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DENGUE PATIENTS

City hospitals still grappling

HELEMUL ALAM

As dengue cases continue to increase across the country, Sir Salimullah Medical College Mitford Hospital, like other city hospitals, is struggling with the mounting pressure of patients for the past week.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), five more dengue patients died and 1,239 were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning. Of them, 67 were admitted to Mitford hospital.

So far, 17,382 dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals, of which 3,365 were in Mugda, 1,134 in Mitford, and 1,259 in DMCH – the three highest dengue admissions in hospitals across the country.

Md Mehedi Hasan, an intern doctor working at Mitford's medicine ward yesterday morning, said the pressure of patients increased especially over the last five days.

"I have admitted six dengue patients at the [medicine] ward just this [yesterday] morning."

Brig Gen Quazi Md Rashid-Un-Nabi, director of the hospital, said they have been handling dengue patients since January when 34 patients were admitted. The number fell to 10 in February but later increased to 14 in March and 16 in April.

It then shot up to 120 in May and went on to 598 in June. On July 5, the number of patients was 30 and increased to 67 on Wednesday.

He added that patients are coming from outside the capital as well.

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SONGBIRDS OF THE SOUTH ... A Brahminy starling, locally known as Bamini myna, spotted on a grassland in Rajshahi. Usually seen in pairs or small flocks in open habitats on the plains of the Indian subcontinent, these passerine birds feast on fruits and nectar as well as insects together. However, they aren't as arboreal as other species and prefer foraging mostly on the ground. Interestingly though, their scientific name *Sturnia pagodarum* is believed to be based on their habit of perching on temple pagodas in southern India. Like many mynas, the Brahminy also have a wide range of calls with musical notes that are long and end abruptly. They are also known to mimic the calls of other species. Their most attractive quality, however, is their striking plumage and vividly coloured bill.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD RIDWANUR RAHMAN

BUSINESS

Exports to US slide

The slowdown in the global economy stemming from the fallout of Covid-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war sent Bangladesh's exports to the US lower last fiscal year.

Shipment to the largest export destination for the country was down 6.82 per cent at \$9.70 billion in 2022-23. It was \$10.41 billion in 2021-22, according to the Export Promotion Bureau.

Exporters are, however, hopeful that export will make a comeback after a few months thanks to the rebounding US economy.

STORY ON B1

USING NID SERVER

EC needs to monitor all its partners 24/7

Suggest experts as precaution against data leak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

IT experts recommended that the Election Commission keep round-the-clock surveillance of all the 171 partners that avail services from the National Identification (NID) server.

In addition, they suggested the EC conduct a vulnerability assessment and penetration test on the server at regular intervals to identify and address cybersecurity vulnerabilities.

The recommendations were made by teachers and IT experts from several universities at a meeting with NID server authorities at the EC office yesterday.

The meeting was held in the wake of the data leak of over five crore citizens – which includes names, birth dates, and NID numbers – from the Office of the Registrar General, Birth and Death Registration (BDRIS) website.

"NID authorities must monitor the security – including software and network securities – of its partners 24/7. Their [partners'] database should also be looked through and they should be brought under scrutiny," a meeting source said.

It must also be observed how many times the partners request service from the server to discern any possible abnormalities there, they added.

"The experts gave us suggestions on how to monitor our partners," EC's NID wing Director General AKM Humayun Kabir told reporters after the meeting.

"We took their opinions and suggestions into consideration. We will be talking to the partners to implement them. Then we will sit down with more experts."

Putin 'already lost the war' in Ukraine

Biden tells Nordic leaders, vows to protect every inch of Nato territory

AFP, Helsinki

US President Joe Biden said yesterday that Russian President Vladimir Putin has "already lost the war" in Ukraine, with Moscow running short of resources and in economic trouble.

"Putin's already lost the war," Biden told a news conference in Helsinki after talks with Nordic leaders. "There is no possibility of him winning the war in Ukraine."

He expected Ukraine's counter-offensive against the Russian invasion would lead to negotiations to end the war.

Biden said that Ukraine would one day join the Nato military alliance, but that it could not happen while Kyiv is still at war with Moscow.

The US president vowed to protect every inch of Nato territory including Finland. "The United States is committed to Finland, committed to Nato, and those commitments are rock solid."

He also said that Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin should be careful of poisoning following the mercenary group's failed uprising in Russia.

"God only knows what he's likely to do. We're not even sure where he is and what relationship he has. If I were he, I'd be careful what I ate. I'd keep my eye on my menu," Biden said.

Meanwhile, Russia responded to Nato vows of support for Ukraine with air strikes and

nuclear sabre-rattling yesterday.

Moscow's riposte came in the form of its latest aerial assault on Ukraine, with Kyiv saying early yesterday it had destroyed 20 Russian attack drones and two cruise missiles.

