

Children, elderly the worst sufferers

Cold-related illnesses ail people across country; 4,196 received treatment at govt hospitals in last 24 hours

STAR REPORT

With a cold wave sweeping through the country, the number of people -- especially children and the elderly -- falling into cold-related illnesses is rising in many districts.

A total of 4,196 patients received treatment for cold-related ailments at different government hospitals countrywide in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, according to the control room of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"Many of them received treatment at outpatient departments of government hospitals, while others were admitted," said Dr Ayesha Akther, assistant director of Health Emergency Operation Center and Control Room of the DGHS.

"Children and elderly persons are more vulnerable to cold-related illnesses," she told The Daily Star last night.

Referring to the DGHS statistics, UNB reports that some 668 of the patients received treatment for acute respiratory infection, while another 1,639 were treated for diarrhoea, and 1,889 for other issues including jaundice, inflammation in the eye, skin diseases, and fever.

Fifty deaths were reported across the country between November 1 and December 28 due to cold-related diseases, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) in a weather bulletin



A woman tends to her child at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal yesterday. The hospital is providing treatment to 175 children, suffering from cold-related illness, daily on an average.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

yesterday said a mild to moderate cold wave may continue today, with prevalence of moderate to thick fog.

Night temperatures may fall slightly, and day temperature may rise slightly over the country, said the BMD forecast.

Yesterday's minimum temperature was

recorded as 7.2 degree Celsius in Dinajpur, while the maximum was in Sylhet at 25 degrees.

Our correspondents from different districts sent reports on the situation.

In Bogura, at least 20 children were admitted with pneumonia and diarrhoea, and 20-25 adult patients admitted with asthma in last two days, said Abdul Wadud, assistant director of the 1,200-bed Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

The district's civil surgeon Gausul Azim Chowdhury said some 45 diarrhoea patients and five pneumonia patients were admitted to 11 upazila health complexes in the district.

In Nilphamari, dense fog disrupted communication, as the sun was not visible in the last two days.

Local met office forecast that the cold spell might continue for the next three days.

The district's civil surgeon Ranjit Kumar Barman said some 550 people have been admitted to the district hospital and six upazila health complexes in the last seven days, with cold-related illnesses.

In Barishal, sudden rain and biting cold brought sufferings to the people in the last three days.

Road and river communications were severely hampered while many -- mostly children -- were suffering from cold-related ailments.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Country not being run according to constitution'

Says Dr Kamal at JSD council

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Oikyafront convener Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said people cannot exercise their power as owners of the country, since Bangladesh is not run as per its constitution.

"Even after 50 years of the country's independence, we have to seek our constitutional power back. Our power have been usurped...we're not allowed to exercise our power as they [government] were not elected truly," he said.

Dr Kamal further said, "I would like to firmly say that the country's current governance system is not operated as per the constitution. Our leaders had written in the constitution that people are owners [sources] of power. But we're not allowed to enjoy it and the benefits of the independence."

He made the remarks while speaking at the triennial council of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Rob) at Mohanagar Natya Mancha auditorium.

The Gonoforum chief said those who think they can buy people and keep the governance system under their grip with black money are living in fool's paradise.

Regretting that the ruling party has been in power 'resorting to falsehood and spreading lies over the general election and its results, he called upon the government to hold a fresh election after bringing changes to the Election Commission.

He said their alliance wants to restore people's ownership of the country on the eve of the Golden Jubilee of Independence.

Speaking at the programme, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said Awami League has established a "puppet government" in the country, destroying the spirit of the Liberation War.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Mahfuzur Rahman passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahfuzur Rahman Dilu, a freedom fighter, died at his Moghbazar residence in Dhaka yesterday. He was 86.

Mahfuzur, father of The Daily Star's Deputy Chief Photographer Anisur Rahman, left behind three sons, two daughters and a host of well-wishers to mourn his death. He will be buried at his village home in Songargaon upazila of Narayanganj today after Zohr prayers.

His family members requested all to pray for eternal peace of his departed soul.



