



PNEUMONIA SURGE

Shishu Hospital overwhelmed by patients

Experts blame air pollution

AHMED DEEPTO

With an oxygen mask on and a cannula attached to one hand, three-year-old Farhana Akhtar was lying in her bed in the pneumonia ward of Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Institute, still struggling to breathe.

Her mother Habiba Akhter sat at one corner of the bed, staring blankly at her daughter, while the father, Abbas Uddin, waited outside the ward.

A resident of Keraniganj, Abbas, in his early 40s, said his child had been suffering for almost two weeks.

"She contracted both pneumonia and asthma, and was in the ICU for five days. She was moved to the ward after her condition improved but the progress has been slow since then."

The ward, with 19 seats, is now completely full, as the 681-bed hospital has been witnessing a surge in pneumonia cases since the arrival of winter.

In the first 19 days of this month, 372 children with pneumonia were admitted to the hospital. The number of such patients admitted last month was 388, according to the hospital data.

On December 18 alone, 17 children were admitted to the hospital with pneumonia.

However, the number of admitted patients dropped to 298 by yesterday, as many children were released after recovery.

In October and November, some 345 and 388 children were hospitalised

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Shoriful Islam breaks into wild celebration after taking the wicket of New Zealand's Tom Latham in the third ODI, which Bangladesh won by nine wickets at the McLean Park in Napier, ending an 18-match losing streak against the Kiwis in New Zealand.

PHOTO: AFP

Tigers break the duck in New Zealand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh ended their 18-match losing streak in ODIs against the hosts in New Zealand with a crushing nine-wicket victory in the dead-rubber third ODI of the three-match series at the McLean Park in Napier yesterday.

The pacers set up the stunning victory for the Tigers with Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Shoriful Islam and Soumya Sarkar picking up three wickets each to bundle out New Zealand for a mere 98 in 31.4 overs, their lowest ever total against Bangladesh in ODIs.

Only two Kiwi batters – Will Young and Tom Latham – could get into 20s as the Bangladesh quicks made full use of the helpful conditions.

Bangladesh chased down the total with 209 balls to spare, their third biggest victory in ODIs in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Israeli strikes kill 201 in Gaza in 24 hours

Says Palestinian health ministry; new evacuation order asks residents to move for security; UN says 'nowhere is safe'

AGENCIES

Palestinians wept and prayed for their dead yesterday after fresh Israeli strikes followed a UN Security Council resolution that demanded more aid be allowed into Gaza but did not call for an immediate halt to fighting.

The health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip reported 18 people killed in a strike on a house at the central Nuseirat refugee camp, and said other targets were hit up and down the Gaza Strip, reports AFP.

The Palestinian health ministry issued a statement saying at least 201 Palestinians have been killed and 368 others injured in Gaza over the past 24 hours.

Since October 7, the total death toll of Palestinians killed in Israeli attacks in the impoverished strip has reached 20,258 people, with 53,688 more injured, the statement added, according to Reuters.

Yesterday's bombardments came after the Security Council approved a resolution demanding "immediate, safe and unhindered" deliveries of life-saving aid be rushed to Gaza "at scale".

It also called for creation of "conditions for a sustainable cessation of hostilities," but did not seek an immediate end to combat.

Members had wrangled for days over the wording.

At Washington's insistence, they toned down some provisions and avoided calling for a ceasefire.

It is still unclear what, if any, impact the vote will have on the ground where Palestinians have been forced into crowded shelters or tents, struggling to find food, fuel, water and medical care.

Israel has repeatedly told Palestinians to make their way to areas in the tiny territory it says are safe, but even when they do residents say they still have been bombarded.

Many Gazans have been forced to move multiple times.

On Friday thousands fled central Gaza after an army evacuation order. It warned residents of Bureij, a refugee camp established about 70 years ago, to move "for their own security" towards Deir al-Balah city further south.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said the latest evacuation order would affect more than 150,000 people.

"The Israeli army just orders people to move into areas where there are ongoing air strikes," Thomas White, UNRWA's Gaza director, wrote on social media.

