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Dengue fatalities cross 450-mark

2nd time in 24 years, 11 more die in 24-hrs

HELEMUL ALAM

The dengue death toll in Bangladesh this year surpassed the 450-mark yesterday, making it only the second time in 24 years that fatalities from the mosquito-borne disease have crossed this threshold.

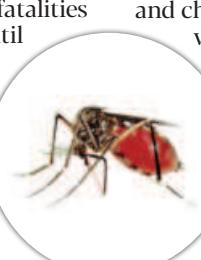
According to the Directorate General of Health Services, 459 dengue patients have died so far this year, with 11 fatalities reported in the last 24 hours until yesterday morning.

The previous record was set in 2023, when 1,705 people lost their lives, while 2022 recorded 281 deaths.

The latest deaths include four in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), five in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), and two in Khulna Division. Meanwhile, 1,079 dengue patients were admitted to hospitals across the country during the same period, bringing the total number of reported cases since January to 86,791, according to DGHS data.

Health experts attribute this year's high mortality rate to severe complications such as multi-organ failure, shock syndrome, delayed hospitalisation, and comorbidities.

Dr HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical



College Hospital, said many patients arrive at hospitals with multi-organ failure, triggered by shock syndrome after fever subsides.

"When shock persists beyond four hours, patients typically face liver damage, followed by kidney failure and other organ failures, leading to death in most cases," he said.

He added that dengue patients with comorbidities like hypertension, diabetes, and chronic lung disease are particularly vulnerable. Those already in end-stage organ failure face an even slimmer chance of survival, as evidenced by recent cases.

WARNING SIGNS OFTEN OVERLOOKED

Nazmul said patients often fail to recognise warning signs, such as severe abdominal pain, breathing difficulties, bleeding, extreme weakness, or significant drops in urination. When they seek medical care, their condition has deteriorated.

Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, emphasised the risk of cross infections from different dengue serotypes, which can cause severe complications if hospitalisation is delayed.

"Anyone with fever should immediately consult a doctor and follow prescribed treatment," she advised.



A brick kiln operates illegally on a crop field in Goinghat, Sylhet, violating regulations. This practice reduces soil fertility, diminishes agricultural land, and contributes to environmental degradation. The photo was taken in Salutikor area recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

NURUL KABIR'S HARASSMENT

Govt launches probe, to create foreign travel policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday announced plans to create a transparent policy on foreign travel, following allegations of harassment by New Age Editor Nurul Kabir at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the policy will clarify who is permitted to travel abroad and who is not, with restrictions often imposed by banks or courts due to financial or legal matters.

Nurul Kabir on Saturday said he had faced harassment twice at the airport during his recent travels to Colombo for a media conference. The Chief Adviser's Office has expressed regret over the incident and launched an investigation.

At a press briefing, Chief Adviser's Deputy Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad Majumder acknowledged that lists of individuals subject to travel restrictions were previously compiled arbitrarily to suppress dissent. He assured that the current government is updating these lists and will ensure no one is unjustly harassed.

The Special Branch of Police has already withdrawn the officer accused of harassing Nurul Kabir, according to the CA's press wing.

UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

Leading univs withdrawing from cluster system

Session delays, irregularities, and lack of central planning cited as reasons

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Undergraduate admission tests under the cluster system faces uncertainty for the 2024-25 academic year, as several prominent universities have decided to withdraw and conduct their own admission tests independently.

The cluster system is a centralised undergraduate admission process in Bangladesh designed to streamline applications for multiple universities under shared categories. It was introduced in the 2020-21 academic year to reduce financial strain, save time, and simplify admissions.

However, lack of coordination among universities has delayed

BACKGROUND

Introduced in 2020-21

Initially included 20 universities

Later expanded to 36

CHALLENGES AND CRITICISMS

Lack of coordination

Session delays

AFTERMATH

Many univs withdraw

They will hold independent tests

STUDENT CONCERN

Higher application fees without cluster

Higher travel expenses

UGC'S POSITION

No authority to prevent independent tests

Suggests divisional tests and reduced fees

Lack of coordination causing session delays

Allegations of corruption

result publication, student admissions, and department allocations, leading to session jams.

