

# Deadly dengue under data wraps

**SANJAY MANDAL**  
The death of more than 20 dengue patients in eight city hospitals this year offers a peek into the severity of the menace but the extent of the crisis remains unknown in the absence of figures from the government.

To put things in perspective, the disease caused by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito had claimed less than 20 lives across the state last year.

**DENGUE DREAD FOR city**  
The Manmata Banerjee government's decision to prefer secrecy to transparency on dengue has raised suspicions of a cover-up among health care experts, who have long been highlighting the administrator's alleged failure to launch mosquito-control measures in time.

Health department officials, however, are claiming that the information blackout is aimed at preventing "unnecessary panic".

Since the start of the year's dengue season around four months ago, 17 patients have died of the disease at Apollo Clemson Hospital.

A health department offi-

cial told Metro on the condition of anonymity that the death count at the government-run Infection Diseases Hospital in Belgachhia stood at 14.

The three units of AMRI Hospitals (in Mukundapur, Dhakura and Salt Lake) have recorded 12 deaths, while three persons have died of dengue at Belle Vue Clinic.

Five dengue deaths have been reported at Medica Super-specialty Hospital and three at Peerless Hospital.

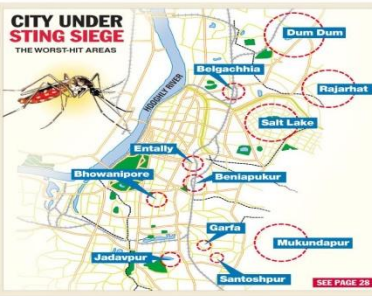
Public health experts suspect the actual victim count could be many times more because hundreds of dengue patients are being treated at state-run hospitals and in private hospitals, apart from the ones this newspaper has got in its touch with.

On Friday, for instance, a dengue death was reported from a nursing home in the Taltala area. The family of infant Ahmed, who was admitted to Royal Nursing Home, said the death certificate had mentioned dengue.

Last year when the government would regularly update the dengue death count, the winged menace had claimed less than 20 lives in the state.

The health department's refusal to release figures this year has led to suspicions that the government was keen on hiding the truth.

"It seems the health department is desperate to cover up its failure and the failure of



ated unnecessary panic," a health department official said. Health experts are dubbing the move counter-productive, as people are under the mistaken impression that the outbreak has been contained.

"Regular information flow would have spurred the people into taking proactive measures against the disease," a city-based health expert said. "Such information flow would also have spread awareness better. A large number of

people in and around the city are ignorant of the causes of the disease and how it can be prevented."

Experts have warned that the city is going through the peak dengue season. As the rains have stopped, there are pockets of fresh water across the city where the dengue-causing mosquitoes are laying eggs.

The average minimum temperature over the past seven days has been 23.8 degrees Celsius. "It is neither too cold nor too warm. The conditions are ideal for a spurt in the vector population growth. Dengue is likely to escalate," said A. K.

Mishra, a former director of the National Institute of Virology, Pune. "Instead of firefighting, the authorities should take a year-long mosquito-control programme."

"The number of people being admitted with dengue is on the rise again, as it was a month ago," said Choudhury, a specialist in infectious diseases at Peerless Hospital. Nine dengue patients are admitted under him. The hospital has recorded three

The government is not releasing data on the number of people suffering from dengue or the number of deaths caused by the disease, apparently to prevent "unnecessary panic".

Apollu, too, is witnessing a surge in the number of dengue patients. "The number was coming down a few days ago but it's going up again. Unlike in previous years, many patients are coming with severe conditions like multi-organ failures," said Rupali Basu, president and CEO, Apollo Hospitals group.

According to health department sources, 30 dengue patients are admitted in the Infectious Diseases Hospital. As many as 400 are showing dengue symptoms and awaiting blood test reports.

# Whole grain may reduce risk of heart disease

**W**hole grain diet may help to significantly lower the risk of heart disease in overweight and obese adults who are under the age of 50, finds a new study.

The findings, published in the *Journal of Nutrition* suggested that whole grains can be a key regulator of blood pressure and could provide an effective nutritional strategy to reduce cardiovascular-related deaths and disorders.

"Heart disease and strokes are a leading cause of death. This research shows that eating whole grains reduces the risk of heart disease," Director of Metabolic Translational Research Center John Kirwan said. In the study, a group of 33 overweight and obese adults followed a whole grain diet or a refined grain diet (control) for two eight-week periods. Participants taking antihypertensive medication were instructed to maintain medication usage throughout the study. (IANS)