At least three people were killed and four people were wounded in the capital, where most of the Iranian-made drones were destroyed, Kyiv's mayor said.

In a sign of its anger at Western backing for Kyiv, Moscow said it would regard F-16 fighter jets sent to Ukraine as a "nuclear" threat because of their capacity to carry atomic bombs.

"Russia cannot ignore the ability of these aircraft to carry nuclear weapons. No amount of assurances will help here," Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov was quoted as saying by the Russian foreign ministry.

The Netherlands and Denmark are leading a plan to train Ukrainian pilots on using the US-made aircraft as part of an 11-nation coalition, after Washington authorised the move.

Russia has repeatedly engaged in nuclear rhetoric since its February 2022 invasion of its pro-Western neighbour Ukraine.

Ukrainian armed forces have received cluster munitions pledged by the United States to Kyiv to boost its slow-moving counter-offensive against the Russian invasion, a senior army official said yesterday.



Thai reformist Pita loses PM vote

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thailand's Pita Limjaroenrat vowed yesterday not to quit in his quest to become prime minister, after suffering defeat in a parliamentary vote fraught by abstentions and no-shows as conservative forces closed ranks to keep him at bay.

The leader of the progressive Move Forward Party, the surprise winners of the May 14 election, was unopposed in the showdown in the bicameral parliament, but fell 51 votes short of the top job after being thwarted by a Senate appointed by the royalist military after a 2014 coup.

Another vote is expected next week, which 42-year-old Pita can contest if nominated again by his eight-party alliance. To win he needs the votes of more than half of parliament's 749 members.

"I accept it but I'm not giving up," he told reporters. "I will not surrender and will use this time to garner more support."

The vote was a critical test of Pita's political clout and a gauge of opposition to his party's anti-establishment agenda, which includes removing the military from politics, dismantling business monopolies and changing a law that prescribes long jail terms for insulting the monarchy.

Move Forward and its alliance partner, Pheu Thai, thrashed conservative pro-military parties in the election, seen widely as a resounding rejection of nearly a decade of government led or backed by the military.

The defeat was the latest blow in a torrid two days for the US-educated Pita, who saw two legal complaints against him gain momentum on the eve of the vote, including a recommendation to disqualify him, prompting hundreds of demonstrators to gather and warn of moves afoot to keep Move Forward from power.

The cases are the latest twist in a two-decade struggle for power fraught with coups, court interventions, party dissolutions and at times violent street protests.

Pita's determination to pursue Move Forward's controversial agenda has put him at odds with a powerful nexus of conservatives and old-money families with influence over democratic institutions, which has loomed large over Thai politics for decades.



Pita Limjaroenrat

Afghan challenge set to intensify

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the format moving to the shortest one, the challenge for Bangladesh gets even more intense as the home side take on Afghanistan in the first of the two-match T20I series at the picturesque Sylhet International Cricket Stadium today, scheduled to begin at 6pm local time.

Despite a 2-1 series defeat in ODIs, a win in the third game was more than a consolation one for Bangladesh. On and off the field, it gave some much-needed momentum to the wounded Tigers after the retirement saga of Tamim Iqbal had hogged all the limelight.

Under T20I skipper Shakib Al Hasan, the hosts looked charged up and were seen enjoying themselves during the training session ahead of the series opener yesterday.

The Afghan spin threat led by skipper Rashid

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Ritu Moni and Nahida Akter celebrate while completing the winning run to cap off the three-match T20I series against their Indian counterparts with a four-wicket victory at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Although the Tigresses had already conceded the series with defeats in first two games, it was a momentous occasion for Bangladesh as they registered just their third victory over India in 16 T20I meetings. Story on Page 11.

PHOTO: BCB

Ancient Egypt artists altered their work

AFP, Paris

From subtly shifting the position of Ramses II's sceptre, to touch-ups on a necklace or headdress, ancient Egyptian artists were more creative than previously thought, according to a study published on Wednesday.

Using new portable imaging and chemical analysis techniques, an international team of scientists took a fresh look at paintings in the Valley of the Kings – a royal burial ground for pharaohs and other ancient Egyptian elites.

Egyptologists have until now considered art in these tombs to be very conventional, adhering to certain rules and using predefined patterns which were transferred onto walls.

However, a small robot moving in front of the painted walls used X-ray, ultraviolet, and infrared vision to "scrutinize" the art in-depth, much like a medical scanner, said Philippe Walter of the French centre for scientific research, CNRS, a co-author of the study published in the PLOS One journal.

On an image of Ramses II, decorating the tomb of the priest Nakhtamon, painted some 1,200 years BCE, the pharaoh is depicted in profile, wearing a necklace and headdress and holding a royal sceptre.

