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A tapestry of faith, tradition and unity



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Arsenal, Liverpool vie for Christmas No.1 spot



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When the ruling party does the opposition's work



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Rose Garden to regain its glory

PREVENTING DENGUE OUTBREAK

Authorities yet to take early steps

Experts warn of another deadly spell if measures not taken immediately

HELEMUL ALAM

The authorities have apparently not learned any lessons from this year's dengue outbreak that saw records tumble both in terms of death toll and hospitalisation.

City corporations and other local government bodies are yet to take any measures to prevent another deadly outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease during monsoon next year, experts say.

Judging by what happened this year, they say the situation may worsen in 2024 unless there is a proper plan and effective surveillance from the beginning.

According to entomologist GM Saifur Rahman, the authorities do not seem to be procuring the equipment needed for effective surveillance. "They are rather likely to follow the same old methods that are ineffective."

As of yesterday, over 3.20 lakh people have been diagnosed with the disease this year. Of them, 1,692 died, according to data from the Directorate General of

the process in the lean season, they will be able to lower the risks of a widespread outbreak," he says.

He recommends using devices called ultra-low volume machines that spray pesticide in the air in the form of a mist.

Unless the management is efficient and free of corruption, modern equipment alone will not control the Aedes population, he says.

Awareness among people can also play a key role in reducing the number of breeding grounds, he adds.

Entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University recommends that the government make a national plan outlining the ways to control Aedes mosquitoes and the type of insecticide to use.

The local government ministry should train employees of the city corporations, zila parishads, and union parishads, he adds.

Muhammad Tajul Islam, minister for local government and rural development, also has fears of another dengue outbreak.



Women competing in a boat race, locally called "Donga Baich", on the Rangpur Katakhal in Khulna's Dumuria upazila. Fifty-seven teams of men and women from nearby villages took part in the race, organised yesterday by Rangpur Union Parishad. The event, which is held in December every year marking the Victory Day, drew a huge crowd to the banks of the canal.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

DENGUE IN 2023		Death toll	1,692
		Cases	3,20,055
		Deaths in Dhaka	975
		Cases in Dhaka	109,713
		Deadliest month	September

Health Services.

Saifur points out that the data does not reflect the real picture because a large number of dengue infections and subsequent deaths go unreported.

A case is recorded only when an individual receives inpatient treatment at one of the 138 hospitals that send information to the DGHS. The rest of the country's around 16,000 facilities do not provide the health directorate with data.

Dengue is a reportable disease in many countries, meaning data on every single patient is recorded, Saifur adds.

Entomologist Manzur A Chowdhury says in the absence of data on the exact number of patients, their locations and distribution of serotypes or closely related forms of the virus, the vector control programme would not be effective.

"Without information, it is not possible to kill adult mosquitoes and destroy the larvae in clusters," he adds.

The government should start surveillance from January. "If they start

"We will start our activities in January. But it is not possible for the city corporations alone to fight the menace. Everyone, especially the residents, will have to come forward," he said.

The breeding grounds of Aedes are mainly in the houses, rooftops and yards, he says, adding that the authorities mainly conduct anti-mosquito drives outside the houses, but mosquitoes usually stay inside.

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Md Atiqul Islam said the corporation sought 10 entomologists from the agriculture ministry to conduct surveys to know about the density of Aedes mosquitoes round the year.

"But it will not be possible for us to start the work with the entomologists before February because of the national election and some other matters," he says.

Dhaka South City Corporation's Chief Health Officer Fazle Shamsul Kabir says the corporation's emphasis is on awareness campaigns, and the plans for next year will be disclosed soon.

OUST-GOVT MOVEMENT

BNP hopeful of keeping people from election

Rizvi says 60 lakh leaflets distributed in 2 days to garner public support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP and like-minded political parties yesterday continued distributing leaflets among the people to mobilise public opinion in favour of boycotting the January 7 polls and their non-cooperation movement.

Some 60 lakh leaflets have been distributed across the country in the first two days of the three-day programme, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told The Daily Star.

"We have received a huge response. We are hopeful that people will not go to the polling centres to cast their votes," he said.

Meanwhile, BNP and its allies will enforce a nationwide dawn-to-dusk blockade of road, rail, and river routes from 6:00am tomorrow to press home their demand for the general election under a non-party neutral government.

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JANUARY 7 ELECTION

Army, BGB to be on duty for 13 days

Deployment on December 29 as striking, mobile forces

7.47 lakh law enforcers to be deployed

Army, BGB, Coast Guard, Rab will remain deployed from Dec 29 to Jan 10

Bikes won't be allowed on roads for 72hrs from Jan 5 midnight

Ban on plying of all vehicles for 24hrs from Jan 6 midnight

RESTRICTIONS ON CARRYING, DISPLAYING LEGAL ARMS UNTIL JAN 9

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Members of BGB, coast guard and Rab will remain deployed for 13 days from December 29 to assist the civil administration during the parliamentary polls, the home ministry said yesterday.

During the last national election in 2018, these forces were deployed for eight days.

According to a circular of the home ministry, armed forces personnel will also carry out duties for 13 days from December 29.

Armed forces personnel were deployed for 10 days during the 2018 polls, sources in the Election Commission said.

EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said the decision on deploying the forces was made keeping in mind the overall situation in the country.

"Some people are saying that they will resist the polls. This might be another reason for keeping the forces on the ground for more days this time," he told The Daily Star.

A total of 27 registered political parties, including the ruling Awami League and its 14-party alliance partners, are participating in the January 7 polls.

The BNP and like-minded parties are among the 17 political parties who are boycotting the

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Services of four trains halted for fear of sabotage

Bangladesh Railway also curtails route of another

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid increasing acts of sabotage, Bangladesh Railway has suspended operations of four trains on different routes.

Of them, services of Uttara Express, a popular local train that travels between Rajshahi and Dinajpur's Parbatipur, were halted from yesterday, Ashim Kumar Talukder, general manager of BR's west zone, told The Daily Star.

"We did it as we think it is not safe to operate the train," he said.

On December 15, the services of a Dhaka-Narayanganj commuter train and a Mymensingh-Bhuapur local train were suspended while the operations of another Ishwardi-Rajshahi local train got suspended on December 16.

Besides, the route on which inter-city Jamuna Express travels was curtailed from December 15. The train used to operate between Dhaka and Jamalpur's Tarakandi, but it now only runs from Dhaka to Jamalpur town.

Shafiqur Rahman, divisional railway manager of Dhaka, yesterday informed reporters of the developments at Kamalapur Railway Station.

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Dhaka South City Corporation is dredging to recover this old channel of the Buriganga, but some traders are still doing business encroaching on the river in Lalbagh's Shahidnagar area. They have set up illegal structures to recycle dumped plastic goods. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

MOHANGANJ EXPRESS FIRE

UN urges govt to 'fully probe' arson attack

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations wants to see a full investigation into the arson attack on a moving train in Dhaka that claimed the lives of four people, including a mother and her child, on December 19.

"I think it is incumbent on the authorities in Bangladesh to fully investigate the source and to bring those responsible to justice," Spokesman for the UN Secretary-General, Stéphane Dujarric, told reporters in a regular briefing in New York yesterday.

The UN extended its condolences to all the victims of the arson attack.

Responding to a question, Stéphane Dujarric also said they call for "free and fair" elections in Bangladesh where people can vote without any sort of intimidation.

"We may have things to say after the elections, but our position remains unchanged," he said.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has said the government and people of Bangladesh "stand firmly" against terrorism and acts of violence as the election draws near.

"They are determined to uphold peace and continue the country's socio-economic development, despite these challenges," said the MoFA on Thursday.