Shift focus to agro-based industry: BCI

UNB, Dhaka

President of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI) Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury Parvez yesterday underscored the need for focusing on agro-based industry to ensure sustainable economic growth after the country's graduation from the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

"Bangladesh's economy largely depends on RMG [readymade garments], textiles, foreign remittance and agricultural production. But to ensure sustainable economic growth after the country's graduation from the group of LDCs, we have to decrease our dependence on those and instead focus more on potentially viable sectors like light engineering, agro-based industry, halal products, blue economy and leather goods," he said while addressing the 33rd BCI annual general meeting at its office in the capital.

Parvez further said the volume of global market for light engineering is \$7 trillion, whereas Bangladesh exports only \$319.4 million.

The chamber has already taken initiatives to create new entrepreneurs and develop micro- and small industries apart from putting emphasis on light engineering and agro-processing industry, Parvez said.

Former BCI presidents Mostofa Azad Cowdhury Babu and Shahedul Islam Helal, senior vice president Md Helal Uddin and vice president Priti Chakraborty, as well as directors and general members of BCI were present.

Woman's decomposed body recovered in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Police yesterday recovered the decomposed body of an unidentified woman, aged around 30, from Jamshing area in Savar municipality outside the capital.

The body was found wrapped in a blanket. Police said miscreants dumped the body in the woods near an abandoned house.

It also bore injury marks, said AFM Sayeed, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station.

The body has been sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed in this connection, the OC added.

Khulna-Jashore Industrial Belt

Jute mill workers call hunger strike again after talks fall apart



Hundreds of workers of Platinum Jute Mills in Khulna rally at the mill gate yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Workers of eight state-owned jute mills in Khulna and Jashore industrial belt will go on an indefinite hunger strike again from this afternoon.

The decision was taken on Thursday, after a third meeting in Dhaka -- held between jute mill workers and leaders, and authorities from the Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation (BJMC) and the Textiles and Jute Ministry -- failed to reach an understanding, said sources.

Earlier on December 10, the jute mill workers started a hunger strike to press home their 11-point demand, including implementation of national wage commission. One worker died and over two hundred fell sick during the hunger strike, which was suspended on December 13, after a meeting with State Minister for

Labour and Employment Monnujan Sufian.

Following this, two meetings were held in Dhaka on December 15 -- one at the jute ministry and another at the BJMC office, in presence of all parties.

"Workers agreed to suspend the hunger strike till December 17. Later, the date was extended to December 22. But after the third meeting -- held between jute mill workers and leaders, and authorities from the Bangladesh Jute Mill Corporation and the textiles and jute ministry -- failed to reach an understanding, we made the decision," said Murad Hossain, former president of Crescent Jute Mill and joint convener of CBA and Non-CBA Sangram Parishad.

"State minister Monnujan Sufian asked for another month to fulfil our demands, but we do not want to give

more time," said Murad Hossain.

Meanwhile, workers of eight state-owned jute mills in Khulna-Jashore industrial belt organised rallies yesterday at their respective mill gates.

Several thousand workers of Daulatpur, Khalishpur, Crescent, Platinum and Star jute mills gathered in front of their mill gates around 10am and took part in the demonstrations. Workers of Alim and Eastern jute mills also gathered in Atrai industrial area of the city.

In Jashore, workers of Jashore Jute Industry (JJI) yesterday also announced to go on a hunger strike in Rajghat area from today, from a demonstration in front of their mill gate.

The workers' demands include cancellation of public-private

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

650 freedom fighters honoured in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation accorded a reception to some 650 freedom fighters and families of martyrs, in a grand programme held on the Nagar Bhaban premises yesterday.

Eight freedom fighters who played leading roles in the Liberation War of 1971 were given crests and prize bonds.

Of them, Bir Protik medalists Nur Hamim and Abdul Malek were given posthumous honours. Others are: Badiuzzaman Tunu Bir Protik, Abdul Khaleque Bir Bikram, Shafikur Rahman Raja, Abdul Hadi, Abdul Mannan, and Dr Muhammad Emdadul Haque. The rest received prize bonds and floral bouquets.

