



Two people sit near a fire to keep themselves warm amid the chilling cold in Akcha village of Thakurgaon Sadar upazila on Sunday morning. As a cold wave is sweeping across the northern region, people, especially those who can't afford warm clothes, have been enduring untold sufferings.

PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Dense fog to push temp even lower

Mercury may drop by 2 degrees in next 3 days, Met office says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Temperatures across the country, especially in the northern parts and the Mymensingh region, will drop for the next three days due to dense fog. "There will be dense fog from Monday night [last night], especially in the northern parts and Mymensingh, which will continue up to noon every day. It will get colder due to the dense fog in those areas," said meteorologist Bazlur Rashid quoting the Met office forecast. It will get colder by one to two degrees Celsius in the next three days and start rising from Thursday, he said. Bazlur added that possible rainfall between January 11 and 13 may usher in another cold wave. Yesterday, the lowest countrywide temperature of 10 degrees Celsius was recorded in Naogaon, while the low in Dhaka was 14.3 degrees Celsius. At the Saidpur airport in Nilphamari, the fog resulted in flights being rescheduled and no flights being possible before 11:00am yesterday, sources said.

853 killed in workplace accidents last year

Finds safety survey, recommends stepping up inspection

MUNTAKIM SAAD

At least 853 people were killed and 236 others seriously injured in workplace accidents last year, according to a survey by Bangladesh Occupational Safety, Health and Environment Foundation. It recommended strengthening inspections to improve the situation. Of the victims, 792 worked in the informal economy while 297 in the formal sector, OSHE Foundation said while revealing its report yesterday. The number of deaths in the formal sector was 171, whereas it was 682 in the informal economy. The report was prepared based on news run by 15 national newspapers, seven local newspapers and information gathered from the spot by staffers of the organisation. The year-wise data of OSHE Foundation showed that at least 18,659 people have been killed at workplaces since 2005. The highest number of deaths -- 3,721 -- were reported in the RMG sector. OSHE also found that the number of deaths in the ship-breaking industry

increased to 16 last year from eight in 2020. The number of injuries was 29 in 2021, up from four in the previous year. In the manufacturing sector, including food processing, steel mills, rice mills, paper mills, brick fields and the leather industry, 116 workers died. In the construction sector the number was 123, while 95 workers died in the agriculture sector. In the RMG industry, it was 27, the organisation said. It also observed that failure to ensure workers' rights, poor legal framework, weak labour inspection and a lack of speedy prosecution were the main reasons behind workplace deaths in the country. The absence of or non-functioning health and safety committees at factories and other establishments, safety-related information services, training and awareness actions for workers and employees at worksites are also responsible. Lack of workers' safety is a lingering issue in Bangladesh. Following the worst-ever workplace accident, the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, which took more than 1,100

lives, the government amended the Labour Act 2006 to make it more comprehensive. Although the situation has improved in the RMG sector, accidents continued in other sectors, claiming countless lives of workers. In the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, many workers could not work for about five months -- from April to August -- due to various restrictions, including layoffs, said the report. Last year, the most dreadful incident occurred at the Hashem Foods factory in Narayanganj's Rupganj on July 8, in which a fire killed at least 54 workers, mostly women and children. Earlier, a report of the Citizen Probe Committee stated that workers' deaths in the Hashem Foods factory blaze was an act of "systematic killing". "The workers were trapped inside the building since the only exit had been locked. This illegal practice to force workers to remain inside the factory led to that terrible tragedy. This once again reveals the extremely callous standards of safety that come to public notice only when a tragedy of such magnitude occurs," observed OSHE.

India 'clearly' going Govt set to slap curbs

FROM PAGE 1 of the pandemic is very much here. "India is clearly in the third wave of Covid-19. And the whole wave seems to be driven by a new variant and today it is Omicron," he told NDTV. The alarming comments came as India yesterday vaccinated more than 3.85 million teens aged between 15 and 18 years yesterday in

an effort to protect its large adolescent population. Bharat Biotech's Covaxin has been used in inoculating the age group, Reuters reported. India has more than 120 million people aged between 15 and 19 years, according to the country's 2011 Census, and the largest population of adolescents in the world, as per UNICEF estimates.

Tigers enjoy

FROM PAGE 1 Haque and troops in tough Kiwi conditions set the performance apart. Interestingly, it was the first instance that Bangladesh took a first-innings lead while batting second outside of Asia which reflects how a young and relatively inexperienced side showed their character as do the near-zero expectations heading into the series. All eyes were on how the Bangladesh batters would react and, although both missed out on deserving hundreds, Mominul and Liton Das added 158 for the fifth wicket to ensure Bangladesh would seize control and end the day on

401 for six. Mahmudul Hasan Joy's 78 in just his second Test and Najmul Hossain's dominant 64 were other highlights of the first time the top six Bangladesh batters faced over 50 deliveries in an innings away from home. Even the New Zealand media started to show concern about keeping their nine-Test win at home intact against the Tigers. But with two days remaining and the Tigers' reputation for throwing it all away despite putting in the hard yards, Bangladesh still has a lot to play for to make this effort count towards a positive outcome.

