



Eighteen more hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eighteen dengue patients were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning, five of whom are from Dhaka.

The total number of cases this year rose to 803, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At least 152 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment at different hospitals across the country. Among the total cases, 640 patients have already been released.

Last year, the country witnessed 1,705 dengue-related deaths and a total of 321,179 reported cases.

Delegation led by Hasan Mahmud in Uganda for NAM Summit

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud is leading the Bangladesh delegation at the two-day 19th NAM Summit, which began yesterday in Kampala, Uganda.

The 19th NAM Summit, themed: "Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence", will continue till today at the Speke Resort Munonyo Convention Centre.

The foreign minister reached Kampala yesterday afternoon, said a senior official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Established in 1961, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which shares 44 of its 120 members with the Commonwealth, is a grouping of mostly developing countries working together to advance shared interests.

After attending the 19th NAM Summit the minister will lead the Bangladesh delegation at the "South Summit" which will be held with the theme "Leaving No One Behind."

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and Bangladesh envoys to the UN and Kenya are also in Uganda to attend the NAM and South summits.

The South Summit aims at boosting South-

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Where the buffalo no longer roam

Coastal herders struggle to survive as erosion swallows 13 sq km of Urir Char island; many climate victims relocating to Chattogram's Sandwip



SIFAYET ULLAH

At the break of dawn, Amir Hossain gets out of bed and steps into his Bathan, a shed where animals are housed and maintained. He starts his day by milking buffaloes, a routine he has maintained for almost a decade now.

However, his life changed three years ago when he was forced out of his island home of Urir Char along with his 43 buffaloes, leaving behind his family and

Water Development Board (WDB).

Since its formation, the island has eroded by two-thirds. Many climate stressors are active here, including coastal erosion, cyclones, drought, and heavy rainfall,

malnourished and weak.

"They are struggling to adapt to the new environment," said Sayeed.

When asked why he had to leave, he replied, "We had no choice," blaming the lack of grazing land on Urir Char.

Due to the migration, the buffalo population in Urir Char dropped to 5,742 from around 35,000 in the last 10 years, according to the livestock department.

Urir Char is an island in the Bay of Bengal located near the Sandwip channel in Chattogram. It emerged in 1971, and over 12,000 people are currently living on the island.

Satellite images obtained by The Daily Star show a significant section of the island's western part has submerged in the sea over the past two decades.

Mohammad Abdur Rahman, director of the Center for People and Environment, said, "Climate change has jeopardised the primary economic support for coastal residents, which is livestock, leading to a financial crisis for those along the coastline."

Ali Azam, the upazila livestock officer of Sandwip, said, "The main factor contributing to the decline in buffalo population on this island is erosion." **WHY DO COASTAL PEOPLE NEED LIVESTOCK?**

Buffalo, being more resistant to salinity than other livestock, enables coastal residents to earn a living by raising them along the coast. The sustainability of buffalo rearing is crucial for the livelihoods of these coastal

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Buffalo herds bathing in golden dawn, their hooves making a mark on sun-kissed earth and herders leading these horned giants to lush green pastures -- scenes like these can no longer be seen in Urir Char due to climate change.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



friends. Now he is a climate refugee living in Chattogram's Sandwip upazila.

At least 200 coastal herders on the island shared the same fate, fleeing from their homes in the face of relentless tides.

With grazing land or pastures vanishing due to erosion and the buffalo population dwindling, these coastal herders had no choice but to migrate to a greener place.

Erosion, influenced by rising sea levels due to the impacts of the climate crisis, claimed 13 square kilometres of the island in the last decade alone, according to the

according to a study titled "Washed away: the impact of climate change-induced coastal erosion in Urir Char".

"Erosion engulfed many pastures in Urir Char, so we couldn't afford to stay there any longer. Our buffaloes need food, and there wasn't any of that left," said Amir.

In Amanullah area of Sandwip, which is 25km from the island, this correspondent met one Mohammad Sayeed.

His move from Urir Char had claimed a heavy price -- six of his buffalo calves were lost to the harsh winter of their new home. The remaining 37 buffaloes appeared



TIB report on polls reflects public opinion

Says BNP

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday said the report of Transparency International Bangladesh on the 12th parliamentary election is based on facts and reflects public opinion.

He also said BNP, together with the people of the country, will restore democracy in the country by toppling the current regime through a street movement with fresh programmes.

Nazrul made the comments while talking to reporters after paying his respects to BNP founder Ziaur Rahman at his Sher-e-Bangla Nagar grave on the occasion of his 88th birth anniversary.

Asked about his thoughts on the ministers' comment opposing TIB's findings on polls, the BNP leader said, "Everyone is saying that the election was rigged with irregularities. So, TIB's findings are a reflection of public opinion."

Nazrul said what BNP has been saying about the election is also a reflection of public opinion. "So, TIB did not say this [election was not fair] to please BNP. Its findings are based on fact," added Nazrul, a BNP standing committee member.

Leaders and activists of BNP and its associate bodies, led by the members of the party standing committee, paid homage to Ziaur Rahman by placing wreaths at his grave and observed the occasion with various programmes yesterday.

On Wednesday, TIB described the 12th parliamentary election as a one-sided affair that was staged to appear competitive.

At a press conference, TIB also unveiled the primary findings of their study on the January 7 polls and said such an election was an "ominous sign" for the country's democracy.

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BNP boycotting polls a conspiracy against country

Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said by not participating in the 12th national polls, BNP took part in a conspiracy against the country's sovereignty.

The road transport and bridges minister made the remark while speaking at a press conference at the AL president's Dhanmondi political office in Dhaka.

Quader said the election would have been more competitive if BNP participated in it.

"Yet, the election was not voter-less or uncompetitive, even though BNP did not participate in it. The party's election boycott is part of a conspiracy against the country's sovereignty," he added.

He said in many countries around the world, despite the participation of all political parties, the voter turnout is not seen above 40 percent.

"We know there's about 25-30 percent voter turnout in many countries, including Europe. Sometimes it's even less than that," the AL general secretary said.

He said the first session of the 12th parliament will begin on January 30.

"We can claim that there is democratic continuity in the country because of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's bravery. Even after the elections, terrorists identified under the leadership of BNP are hatching plots," the minister added.



COLD WAVE

All schools shut down in Kurigram

UNB, Kurigram

All educational institutions in Kurigram district have been declared shut due to the ongoing cold spell.

Mohammad Saidul Arif, deputy commissioner (DC) of Kurigram, said, "We have decided to shut all educational institutions till the situation improves."

Kurigram, a northern district of the country, witnessed 9 degrees Celsius on Thursday and 10.2 degrees Celsius yesterday morning.

Subal Chandra Sarkar, in charge of Rajarhat

Meteorological Office in Kurigram, said the temperature has been fluctuating between 9 and 13 degrees Celsius in the district for the last week.

He said the district has not witnessed such a cold wave in the last 10-12 years, adding such temperature may continue for two more days.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Directorate

of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) said in a circular that education authorities in individual districts can shut down schools if temperature drops below 10 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, people continue to suffer in Kurigram due to the ongoing cold snap.

Md Abdul Aziz, a resident of Hospital Para area, said, "I have never seen such a situation in Kurigram in the last eight to ten years."

Moza Mia of Kathalbari Sinai village said, "It has become extremely difficult to step outside without warm clothes."

The children and the elderly are the worst sufferers of this bitter cold, he added.

The Meteorological Office said as the speed of the northern wind is 8-12 kilometers per hour, the intensity of cold is being felt more.

Due to the cold wave and dense fog, flights and inland road communication have been delayed over the last few weeks.



PHOTO: STAR



A group of people sits on top of goods loaded on a truck in the capital's Farmgate area yesterday. Such an action not only jeopardises their lives, but also puts others in harm's way.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN