

Season’s first dengue death recorded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first death from dengue this year was reported yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The deceased is Ayul Khan (12), who was undergoing treatment at Central Hospital, an official of DGHS said.

In total, 27 patients were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, DGHS said.

With the new cases, the total number of dengue patients rose to 808, pointing towards an alarming rise of dengue cases this year.

Among the patients, 110 are still undergoing treatment. Of them, four are from outside Dhaka. A total of 532 patients so far have been released from hospitals.

Dhaka is at risk of a major dengue outbreak this year compared to the last couple of years, found DGHS in a pre-monsoon survey.



Even though Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) just recently evicted illegal structures from this bank at Buriganga Adi Channel area, influential quarters have yet again started fixing the broken-down establishments to occupy the place. This photo was taken recently from Dhaka’s Kamrangirchar.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Still left behind

Speakers urge govt to recognise, include indigenous people of the plains in census, safety net

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Bashonti Murmu, a 34-year-old Santal woman, lives in Tanore upazila of Natore district. A couple of years ago, she went to a local money lender to pay for the education of her three children.

She wanted to borrow Tk 7,000 from him. The money lender asked her to sign a deed saying she will have to repay Tk 9,000 within six months or work as a labourer in the lender's paddy field for a year and pay Tk 3,500. If she works for another year, she will not have to repay the loan.

Bashonti had to agree to these exploitative terms. She had no other alternative.

Bashonti is not alone. Thousands of indigenous people of the plains, who are mostly farmers, have to work as bonded labourers and live in extreme poverty.

According to the 2011 census, there are approximately 1.6 million plainland ethnic minorities in Bangladesh. According to a Brac study, 80 percent of them live below the poverty line and 24.6 percent of them live below the extreme poverty line.

Traidcraft Exchange and The Daily Star organised a conference at The Daily Star Centre yesterday to share findings from Traidcraft's "Project Muktee", co-funded by European Union, to address and prevent such forced labour in agriculture.

Shahed Ferdous, country director of Traidcraft Exchange, said, "We have released 4,118 indigenous people from bonded labour in Rajshahi division from January 2019 to June 2022."

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PRAYER TIMING JUNE 22			Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
		Azan	4-05	12-45	5-00	6-52	8-17
		Jamaat	4-40	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45
		SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

Villagers selling solar power to nat’l grid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Solar-energy users of a village now can sell their excess electricity to the national grid.

This was made possible through a mechanism called PCC (Point of Common Coupling), which integrates the grid extension with the solar-home system.

The initiative was launched at Saddam Bazar of Mymensingh's Dhobaura upazila.

Twenty shopkeepers of the village have been brought under the PCC network, so that they can sell their unused renewable energy to the national grid through a mobile application.

SOLshare and Shakti Foundation jointly launched the initiative.

Earlier in 2016, SOLshare made it possible to share unused solar energy with neighbours, which got the United Nations climate change award.

According to the initiators, the grid line of Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board is connected to one side of the PCC, while the local microgrid from solar systems is connected to the other side.

The project was inaugurated yesterday by advisor to the prime minister for power, energy and mineral resources affairs Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury at an event at SOLshare's office at the capital's Bhatara area.

Twenty shopkeepers of the village have been brought under the PCC network, so that they can sell their unused renewable energy to the national grid through a mobile application.

The villagers of Saddam Bazar virtually joined the event.

Sebastian Groh, co-founder and managing director of SOLshare, said solar-energy users are able to sell electricity to the national grid to earn additional income while paving the path to sustainability.

The project was funded by the UK government. Joining the event as special

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‘Delayed projects hampering operations’

BR, ministry on challenges and remedies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to most of the 3,093-kilometre rail line, including the important corridors, being single line, Bangladesh Railway (BR) cannot increase trains, maintain punctuality and cut travel time.

Moreover, most bridges under the rail network are old, forcing the authorities to restrict speed and load limits. Meanwhile, only 124 stations (35 percent) out of the total 359 have a modern signalling system.

However, BR does not have enough modern workshops and factories to maintain the engines and carriages, often causing a delay in supplying necessary engines and coaches on time.

BR is currently running with 24,459 staffers against the 47,537 posts. Due to the lack of human resources, 123 stations remain shut down.

As a result, the railway has only 5 percent of the modal share in transporting passengers and goods.

To make matters worse, most projects attempting to improve BR's infrastructure and rolling stocks got delayed.

BR officials and the railways ministry shared the grim picture at a seminar organised by the ministry in the capital's Cirdap auditorium yesterday.

THE CHALLENGES

Quamrul Ahsan, BR additional director general (infrastructure), during his keynote presentation, said BR transported 92.7 million passengers by operating 366 passengers trains. It also carried

5.44 million tonnes of goods operating 50 freight trains.

BR earned Tk 15,901 million as revenue and spent Tk 30,506 million annually.

Talking about BR's challenges, he said most of the 3,093km network is single line. According to sources, BR has only around 350 km double line.

Quamrul also said most of the lines in the west zone are broad

life, said the BR official.

While talking about the challenges, he mentioned several reasons, including delay in project approval, land acquisition, appointing consultants, lack of coordination among relevant agencies, and delay in getting approval from foreign lenders.

THE REMEDIES

Addressing the seminar,

CHALLENGESS	REMEDIES
➤ Most lines being single-tracked	➤ Introducing more double-tracked line
➤ Lack of modern signalling	➤ Using information technology in signalling
➤ Lack of modern workshops, human resources	➤ Ensuring timely project implementation
➤ Different gauges in different zones	➤ Converting MG lines into BG

gauge (BR), while most lines in the east zone are metre gauge (MG).

Different gauges in different zones are causing difficulties in operation and maintenance and full of use of rolling stock cannot be ensured for it. BR has taken a plan to convert all MG lines into BG ones to solve the problem, he added.

Out of the total 263, 249 locomotives are currently operating. BR owns 1,671 coaches and 3,221 wagons. However, around 67 percent of locomotives and 47 percent of coaches have crossed economic

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan said they are gradually progressing.

"We will make railway time-befitting, passenger-friendly and modern using information technology," he said, asking the authorities concerned to implement the ongoing projects as soon as possible.

Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT Division, said they will provide technological support to the railways to improve their service.

He asked BR to formulate a master plan emphasising

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HC rejects ACC’s prayer against Inqilab journalist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rejecting a prayer of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for taking action against a journalist of Daily Inqilab over publishing of a report on corruption, the High Court yesterday observed that the commission can approach Bangladesh Press Council if it has any allegation about the report.

The Press Council will take necessary steps under Press Council Act, 1974, the HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo said in a suo motu (voluntary) rule.

On March 8, 2021, the bench issued a suo motu rule, inquiring about a report published by Inqilab on March 3 that year, under the headline "20 Kotite Prokousholi Ashrafuler Daaymukti! Durniti Domone 'Dudok Style'".

The report was about the corruption allegation against former Public Works Department engineer Ashrafur Alam and his wife Sabiha Alam, and ACC exempting them from the allegation.

It mentioned that Tk 20 crore was spent to get rid of the allegations.

The HC yesterday disposed of the March 8 rule and ordered the anti-graft watchdog to conduct further inquiry into the corruption allegation, Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told The Daily Star.

Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan represented Anti-Corruption Commission, while Mohammad Shishir Manir represented Sayeed.

NAGAR PARIBAHAN

200 buses on 3 new routes from Sept 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bus Route Rationalisation Committee (BRCC) has decided to introduce 200 more buses on three new routes in Dhaka from September 1.

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh made the announcement after holding the committee's 23rd meeting at Nagar Bhaban in the city yesterday.

Three new routes are Ghatarchar (Keraniganj) to Bhulta (Narayanganj) via Farmgate; Ghatarchar to Meghna Ghat (Kanchpur) via Bosila (Mohammadpur) and Science Lab; and Ghatarchar to Narayanganj via Karail.

On December 26 last year, with a fleet of 50 buses including 30 double-deckers of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC), the new Nagar Paribahan Bus service started plying the capital's streets.

However, Nagar Paribahan was struggling to provide better service due to lack of buses.

DSCC mayor on March 22 announced the running of 225 new buses on three new routes in Dhaka without giving any deadline.

DNCC mayor Md Atiqul Islam said no bus will be allowed on the route from Ghatarchar to Kanchpur except Dhaka Nagar Paribahan.



PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

DSCC preparing 30-year master plan for Dhaka

LGRD minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation is preparing a 30-year "Integrated City Master Plan for Dhaka (2020-2050)" for a clean and smart Dhaka city, LGRD Minister Tazul Islam told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday.

He was replying to a query from ruling Awami League MP M Abdul Latif.

The minister said Mohakhali Bus Terminal will be reconstructed via "The Dhaka Public Transport Improvement Project."

He also said the corridor road of BRT Line-3 will be improved.

Projects will be taken to enhance the Buriganga old channel's beauty and create an aesthetic environment, he added.



After a long hard day's work, a garbage collector takes a break and enjoys a drink to rejuvenate herself. Workers like her start off their day early, as they have to cover many areas and collect the wastes -- performing a crucial role in keeping the city clean. This photo was taken from Mirpur yesterday.