

27 dengue patients hospitalised in 24 hrs

STAR REPORT

A total of 27 new dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals across the country during the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

As many as 14 dengue patients were hospitalised in Dhaka and 13 were admitted to different hospitals outside Dhaka during the last 24 hours, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"No dengue-related death was reported this year. The death toll last year was 281.

With the new cases, the total number of patients rose to 242 this year while some 40 patients were released from the hospitals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) classifies dengue as one of the top 10 threats to public health.

Govt working to build smart Bangladesh Says Shahriar Alam

BSS, Rajshahi

The government is working with the determination to build a smart Bangladesh, said State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam at an event on Friday night.

"Digital Bangladesh has already been built and time has come to build a 'Smart Bangladesh' with the farsighted leadership of the prime minister," he said.

The state minister came up with the remarks while inaugurating the newly-constructed academic building of Harirampur Government Primary School under Bagha upazila in the district as the chief guest.

"We have no more time to look backward... we have to look forward as the present Bangladesh has been marching forward vibrantly," he added.

In the past, huge amount of foreign donations was brought to the country. The present Awami League government has been working to cut the foreign donation, he added.

The state minister also told the meeting that 26,000 academic buildings were constructed in addition to appointing 36,000 teachers since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came to power.

Shahriar Alam mentioned that the prime minister intends to build a happy, prosperous and non-communal Bangladesh.



As the winter chills take over the country, all residents, even the four-legged ones, are struggling to stay warm. In an effort to protect her little friends, a woman puts shirts and sweaters on two goats, hoping that this would bring some sort of relief for the animals. This photo was taken in Barishal's Babuganj area recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Nurunnahar: the one who defied all odds

Ishwardi woman brings solvency through farming, sets example for many

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Nurunnahar Begum of Boktarpur village in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila left home for love in 1994, to marry Md Rabiul Islam of the same locality. Rabiul didn't have any source of income at that time, so her family didn't approve of the wedding.

The first four years of the marriage was challenging. They had to struggle a lot to get three square meals a day. But Nurunnahar wasn't one to give up.

THE BEGINNING

"We had no earning. We couldn't even manage food often and nobody came to help. At last, I took Tk 2,000 loan from a local NGO for vegetable cultivation on 10 decimals of land. We also started rearing chickens in 1998," said Nurunnahar, talking to this newspaper.

"We earned Tk 25,000 within a year," she added.

However, she was widely criticised by the society, as the village couldn't accept the notion of a woman being the provider for her family.

But, she said, she always had the full support of her husband, which made life a lot easier for her.

Since then, she has won a host of national awards for her contributions to the country's agriculture sector, while the women of the

CHANGE MAKER



village look up to her for inspiration. **THE EXPANSION**

In 2002, she took Tk 50,000 loan from a private bank and took a lease on 5 bighas of land. She also bought two cows with the money.

"I planted carrots, cauliflowers, radishes and other seasonal vegetables on my field...", said Nurunnahar.

In 2008, she took out a Tk 5 lakh loan for fruit cultivation on additional pieces of land. She also bought five cattle for expanding her dairy farm.

Nurunnahar now operates 140 bighas

of land, where she is cultivating crops and fruits as well as raising livestock. She owns 40 to 42 bighas and took lease of the remainder.

Her dairy farm consists of over 200 cows and 200 goats. She cultivates different cash crops on 20 bighas of land, paddy on 25 bighas, and vegetable on 30 bighas. She also has a fisheries project on 7 bighas.

Nurunnahar is also involved in compost fertiliser processing work.

At present, she's not only solvent but has also employed 80 people, some of whom are women. "I started from the bottom. Now I'm very happy with where I am," she said.

With the money Nurunnahar earns, she

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

MARINE DRIVE IN COX'S BAZAR

One dead, seven injured as tourist vehicle overturns

STAR REPORT

One person died and seven were injured when a vehicle carrying tourists overturned on Cox's Bazar Marine Drive road on Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Momotaz Begum (60), from Dhaka's Wari area.

Anwarul, officer-in-charge of Ramu Police Station, said the accident occurred around 10:00pm when the driver of the vehicle, carrying 12 tourists, was returning to Cox's Bazar from Inani. The vehicle overturned on Marine Drive near Himchhari Police Station as the driver lost control of the wheels.

The accident left eight people, including the driver, injured.

The identities of the others injured could not be confirmed immediately but all the victims are relatives, said the OC.

On information, police with the help of locals rescued the victims and sent them to Cox's Bazar District Sadar Hospital. Police also seized the vehicle and kept it at Himchhari Police Station.

"Momotaz Begum died on the way to the hospital. The injured are currently undergoing treatment and three of them are in critical condition," added the OC. Meanwhile in Sirajganj, at least two people were killed and four injured in separate road accidents in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Hamidur Rahman  
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

AL always willing to talk to BNP Says agriculture minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque yesterday said Awami League will always keep the door of dialogue open for BNP.

Razzaque, also AL presidium member, said dialogue is the best way to solve any problem, so AL will always welcome such discussions.

But everything should be as per the Constitution, he mentioned.

The minister made these remarks at the golden jubilee and reunion function of Shaheed Smriti High School in Tangail's Madhupur.

He said a fair election will be held in the country in time according to the Constitution. It does not matter if BNP or anyone else refrains from participating in the polls.

"But we will try our best until the last moment

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Govt snatched away people's voting rights Alleges Zonayed Saki

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The present government has snatched all the rights of the citizens, said Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, at a programme in Chattogram yesterday.

"We will have to bring back our right to vote for the sake of establishing our democratic rights," he said.

He was addressing a meeting held commemorating Siddiquil Islam, president of Maolana Bhasani Foundation in Chattogram, who died in November last year.

The meeting was held at Chattogram Press Club.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Grabbing canals for fish cultivation

Khulna farmers bear the brunt due to a lack of irrigation water

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Farmers in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila are facing a crisis of sweet water for irrigating their agricultural land as most of the local canals have been grabbed by influential people.

Some people have turned the canals into ponds or ditches by setting up enclosures for fish farming, while others have set up illegal structures on the banks of all 25 big canals of the upazila. The situation deteriorates during winter when water of the canals dry up, making them vulnerable to encroachment.

The 4km long Hatbati and 6km long Daskatia canals play a vital role in cultivation of seasonal vegetables as several hundred farmers of Hatbati, Hogolbunia, Pathoriaghata, Baroiabad, Hetalbunia, Dakkhin Sailmari and Khalashibunia villages irrigate their lands with sweet water of the waterbodies.

But vested quarters have illegally set up over a hundred fish enclosures on the two canals.

Bidhan Biswas, a farmer of Hogolbunia village, told The Daily Star that over 1,200 farmers depend on Hatbati canal for water.

"But we are suffering from lack of water for irrigation as countless enclosures have been set up on the canal," he said.

"Our demands of freeing the canals from illegal occupation have repeatedly fallen to the deaf ears of the upazila nirbahai officer, upazila agriculture officer and local union parishad chairman," said Sukumar Bala of the same village.

In a recent visit, this correspondent saw one Krishna Biswas have occupied two-third of the Hatbati, Hetalbunia and Dashkatia canals and have built brick houses, tea stalls and cowsheds on their banks.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

Almost all canals flowing through Khulna's Batiaghata upazila have been encroached, endangering cultivation for local farmers. Some quarters have turned the canals into ponds or ditches by setting up enclosures for fish farming, while others have set up illegal structures on the banks.