



PM visits ‘Green School’ stalls, urges children to keep schools clean

Staff correspondent

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Wednesday visited stalls set up by government primary schools under the ‘Green School’ programme, where he urged children to keep their schools clean and continue helping one another through small acts of kindness. Executive Branch The Prime Minister toured the exhibition after inaugurating the Green School programme at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre by planting a tree,

where students and teachers from 60 districts showcased innovative educational activities, local heritage, handicrafts, environmental initiatives and creative learning projects. The Ministry of Primary and Mass Education organised the programme, which featured the presentation of the Primary Education Medal 2026, the inauguration of the nationwide Green School tree plantation campaign and exhibitions showcasing innovative primary education initiatives from across the country. During the visit, Tarique

interacted warmly with children, teachers and school authorities, praising their creativity and encouraging them to continue their innovative initiatives. “Assalamu Alaikum. How are you all?” the Prime Minister asked as he entered different stalls, where students proudly displayed handicrafts, models and learning materials they had prepared. When he asked whether they had made the exhibits themselves, the children replied in unison, “Yes, Honourable Prime

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Rath Yatra Utsab begins Today

Staff correspondent

Rath Yatra Utsab of Lord Jagannath, one of the most important religious festivals of the Hindu community, will begin Today. According to traditional customs, the Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath is observed every year on the second day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Ashadha.

The nine-day festival will be celebrated in a festive atmosphere with colourful processions and various religious programmes. The rituals of the Rath Yatra will begin at 8 am tomorrow (Thursday) at Swamibagh Temple in the capital with an Agnihotra Yajna praying for world peace and prosperity. Later, at 3 pm, the Rath Yatra procession will start from the temple and the chariot will reach Dhakeshwari Temple around 7 pm. The festival will conclude on July 25 at 3 pm with the colourful procession of the Ulta Rath Yatra (return journey). This year, the Rath Yatra will be organised at 128 ISKCON temples and ashrams across the country, including

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Bangladesh, Canada explore closer ties in livestock, food safety cooperation

Staff correspondent

Bangladesh has moved to deepen cooperation with Canada in livestock development, safe animal-based food production, food security and trade capacity building. A high-level delegation from the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, led by Secretary Delwar Hossain, held a bilateral meeting with Prarthi Muthukumarasamy, Director General of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and other senior officials at the agency’s headquarters in Ottawa on Tuesday afternoon (local time), said a PID handout on Wednesday. The two sides held detailed discussions on livestock development, food security, animal

health, veterinary services, animal feed quality control, disease surveillance, research, institutional capacity building, and implementation of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures. They also expressed mutual interest in expanding trade in animal products, enhancing technical cooperation, exchanging information and expertise, developing skilled human resources, and upgrading modern laboratory and food inspection systems. Speaking at the meeting, Livestock Secretary said the government is attaching the highest priority to producing international-standard safe animal-based foods and boosting export capabilities, adding that technical assistance from the CFIA would play a vital role in strengthening

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Saudi Arabia keen to expand investment in Bangladesh's transport, logistics sectors

Staff correspondent

Saudi Arabia has expressed strong interest in expanding its investment footprint in Bangladesh, particularly in transport and logistics, with a special focus on maritime sector development. The interest was conveyed during a meeting between Saudi Deputy Minister of Transport and Logistics Dr. Rumaih Mohammed Al-Rumaih and his delegation with Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) Executive Chairman Ashik Chowdhury at

Biniyog Bhaban today, said a press release. The Bangladesh side was led by Ashik Chowdhury, who also serves as Chief Executive Officer of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Authority. Officials from BIDA, the PPP Authority and the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) attended the meeting. During the discussion, the Saudi deputy minister praised Bangladesh’s ongoing efforts to promote privatisation and improve the business climate, saying the initiatives are aligned with Saudi Arabia’s own economic strategy.

