



Uproar in JS over loan defaulter tag

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lawmakers from the treasury and opposition benches engaged in a heated argument yesterday after independent MP Rumeen Farhana called the legislature a “parliament of loan defaulters”.

The treasury side argued that no MP could legally be labelled a loan defaulter, as all candidates had been allowed to contest the election after being cleared as non-defaulters.

Opposition lawmakers countered that if defaulters cannot be called out in a sovereign parliament, there is no other forum where such accountability can be demanded.

Participating in the discussion on the proposed budget, Rumeen said, “Standing in this parliament of loan defaulters, I must say that Bangladesh’s total non-performing loans amount to Tk 6.44 lakh crore”

A few minutes later, BNP MP AKM Fazlul Haque Milon raised a point of order and said this parliament was exceptional because it had been formed through free and fair elections following years of struggle.

He said many MPs, consciously or unconsciously, make remarks in the House that tarnish the image of all lawmakers, make them controversial, and undermine their dignity.

“Loan defaulters cannot contest elections. So how can this be a parliament of loan defaulters? I request that this phrase be expunged from the record,” he said.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4



A cluster of translucent cuttlefish eggs, often called “sea grapes”, sways gently on the shallow seabed of the Bay of Bengal off Saint Martin's Island, each one holding a tiny master of disguise yet to hatch. Cuttlefish are cephalopods related to squid and octopuses, with around 120 species known worldwide. In Bangladesh’s waters, pharaoh and spineless cuttlefish are among the species recorded. They inhabit sandy bottoms, seagrass beds, coral patches, and shallow coastal waters, feeding on fish and other small marine animals. Renowned for their ability to instantly change colour, texture, and pattern, they possess one of nature’s most advanced camouflage systems. Their eggs are attached to seagrass, corals, or other underwater structures for protection.

PHOTO: SHARIF SARWAR

TARIQUE’S KL TRIP Cooperation beyond labour to be the focus

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh is seeking to transform its relationship with Malaysia from labour-centric into a broader strategic partnership focused on trade, education, technology, and regional cooperation as Prime Minister Tarique Rahman makes his maiden foreign visit to the Southeast Asian nation.

He is scheduled to reach Kuala Lumpur on Sunday for a two-day visit. He will hold bilateral talks with his Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim the following day.

He will be flying to China on Monday evening.

Officials from the foreign and expatriates’ welfare ministries said the two countries are expected to sign three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on information, culture, and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6

SSC, HSC EXAMS One country, one question paper

Says edn minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon yesterday said the government has taken steps to hold SSC and HSC examinations across the country using uniform question papers.

“One education board sets easier questions while another sets tougher ones. In one Bangladesh, SSC and HSC examinations cannot be held with different sets of questions,” he told a press briefing at the Secretariat.

Milon said the move was intended to ensure consistency across the examination system.

Referring to O- and A-Level examinations, he noted that their question papers do not vary from one country to another.

Asked about class one admission tests, the education minister said the planned test would be “nominal” and would not be the kind of exam for which children would need coaching.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

MEASLES OUTBREAK

Confirmed, suspected cases cross 1 lakh

Daily hospital admissions above 800 in June; deaths on the decline, says govt

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

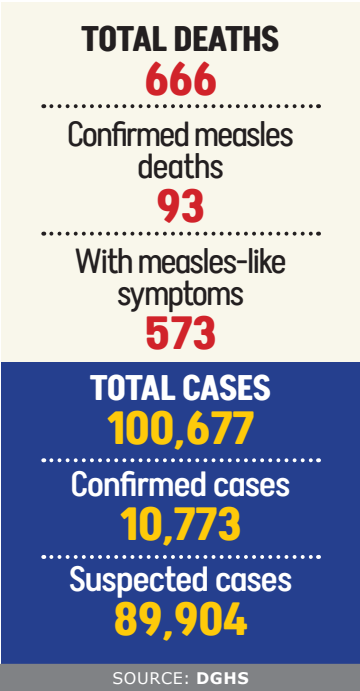
The number of measles and suspected measles cases crossed one lakh yesterday, as infections continued to climb despite 1.84 crore children being brought under vaccination coverage a month ago.

Although the number of measles-related deaths has declined over the past three weeks, daily cases have remained above 1,000, while hospital admissions stood at 800 on all but one day during the first 18 days of this month.

The country recorded 1,009 suspected measles cases and 139 confirmed cases in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, taking the total number of cases to 100,677, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

Of them, 10,773 are confirmed measles cases and 89,904 are suspected cases reported since March 15, according to DGHS data.

Meanwhile, five more deaths were reported in the 24-hour period, taking the total death toll to 666 – including 93 confirmed measles deaths and 573 deaths with measles-like symptoms.



Health experts listed the possibility of inadequate vaccination coverage in some areas and lack of infection control and prevention measures as reasons. They warned that as the dengue season approaches, children infected with measles could face severe complications if

they also contract dengue.

