

A RISING CONCERN

263 dengue patients hospitalised in May, sharp increase in early monsoon

HELEMUL ALAM

A total of 263 dengue patients were hospitalised in May out of 352 dengue cases this year. The numbers have seen a sharp rise with the frequent downpours in the last month.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), at least 14 dengue patients were hospitalised across the country in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

Warning the city corporations of a major outbreak of dengue this year, experts suggested that the corporations take extensive measures to control the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes.

“Though the city corporations last year claimed that they could control the outbreak, the reality is that they failed to do so,” said GM Saifur Rahman, an entomologist at Bangladesh National University.

Saifur said many of the eggs laid by these mosquitoes remained unhatched, which can help spread dengue assisted by the early monsoon.

“We suggested conducting rigorous drives by identifying the more Aedes

prone clusters. However, our suggestion was ignored.”

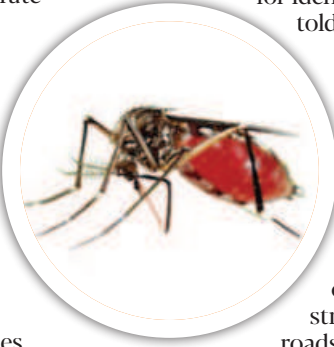
“The authorities will have to monitor the clusters and continue drives for at least two months in the 150-metre radius of each area as the eggs survive for at least a year. But Dhaka lacks the mechanism for identifying the clusters,” Saifur told this correspondent.

According to entomologist Kabirul Bashar, residents have to ensure that there are no breeding sources at their homes or yards, and the city corporations have to ensure that there is no stagnant water in open spaces, government structures and housings, roads and under-construction projects.

Dr Md Ekramul Haque, deputy programme manager of malaria and ATD control programme at DGHS, said they have trained 1,500 doctors across the country this year.

They have also instructed the authorities of six dengue dedicated hospitals in Dhaka to remain prepared. “We have enough dengue virus kits and bringing more by June,” he added.

Dhaka North City Corporation



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, accompanied by her younger sister Sheikh Rehana and other family members, yesterday offered prayers at the mausoleum of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Tungipara of Gopalganj.

PHOTO: PJO

Will wage simultaneous movement Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP yesterday said it reached an agreement with Ganasanghati Andolan to wage a “simultaneous” movement to bring down the Awami League government and establish a neutral one for polls.

“We have agreed to establish a people’s government by ousting the current fascist regime, which has destroyed all our achievements, through a mass upsurge involving all the country’s people and political parties,” said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

He said this after holding a two-hour dialogue with the party around 12:15pm at Ganasanghati Andolan’s Hatirpool central office.

Ganasanghati Andolan’s chief coordinator Zonayed Saki said the current constitutional structure needs to be changed, as the current regime established “autocracy” based on it.

As part of BNP’s ongoing dialogues with political parties, a party delegation, led by Fakhrul, joined the talk.

PRAYER
TIMING
NOVEMBER 18

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-45	5-00	6-43	8-05
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-47	8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

DHAKA-MAWA-BHANGA EXPRESSWAY
Tk 717cr for toll collection, maintenance

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has to spend Tk 717 crore to collect tolls as well as operate and maintain Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway for the next five years.

Korea Expressway Corporation (KEC) will carry out the job, in association with two other companies -- one from Bangladesh and another from Korea.

The authorities have already negotiated with KEC; the work will be carried out at a cost of Tk 717 crore. A proposal regarding this was placed before the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase.

“We hope that the proposal will be approved soon,” Sabuj Uddin Khan, additional chief engineer (Dhaka zone) of Roads and Highways Department (RHD), told The Daily Star yesterday.

“We are expecting to sign the contract [with KEC] within seven to 10 days. However, KEC has already started background work,” he said.

The development came at a time when RHD is set to start collecting tolls from vehicles for using the country’s first expressway from July 1, five days after Padma Bridge, which links two parts of the expressway, is scheduled to be opened.

In August last year, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved a proposal to give KEC the responsibility to collect tolls from the expressway and other

works.

The decision to hire KEC for the expressway’s work came after Bangladesh Bridge Authority signed a memorandum of understanding with the Korean company for collecting tolls as well as operating and maintaining Padma Bridge in September 2019.

The company was chosen for being well integrated with

Apart from collecting tolls and maintaining the 55-km expressway, KEC will install and operate Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) for it, said Sabuj Uddin.

