

Christmas celebrated across Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

The Christian community celebrated Christmas in the country yesterday amid festivities and enthusiasm.

Christmas, the biggest religious festival of the Christians, is annually celebrated all over the world on December 25 – commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is a time when family, friends and relatives get together to celebrate the day with colourful lights and Christmas trees decorated at homes.

Christmas carols and hymns were performed before and after the prayer sessions at the churches.

As part of the overall security arrangements, a sufficient number of Rab personnel, along with law enforcers from other agencies, were deployed across the country to respond to emergencies and unforeseen situations.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages on the occasion.

President Abdul Hamid wished, "May Christmas bring endless joy and welfare to everyone including the Christian community. May everyone's life be filled with happiness and prosperity."

The prime minister wished peace, welfare and prosperity to all citizens including the Christian community on the eve and urged for collective effort from all for making a prosperous, non-communal and peaceful nation.

The President hosted a reception at Bangabhaban on the occasion last evening.

Archbishop of Bangladesh, ambassadors and representatives from foreign missions, distinguished members of the Christian community, religious leaders and professionals will join the reception.



Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with the newly-elected AL central working committee and advisory council members paid rich tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi-32 yesterday morning.

PHOTO: PTD

New AL central committee pays tribute to Bangabandhu

BSS, Dhaka

The newly-elected Awami League central working committee and advisory council led by party President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday paid tributes to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Hasina first laid a wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation in front of the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi-32 in Dhaka in the morning.

The prime minister stood there in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the architect of independence of Bangladesh.

Later, Hasina along with members of the central committee and advisory council placed another wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu.

Hasina was elected president of Awami League

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Cold wave continues sweeping the north

BSS, Dhaka

Mild to moderate cold wave continues sweeping over the sub-Himalayan northern districts in recent days causing sufferings to common people.

Despite the appearance of the sun for a few hours from noon, the intensity of the cold wave remained almost unchanged during the past 24 hours ending at 6:00pm yesterday.

According to the Meteorological Office sources, the country's lowest temperature of 9.8 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Dinajpur.

The Met Office yesterday recorded the minimum temperature of 14.1 degrees Celsius at Rangpur, 13.2 degrees Celsius at Syedpur, 10.4 degrees Celsius at Tentulia, 12.6 degrees Celsius at Dimla and 13.2 degrees Celsius at Rajshahi.

Talking to the news agency, District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer of Rangpur Md Motahar Hossain said distribution of 55,000 pieces of blankets allocated by the government so far among cold-hit people of the district is nearing completion.

"We have sent a letter to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief seeking more 60,000 pieces of blankets," he added.

DRRO of Kurigram Abdul Hye Sarker said the district administration has

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Dope test plan struggling to materialise

Committee rejects relevant project, asks to make the test permanent feature of narcotics department

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The government's much-hyped dope test initiative to eradicate drug abuse from the country is struggling to fully materialise thanks to bureaucratic tangles.

In 2018, the public administration ministry decided that government job aspirants must undergo dope tests. The government also made the test mandatory for getting a professional driving licence.

However, the government's project-evaluation committee (PEC), after analysing the proposal, suggested not conducting dope tests under any project. Rather, it opined that these tests should be permanently incorporated into activities of the Department of Narcotics (DNC), through recruiting workforce under its organisational structure.

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On December 11, during a project-evaluation meeting, PEC suggested recruiting sufficient workforce under the DNC and bearing expenses from the department's operational budget to conduct tests.

For this reason, the project – which was supposed to start in January 2023 and continue till December 2025 – is in limbo, according to the meeting papers.

Kazi Abed Hossain, director (admin) of DNC, told The Daily Star just because the dope-test project has not been approved does not mean testing is suspended. "PEC has suggested meeting expenses from the DNC's operational budget, not any project fund."

"It may take some time to revise the

TIMELINE
Public admin ministry tells home ministry to conduct "narcotics check"
Home ministry asks its narcotics wing to take steps
DNC given the authority to conduct tests
Department prepares project proposal, sends it to home ministry
Home ministry sends proposal to planning commission
PEC decides not to approve dope tests as a project

documents, create posts in the DNC, and train those who will be appointed. But we are working and are hopeful of completing the procedures soon," Hossain added.

