

Return of diphtheria rings alarm

Outbreak kills 27 Rohingyas so far; 2,700 more infected

- 5 Bangladeshis also infected by the highly infectious disease
- 76% of reported diphtheria cases are children below 15 years
- 81% Rohingya children aged below 7 years and 91% aged between 7-15 years already vaccinated
- Fresh vaccination programme began yesterday targeting 1.5 lakh Bangladeshi children aged 7-15 years

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

There has been no reported diphtheria case in Bangladesh for the last 35 years. But the highly contagious disease, long forgotten in most part of the world due to increased vaccination, has made a sudden comeback.

The first case of the latest outbreak was reported in November in a Rohingya refugee camp in Ukhaia, Cox's Bazar. Since then, 27 Rohingya children have died after contracting the bacterial disease. Another 2,700 living in camps in Ukhaia and Teknaf have been infected, district Civil Surgeon Abdus Salam told The Daily Star yesterday.

Five Bangladeshi children have also contracted the disease, but are recovering. Aged seven and below, the victims are from Ukhaia and they all visited nearby Rohingya camps, he added.

Alarmed, the Bangladesh government and international organisations have started a mass vaccination programme in and around the camps.

Diphtheria transmission occurs from person to person through droplets such as coughing and sneezing and close physical contact. It can be treated by drugs and prevented by

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS At least 3 new faces likely to be inducted

RASHIDUL HASAN and MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to induct at least three new faces into her council of ministers this evening.

On her advice, President Abdul Hamid would make the appointments and administer the oath of office at the Bangabhaban, according to sources at the Cabinet Division, the ruling Awami League, and the Bangabhaban.

The number of new ministers could be four. The Daily Star yesterday talked with three of them over phone and they acknowledged the developments.

AKM Shahgahan Kamal, lawmaker from Laxmipur-3, and State Minister Fisheries and Livestock Narayan Chandra Chanda might be made full ministers, sources said.

Shahgahan, who became a lawmaker in 1973 and 2014, told The Daily Star last night that he got a phone call from the Cabinet Division and was requested to be present at the Bangabhaban around 6:30pm today.

Asked, he said it was Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's call in which

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid along with officials from his ministry and the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) releases balloons during the inauguration of "Textbook Festival Day" at the capital's Azimpur Government Girls High School yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



GLOWING WITH JOY

Festivity at schools across the country as students given new textbooks on New Year's Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For schoolchildren of Bangladesh, the first morning of 2018 came with the refreshing smell of new books.

Students of primary and secondary grades went to their schools braving the chilly winter morning and when they



reached there, they were given a complete set of textbooks.

Some held those up in the air in joy, some held them tight to their chests, while some were seen flipping through the pages to see what was in them.

The exuberance of students turned every school ground into a carnival ground yesterday, the first day of the new academic session and the "Textbook Festival Day".

Yesterday, the government started distributing free textbooks like it did in the last eight years.

This year, the government is providing 35.42 crore copies of textbooks to more

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Lower courts' freedom undermined by 3 rules

They have been made subordinate to the executive, say six eminent jurists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lower courts have been made subordinate to the executive by three "cardinal" rules, Dr Kamal Hossain and five other leading jurists of the country said yesterday.

The protection of the independence of the judiciary has been undermined and the

separation of power has been violated by the rules, they said in a joint statement, without naming the rules.

The other five jurists are Rafique-ul Huq, M Amir-Ul Islam, Mainul Hossain, Fida M Kamal and AF Hasan Ariff. The statement was issued on the occasion of Supreme

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Shakib the runaway leader

SPORTS REPORTER

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has declared Shakib Al Hasan as the "runaway leader" in all-rounder rankings across all three formats in 2017.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



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Who doesn't like to travel during the winter? This season, Omera brings a special offer designed for winter. By participating in this offer you have the possibility to win a free air ticket to Kolkata, Bali, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Cox's Bazar and Nepal. More prizes include an Omera Single Burner Stove and Mobile recharge.

Bali, an island as tranquil as its beaches and as calm as its mountains, with an abundance of old statues and monuments all over the place. No amount of words can truly describe the Bali experience.

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Kuala Lumpur is a favorite pick for travel enthusiasts. The world famous Petronas Twin Tower is located in the heart of the city. It is also a famous destination for shopping.

Nepal is known for its breathtaking views and sceneries. Kathmandu the capital of Nepal is known for its marvelous temples. It is also within touching distance of Nepal's premier attraction, the Himalayas.

Whether out the cuisines, shopping

in the Burmese market or gazing at the deep blue sea, Cox's Bazar is one of the most ideal location for your vacation.

Colorful neon lights, authentic street foods, an adventure through the canals, Bangkok is so much more but it is the people that truly capture the beauty of Thailand. The ever friendly and interactive local people engaging with the tourists makes this city very vibrant.

So, this winter may your travels be special.



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