Rajshahi city Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton attended the programme as chief guest.

He said the city corporation would name different city roads after the martyrs and valiant freedom fighters next year.

RCC will organise events at educational institutions to spread the experience of freedom fighters among the new generation, Liton added.

Four snatchers arrested in M'singh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police arrested four alleged snatchers and seized a car from their possession in Bhaluka of Mymensingh early yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as Shahadat Hossain (38), from Barguna; Shah Alam (28), from Cumilla; Swapon Mia (28), from Mymensingh; and Ujjol Mia (30), from Sherpur, police said.

The four took one Sajib Mia in the car as a passenger from Mymensingh city's Bypass Road around 12:30am, said Mohammad Mainuddin, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station.

When the car crossed Trishal upazila headquarters, the snatchers took away a mobile phone and Tk 1,190 in cash from Sajib and left him beside Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Chelerghat area, said the OC.

Taking help from locals, Sajib informed Bhoraduba highway police about the incident.

Later, a police team halted the car in Bhaluka Bus Stand area and arrested the four, said the OC.

Police seized five mobiles, one owned by Sajib, and the snatched money.

The arrestees were handed over to Trishal Police Station yesterday.

A Mymensingh court sent them to jail when they were produced before it later in the day, said Trishal Police Station OC Md Azizur Rahman.

Magazine for job-seekers hits the stands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A monthly magazine aimed at helping job-seekers and other competitive tests hit the stands yesterday.

The magazine -- titled "Chalti Ghotona: Bangladesh O Biswo" edited by Abdul Quayum, associate editor of Bangla daily Prothom Alo -- was launched at Pragati Bhaban in Karwan Bazar.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder, former Bangladesh Public Service Commission chairman Ikram Ahmed, former PSC member Samar Chandra Pal, Abdul Quayum and Editor of Kishor Alo Anisul Hoque, among others, spoke at the programme.

They said the magazine will be a source of knowledge on different topics, apart from preparation for tests.

Raise awareness against social menaces

IGP urges retired police officers

UNB, Dhaka

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Mohammad Javed Patwary yesterday urged retired police officers to create awareness against menaces like drugs, militancy, terrorism and stalking.

"You're our guides. You've retired from the force but you're policemen for life. You can still work against drugs, terrorism and stalking. You can make people aware of those menaces," he said.

The IGP was addressing the 37th annual general meeting of Retired Police Officers' Welfare Association at the Bangladesh Police Auditorium of Rajarbagh Police Lines.

Police have been able to achieve great successes in combating militancy, he said. Mentioning that they have now declared a "war on drugs", the IGP said they are committed to preventing the spread of drugs.

The programme was addressed, among others, by former DIG Waliur Rahman and secretary general of the association Md Rafiqul Islam. The association's president former IGP Abdur Rouf chaired the event.

Five senior members of the association were honoured at the programme. The association also awarded scholarships to 20 meritorious students who obtained GPA-5 in the Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate examinations.

M'singh Press Club elects new leadership

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Amit Roy and Md Saiful Islam have been elected as the new secretary and joint-secretary of Mymensingh Press Club for a one-year term.

The election was held and the results were announced at the club's auditorium on Friday.

The other elected are AZM Imamuddin Mukta and Dr KR Islam as vice presidents; Md Aminul Islam, Jahangir Kabir Jewel, Sharifuzzaman Titu and Md Harun-or-Rashid as departmental secretaries; and Md Ataul Karim Khokon, Anisur Rahman Hatem, Anwarul Hasan Rumi, Mir Golaam Mustaf, Md Babul Hossain, Sheikh Mohiuddin Ahmad and Md Mozammel Haque as executive members.



Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton presents a crest to Abdul Khaleque Bir Bikram at a programme yesterday. The city corporation accorded a reception to some 650 freedom fighters and families of martyrs at Nagar Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED