

229 more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 229 new patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till 8am yesterday, of whom 53 are from outside Dhaka.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), with the new cases, a total of 6,095 were diagnosed during the current month, out of a total 16,451 infected this year.

According to the DGHS, 59 people have died of dengue infection in the country this year. Of the infected, 1,018 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals in Dhaka, and 199 outside the capital, DGHS data shows.

Meanwhile, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) mayor yesterday claimed success in controlling the menace with the collective efforts of all, despite propaganda and negative politics.

He also said they brought down the number of infected to 10 percent of 2019, when the country saw the highest number of dengue cases.



On September 21, a photo was published in The Daily Star depicting students of Rajuk Uttara Model College jaywalking to cross the road in front of their campus (bottom right), as the nearby foot overbridge was removed more than a year ago (top right). Following this, Uttara traffic police put up a barricade and sign, and assigned personnel in the area yesterday to facilitate safer road-crossing for people. While this is indeed commendable, it still remains to be seen when the overbridge is reconstructed to put an end to this dangerous practice altogether.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'We're pursuing legal recourse'

Says Momen on repatriating killer of Bangabandhu from US

UNB, New York

Bangladesh is pursuing legal recourse in the US for the repatriation of Rashed Chowdhury, the fugitive convicted assassin of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen.

"It is in the legal process. We're pursuing it. But the legal process is a time-consuming matter in the US," he said, responding to a question at a press briefing in New York on Tuesday.

"(But) we are hopeful (of bringing back Rashed Chowdhury to Bangladesh). Our belief is that we'll be able to bring back the person to the country after completing the legal process," he added.

He said Bangladesh had earlier brought another killer back to the country from the US.



Amend tobacco control act

Urge speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To achieve a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040, the Tobacco Control Act needs to be amended, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

The existing act has weaknesses in at least six sections, and as such, needs to be updated as soon as possible, they stated at the discussion on the importance of stricter measures to control the spread of tobacco.

National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh organised the event in Dhaka in collaboration with the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids and Bangladesh Health Reporters Forum (BHRF).

Dr Ahmad Khairul Abrar, research coordinator of the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute, in his keynote speech, highlighted that smokers are more prone to spreading Covid-19 due to behavioral reasons.

"If a smoker gets Covid-19, the risk of it turning severe is 2.5 to 14 times higher compared to a non-smoker," said Dr Abrar, citing World Health Organization from last year.

In Bangladesh, around 3.78 million adults use tobacco while another 38.4 million are victims of secondhand smoke in public places including workplace and public transport, according to Global Adult Tobacco survey 2017.

He said excessive use of tobacco products is one of the leading causes of heart disease, cancer, breast disease and many other preventable diseases and deaths.

Referring to different studies, he mentioned that more than 1.61 lakh people die due to tobacco related diseases

RECOMMENDATIONS	
▶	Ban smoking at public places, transport
▶	Prohibit display of tobacco products in stores
▶	Stop CSR activities of tobacco companies
▶	Bar import, manufacture, sale, use of e-cigarettes
▶	Stop sale of single stick cigarette
▶	Increase size of pictorial health warnings

every year in the country.

Speakers at the meeting demanded six important amendments to the Tobacco Control Act.

Those include -- 100 percent ban on smoking across all public places and transport, ban on the display of tobacco products in stores, ban on CSR activities of the tobacco companies, ban on the import, manufacture, sale and use of e-cigarettes, ban on the sale of single stick cigarette, and an increase in the size of pictorial health warnings.

Mostafizur Rahman, lead policy advisor of Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, said, "The existing act has many provisions in line with the WHO. However, there are weaknesses in some sections. If those are revised, the act will be more effective."

Toufiq Maruf, president of BHRF, said, "The BHRF has been working consistently on the importance of public health. Members of this forum regularly report on tobacco control."

GOODS TRANSPORT

One strike ends, another still on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The group of owners and workers of goods transport, who have been enforcing a 72-hour strike from Tuesday, withdrew their programme yesterday.

"We have withdrawn our work abstention following a fruitful meeting with the home minister at the secretariat today [yesterday]," Talukder Mohammed Monir, a top leader of the platform enforcing the strike, told The Daily Star.

However, another group of owners and workers of goods transport, who had announced to enforce 48-hour strike from Monday, did not withdraw their programme till yesterday.

Bangladesh Covered-Van, Truck, Prime Mover Goods Transportation Owners Association and Bangladesh Truck Drivers Workers Federation on August 28 called the 72-hour strike to press home their 15-point demand.

Their demands include withdrawing "additional" income tax, issuing "heavy vehicle licences" to those driving heavy vehicles directly (currently, a driver has to get light vehicle licence and then licence for medium vehicles

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72-hr strike enforced from Sept 21

Called off after meeting with home minister

Another faction called for 48-hr strike from Sept 27

Sundarbans can play vital role in climate mitigation

Says British envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Sundarbans can play a major role in climate adaptation and mitigation, as it has been protecting the Southwest coast of Bangladesh from tropical storms for years, said British High Commissioner Robert Chatterton Dickson at a webinar yesterday.

Speaking as the chief guest, he said the largest mangrove forest in the world is an example for its role in climate adaptation and mitigation.

The webinar, titled "Addressing the Goals of COP-26 in South Asian Context", was organised by the Center For Governance Studies.

He also said they have in front of them extraordinary scientific evidence about the scale of the climate emergency, as well as what could happen if the world can't keep the rise in global temperature under 1.5 degree Celsius, in line with the Paris Climate Agreement.

Dickson said over 2021 to 2025, developed countries are committed to deliver 16 billion dollars as climate fund, 50 percent

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Ensure 'climate justice' for migrants

Speakers tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

- ▶ Define needs, rights of climate migrants
- ▶ Create satellite cities for displaced people
- ▶ Improve coastal embankment
- ▶ Focus on afforestation
- ▶ Develop climate resilient agriculture
- ▶ Embolden policymaking environment



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers during a two-day workshop stressed for significant stride in social, economic and political dimensions to address issues of climate vulnerabilities and ensure "climate justice" for migrants.

They further stressed the need for robust collaboration among the government, public sector, NGOs, academicians, and professional bodies in this regard.

Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Caucus on Migration and Development (BPCMD) and WARBE Development Foundation jointly organised the knowledge-sharing workshop on "Climate Change, Displacement and Migration" in Sreemangal that ended yesterday, said a press release of the caucus.

The event was supported by PROKAS, British Council and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The workshop was inaugurated with special remarks by Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairman, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, and Mujibul Haque, chairman of Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Labour and Employment.

Moderated by Shirin Lira, senior IBP manager of PROKAS, the programme started with a brief presentation

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Can we call them elected?

Asks Election Commissioner Mahub Talukdar on those who won unopposed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Changes in the current electoral system -- in which many are being elected unopposed and voters are showing apathy towards voting -- will not come unless there is a consensus among political parties, said election commissioner Mahub Talukdar yesterday.

"Voters' apathy towards election is an ominous sign for democracy," he said during a press briefing at his office.

"Participation of many parties in an election is a must for a multi-party democracy system. It is essential to find out the reason as to why elections are being held without competition and take steps accordingly," he said.

Mahub held the press briefing after the union parishad election was held on Monday.

He said he performed duties as the acting chief election commissioner during the election. It was painful to see that three people died during the election, he said, adding that life of a person is more important than an election.

The EC has to take responsibility of every incident that takes place centring any election, he said.

"People who were seen brandishing arms are being arrested after watching video footage," he said. "We have also warned an MP for violating electoral code of conduct."

Mahub said voter turnout was sort of satisfactory, but that 43 persons being elected uncontested had demeaned the election. The purpose of an election is to select a person among many. "If anyone is elected unopposed, can we say that s/he was actually elected?" he asked.

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'Conduct fair probe, punish those involved'

TIB on irregularities in recruiting medical technologists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has called for impartial investigation and punishment of those involved in bribery and irregularities in the recruitment of medical technologists, technician and cardiographers.

Saying that cancelling the recruitment is not enough, TIB said, "Since the irregularities has come to the fore, we apprehend that attempts are taken to cover up the matter and back corrupt syndicates by scrapping it."

The health ministry has cancelled the process for appointing 2,839 for the posts of medical technologists, technicians and cardiographers due to "ambiguity in the answer scripts of the written test".

On April 13, the ministry had postponed the appointment process and formed a four-member probe committee, led by Additional Secretary Nazmul Haque Khan, to investigate anomalies in the recruitment test, which came to light through a report run by Bangla daily Prothom Alo the previous day.

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