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Security tightened in Dhaka over students' long march

Staff correspondent

Security has been stepped up across key areas of the capital after students announced a long march to the Ministry of Education following Wednesday’s Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations. Members of law enforcement agencies were deployed at several strategic intersections, including Nilkhet, Science Lab, Shahbagh and Maghbazar. A platoon of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) was stationed at the Nilkhet intersection on Wednesday afternoon, while more than 50 police personnel were deployed at Science Lab. An increased police presence was also observed in Shahbagh, Maghbazar and other important locations across the city. At the City College examination centre, students were seen leaving the premises after completing their exams and heading to their respective destinations

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HSC examinees block Uttara road again

Staff correspondent

A section of HSC examinees again blocked a major road in Dhaka’s Uttara area on Wednesday demanding resignation of the Education Minister and implementation of a six-point demand. The protesters occupied the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in front of the BNS Center shortly after completing their examinations, halting vehicular movement on the main road connecting Uttara with other parts of the capital.

Assistant Commissioner Mahbubur Rahman of the Uttara East Zone under the Uttara Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Traffic Police said the students took to the road at around 1:15 pm after their examinations. City & Local Guides

“They are at the same place where they stayed yesterday, in front of BNS Center. Vehicular movement on both sides of the road has remained suspended because of their presence,” he said. Hundreds of vehicles were seen stranded on the Tongi-bound flyover, while traffic congestion spread to adjacent roads. Only a limited

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Any extradition is a legal issue; it'll be dealt with accordingly, India says about Hasina

Staff correspondent

India on Tuesday said there has been no change in its position regarding former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and stressed that any extradition is a legal issue. Executive Branch “Now, on this particular issue, there is no change in our approach to the matter. Any extradition matter is a legal issue, as you very well know, and it will be dealt with accordingly,” Spokesperson for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Randhir Jaiswal told reporters in New Delhi during a regular briefing. He made the remarks when a journalist drew his attention to Hasina’s recent interview, where she expressed her desire to return to Bangladesh in December this year.

Responding to a question on development projects in Bangladesh, the MEA spokesperson said the development cooperation programme that they have with Bangladesh is something that is done through mutual consultations, and that continues to be the case. Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed on Tuesday told Parliament that the government wants Hasina to be extradited to Bangladesh under the existing extradition agreement, saying she will be arrested immediately upon her return as she has already been convicted in several cases. Referring to the legal

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Bangladesh eyes smarter welfare system through Dynamic Social Registry

Staff correspondent

Bangladesh is embarking on one of the most ambitious overhauls of its social protection system, seeking to replace fragmented welfare programmes with a digitally driven, citizen-centric model that promises to make benefits more transparent, targeted and accessible. Dynamic Social Registry (DSR), a nationwide digital platform being implemented by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Welfare, is designed to allow citizens to apply for social protection benefits from anywhere in the country while enabling the government to identify eligible recipients through data-driven poverty assessments, according to the budget document. The initiative signals a shift from traditional, programme-based welfare administration towards an integrated digital ecosystem where social protection is linked to verified household data, direct benefit transfers and continuous updating of beneficiaries’ socioeconomic conditions. The government acknowledges that Bangladesh’s existing social protection framework—comprising more than 90 separate programmes—has struggled with overlapping benefits, weak coordination and exclusion of many deserving households. Dhakacity guide According to the budget document, the current system is “neither sufficiently responsive to contemporary needs nor sustainable in the long term.” The DSR is intended to address these weaknesses by creating a unified database capable of scientifically

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New law to curb human trafficking organised crimes: Home Minister

Staff correspondent

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has expressed optimism that the new law (Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2026) will play a crucial role in preventing human trafficking and migrant smuggling as well as curbing organised criminal networks. Executive Branch Bangladesh’s legal and institutional capacity has been elevated to international standards, keeping pace with the constantly evolving tactics of criminal syndicate, he said while addressing the National Dissemination Meeting on the “Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Act, 2026,” held at a hotel in the capital. The Ministry of Home Affairs and Justice & Care, Bangladesh, jointly organized the

event. The Minister reiterated the firm and unwavering commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to suppress human trafficking and migrant smuggling through a strong law, effective institutional coordination, and a victim-centric criminal justice system. The Minister further highlighted that the new law clearly defines human trafficking and migrant smuggling as separate and distinct offenses. This national-level dissemination programme created an important opportunity to build a unified and clear understanding of the new law among the institutions responsible for its implementation.

Participants exchanged views on the key provisions and implementation framework of the Act. The priorities for effective enforcement, including strengthening coordination at every step of the criminal justice process from investigation

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HSC Examinees Stage Protest in Feni Demanding Education Minister's Resignation, 8-Point Claims

Jahangir, Alam Staff reporter

HSC examinees staged a fierce protest at the Khejuri Chatter on Trunk Road in Feni, demanding the immediate resignation of the Education Minister alongside a spanning 8-point list of demands. The demonstration, which began on saw hundreds of students gathering in the heart of the city, bringing traffic to a standstill on the busy Trunk Road. According to eyewitnesses and protesting students, the examinees took to the streets to express their deep

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BGB’s Humanitarian Initiative in Feni

Free Medical Care, Educational Supplies Distributed & Flood Awareness Meeting Held Juwel, Nag, Mirsarai Chattogram.

The Feni Battalion (4 BGB) has launched a humanitarian initiative providing free medical services, medicines, and educational supplies to underprivileged residents and students in the border areas of Parshuram upazila. Alongside these distributions, an awareness meeting was conducted, and leaflets were distributed regarding flood preparedness ahead of the upcoming monsoon season. The day-long humanitarian and social welfare activities

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Five more suspected measles deaths take Bangladesh toll to 772

Staff correspondent

Five children died with symptoms consistent with measles in the 24 hours until 8:00am on Wednesday, bringing Bangladesh’s combined tally of confirmed and suspected measles-related deaths to 772. Dhakacity guide The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has classified the latest deaths as suspected measles fatalities. With the latest update,

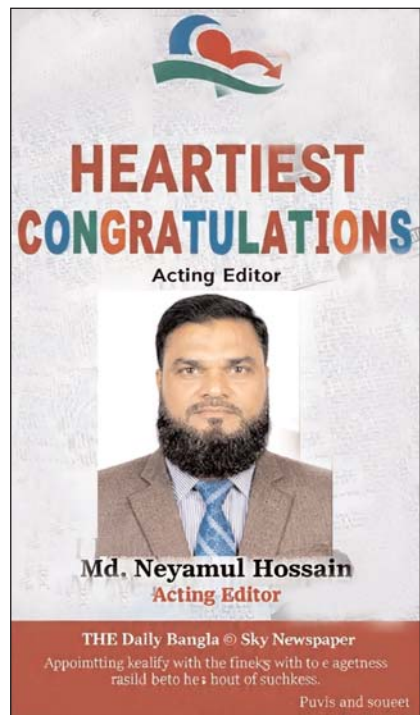
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Collective actions need to combat adverse effects of climate change: Riton

Staff correspondent

Rajshahi City Corporation Administrator Mahfuzur Rahman Riton has called for collective actions to combat the adverse effects of climate change. He said that climate change, environmental pollution and degradation of natural resources are among the biggest challenges in the world today. To tackle this crisis, the government, local government institutions, civil society, youth and the private sector must work together. He said this while speaking as the chief guest at a high-level dialogue organized under the Green Voice project by The Earth Society at the conference room of

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Transparency must guide appointments at the Information Commission

Following the July uprising and the subsequent resignation and termination of the three commissioners of the Information Commission, this statutory body has remained in a state of operational paralysis for almost two years now. As a result, hundreds of aggrieved citizens who fail to access information from public institutions have nowhere to file their complaints and obtain a resolution. Under such circumstances, the BNP government's move to create a committee to appoint information commissioners, although delayed, is one in the right direction. However, the government can claim little credit for this action, which came five months after it took office. The pledge to reform all constitutional and statutory bodies and to reinstate transparency, accountability, and credibility in those bodies is part of BNP's 31-point plan.

Under such circumstances, the BNP government's move to create a committee to appoint information commissioners, although delayed, is one in the right direction. However, the government can claim little credit for this action.

Therefore, forming a five-member committee to search for and appoint information commissioners to revive an institution that strengthens democracy is not a favour nor an extraordinary achievement; it is a duty that has been delayed for quite a while. Of course, the BNP cannot be blamed alone for allowing the commission to remain without commissioners for so long, which resulted in the accumulation of 780 complaints awaiting resolution. The interim government's inaction played a large part in rendering the Information Commission almost non-functional. Of course, citizens could continue to demand necessary information using the Right to Information Act, 2009, even in the absence of the commissioners. However, in instances where they were denied access, they had nowhere to lodge complaints for the last 22 months. According to officials of the commission, other primary functions, including imparting training on information rights and running awareness campaigns, also came to a halt over the last 22 months. The importance of the right to information in a democracy can hardly be overstated. And to ensure that citizens can exercise this right properly, the existence of a functional Information Commission is imperative. However, it must be ensured that such a vital institution remains free from partisan influence. That is why the current phase of selection and appointment of the commissioners is crucial. The government must ensure that qualified persons are chosen and the process remains transparent. There have hardly been any instances of our statutory bodies, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the Information Commission, and the Anti-Corruption Commission, functioning effectively with full independence and empowerment.

Instead, after the uprising, these three institutions at times remained leaderless for a prolonged period. We hope the BNP government will not squander the chance to correct the course by allowing these institutions to revert to their previous state of ineffectiveness and partisanship.

PM visits ‘Green School’

Minister."Tarique thanked both the students and teachers for their efforts. Teachers briefed the Prime Minister on students' attendance, playground facilities and various educational activities under the "Joyful Learning" and "Digital Education" programmes. He also asked students what games they usually played and listened attentively to explanations about different learning activities. At one stall, students told the Prime Minister that they regularly save part of their tiffin money to support classmates from underprivileged families and share meals together. "You are doing a very good job," Tarique told them. The students also explained their daily class routines, tiffin breaks and extracurricular activities.

After learning about one educational game, the Prime Minister remarked, "The game is excellent." Executive Branch Visiting another stall, Tarique shook hands with young students and urged them to keep their schools clean.

"Keep your school clean. Whenever you see litter, pick it up and throw it into the proper bin. All right?" he told the children. The students enthusiastically responded, "Yes, Sir."

At a stall representing a government primary school from Habiganj, the Prime Minister again exchanged greetings with students before encouraging them to plant trees. "I am fine. Are you all doing well?" he asked after the children enquired about his health. Looking at the displays prepared by the students, he praised their work, saying, "Very good."

He then urged every child to plant and care for at least one tree. "Everyone should plant a tree and take care of it," he said. The children replied together, "Yes, Sir."

At another stall featuring a children's Pocket Library, students explained how books were arranged according to reading levels so that children could easily choose books suited to their abilities.

Appreciating the initiative, the Prime Minister said, "You have organised it very nicely. Thank you." During the visit, students also made several requests to the Prime Minister. Executive Branch

At one stall, children asked him to plant a sapling in a flower pot so that it could later be planted in their school as a lasting memory of his visit.

At another stall, students requested to take a photograph with him. "There is no problem," Tarique replied with a smile before stepping inside the stall and posing with the children as cameras clicked repeatedly.

The Prime Minister arrived at the exhibition venue around 10 am, where he was received by Education Minister Anam Ehsanul Haq Milon and State Minister for Primary, Mass Education Bobby Hajjaj, Prime Minister's Adviser on Education and Primary and Mass Education Dr Mahdi Amin and Primary and Mass Education Secretary Md Shakhawat Hossain. He then inaugurated the nationwide tree plantation programme at government primary schools under the 'Green School' programme by planting a Neem' sapling at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Agargaon. Later, he spent about one and a half hours visiting exhibition stalls and interacting with students from different primary schools.

