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As the sun begins its descent on the horizon, casting a warm golden hue across the sky, the tranquil waters of Kuakata beach shimmer with its reflected light. Amid this, a line of engine-powered boats, manned by fishermen from nearby coastal villages, prepares to set out for an evening of fishing. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Cold bites, warmth eludes

Char people in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat suffer without adequate winter clothes

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The char people in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat are enduring severe suffering due to a biting cold wave that has persisted for two consecutive weeks.

These areas, situated in the basin of 26 rivers, including the Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar, and Gangadhar, are home to around 500 chars, with 400 in Kurigram and 100 in Lalmonirhat.

More than six lakh people live in these remote and vulnerable regions, struggling to cope with the extreme cold using old, worn-out clothes.

The inability to afford winter clothing exacerbates their hardship, and while government, NGO, and private initiatives distribute winter clothes, these resources often fail to reach the remote char areas.

In the impassable Char Ghughumari on the Brahmaputra riverbed in Saheber Alga Union of Ulipur upazila, Kurigram, the situation is particularly dire. Located about 20 kilometers from the mainland, residents are shivering due to a lack of blankets.

Suruj Mia, a 62-year-old farm labourer from Char Ghughumari, said the cold has made life unbearable. Despite his need for a blanket, his sons cannot afford to buy one, and no external aid has reached the char due to its remoteness, he said.

At Rahamater Char on the Teesta riverbed in Ulipur

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Three killed in road accidents in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Three people, including a primary school teacher, were killed in separate road accidents in Pirganj and Sadar upazilas of Thakurgaon on Friday night and yesterday.

The deceased are Mamunur Rashid, 35, Tojammin Shahinaj Rebu, 48, and Moktarul Islam, 65.

Md Shahidur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said Mamunur sustained injuries when a Gorea-bound pickup hit his motorcycle from behind at Manabkalyanpara in Sadar upazila around 11:30am yesterday.

He was taken to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Tajul Islam, OC of Pirganj Police Station, said Rebu died on the spot when a minibus hit a battery-run rickshaw van carrying him near Pirganj intersection around 8:30am.

She was an assistant teacher at a local government primary school.

Besides, the 65-year-old man sustained injuries after a motorbike hit him while crossing a road at Jamtoli in Pirganj municipality area on Friday night.

He died at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

8,543 killed on the roads in 2024

Says Jatri Kalyan Samity; motorbikes account for one-third of accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road crashes and fatalities in Bangladesh increased last year, with motorcycle-related incidents accounting for nearly one-third of all crashes and casualties, according to the Bangladesh Jatri Kalyan Samity.

At least 8,543 people were killed and 12,608 injured in 6,359 road crashes across the country in 2024, the organisation reported.

The organisation said 2,570 people were killed in 2,329 bike-related crashes last year, which accounted for 36.62 percent of total crashes and 30.08 percent of deaths.

The sharp rise in motorcycles and battery-run auto-rickshaws, along with the illegal operation of both speedy and slow-moving vehicles on highways, were blamed for the rise, said the organisation's secretary general Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury while revealing the annual report at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday.



2024 AT A GLANCE

- Total accidents 6,359
- Total killed 8,543
- Total injured 12, 608
- Rise in crashes from 2023 1.56pc
- Rise in deaths 8.11pc
- Rise in injuries 21.56pc

The report comes amid a series of recent accidents on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway. On December 27, at least six people lost their lives when a bus rammed into three other vehicles at the expressway's toll plaza in South Keraniganj

It was later found that the bus had no legal documents, including fitness clearance and route permit, while the driver had no valid licence.

The Samity identified 22 causes of road crashes, including unfit vehicles, reckless driving, and unskilled drivers. It also made 13 recommendations, including enacting a new road safety act and prioritising road safety measures.

Mozammel said despite the change in government, no significant improvement has been seen in the transportation sector.

"The control of extortion has merely shifted hands, while unfit vehicles continue to operate. The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA)

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First dengue death reported this year

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh reported its first dengue death of the year in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The death has been reported in the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC), according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

During this period, 56 more patients were hospitalised with the viral fever, bringing the total number of cases to 221, it added.

Of the new cases, nine dengue patients were admitted to hospital under DNCC while 12 were hospitalised in Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

Currently, 436 patients are receiving treatment in hospitals across the country.

Last year, dengue claimed the lives of 575 people.

According to the DGHS, there were 101,214 dengue cases and 100,040 recoveries in 2024.

As Bangladesh enters another year with dengue looming large, experts have stressed the need for proactive, comprehensive measures. Waiting until the monsoon season is no longer an option.

"Anti-mosquito drives must begin as early as January," said Entomologist Manzur A Chowdhury.

"Identifying hotspots and implementing targeted interventions like larviciding, adultciding, and public awareness campaigns are essential."



TABLIGH JAMAAT Protest on Jan 10, confce on Jan 25 Says Zubair faction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Tabligh Jamaat faction aligned with Maulana Zubair Ahmad will hold a nationwide demonstration on January 10 to seek a ban on the activities of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi's followers.

An ulema (Islamic scholars) conference will also be held on January 25, said Hefazat-e-Islam Vice President Mufti Nazmul Hasan Qasemi at a press conference at the Kakrail Mosque in Dhaka yesterday.

He made the announcement on behalf of Ulema-Mashayekh Bangladesh and Tabligh Jamaat Companions.

He said all activities of Saad supporters should be banned, and they should be held accountable for the killings in 2018 and 2024.

In a written statement, Qasemi said, "If the government fails to take

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'Bangladesh open for business' Special envoy to chief adviser tells British entrepreneurs

UNB, Dhaka

Lutley Siddiqi, special envoy to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus, yesterday urged British entrepreneurs, including Bangladeshi-origin investors, to capitalise on Bangladesh's widespread reforms designed to attract foreign direct investment.

"We are open for business. We are keen to answer your questions. Please keep on asking them. Please keep on visiting to take a look for yourselves. And if you like what you see and hear, please help spread the word," Siddiqi said during a meeting with a delegation from UKBCCI at the State Guest House Jamuna.

UKBCCI Chairman Iqbal Ahmed and UKBCCI President MG Moula Mia are leading the delegation that is currently on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

The special envoy appraised the delegates on positive developments on the macroeconomic front – exchange rate, reserves, exports, port handling rates, etc. – and steps already taken across the government to create a more conducive experience for investors.

Siddiqi answered questions about labour reforms, the RMG sector, the law-and-order situation and the overall reform journey.

He expressed gratitude for the engagement and support of the Bangladeshi diaspora.

BIDA chairman Ashik Mahmud Chowdhury, senior secretary for SDG affairs Lamiya Morshed, and UK parliamentarian Rupa Huq were among others present on the occasion.



At least four steps on the stairway of the Paribagh footbridge have been missing for six months, creating a significant safety hazard for commuters. The other ramp is also in a deteriorated state (not in picture). A mother and her son stare at the gaping hole from above as commuters face the danger of falling from this height, particularly at night. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN