

Another 242 hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 242 people with dengue fever have been admitted to hospitals in the country during 24 hours, till 8am yesterday. Of them, 21 are from outside Dhaka.

With them, a total of 5,434 patients have been diagnosed with dengue this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the total infected, 260 are from outside Dhaka.

Among the total infected, 2,776 were diagnosed during the current month.

At least 2,286 people were hospitalised across the country in July and 272 in June. In May, 43 people were infected with dengue.

Though most of the patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 896 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country, the DGHS data shows.

Meanwhile, ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of DGHS, at a programme on "Challenges of Covid Pandemic and Dengue Outbreak" at a city hotel yesterday

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

With the lockdown lifted, many have taken the opportunity to get a quick haircut and beard-trim, and these barbers stationed on the footpath in front of the capital's Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital are ready with their scissors. This makeshift barbershop, complete with barber chairs, mirrors and grooming products, are a great choice for those looking for a cheap option. This photo was taken on Wednesday.

'Repatriation is our main agenda'

JS body opposes WB proposal of integrating Rohingyas into Bangladesh

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday strongly opposed the World Bank's reform proposals, including the inclusion of Rohingya refugees in the host country.

The parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs ministry has asked the ministry concerned to be vigilant in this regard, citing the proposal as an intention to allow Myanmar's displaced Rohingyas to settle permanently in Bangladesh.

The meeting was held in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Muhammad Faruk Khan, chief of the parliamentary body, said, "We have told the ministry that the World Bank wants to make permanent arrangements for the Rohingyas by making such proposals. All these proposals for the settlement of Rohingyas cannot be accepted. We have clearly opposed it. We have said very strongly that we should not fall into the trap of the World Bank."

"We have also told the foreign ministry that statement in this regard will be clear that we have given them temporary shelter. You [World Bank] should make arrangements for their return to Myanmar. We will not accept such proposals to construct buildings for them and giving them opportunities for work and to buy land," he added.

Faruk Khan, also a ruling Awami League MP, said they have told the foreign ministry that their first agenda while discussion with the World Bank will be how to send Rohingyas back to Myanmar.

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SC upholds status of 196 freedom fighters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld the High Court orders that stayed the government decision for cancelling freedom fighter status of 196 retired members of army, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Bangladesh Air Force (BAF), and also directed the government to give them benefits as freedom fighters.

A five-member bench of the SC's Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain dismissed five appeals filed by the government, challenging the HC orders.

Lawyers Ahsanul Karim, Sabrina Jerin and Abdul Qaim appeared for the freedom fighters while Additional Attorney General SK Md Morshed represented the state during the virtual hearing.

Following the five petitions, the HC on September 21 last year stayed the government decision of cancelling the freedom fighter status of 196 retired members of Army, BGB and BAF, and also directed the government to give them benefits as freedom fighters.

On June 7 last year, the Liberation War affairs ministry issued two gazette notification cancelling freedom fighter status of 1,134 retired BGB personnel and 47 retired BAF personnel, including the 196 petitioners, on charge of obtaining the status by placing forged documents.

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Third death anniversary of Golam Sarwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the third death anniversary of veteran journalist and freedom fighter Golam Sarwar.

Sarwar died of old-age complications at a Singapore hospital in 2018 at the age of 75.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S ANCENSTRAL LAND

Seized in name of dev: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ancestral lands of indigenous people, both in hilly areas and plains, are being seized for constructing hotels, eco-parks, and security camps, in the name of different development projects.

Speakers made the remark yesterday at a virtual webinar titled "Protection of the lands of indigenous peoples and our duties".

Despite repeated promises from the government to stop land-grabbing and attack against indigenous groups, the reality is quite the opposite, they said.

Various major incidents of land grabbing within just one year indicates that land grabbing and violence against indigenous communities have increased during the pandemic.

Sohel Chandra Hajong, executive member of Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum, presented the concept note, where he talked about major incidents of land

grabbing in the last one year.

Evicting Mro people from Bandarban to construct a luxurious five-star hotel, destroying betel leaf plantation and ancient orchards of Khasi people to evict them from their villages, declaring indigenous lands as reserve forest in Madhupur and Tangail, land acquisition to construct eco-park, and grabbing Rakhine temples and their assets in Kuakata were mentioned in the concept note.

Sohel said, "The government's initiative to prevent such incidents is not satisfactory at all. Although it has formed a land commission for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), the commission has no visible activity. Although promised a long time ago, a separate commission for indigenous peoples of the plains has not been formed yet."

Echoing the concept note, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh

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'Vaccination drive a complete mess'

Says Mirza Fakhru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday alleged that mismanagement centring the government's Covid-19 vaccination drive has jeopardised lives of the people.

"The vaccination campaign was a complete mess due to the government's failure to tackle the pandemic," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir.

He made the remarks while visiting the capital's Banani Graveyard to place wreaths and offer prayers at the grave of Arafat Rahman Koko, the youngest son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, marking his 52nd birth anniversary.

Fakhru urged the government to collect adequate vaccines immediately, work sincerely for people and announce a roadmap to deal with the pandemic.

He alleged that the government has totally failed to manage Covid-19. "It shouldn't be in power any more for its ill-planned lockdown and mismanagement of the vaccination drive. This government should go right away."

The BNP secretary general paid tribute to Koko and recalled his role in the development of sports organisations and cricket.

