

It's December, why is dengue still around?

SUMON ALI

The number of dengue cases and fatalities have been much higher in December this year compared to that of the last four years, according to data from 2019 to 2022.

Although experts earlier predicted that the infection rate would come down with the approach of winter, new infections, hospitalisations and deaths are being recorded almost every day.

In December of this year alone, 4,397 people have been hospitalised with dengue fever, and 19 patients died till 8:00am yesterday.

A total of 1,207 patients were admitted to hospitals and seven died in December 2021, the data show. In December 2020, 231 persons were hospitalised but no one died.

In 2019, the highest number of patients, 1,01,354, were admitted to different hospitals in the country. However, in December of that year, 1,247 patients were diagnosed with dengue, and there was no fatality.

Contacted, entomologist Dr Manjur Ahmed Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "The temperature required for the survival of Aedes mosquitoes is still favourable."

He said there is still a prevalence of dengue as winter is yet to set in properly. However, with the drop in temperature, the dengue menace will decrease.

The entomologist, however, expressed fear that cases of dengue fever may rise further next year. "If the city corporations stop taking measures when the outbreak is over this winter, the dengue situation may turn deadlier next year."

Khalilur Rahman, a former entomologist at Directorate

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



The ugly, tangled mess of overhead cables in Narayanganj's Nayamati area not only blemishes the skyline but also exposes pedestrians to great risks of accidents. The already concerning situation is exacerbated by the fact that this road is always full of people, as shops are situated on both sides. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

All religious faiths enjoy equal rights

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government has been working for the welfare of the people of all religious faiths living in the country.

"We have been establishing Bangladesh as a non-communal country. Here, all citizens have equal rights," she said.

The prime minister was exchanging Christmas greetings with the leaders of the Christian community, joining a function virtually in Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council in the capital's Farmgate from her office.

She greeted all the people of the Christian community of the country on the occasion of Christmas to be celebrated on Sunday.

Hasina said her government has always stood by all people during any crisis. "We believe that we have to work for all

Take steps to curb mosquito menace

SC lawyer asks government officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday requested officials concerned of the government to take adequate measures to tackle the mosquito menace in all 12 city corporations as well as the whole country.

Advocate JR Khan Robin sent an application to the secretary at the Ministry of Health and Family Planning; and chief executive officers and chief health officers of 12 city corporations, saying that he will take legal steps against them if they fail to take the measures.

The 12 city corporations are — Dhaka north and south, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Chattogram, Cumilla, Rajshahi, Khulna, Sylhet, Barishal, Rangpur and Mymensingh.

According to the application, the mosquito problem in the country, particularly in urban areas, is becoming more and more menacing. Although the persons concerned try to protect people from the "dengue virus" by taking various measures, those are not sufficient.

In the application, Robin said the number of Aedes mosquitoes, the carrier of dengue, is increasing day by day due to lack of adequate measures.

ONE DEAD, 126 MORE INFECTED IN 24 HRS

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, at least one dengue patient died, while 126 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The death toll has now risen to 273, while cases are now 61,755, of which 22,866 have been recorded outside Dhaka.

A total of 60,909 patients, 22,515 from outside Dhaka, have been released.

Some 573 patients, 247 from outside Dhaka, are still undergoing treatment.

Experts have been urging authorities concerned to conduct extensive drives by identifying clusters of Aedes mosquitoes immediately.

'Treat discrimination as punishable offence'

Speakers tell dialogue on anti-discrimination law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil society leaders yesterday urged the government to treat discrimination as a punishable offence and clarify some clauses of the anti-discrimination draft law, including the definition of discrimination.

They came up with the call in a national dialogue on the anti-discrimination bill placed in parliament recently.

The dialogue was jointly organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Dhaka International University and Nagorik Uddyog.

Persons with physical disabilities, government officials, lawmakers, transgender community leaders, leaders from the Dalit community, and jurists took part in the dialogue.

Bikash Kumar Das from the Dalit community presented the keynote at the event.

He said any law excluding the

The demand raised from the marginalised community is that there should be a clear definition and schedule for transgender people and members of the Hijra community in the law. Section-02 of the draft law has a provision of protecting the rights of only people with physical disabilities.

ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Chief executive of Nagorik Uddyog

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clarifying definition of discrimination

Including criminal provision

Remedy for victims

Monitoring via representatives of the marginalised

four decades.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, said it was really a challenge to implement any law after enacting it.

"We have to change our mindset first to eliminate discrimination from our society. Even in this age, people from Dalit communities are not allowed to sit in hotels. This is a grave violation of human rights. The draft law should be designed in a way so that people who are direct victims of discrimination can get a remedy," she said.

In regards to international commitments and sustainable development goals (SDGs), there is a necessity to implement the law, she added.

Sara Hossain, jurist and executive director of BLAST, said it took 10 years to make the law a reality.

"The law would be more effective once the proposals that came from the dialogue are incorporated in the draft law," she added.

Termining the draft law as an example of positive progress, Sara said there is room to qualify the definition of discrimination in light of the international charter.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, underscored the need to keep the true representatives from the tea workers, Dalit and Harijan communities in the monitoring cell to be formed under the law.

Zakir Hossain, chief executive of Nagorik Uddyog, criticised the government for the delay in enacting the law.

"The demand raised from the marginalised community is that there should be a clear definition and schedule for transgender people and members of the Hijra

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Raise its members to 20

Suggests JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary watchdog yesterday recommended increasing the number of members in Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC) from 15 to 20.

The parliamentary standing committee on the public administration ministry said the issue of setting up a PSC secretariat should be included in the legal framework and the provision of making rules under the law should be added.

The parliamentary body came up with the recommendation while finalising a bill, titled "Bangladesh Public Service Commission Bill 2022".

PSC deals with the recruitment of civil service servants in the government. They are responsible for exam related activities.

Mentioning the logic of increasing the number of PSC members from 15 to 20, the parliamentary committee said due to the rising number of candidates for direct recruitment to the posts of grade 12 and above (cadre and non-cadre) — pre-selection, written test, viva-voce and practical tests, preparation and publication of results take a long time.

It is, therefore, necessary to increase the number of members of the commission to meet

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

A step forward to resolving disputes without trial

Ministry taking alternative dispute resolution to fields

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The expatriates' welfare ministry is gradually taking alternative dispute resolution (ADR) to the field level to address problems of migrant workers, said Ahmed Munir Saleheen, secretary of the ministry, at a "stakeholders' meeting" yesterday.

ADR refers to the different ways people can resolve disputes without a trial. Common ADR processes include mediation, arbitration, and neutral evaluation.

He said ADR will primarily take place at district manpower and employment offices (DEMOs) in Chattogram, Cumilla and Narsingdi.

A third party may assist the DEMOs during the ADR procedure, he added.

The secretary called upon different stakeholders, including migrant-rights groups, to take this as an opportunity to address challenges in the labour migration sector.

Besides, Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) has to come forward to "amicably settle" as many disputes as possible, he added.

However, it is more important that no dispute happens as "prevention is better than cure", he noted.

The ministry organised the programme marking International Migrants Day. Various stakeholders including representatives of migrant-rights groups and government officials took part.

At the programme, Baira Secretary General Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman said it will be possible to ensure safe migration of workers if different stakeholders work together in this regard.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

ADMISSION ANOMALIES

Monitoring teams visiting schools and colleges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The education ministry has formed monitoring committees to prevent charging of extra admission and readmission fees in different schools and colleges across the country.

Members of four monitoring teams yesterday started visiting different government and private schools and colleges.

Four deputy secretaries of the education ministry have been leading the teams, according to a government press release.

Besides, 16 monitoring committees formed by the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education are visiting educational institutions in Dhaka city, eight divisional monitoring committees are visiting divisional headquarters, and 55 district monitoring teams are going to district headquarters.

Upazila monitoring committees are also visiting the upazila-level educational institutions. After visiting the institutions, the teams are submitting reports to the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education.

Appropriate actions will be taken as per the rules if any irregularities are found, the press release said.



Commuters either have to avoid Tejgaon-Mohakhali road or face the consequence of being stuck in traffic for hours. Although gridlocks are common throughout Dhaka, people who have to regularly pass this road will say that the ordeal centring traffic jams is even worse in this area. Hundreds of vehicles were seen stuck in long queues yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN