



Arial beel under threat



Paper pens that grow into plants!



July set to be warmest month on record



Mbappe-PSG saga to stretch

DENGUE OUTBREAK

Deadlier than ever

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

With the city hospitals struggling to accommodate a growing number of dengue patients, deaths from the viral fever are increasing at a higher rate compared to the previous years.

Experts and doctors have attributed this year's rising death rate to late hospitalisation and second-time infection of the mosquito-borne virus.

Hospital sources say almost two-thirds of the total dengue patients this year are male. However, among the dead, the number of females is higher than the males.

In the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, only one dengue patient died in Dhaka while at least 896 were hospitalised. With this, a total of 156 people died this year. Of them, 89 are female and 67 male, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

On the other hand, of the total 28,443 dengue patients this year, 18,056 are men and 10,387 women.

In 2019, the country saw the highest number of dengue cases -- 101,354, with a death rate of 0.17 percent. The death rate is highest this year -- 0.54 percent.

"When number of patients increases, deaths also increase. Second-time dengue infection with two different

| YEAR | CASES | DEATHS | DEATH RATE |
|------|----------|--------|------------|
| 2019 | 1,01,354 | 179 | 0.17% |
| 2020 | 1,405 | 7 | 0.49% |
| 2021 | 28,429 | 105 | 0.36% |
| 2022 | 62,362 | 281 | 0.45% |
| 2023 | 28,443 | 156 | 0.54% |

TILL 21 JULY



To cope with the rising number of patients getting admitted with dengue fever, the authorities at the Mugda General Hospital have set up beds in the corridor on the ninth floor to turn it into a makeshift male dengue ward, which was at capacity yesterday morning. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Hilsa production growth rate declining

Catching jatka, use of banned nets largely to blame: experts

| YEAR-ON-YEAR HILSA PRODUCTION, GROWTH RATE | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| YEAR | PRODUCTION (TONNE) | GROWTH RATE (IN %) |
| 2021-22 | 5,66,593 | 0.24 |
| 2020-21 | 5,65,183 | 2.68 |
| 2019-20 | 5,50,428 | 3.30 |
| 2018-19 | 5,32,795 | 3.01 |
| 2017-18 | 5,17,189 | 4.18 |

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Despite an upward trend in the overall catch, year-on-year growth rate of hilsa production has been declining in recent years. The reasons include illegal netting of brood and jatka hilsa, widespread use of banned gillnet and the impact of climate change such as erratic rainfalls.

In 2021, the country lost more than 58,000 tonnes of mature hilsa due to illegal jatka netting alone. On the other hand, use of gillnet at river estuaries acts as the

biggest impediment for brood hilsa to come from sea and lay eggs in rivers, according to Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI).

To increase fish production, the government bans netting of hilsa and other endangered fish species twice a year. The first ban of the year lasts two months from March 1 to protect the fries to grow. The second ban starts on October 1 and lasts 22 days so that brood hilsa and other fish species can lay eggs.

Besides, the gillnet, a small-mesh net made of monofilament synthetic nylon fiber that is highly

effective in catching large numbers of fish, is banned in the country since 2001 to stop indiscriminate fishing and killing of aquatic species.

However, during the ban, a section of fishermen continues to catch hilsa using gillnet taking advantage of lax monitoring by law enforcers, contributing to the dwindling growth of the very popular fish in this part of the world.

GROWTH TARGET FAILS
Bangladesh is the biggest producer of hilsa in the world. But the recent

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

High price of coarse rice hurting the poor

Fish, vegetables now also dearer

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The rising prices of essential commodities are making life increasingly difficult for people, especially those from low- to middle-income groups.

Compared to last month, retail prices of coarse rice have risen by Tk 3-5 per kg, while fine rice prices remain unchanged at Tk 60-80 per kg.

Meanwhile, there is no sign of a drop in vegetable prices and within a week, fish prices have shot up by Tk 10 to Tk 100 per kg, this correspondent reports after visiting several kitchen markets in the capital.

Kamal Hossain, of Mokbul Rice Agency in Mirpur, said the wholesale price of coarse rice has increased by Tk 3-5 per kg. "The wholesale price of coarse rice is now Tk 42-46 per kg, up from Tk 40-44 last month."

"There is now a shortage of coarse rice in the market as it is off-season," he said, adding that coarse rice was sold at Tk 48-52 per kg at the retail market.

Monir Hossain Jony, a proprietor of Rony Rice Agency in Karwan Bazar, said rice comes in 50kg jute-made sacks, the cost of which remains hidden in the total price of rice.

"We always get less than 50kg in each sack from the wholesaler. To offset the deficit, we increase the price by Tk 1-2 per kg of rice," he said.

An official of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) told the correspondent that there is a shortage in the supply of coarse rice.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

AL's 'peace and development' rallies to go on in August

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since the national election is only months away, the ruling Awami League has decided to keep holding "Peace and Development" rallies throughout August.

The party usually refrains from holding large programmes in August, the month of mourning.

It has also asked its leaders to intensify activities at the grassroots.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader issued the instructions to the party leaders during a secretary-level meeting at the AL headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday.

Quader asked the leaders to publicise government's achievements alongside holding mourning day programmes.

The special extended meeting on July 30 between AL President Sheikh Hasina and leaders and elected representatives down to the thana level were also discussed.

Quader told the meeting that a rally of Rangpur division AL would be held on August 2.

Before the meeting, Quader spoke to journalists where he alleged that the BNP has started violence and killings across the country following the announcement of their one-point demand.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PLYING PRECARIOUSLY ... Despite highways being off-limits to three-wheelers, one such vehicle, locally known as a "Tom Tom", carries bunches of jute sticks on the Dhaka-Barishal highway yesterday, violating traffic laws. The vehicle is so overloaded that the driver has difficulty seeing rear traffic. The photo was taken in the Batajor area of Barishal's Gournadi upazila.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

YOUTH RALLY

BNP to urge raising voices against govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After holding youth rallies in five cities, the BNP's front and associate bodies will have their final youth rally in Dhaka at the Suhrawardy Udyan today.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, Jubo Dal, and Swechchhasebak Dal leaders said that at the rally, they would urge the youth to raise their voices for the BNP's one-point demand -- election under a non-partisan interim administration.

The three bodies have asked leaders and activists across the country to join the rally in Dhaka, said the leaders, adding that many have already reached the capital.

"Our movement is getting momentum as it is disciplined and non-violent in nature. The movement will gather more pace in the coming days as more people will join our programmes," said Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, standing committee member of the party.

The youth rally is scheduled to start at 2:00pm. BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir is expected to address the rally.

Sources said several youths will speak at the rally, including an unemployed youth, a youth from the family of an

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1