to discuss his advancing nuclear arsenal. But their negotiations fell apart after Trump rejected Kim's calls for extensive sanctions relief in return for a partial surrender of his nuclear capability. Biden's administration has worked to formulate a new approach on North Korea's nuclear program that it describes as "calibrated and practical." Details of his North Korea policy haven't been publicized, but U.S. officials have suggested Biden would seek a middle ground between Trump's direct meetings with Kim and former President Barack Obama's "strategic patience" to curb Kim's nuclear program. Earlier this week, leaders of the Group of Seven wealthy nations issued a statement calling for the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and "the verifiable and irreversible abandonment" North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. They called on North Korea to engage and resume dialogue.

Taliban openly hold fundraising ...

From P1

The Afghan NSA had tweeted that Qureshi's interview "comes as Taliban launches violent offensives against Afghan people across the country, we know how & why they continue to be enabled to do this. Qurashi is either uninformed, ignorant or accomplice. Maybe he also rejects that, Osama was found next to Pakistani Military HQ."

Meanwhile, the Afghan government has longstanding reservations that Pakistan may be using the Afghan Taliban as a proxy. Pakistan has been long blamed for providing support to Taliban terrorists in Afghanistan.

Donations are only one of the sources through which the insurgent group finances its bloody insurgency against the Afghan government.

Noor Zaman Achakzai, a reporter and analyst of the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, said the Taliban have sources of income beyond donations.

"Taliban have numerous sources of wealth. They collect double the tax gathered by Afghan authorities, from smuggling, transportation of oil, narcotics, weapons and local cultivation," he said, according to VoA. "In Ramadan, they also received huge Zakat (alms) from Islamic countries."

The United Nations also says the Taliban subsidize their insurgency through drug trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, illegal mining and taxation in areas under their control. The annual Taliban income from different sources is estimated to be between $300 million and $1.6 billion, according to a U.N. report.

Some critics, however, charge that Islamabad's actions against these individuals are symbolic and aimed at improving its image at the Paris-based Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

FATF, a global terror-financing and money-laundering watchdog, has retained Pakistan's "gray list" status for its failure to curb terror financing and money laundering.

Liaquat Shahwani, a spokesperson for the Baluchistan government, told VOA that local authorities had "no such information" that the Taliban were collecting funds in the province. "After the FATF, we legislated in the Baluchistan parliament under the Social Welfare Act to strictly forbid any group from collecting funds," Shahwani told VOA.

The Taliban enjoy the support of mainstream Islamic parties such as Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-i-Islami, which have been part of the government. Some of the parties, including JUI, were involved in training the Taliban when they first emerged in 1990s.

The Kabul Times

In the wake of India's covid crisis, ...

From P6

What to Know: Shortages of oxygen and hospital beds, along with low vaccination rates, have added to the surge in illness and deaths in India.

Case Counts: Experts say the true death count far exceeds official figures. This chart illustrates how known Covid cases have grown over the last few months across the country.

Travel Bans: The U.S. has begun to restrict travel from India, and Australia has banned all incoming travel from the country, including among its own citizens.

How to Help: Donors around the world are giving money for meals, medical expenses, P.P.E. and oxygen tanks, among other essential supplies.

The study that Dr. Chakrabarti co-authored, published this month by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said that heavy use of steroids, the correlation with diabetes and the unsanitary conditions at some hospitals had played a role.

Even before the pandemic, India recorded about 50 mucormycosis cases a year, compared with, on average, a single case every two years in the United States and Western Europe. Environmental conditions play a part, as does the incidence of diabetes — India has more than twice as many people with the condition as the United States does.

Usually in India, mucormycosis afflicts people with diabetes who are either unaware of their condition or who are not taking insulin properly. But in the current outbreak, many patients had no history of diabetes. The common denominator was a Covid-19 infection treated with steroids, clinicians and researchers say.

The government in Ahmedabad, in Gujarat, declared mucormycosis an epidemic in May. Other states have followed. Whether patients live or die often depends on how quickly they undergo debridement surgery that removes the fungus and then start a two-week course of amphotericin B.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is from Gujarat, described the fungal disease as a new "challenge" and said it was "important to create systems to tackle it."

India makes small supplies of amphotericin B, which can be obtained free of charge at some public hospitals. But because supplies are limited, India is importing it from the United States, where it costs about $300 per vial. Each patient needs 60 to 100 vials. Gilead Sciences, the American manufacturer, has donated about 200,000 vials.

Doctors are using cheaper drugs that are as effective but more toxic, posing a risk of kidney damage.

"That's a very painful choice," said Dr. Atul Patel, an infectious diseases specialist at the private Sterling Hospital in Ahmedabad who has treated dozens of mucormycosis patients in the outbreak.

Dr. Patel, another of the study's authors, said that steroids, which in India are commonly prescribed for routine ailments such as diarrhea or fever, had been prescribed to Covid-19 patients with mild infections who didn't need them.

That was the case for one of Dr. Patel's patients, Ambaben Heerabhai Patel, 60, the matriarch of a farming family in rural Gujarat, who is paying about $700 a day for antifungal treatment and other services at Sterling.

It's a steep cost, but Ms. Patel had seen Dr. Patel — no relation — for previous health issues related to her diabetes. After back-to-back infections of Covid-19 and then mucormycosis, she did not want to take any chances.

Arriving at the hospital May 17 with an intense headache and facial numbness, Ms. Patel said in early June from her private room at Sterling Hospital that she felt well for the first time in more than a month.

Of Dr. Patel, she said, "he's like my god."

Nytimes