

Changes being made to keep pace with world Says PM on new curriculum

UNB, Dhaka
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said changes are being made in the curriculum as the government wants to develop an education system of international standard in Bangladesh.

"We want our country to move, keeping pace with the world. This is why the changes are being made in the curriculum," she said while opening the free textbook distribution among students up to secondary level for the 2024 academic year.

She launched the event at her office by handing over books to students of pre-primary, primary and secondary levels in the morning.

Hasina said she considers expenses for education as investment.

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These youngsters had an exciting day at the PMO yesterday. Not only Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over free textbooks to them, she also treated them with chocolates. The premier also launched the free textbook distribution programme among students for the 2024 academic year.

PHOTO: PID

Yunus case verdict today COURT CORRESPONDENT

The verdict of a labour law violation case filed against Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and three top officials of Grameen Telecom is set to be delivered today.

Sheikh Merina Sultana, chairman of the Third Labour Court of Dhaka, on December 24 set the date after hearing closing arguments from the defence and prosecution.

Prof Yunus is the chairman of Grameen Telecom, while its top officials are Ashraful Hassan, Nurjahan Begum and Mohammad Shahjahan.

On June 6, the court framed charges against them. It also recorded statements of four prosecution witnesses.

On September 9, 2021, Labour Inspector (general) SM Arifuzzaman of the Inspection for Factories and Establishments Department filed the case with the Third Labour Court of Dhaka.

According to the case documents, IFED officials on August 16, 2021, inspected the office of Grameen Telecom in the capital's Mirpur and found several violations of labour laws.

'Upcoming polls more like an AL council'

Says ASK while presenting 2023 human rights report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sense of unease has gripped the country, said human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra's Executive Committee Chairperson Advocate ZI Khan Panna yesterday.

He was speaking at an event while describing the country's rights situation ahead of the national polls. He said they (rights activists) are living in such a situation that none of his colleagues dared to speak at the programme, fearing arrests and jail.

"That's why, I am the one speaking in front of you," Panna said in reply to questions from journalists after the rights body presented the report on human rights situation, at Jatiya Press Club.

"We are struggling as our funds have not been released [by the government body] since the last year. Some of our colleagues have left the organisation."

"Previously, the number of our staffers was over 200. Now it stands at 22. Some of them are working voluntarily," he added.

At the press conference, ASK Executive Director Faruq Faisal read out the written copy of the 2023 Human Rights Situation Report.

The report said there were allegations of obstruction of peaceful assembly, "ghost" cases by law enforcement agencies, political arrests, extrajudicial killings, torture in custody, illegal conduct by members of law enforcement agencies, disappearance after detention, and violence against women and children this year.

ASK said as 14 political parties, including the main opposition BNP, have boycotted the election, many questions and concerns have been raised in the country and abroad about the acceptability of the polls.

Panna termed the upcoming national election a "council of Awami League".

"The election, which is being conducted for one party, mirrors the voting in the Awami League

2023 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT BY ASK	
Incidents	Numbers
Death in law enforcers' custody	18
Death in jail	105
Killed in gunfight	2
Abducted using law enforcers' identity	9
Killed in political violence	45
Journalist tortured, harassed	290
Women raped	573
Children raped	314
Children killed	484
Attack on Hindus	21
Shot dead by BSF	30
Killed by mob	51

council, with alliance members participating. It is very shameful that we are being deprived of the right to elect public representatives by voting," he added.

At least 1,512 opposition party leaders and activists have been sentenced in 92 cases in the last five months in Dhaka, ASK said citing media reports.

Rival candidates' election camps and rallies are facing attacks, with workers being beaten and threatened, ASK added.

In 2023, at least 45 people were killed and at least 6,978 injured in various political conflicts, according to ASK.

The right to hold peaceful protests or assemblies is a constitutional right. But this right is gradually shrinking in Bangladesh. The law enforcement

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Fakhrul's bail hearing Jan 9 COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set January 9 for hearing the bail petitions in nine cases filed against BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir over political violence in the capital centring BNP's rally on October 28.

Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury fixed the date, following defence petitions submitted before the court on Thursday, Fakhrul's lawyer Sheikh Shakil Ahmed Ripon told The Daily Star.

On December 18, the High Court directed the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka to accept, hear and dispose of the bail petitions of Fakhrul.

On October 29, Fakhrul was arrested in a case filed with Ramna Police Station over the attack on the residence of the chief justice during a clash with police on October 28.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 1

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:30	12:45	4:00	5:30	7:00
JAMAAT 6:05	1:15	4:15	5:35	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

2023: the year of dengue devastation

Experts urge for early steps to prevent similar outbreak

HELEMUL ALAM

The year 2023 is marked by the worst outbreak of dengue since the disease's first official appearance in 2000. The country witnessed 1,705 dengue-related deaths and a total of 321,179 reported cases this year.

In 2000, the nation experienced 93 deaths and 5,551 cases, with the highest recorded death toll before 2023 being 281 in 2022. The highest number of cases before this year was 101,354 in 2019.

In 2023, dengue fatalities saw 970 female and 735 male victims, while in terms of cases, 60 percent were male and 40 percent female. The 36 to 40 age group accounted for 10 percent of the total deaths whereas the 21 to 25 age group led with 14 percent of the reported cases.

Notably, Mugda Medical College and Hospital topped the list with 13,505 cases, while Dhaka Medical College Hospital reported the highest number of deaths - 253.

One of the main reasons behind dengue deaths this year was second-time infection, while other reasons include late hospitalisation and comorbidity, according to the recent findings of the death review committee of Directorate General of Health Services.

DENGUE SCOURGE		
YEAR	CASELOAD	DEATHS
2016	6,060	14
2017	2,769	8
2018	10,148	26
2019	1,01,354	179
2020	1,405	7
2021	28,429	105
2022	62,382	281
2023	3,21,179	1,705

"In our review, we've tried to find the reasons for this year's severity [of the infection]. We found that most of the patients were infected [with dengue] for the second time, which increased the mortality rate," said Prof Ahmedul Kabir, head of the committee and additional director general (administration) of the DGHS.

Experts identified changing patterns of the dengue virus, false results in testing kits, and the presence of serotypes DEN-2 and DEN-3 among other reasons for the staggering number of deaths this year.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, said, "This year we got many patients coming to hospital in critical conditions within just a few days of getting infected."

In many cases, he said, test kits give false results. "As a result, patients end up coming to hospital only when their condition is already critical."

"Among the four dengue serotypes, 2 and 3 are most dangerous," he added.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman advised the authorities concerned to take necessary steps from the beginning of January to control dengue in 2024.

The authorities do not seem to be procuring the equipment needed for effective surveillance, he said. "They are rather likely to follow the same old methods that are ineffective," he added.

He pointed out that the data of 2023 does not reflect the real picture because a large number of dengue infections and subsequent deaths go unreported.

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