The government, however, said the number of deaths has declined significantly, while infections are also falling and are expected to decrease further soon.

The country is experiencing an unprecedented measles outbreak, with cases and deaths rising sharply since mid-March.

The government launched an emergency measles-rubella vaccination campaign in 30 high-burden upazilas on April 5, followed by four city corporations, before expanding it nationwide on April 20.

The government and health experts expect infections to decline sharply after mid-June, as 1.84 crore children – more than two lakh above the preliminary target – had been vaccinated by May 20.

They, however, said immunity takes three to four weeks to develop after vaccination. The campaign, meanwhile, continued as some children remained outside its coverage.

HOSPITAL ADMISSIONS STILL HIGH

The number of measles patients admitted to hospitals hovered between 800 and 1,200 this

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

18 students fall sick after school meal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

At least 18 students of a government primary school in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila fell ill reportedly after eating food distributed under the school feeding programme.

Of them, 10 students were admitted to Chapainawabganj 250-bed District Hospital Wednesday night and were released yesterday morning after receiving treatment, said Resident Medical Officer Dr Mahbub Hasan.

The incident occurred on Wednesday at Salim Dolpara Government Primary School, where students were served eggs and bread as part of the school feeding programme at noon.

Head teacher Durul Hoda told The Daily Star that food had been supplied for 221 students.

“Most had already eaten when around 18 students began feeling unwell. We immediately instructed the remaining students not to eat the food. Teachers checked the items and noticed a slight stale smell coming from some of the food, though not all of it,” he said.

Dr Mahbub Hasan said 10 students were admitted to

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Healthcare reels from shortage of nurses, midwives

Finds govt-funded study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh’s health sector is grappling with a severe shortage of health workers, particularly nurses and allied professionals, alongside stark urban-rural disparities in workforce distribution, threatening equitable access to healthcare, according to a government-funded study.

It highlighted severe urban-rural maldistribution, with almost 75 percent of doctors and nurses serving in urban areas, though 62 percent of the population lives in rural areas.

The country has only 12.78 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 people, compared with the World Health Organisation-recommended 44.5 doctors, said the study conducted by the University of Dhaka’s Department of Population Sciences over the past year with funding from the National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT).

The researchers interviewed 1,756 health professionals – including doctors, nurse, medical technologists and pharmacists – and analysed the government’s recent health workforce data, including the HRH Data Sheet 2023.

While the number of doctors meets the WHO benchmark, the country continues to face an acute shortage of nurses and midwives, leaving the doctor-nurse-midwife ratio at 1:0.75:0.74 – far below the recommended 1:3:5.

It highlighted severe urban-rural maldistribution, with almost 75 percent of doctors and nurses serving in urban areas, though 62 percent of the population lives in rural areas.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

South Africa salvage draw

AGENCIES

South Africa scored a penalty seven minutes from fulltime as they fought back to draw 1-1 with the Czechia at the World Cup yesterday after falling behind early in the Group A clash.

The result effectively left the two sides, who both lost their opening fixtures, likely requiring a win in their last group game to keep alive their hopes of reaching the knockout rounds.

Teboho Mokoena slotted home the late spotkick which gave South Africa a lifeline as they were staring at potential early elimination, after the Czechs had led from the sixth minute through Michal Sadilek.

South Africa and Czechia now have a point after losing their respective opening games against Mexico and South Korea.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 6



Referee Tori Penso leads assistant referees Kathryn Nesbitt (L) and Brooke Mayo as the all-American, all-female officiating crew walk out of the tunnel for warm-ups before the FIFA World Cup 2026 Group A match between Czechia and South Africa at Atlanta Stadium in Georgia yesterday. The trio became the first all-female refereeing team to oversee a match of this World Cup.

PHOTO: AFP

Colombia’s ‘Lucho’ steps into spotlight

REUTERS, Mexico City

It was 12 years ago that Colombia forward James Rodriguez announced himself at the World Cup in Brazil – and though he led his side out for their 2026 opener on Wednesday, it was teammate Luis Diaz who showed he could be the main man this year.

Diaz was the architect of his side’s 3-1 Group K win over tournament debutants Uzbekistan at a raucous Azteca Stadium that was filled to the brim with loud and proud Colombia supporters.

Although 29 years old, it is the first World Cup for Diaz as he made a late breakthrough in his career, at Portuguese side Porto, and Colombia did not qualify for the 2022 tournament in Qatar.

He certainly showed he would make the most of his opportunity over the next few weeks as, not long after hitting the post, he sent a sumptuous ball over the top for teammate Daniel Munoz to hook into the net on the turn.

Although Uzbekistan equalised on the hour mark, Diaz burst forward five minutes later to slot the ball in, his first World Cup goal restoring his side’s lead.

The loudest cheers before kickoff were when talisman Rodriguez was shown on the big screen, but that was beaten by the deafening roar that greeted Diaz’s substitution in the third minute of stoppage time.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4