The cluster system has also faced growing criticism for

participation.

"The cluster system caused session delays. While many JNU students from the 2023-24 session have completed their first semester, others are still undergoing migration processes. How can these students keep up with those who have already progressed a semester ahead?" said Jagannath University (JNU) Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Rezaul Karim.

Several other VCs from different clusters expressed similar dissatisfaction.

The cluster admission system initially included 20 general and science-technology universities, later expanding to 24 general, three engineering, and nine

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alleged corruption.

Leading universities from the clusters including General, Science and Technology, Engineering, and Agricultural are now reconsidering their

FIVE BCS EXAMS

Govt to recruit 18,150 officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will recruit 18,150 successful candidates from five Bangladesh Civil Service examinations, four of which have already been held, with one yet to be scheduled.

Of the total, 12,710 candidates will be appointed to cadre positions, while 5,439 will fill non-cadre roles. Senior Secretary Mokhles ur Rahman of the Public Administration Ministry announced at a press conference yesterday.

For cadre appointments, 2,064 candidates will be recruited through the 43rd BCS, 1,710 through the 44th, 2,309 through the 45th, 3,140 through the 46th, and 3,487 through the 47th BCS examinations. Non-cadre appointments will include 642 candidates from the 43rd BCS, 1,791 from the 44th, 1,570 from the 45th, 1,111 from the 46th, and 325 from the 47th BCS.

The recruitment process for the 43rd, 44th, 45th, and 46th BCS exams was initiated by the previous Public Service Commission.

While the PSC conducted preliminary, written, and viva voce examinations for the 43rd BCS, the final gazette was published on 15 October, with the joining date for 1,965 candidates set for 1 January, after being delayed from 17 November.

A reverification process is currently underway

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Dust envelops the air, obstructing the visibility of vehicles and passersby on Pagla Postogola Road in Narayanganj yesterday. Air pollution, especially dust pollution, continues to plague Bangladesh year-round, with conditions worsening during winter.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

AL's election commissions must face justice

Citizens tell reform committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All participants in a views-exchange programme with the electoral reform commission yesterday called for the prosecution of previous Election Commissions, said Electoral Reform Commission Chief Badiul Alam Majumdar.

"Almost everyone is in favour of bringing previous Election Commissions to justice for violating their oath by holding controversial, staged, and scandalous elections," Badiul said after the meeting with eminent citizens and academics at the Election Commission office.

The Kazi Habibul Awal-led Election Commission faced severe criticism for overseeing the most recent national polls, which were boycotted by major opposition parties, including BNP. To make the elections appear participatory, the Awami League fielded "dummy" independent candidates, many of whom were AL leaders.

The KM Nurul Huda-led commission was also criticised following the December 2018 general election. Opposition parties alleged ballot-box stuffing on the night before the vote.

In January 2019, the Jatiya Oikya Front accused the EC of allowing 30-60 percent of votes to be cast the night before the election.

Transparency International Bangladesh later revealed ballot-stamping incidents in more than 30 centres across 33 constituencies.

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PEER'S DEATH

JU students continue protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, JU

First-year students at Jahangirnagar University locked the entrance to the administrative building yesterday, protesting the tragic death of their classmate, Afzana Karim, who was struck by a battery-run three-wheeler on November 19.

The protesting students locked the building around 9:00am and boycotted all academic activities, demanding the immediate identification and arrest of the rickshaw driver responsible for the accident.

"On Thursday, we issued a 48-hour ultimatum to the university administration to identify and arrest the rickshaw driver. But they failed to act. Therefore, we have locked the administrative building and will continue boycotting academic activities until our demands are met," said

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