Neglect of duty

FROM PAGE 16 examine the launch properly, they said. Mahbubur Rahman, surveyor of Shipping Department at Sadarghat, admitted to the committee that he did not look into whether the engines of the launch were changed and that he neglected his duties, source said. The launch made its first trip after three months on December 19 and the second one on December 23. But, Shipping Department Inspector Habibur Rahman did not inspect the launch.

that we readied during the previous Covid waves." He said ensuring a smooth and uninterrupted supply of oxygen was at the heart of their preparations. "If we can address the oxygen shortage problem, it will be a big support for us. Because we have seen that oxygen was the main thing required by Covid patients." Bashar also said most of the 40 oxygen generators had already been installed in hospitals. "Besides, central oxygen supply system has already been installed at most district hospitals." The DGHS chief also said people with chronic diseases, irrespective of their age, would be able to take the booster dose of Covid vaccine even if they did not get any SMS from the authorities. For more than a week, the country has been witnessing a steady rise in novel coronavirus infections. Besides, at least 10 Covid Omicron cases have been detected so far. In 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, the health directorate reported 674 fresh Covid cases -- the highest daily cases since October 6. they had enough time. Had they anchored the launch and tried to douse the fire, the number of deaths might have been less. They rather abandoned the launch. So the drivers Masum Billah, Abul Kalam and grizzers are responsible for the incident, they said. The committee also held two masters Riaz Sikder and Khalilur responsible for the incident as they did not anchor the vessel even after failing to fix the problem in the engines. All of them are in jail. At least three cases have been filed over the incident.

US Defense Secretary contracts Covid

AFP, WASHINGTON

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin reported Sunday that he has contracted Covid-19, as the highly infectious Omicron

variant sweeps across the United States. Austin's symptoms were "mild" and he will quarantine at home for the next five days, the Pentagon chief said in a statement.

Why do we

FROM PAGE 16 through the narrowed vessels by filtering out some excess fluid from blood. The excess fluid goes to your bladder and thus, makes you feel the urge to urinate more frequently. A full bladder is another way for the body to lose heat, so urinating frequently helps preserve your core warmth.

Strong quake hits off Taiwan's eastern coast

AFP, TAIPEI

A strong earthquake struck off the coast of eastern Taiwan yesterday evening, the Central Weather Bureau said, with shaking felt in the capital Taipei but no immediate reports of damage. The weather bureau said the quake measured 6.0 in magnitude and hit at the relatively shallow depth of 19 kilometres (12 miles). The United States Geological Survey (USGS) put the magnitude higher at 6.2. The epicentre was given in the sea 56 kilometres east of the coastal city of Hualien. The weather bureau said no immediate reports of damage had come in. An AFP reporter in Taipei said buildings swayed violently when the tremor struck during the rush hour commute at 5:46 pm (0946 GMT). "The shaking lasted for a good 20 seconds with the ground moving left and right," the reporter said.

Frame law or form EC on consensus

President urged at talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ganotanry Party yesterday urged President Abdul Hamid to take necessary steps to frame a law with a provision for a constitutional council to form the Election Commission. Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon during its dialogue with the president on formation of the EC also favoured enacting a law in this regard through consensus among all political parties. During the dialogue, Ganotanry Party proposed that there should be a council consisting the prime minister, the Speaker, chief justice, opposition leader and attorney general, which would recommend names to the president for the posts of chief election commissioner and other election commissioners. "If it is not possible to enact a law in line with the constitution due to time constraints, the next Election Commission can be formed through a search committee consisting persons holding constitutional posts," Ganotanry Party General Secretary Shahadat Hussain told reporters after the dialogue at the Bangabhaban.

The party in its written proposal to Hamid said the search committee would recommend five names for each of the posts of CEC and election commissioners. "Names proposed by the search committee will be sent to the Business Advisory Committee of the Jatiya Sangsad for scrutiny. The Business Advisory Committee will prepare a shortlist and forward it to the president. The president will form the Election Commission from it," the proposal said.

Those who would be appointed as election commissioners should believe in the spirit of Liberation War. There should be a process to make the EC accountable for its failure. Political parties and people who are against the spirit of Liberation War should be disqualified from contesting polls, the party proposed.

A seven-member delegation, led by Ganotanry Party President Mohammad Arash Ali, took part in the dialogue. Speaking to reporters outside the Bangabhaban after joining the dialogue, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon Organising Secretary Sultan Mohiuddin said they urged the president to take steps to frame a law to constitute EC through consensus among all political parties.

The party said the EC should be truly independent and act neutrally. "Anti-religion, identified corrupt people, holders of black money, killers, goons, convicted accused as well as druggies should be disqualified from contesting elections," Sultan said. He said the EC made giving 33 percent party positions to women mandatory for all political parties, but it should be made optional. A seven-member delegation, led by party Chairman Maulana Ataullah Ibne Hafezi Hujur, joined the dialogue.

The president late last month started the talks with registered political parties on formation of the next EC as the tenure of the current one expires on February 14. Twelve political parties have so far joined the dialogue. However, three parties -- Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal and Islami Andolon Bangladesh -- have refused to join the talks. The BNP said it would not join the dialogue even if it is invited. About the reason for staying away from the dialogue, the parties said the talks would not be meaningful.

US SANCTIONS ON RAB

Will fix if any weaknesses found

Says Momen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said in case of any weaknesses, the government will rectify them in a bid to get the US to reconsider sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former top officials. The government previously denied that Rab was behind several hundred extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances after the sanctions were imposed on December 10 last year. "If we have any weaknesses, we will try to rectify it. We are pretty open to it," he told journalists at his office yesterday. "We will see why they [the US] are dissatisfied. Based on the information, we will try to rectify it. If they are dissatisfied because of false information, we will provide the correct information and explain that you are acting on false information. Our assessment is that they will understand us," he said. The US have mature, responsible leadership, Momen said, adding that the US will move away from their position once the government provides the information. The government was also considering appointing a law firm that can work for withdrawal of the US sanctions. Asked, he said, "When legal process is required, we will involve it." In late December, Momen also wrote a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, requesting that they reconsider the sanctions.