



Zero dengue deaths in last 24 hours

UNB, Dhaka

No fresh deaths due to dengue were reported in the country in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

During the period, 85 more patients, including 26 in the capital, were hospitalised with the viral fever across the country.

A total of 3,21,179 dengue cases and 3,18,749 recoveries were recorded last year by DGHS.

Last year, September was the deadliest month for the dengue outbreak, with 396 fatalities and 79,598 cases, according to the DGHS data.

The country witnessed 1,705 dengue-related deaths and a total of 3,21,179 reported cases in 2023, the highest since the disease's first official outbreak in 2000.



A makeshift campaign office of an independent candidate has been set up capturing almost half of the footpath near Dhaka Zoo in Mirpur, obstructing pedestrians. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

2019 VIOLENCE

18 more BNP men sentenced

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 18 leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations were sentenced to three years' imprisonment over political violence in the capital's Chawkbazar in 2019.

With this, at least 1,540 BNP Jamaat activists have been jailed since November 7 this year in 92 cases lodged between June 2010 and December 2019 on charges of illegal gathering on the streets, rioting, damaging properties, arson attacks on vehicles, vandalism, and assaulting the law enforcers and obstructing them from discharging duties.

Yesterday, only two convicts were present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Afnan Sumi delivered the verdict.

BNP's Dhaka south city unit joint secretary Anwar Pervej Badal, Jubo Dal joint general secretary Mir Newaj Ali, and its Chawkbazar unit convener Safa Karim Lucky Shah are among the convicts.

The court, however, acquitted Mir Ashraf Ali Ajam from the case as the charges framed against him were not proved. During the trial, four prosecution witnesses testified before the court.

According to the case documents, on December 8, 2019, a group of leaders and activists of BNP brought out a protest procession in the Chawkbazar area, demanding release of BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia.

They then assaulted the law enforcers. Following the incident, sub-inspector Gias Uddin filed a case with Chawkbazar Police Station.



New year brings 'very unhealthy' air

Dec 31 celebrations exacerbate Dhaka's air, noise pollution, says study

MD ABBAS

On the first day of 2024, Dhaka's air quality was categorised as "very unhealthy" with an Air Quality Index (AQI) score of 259, posing a serious health risk to residents, according to a study.

This represented a 39-point increase compared to the previous day, the last day of 2023.

The increase in air pollution is due to the celebration of the new year with firecrackers and lanterns, said the study.

The Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS) released a study titled "Research Report on Air and Sound Pollution Due to Firecrackers and Lanterns for New Year Celebration," revealing that the capital's AQI increased to 259, up from 220 on December 31.

If the AQI remains below 50, it is considered "healthy." It is deemed "very unhealthy" if the AQI stays between 201 and 300 and considered "seriously unhealthy" if it reaches 301 to 500.

For the past seven years, the research team has been monitoring the intensity of air and noise pollution during the English New Year celebrations.

They have also been measuring the difference in air and noise pollution in the hours before and after New Year celebrations.

The study reveals a significant change in Dhaka's AQI on the first



AQI UNDER 50 IS CONSIDERED 'HEALTHY'

Year	AQI (Dec 31)	AQI (Jan 1)
2023-24	205	241
2022-23	267	284
2021-22	227	172
2020-21	223	239
2019-20	233	319

Source: Center for Atmospheric Pollution studies (CAPS)

day of January compared to the last day of December for the last seven years.

Analysing the data, the research team observed that the AQI has increased by a minimum of six percent to a maximum of 66 percent from December 31 to January 1.

During this period, Dhaka's AQI consistently remained in the categories of "very unhealthy" and "seriously unhealthy".

The air pollution from 11:00pm to 11:59pm on December 31, 2023, increased by 64 micrograms per cubic meter. It was 91 micrograms during the same time in 2022, the report said.

Additionally, it noted that when compared to the previous year, the pollution (due to new year celebrations), had decreased by 1 percent.

"When the clock struck 12:00am, the pollution began to rise. At 1:00am, the air pollution per cubic metre increased by 249 microgrammes [from 64]," said CAPS Chairman Prof Ahmad Kamruzzaman Majumder, who is also a dean at the Faculty of Science at Stamford University Bangladesh.

Prof Kamruzzaman, also joint secretary at Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), pointed out that the celebration of the English New Year not only contributes to air pollution but also generates noise pollution.