Country facing a third election with clearly predictable outcome

Says eminent economist Prof Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is facing the possibility of a third election in which the basic preconditions for a competitive and inclusive election are not really going to be fulfilled, eminent economist Professor Rehman Sobhan said yesterday.

"Now, needless to say, the reasons which have never been entirely made clear we chose to do away with the system of caretaker governments," he said at a book launch at the capital's Bangla Academy.

"And the outcome, of course, has been visible enough. We had two elections, whose credibility has certainly been questioned, not just here, but internationally. And we are now facing the possibility of an election again, whose outcome is very clearly predictable.

"Obviously, the major opposition party is incarcerated or is in a fugitive condition. And the only contestants are going to be people from the ruling gharana, or people who are uncertain about their political identity, and what you may see a genius-like face where it's one side of your face, you are the opposition, and the other, you are the election partner, where you solicit for being gifted seats to

contest the election. No one can take that sort of political party very seriously.

The books unveiled at the event were Ekattorer Dinponji: Muktiyuddher Dainik Ghotonalipi edited by Sajjad Sharif and Muktiyuddhe Shahid Buddhijibi: Smriti Jibon Juddho edited by Anisul Hoque.

As the featured speaker at the event organised by Prothom Alo, Prof Sobhan delivered a speech titled Obyahata Muktiyuddho which translates as Continued Liberation War.

"We should keep in mind that the liberation struggle itself originated in the attempt to build a democratic society in the denial of democracy, which was a singular element in the creation and perpetuation of economic disparities, and the political injustice, because in order to create that unequal society, it could only be done through a process of denial of democracy," he said.

"So, looking at the state of democracy, we see that over a 52-year period, we have not really been able to consolidate and build a sustainable democratic system in a culture in our society.

"After 52 years, we are still trying to work out

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



'Martian material' could be giant leap for clean energy

INDEPENDENT ONLINE

Scientists have developed a new material from a mineral abundant on Mars that they claim could open the door to sustainable habitation on the red planet.

Researchers assessed the potential of a type of nanomaterials – ultrasmall components thousands of times smaller than a human hair – for clean energy production and building materials on Mars.

The study, published in the journal Advanced Functional Materials, found that a material typically considered a waste product by NASA can be altered to provide clean energy and sustainable electronics.

On Mars, the mineral gypsum – calcium sulphate – is known to exist in large deposits, and is believed to contain most of the Red Planet's primordial water content.

Several NASA-funded research

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



Farmers working in a potato field in Bogura's Shibganj upazila yesterday. The growers say they will have lower output this year compared to last year due to unfavourable weather and fungal disease. The crop will be harvested in February.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

JP contesting polls for sake of its existence

GM Quader to party leaders, kicks off electioneering in Rangpur-3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader has said his party is participating in the national polls to make sure the party exists.

"We are running in the election as we need to represent in parliament. It will be beneficial for us to stay in the electoral race and strengthen our organisation," he said.

Quader was speaking at a meeting yesterday with JP leaders and activists at its office on Rangpur city's Central Road. Journalists were also present.

The JP chief, an aspirant for Rangpur-3 (Sadar), said if the election is not held in a free and fair manner, they would decide the next course of action following discussions in the party.

He said the JP may cease to exist if it is not represented

As there is no risk to Awami League's staying in power, we hope the party will take necessary measures to hold the election in a free and fair manner.

GM QUADER
Chairman of Jatiya Party

in the Jatiya Sangsad. "We have decided to run to keep the Jatiya Party's unity intact."

This was Quader's first public appearance since October 14.

About not appearing before the public for more than two months, JP chairman said, "I was at a loss as to what to say as the political situation in the country was changing continuously.

"I wasn't clear about what's good and what's bad. That's why I kept mum."

Quader said he was focusing on finding out the better option for the JP.

Asked whether the January 7 election would be free and fair, Quader said they were hoping so.

He, however, expressed worries that this hope may turn into frustration in no time.

"As there is no risk to Awami League's staying in power, we hope the party will take necessary measures to hold the election in a free and fair manner."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Today is the 50th Death Anniversary of
Begum Firdaus Rizvi

We request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to remember her in their prayers and to pray for eternal peace of her soul