Under ITS, modern information and communication technologies are used to facilitate transport infrastructure and vehicles to improve traffic management and safety, reduce traffic jams



all works of the expressway and Padma Bridge and absence of other such companies in Bangladesh, said RHD sources.

When RHD started negotiating with KEC, the company submitted the names of two sub-contractors for the work: S-Traffic Co Ltd of Korea and Tele Tell Communications of Bangladesh, according to sources.

Later, RHD and the firm agreed to do the work for Tk 717 crore.

and road maintenance costs, engineers said.

In April last year, The finance ministry approved Tk 10 as the expressway’s base toll -- proposed by the Road Transport and Highways Division -- for an interim period until the opening of Padma Bridge.

The fee per kilometre for a medium-sized truck (two-axle) is considered the base toll, and the toll for other vehicles

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

COVAX Bangladesh top recipient of vaccines from Unicef

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unicef delivered over 190 million doses of Covid-19 vaccines to Bangladesh through Covax in one year.

To date, Bangladesh remains the top recipient of Covid vaccines under Covax, the global initiative co-led by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the World Health Organization, with Unicef as a key delivery partner.

Covax accounts for more than 62 percent of Covid vaccine doses received by Bangladesh, according to a press release.

Covid-19 vaccination started in Bangladesh in February 2021. Unicef delivered the first Covax shipment of vaccines to Bangladesh on June 1 last year at a time when only 4 percent of the population were fully vaccinated.

“With the committed strong leadership of the prime minister, Bangladesh has shown incredible resilience to face the pandemic. With continuous supply of vaccines and hard work of dedicated health workers, we have been able to vaccinate the targeted population without wasting doses,” said Prof Dr Meerjady Sabrina Flora,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Bangladesh-India bus service likely to resume June 10 Mitali Express starts operation today



TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bus service between Bangladesh and India is likely to resume on June 10, after remaining suspended for over two years due to the pandemic.

Although no formal order regarding the resumption has been issued, Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) and its operator Shyamoli NR Travels, were verbally informed about the development, sources said.

The development came days after railway service between the two neighbouring countries resumed on Sunday.

Both bus and train services were suspended in March 2020, when the deadly coronavirus hit Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Mitali Express, the third passenger train to be operated between the two countries, will start running from today.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, who is now in India, and Indian Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw will jointly flag off the new train virtually from Rail Bhavan in New Delhi at 9:25am, railway sources said.

BUS SERVICE

Before suspension of services, buses were operated on five cross-border routes: Dhaka-Kolkata-Dhaka, Dhaka-Agartala-Dhaka, Dhaka-Sylhet-Shillong-Guwahati-Dhaka,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Of public schools and its woes

TAZREEN JAHAN BARI

UN SDG 4 promises equitable, inclusive, and quality education for all by 2030. With 2030 less than eight years away, and as the new fiscal year is set to begin, it’s important to ask -- will the state of public schools remain unchanged?

More often than not, these schools are ill-equipped to begin with.

Jhuma Akhter, a seventh-grader at Kurni Jalal Uddin High School in Tangail’s Mirzapur, said, “We don’t have any labs or computer facilities in our school, nor do we get tiffin from the institution like some others.”

Then there is the quality of teaching as well.

“Although some of my teachers are good, most hardly explain anything in classes. We have no choice but to get private tutors or go to coaching centres,” said Zobaer Bin Zoha, an eighth-grader at Rajshahi Collegiate School.

Admittedly, a lack of accountability is creating “irresponsible” teachers. But can



Visitors at a photo exhibition titled “Bangabandhu and Ruposhi Bangla” at the National Gallery No-3 of Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka yesterday. Bangladesh Photojournalists Association and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy jointly organised the event.

PHOTO: STAR

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

‘If you want your child back, tell me where my wife is’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After Rashedul Islam’s wife eloped with a man, he was desperate to get her back.

He thought his wife’s friend Mira Akter might know of her whereabouts.

He repeatedly asked Mira for leads but she said she knew nothing.

Rashed, a mason in Ashulia area, then abducted Mira’s one-and-a-half-year-old daughter Akhi from near her house in Ashulia’s Tenguri area on March 31.

On Monday, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued the child from Gazipur’s Kaliakair upazila, nearly three months after her abduction.

A team of Rab-4 also arrested Rashed from Rangpur and his associate Ruksana (35) from Kaliakair, Mozammel Haque, commanding officer of Rab-4, told a press briefing yesterday.

Rashed had been hiding the child at Ruksana’s house over the last two months, he said.

Rashed’s wife Nur Jahan and Mira worked in the same garment factory in Ashulia, he further said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4