BNP leaders Aman Ullah Aman, Abdus Salam, Fazlul

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PATURIA, SHIMULIA ROUTES

High currents in Padma disrupt ferry services

STAR REPORT

Ferry services on two major river routes were facing trouble yesterday due to huge currents in Padma river.

The ferries were taking extra time to cross the river, resulting in fewer trips. Consequently, a long queue of vehicles waiting to board ferries was noticed at the terminals.

The routes are Paturia-Daulatdia and Shimulia-Banglabazar. Paturia is located in Manikganj, while Daulatdia is in Rajbari. Shimulia is in Munshiganj and Banglabazar in Madaripur. The two routes are considered gateways to 21 southern districts of the country.

At Paturia terminal, over 500 goods-carrying trucks, and 70 long-distance and 80 small buses were seen stuck yesterday evening, as ferries were moving slowly.

Normally, a ferry takes around 30 minutes to cross the river, but now it requires around 45 minutes, said ferry operators.

Drivers and their helpers were facing immense difficulties, as they had to wait for a long time. The situation may remain the same amid high currents.

Traffic flow increased in the last two days, after withdrawal of the lockdown, but ferry trips were fewer. That is why congestion was created, said Md Zillur Rahman, deputy general manager (commerce) at Manikganj's Aricha zone office of BIWTC.

A similar situation was noticed in Shimulia terminal.

Normally, it takes around one hour and 20 minutes to cross the river on the route. But each of the ferries took over two hours to cross the river yesterday, said BIWTC officials.

Around 600 vehicles were seen waiting at both Shimulia and Banglabazar terminals.

Passenger vehicles had to wait five to seven hours to board ferries, while cargo-laden vehicles had to wait more, said Md Faysal, BIWTC's manager at Shimulia terminal.

RAPE, MURDER OF UNIV STUDENT

Apex court stays bail of accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed a High Court order that granted six weeks' bail to Mortuza Raihan Chowdhury, an accused in a case filed over the rape and murder of a private university student in the capital, in January this year.

Justice Obaidul Hassan of the Appellate Division passed the order following a petition filed by the state seeking a stay on the HC order.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Dasgupta stood for the state. He argued that the accused had already confessed his involvement in the murder and rape to a magistrate.

"Mortuza was granted bail in the case on July 19 following a petition," Amit told The Daily Star.

Mortuza (21) and Nuhut (21), students of the same university, were arrested on January 31 following a case filed by the victim's father where he accused five persons for rape and death of his daughter, with Mohammadpur Police Station. According to the documents, Mortuza, the victim and another accused Arafat went to a restaurant at Uttara and had alcohol on January 28. Later, they all went to a friend's house in Mohammadpur where Raihan and another friend of the victim raped her.

The victim later fell sick and died on January 31 while undergoing treatment at a city hospital.



A fine arts student, sitting under a canopy of Chattogram city's CRB area, is busy with his brushes, finishing a painting that will express his protest against the plan of building a hospital there. It's not just him; many others gathered at the area yesterday, under the banner of "People's Voice", to demonstrate by creating works of art, inset.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

MINI BYTES



Samsung teams up with Google to challenge Apple Watch

NAVEED HUSSAIN

While the rate of development in phones appears to be slowing lately, the rate of development in wearables has the potential to accelerate. In the wearables arena, nothing in the Android ecosystem compares to the Apple Watch in terms of quality and utility. So without a viable alternative for Android users, Apple is increasingly likely to continue gaining users.

But finally, Samsung appears to be ready to make a serious attempt to re-enter the wearables market, teaming up with Google. Samsung is expected to unveil two new smartwatches on August 11th: the Galaxy Watch 4 and Galaxy Watch 4 Classic, both of which have been widely rumored. And with this new release, the wearables war between Samsung, Google and Apple takes a new shape as the company that stands to gain the most from the success of these watches is Google, not Samsung.

Despite its purchase of Fitbit and rumors that Google is working on a Pixel watch, Samsung will be the first to release Wear OS 3 smartwatches. They'll be based on Google and Samsung's collaboration, which was announced at Google IO earlier this year.

In other words, Samsung is abandoning its own Tizen watch OS

in favor of contributing parts of it to a resurrected version of Google's dormant Wear OS. Both companies claim to have improved battery life, software experiences, and third-party app support.

Making a smartwatch that is better than the current Wear OS watch options, on the other hand, is embarrassingly simple. For years, Samsung has been doing it with its Tizen watches, which only work with Samsung devices and have been hampered by poor third-party app support.

It's not just a matter of raising the bar for Wear OS or Tizen. For Android users, there are low bars everywhere. OnePlus, Realme, Oppo, Fitbit, and others have turned to proprietary, simplified platforms that lack the features you'd expect in a smartwatch today as Wear OS has stagnated.

As a result, the pressure is on both Samsung and Google to deliver a pair of smartwatches that are good enough to keep Android users who want a smartwatch from feeling left out. It's unlikely, however, that Samsung's first round of Wear OS 3 watches will be able to match the Apple Watch's ecosystem or integration.

Samsung, like Apple, will surely be attempting to develop an entire ecosystem of Android-related products and services. We don't know how tightly these watches will be tied to Samsung's ecosystem just yet, but it's possible that non-Samsung Android users will be turned off.