DNC officials say it will take at least three to four years to start dope tests using the operational budget, after finishing all the procedures.

But the problems don't end there. The finance ministry on December 13 issued a circular stating that spending money from the operational budget to buy "machinery and tools" will be completely stopped in the 2022-23 fiscal.

"Machinery and tools have to be bought to conduct dope tests. So, we will first talk with the finance ministry about PEC's opinion and then take further steps," Dulal Krishna Saha, chief chemical examinee of DNC, told The Daily Star.

A FOUR-YEAR STRUGGLE

Authorities first took the initiative for dope tests after the public administration ministry sent a letter to the home ministry on September 5, 2018, for conducting a

"narcotics check" of people who wish to get into government service.

On September 18 of that year, the home ministry asked its narcotics wing to take steps, according to a ministry circular.

At the time, a letter was also sent to the health ministry centring dope tests.

The DNC was given the authority to conduct the tests, as per the Narcotics Control Act, 2018. The department then prepared a project proposal to conduct tests and sent it to the home ministry in July 2019, according to DNC officials.

After analysing the proposal for a year, the home ministry sent it to the planning commission in July 2020, said officials.

The planning commission first held a meeting on the project in September 2020, and two years later, the PEC decided not to approve dope tests as a project.

According to PEC, one reason the project was declined was that a feasibility study is required for any project that has a budget over Tk 50 crore, but no such study has been conducted.

Furthermore, PEC said that if technical workforce is not recruited timely, then the dope-test kits that will be bought may become unusable after a period.

It also said that if tests are conducted under a project, work of the recruited workforce will end right when the project is over, which is not desirable. For this, PEC suggested creating permanent posts under the DNC.

RELATED PROJECT SITTING IDLE

In January 2019, the DNC took a project – "Establishment of Testing Laboratories of the Department of Narcotics Control in Four Divisional (Chattoagram, Barishal, Sylhet and Rajshahi) Cities" – with a budget of Tk 36 crore to facilitate dope tests.

The project was successfully implemented in July 2022, said Dulal Krishna. "We may start other activities in these labs soon, which include verifying whether seized drugs are genuine."

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AL leadership ready to face challenges Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka



Awami League has chosen experienced leadership through democratic process to face the upcoming challenges, said party General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"Awami League is united under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina," said Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister.

He was talking to journalists after paying tributes to the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in front of the Bangabandhu Bhaban in the city's Dhanmondi-32.

The AL leader said there are many challenges ahead including the global crisis situation, next general election and programmes led by BNP to oust the government. Therefore, experienced leaders have been kept to face those challenges, he added.

Quader said he became AL general secretary for the third time and his duties have increased.

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'Goal is to save people from misrule' Says BNP's Khandaker Mosharraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The goal of BNP's 10-point demand is to protect the country's people from the incumbent government's misrule, said party leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday.

"The 10-point demand include resignation of the government, dissolution of the parliament, and election under a caretaker government," said the BNP standing committee member.

He was addressing a discussion at the capital's Jatiya Press Club, organised by factions of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and Dhaka Union of Journalists, marking the death anniversary of former press club president Riaz Uddin Ahmed.

The BNP leader said his party placed state-reform proposals on what would happen after the

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One Covid death in 24hrs, positivity rate 0.44pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person died from Covid-19 in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of deaths from Covid-19 in the country is now 29,439 and the death rate stands at 1.45 percent.

At least six new coronavirus cases were reported during this period.

The daily positivity rate is 0.44 percent while the total positivity rate stands at 13.44 percent.

With the new infections, the total number of cases rose to 20,37,024, the release added.

A total of 1,372 samples were tested across the country during this period. At least 73 Covid-19 patients have recovered in this time.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 19,87,297 and the recovery rate stands at 97.56 percent, said the release.



Dengue death toll 276

Total number of patients 62,021

485 still undergoing treatment

Number of recovered patients 61,260

49 more hospitalised yesterday

SOURCE: DGHS

PRAYER TIMING
DECEMBER 26

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



There are several lidless manholes on the entire stretch of the road from Agargaon Shishu Mela to Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area. Several pedestrians have injured themselves by falling into these holes in the last few months, locals claimed. The risks get worse during the night. This photo was taken from Agargaon yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON