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BNP's Nayapaltan office remains locked for over two weeks since the violence centring its October 28 rally. The area also stays guarded by police. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

2 grim milestones in one day

Highest 24 deaths from dengue recorded; total fatalities cross 1,500

HELEMUL ALAM

Twenty-four dengue patients died in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, the highest number of single-day casualties from the mosquito-borne disease in the country, taking the death toll past the 1,500-mark this year.

The number of deaths is 0.5 percent of total infections this year, which shows a grim picture. According to the Directorate General of Health Services, at least 1,623 dengue patients were hospitalised across the country yesterday, raising the total number of cases to 2,96,665.

Among the 1,500 deaths this year, 868 are females and 652 males.

Death toll was the highest for patients

Optimising primary healthcare centres for treatment and utilising medical colleges for critical cases could significantly reduce fatalities.

MUSHTAQ HOSSAIN
Public health expert



aged between 36 and 40 years, as 10 percent of the casualties belonged to this age group.

Addressing the spike in dengue-related deaths this year, public health expert Mushtaq Hossain emphasised the failure to break away from traditional health management approaches.

According to Hossain, optimising primary healthcare centres for treatment and utilising medical colleges for critical cases could significantly reduce fatalities.

"The medical colleges are currently overwhelmed with both critical and normal dengue patients. Many patients are being treated on floors. It becomes difficult for even highly skilled nurses and doctors to provide quality

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Arsonists using code words: DMP Security beefed up in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arsonists are planning sabotage activities and setting buses on fire by using code words like "Bring the Coke bottle with you", "We will have breakfast after sunset", or "You are invited to have breakfast in the evening" -- in order to avoid law enforcers' vigilance, claimed police yesterday.

Biplob Kumar Sarker, joint commissioner (operation) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said cops found out about such developments after analysing cell phones of 14 arsonists arrested red-handed while setting fire to city buses.

Talking to this newspaper, Biplob said "Bring Coke bottles" means bring petrol with you, and "breakfast after sunset" means gathering in a certain area for sabotage during morning.

"All of them are involved in BNP politics," he said replying to a question.

"We have identified the people involved in the planning, preparation, and implementation of the sabotage and we will bring all of them to the book," he said.

Meanwhile, police beefed up security in the capital as the election schedule was announced yesterday.

Intelligence surveillance has been increased to prevent subversive activities, said Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (detective branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

US LETTER TO POLITICAL PARTIES

AL rejects dialogue, BNP open for talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday ruled out the possibility of engaging in dialogue with opposition parties, saying the time for dialogue is over.

However, BNP Standing Committee Member Abdul Moyeen Khan told The Daily Star that BNP is always open for dialogue.

"When will the dialogue take place? The election schedule is being announced today [yesterday]," Quader told journalists after a talk with US Ambassador Peter Haas at the secretariat.

Peter Haas visited Quader to hand over an official letter -- sent by US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu -- calling for "dialogue without preconditions" among three major parties -- Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party -- to resolve the political crisis over the

When will the dialogue take place? The election schedule is being announced today (yesterday).

OBAIDUL QUADER
AL general secretary

The dialogue has to be meaningful. Talks must aim at resolving the current political crisis in a peaceful and just manner.

MOYEEN KHAN
BNP standing committee member

upcoming election.

Quader expressed his intent to discuss the issue of the letter with party president Sheikh Hasina and other members. "We will reply after discussion," he said.

When asked if the possibility of political dialogue is being entirely ruled out, he said, "No party practising democracy can deny the need for dialogue. However, with the announcement of the election date, the focus will shift."

Following the meeting, Ambassador Haas said the US position is neutral and it does not favour or support any particular political party in Bangladesh.

"We delivered the same message that we delivered to all political parties here [in Bangladesh] that the US remains neutral ahead of the upcoming polls," he said after the meeting with Quader.

"We want free and fair elections

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Pay Tk 15 lakh to each victim family' HC directs govt over death of 104 children after drinking toxic syrup

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to constitute an independent national committee to prevent medicine adulteration in the full text of a verdict.

"Receiving all types of treatment facilities without any cost is a fundamental right of citizens as enshrined in the constitution," the HC bench of Justice Md Ashraf Kamal and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil observed in the full-text verdict.

In the judgement, the bench ordered the Directorate General of Drug Administration to pay Tk 15 lakh each to families of 104 children who died after taking toxic paracetamol syrup in 1991 and 2009. It asked the DGDA to pay the victims' families first and then collect the money from the companies or individuals responsible for producing the syrup.

HC also ordered the authorities concerned to

HC IN FULL TEXT VERDICT

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

A fatal deception

Syndicate selling cheap injections with false labels at high price; DB arrests 3 members

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

An organised syndicate has been distributing counterfeit injections in the market, which are needed for kidney dialysis, newborn jaundice prevention, and vitamin-K deficiency treatment.

Their modus operandi involves acquiring low-priced injections or medicine from the market, then putting stickers of international brands on them, and subsequently selling the products at high prices.

They distributed these products in the wholesale medicine market at Mitford, which eventually reached retail outlets nationwide.

The police's Detective Branch (DB) uncovered these activities following the arrest of three key members of the syndicate during a raid on a flat in Mohammadpur on Tuesday.

The arrestees were identified as Ashfaq Ahmed Ali, 36, Jashim Uddin, 37, and Shuvo Barman, 29.

The flat was identified as a hub for the syndicate's counterfeit pharmaceutical activities, said Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (DB) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

The DB chief said the syndicate acquired tetanus injections from the market for Tk

100 each and put seals of Switzerland-based injections over them before selling each for Tk 4,015.

These injections are administered to expecting mothers. They are mainly used to prevent child death or disability when the mother's blood group is detected negative, he said.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, an associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, cautioned against the potential harm caused by using alternative or incorrect medicine, particularly for newborns.

"For kidney dialysis, the syndicate used low-cost India-based injections, priced at Tk 500, but sold them for Tk 10,587, putting labels of a US-based company on them," he said.

Similarly, they marketed locally produced injections for treating vitamin K deficiency at Tk 690, while their actual price is Tk 20, by falsely attributing them to a French company.

"We will inform the drug administration of the investigation updates so that action

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Awami League activists bring out a procession on the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue last night, welcoming the announcement of polls schedule by the chief election commissioner. As per the announcement, the national election will be held on January 7.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Japan to provide four patrol ships to Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan will provide four patrol ships to Bangladesh as part of its Official Security Assistance (OSA) framework.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori and Bangladesh Armed Forces Division's Principal Staff Officer Lt Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman signed the deal and exchanged notes for 575 million yen (US \$3.8 million) for the ships in Dhaka yesterday.

Japan established the OSA framework this year for deepening security cooperation with recipient countries.

Bangladesh, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Fiji are the four beneficiary countries of the OSA programme, for which Japan allocated 2 billion yen for the current fiscal year.

"Bangladesh and Japan, during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4