"Before 12:00am, the average Leq [Equivalent Continuous Sound Level] remains at 48 to 70 decibels. However, after 12:00am, the Leq rises to 85 to 110 decibels, which poses a serious threat to human health," he explained.

He added that the trend of noise pollution over the past seven years due to New Year celebrations has remained consistently noisy.

2023: A distressing year for women and children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The year 2023 unfolded as a distressing year for women and children in Bangladesh.

The most recent data released by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad painted a grim picture — revealing a total of 2,937 incidents of torture and sexual violence against children and women throughout the country from January to December 2023.

While the death penalty has been imposed for rape, the incidence of such cases has not seen a decrease. According to the parishad data, a total of 639 women and girls were raped during this period, with 431 of them being girls.

Among the reported cases, 140 women were gang-raped, 69 of them being girls. Shockingly, 34 individuals were killed following the rape, including 25 girls, and an additional 14 tragically took their own lives, including nine girls.

Another 98 women, including 68 girls, faced rape attempts in the past year, while 149 women, including 103 girls, faced other forms of sexual violence in this period, following which eight girls and a woman died by suicide.

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The organisation compiled this information based on reports from 12 national dailies.

Although acid attacks are on the decline, eight women, including four girls, fell victim to such attacks in 2023.

Furthermore, 34 women and girls faced fire accidents, resulting in the death of 20 women. Another 13 women, including 10 girls, were trafficked.

A total of 499 women, including 87 girls, were killed for various reasons, while 19 women and girls faced attempts of murder. In addition, 266 women, including 74 girls, died mysteriously in the past year.

Dowry-related violence affected 122 women and girls, with 52 of them dying. Additionally, 231 women, including 83 girls, experienced physical violence, and 32 reportedly faced domestic violence in 2023.

The period also witnessed the abduction of 115 women and 132 girls.

Notably, cases of cyber violence and child marriages were relatively low, suggesting that many incidents go unreported.

BNP extends mass contact till Jan 4

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP and its allies extended their ongoing mass outreach and leaflet distribution programme for three more days, starting today, to garner public support for the party's call to boycott the January 7 election.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi made the announcement at a virtual press briefing yesterday afternoon.

"The mass outreach programme will be held on January 2, 3, and 4, in favour of the polls boycott and non-cooperation movement, along with the resignation of Awami League government and the reinstatement of neutral polls-time caretaker government system," said Rizvi.

At least 235 BNP leaders and activists have been arrested across the country in the 24 hours preceding yesterday afternoon, and twelve cases were filed accusing 983 BNP members, he said.

Meanwhile, since October 29, BNP has enforced four rounds of strikes and 12 rounds of blockades.

DSCC 'RED ZONE'

Hawkers reclaim GULISTAN

DIPAN NANDY

Dhaka South City Corporation is facing a tough challenge in keeping hawkers away from the red zone areas that have been designated as hawker-free.

Despite repeated efforts by the mobile court to clear these critical zones, the "red" marked roads, initially intended for uninterrupted movement, keep becoming havens for hawkers again and again.

On September 7, 2022, the DSCC announced that it would introduce a new system where city roads would be divided into three categories — red, yellow, and green. Red zones would be completely off-limits to hawkers.

Consequently, it launched a drive on September 13, 2022, to evict hawkers from roads and footpaths in the capital's Gulistan, a red zone. The total area of the red zone was — Zero Point (Nur Hossain Chataar) to Ahad Police Box through Bangabandhu Avenue.

Earlier, in 2017, DSCC prepared a list of around 6,000 hawkers in different areas and allocated Tk 3 crore for shifting them, but the plan failed as evicted hawkers returned to footpaths in areas like Gulistan and Motijheel.

In a recent visit to the GPO intersection

in Gulistan, this correspondent saw that the evicted hawkers relocated to the footpaths.

Despite eviction campaigns, hawkers are quick to resurface shortly after being removed and reclaim the areas.

The area around Zero Point and Baitul Mukarram in Gulistan, initially marked as

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Kalam, a cloth seller on the footpath, said, "We don't have huge capital for business. So we sit on the footpaths. If the government makes a permanent building for us, we won't need to sit here."

Tabarul, another cloth seller, echoed Kalam.

"DSCC removed us from here in 2022, and we sat again later. We have to



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

As soon as dawn breaks in Khulna, Shahidul Molla sets off with his array of colourful balloons. He sells each piece for Tk 50. Needless to say, Shahidul remains a very popular figure among children across various city alleys and lanes. The photo was taken yesterday in Nurmagar area.