HSC examinees block

number of motorbikes and ambulances are being allowed to pass through one side of the road. Law enforcement personnel were deployed in and around the area to maintain order. Additional police members remained on duty, while a water cannon was kept ready to deal with any untoward situation, said police. The protesters said their demand for the resignation of the Education Minister remained unchanged.

New law to curb human

to judicial disposal were also discussed during the session.

Use of Salt / Sodium Chloride in Fish Farming, Transportation & Treatment

Dr. Mou Kobir, Cox's Bazar

Sodium Chloride is a chemical compound. It is commonly known as common salt or table salt. Its chemical formula is NaCl. Sodium Chloride contains 39.34% Sodium and 60.66% Chlorine. For fish, the Chloride part of salt is the most important.

Question: In which areas of fish farming can salt be used and what benefits does it provide?

Answer: Salt works very effectively for:

- Conditioning fish and fry to increase energy
- Controlling fungal infection in fish eggs
- Controlling external parasites and germs on fish
- Reducing/eliminating Nitrite NO2 toxicity in pond water
- Improving feed quality by adding it to fish feed
- Controlling harmful bacteria & fungus and managing nitrite in Biofloc / RAS
- Boosting immunity and increasing mucus on fish body

In our country, many field workers often advise applying "1 kg salt + 1 kg / 500 gm lime per decimal" when there is a wound disease or any other problem in the pond. I don't know why this advice is given without knowing what the actual problem is in the water or in the fish.

I tried a lot to find any scientific writing by fisheries experts or researchers about the correctness of using salt and lime to treat wound diseases in fish ponds, but couldn't find any. If anyone knows the scientific basis behind how Bangladeshi fisheries workers decided on this, and what considerations they use to advise farmers to use salt and lime for wound treatment, please share or write about it.

The salinity of fish blood is 10 ppt. Since freshwater has very low salinity, pond/environment water constantly enters the fish body through osmosis. The fish has to spend energy to expel this extra water. As a result, fish become weak and growth rate decreases. If there is a tolerable level of low or slightly higher salinity in the water, less pond water enters the fish body, meaning osmosis decreases.

Using salt in fish farming and transportation is low cost, high benefit. For fish treatment, salinity from 3-50 ppt can be used. But treating fish in a whole pond requires a huge amount of salt, so pond treatment with salt is not economical.

The event was attended by Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam, British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sarah Cooke, US Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent T. Christensen, Inspector General of Bangladesh Police Md. Ali Hossain Fakir, DG of Bangladesh Coast Guard Rear Admiral Md Ziaul Hoque, DG of BGB Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui and Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs Dr. Ziauddin Ahmed as special guests.

Rath Yatra Utsab begins

Dhaka.

Followers of Sanatan Dharma believe that Lord Jagannath is the Nath or Adhiswar of the world. They believe that by receiving His grace, devotees attain liberation and are freed from the cycle of rebirth.

Based on this belief, devotees begin the chariot journey carrying the idol of Lord Jagannath on the decorated raths. The nine-day programme organised by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in Dhaka includes Harinam Sankirtan, Agnihotra Yajna for world peace and prosperity, Mahaprasad distribution, religious discussions, processions, Padavali Kirtan, Aarti Kirtan, Bhagavad Katha, cultural programmes, Srimad Bhagavad Gita recitation, religious film screenings and drama performances.

The Rath Yatra procession will be inaugurated at 3 pm after a discussion programme. BNP Secretary General and Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir will attend the event as the chief guest. ISKCON Bangladesh General Secretary Nitai Swami said the nine-day Rath Yatra Utsab of Sri Sri Jagannath Dev, one of the major religious events of Sanatan Dharma followers, will be celebrated this year as well.

He said the Rath Yatra will start from Swamibagh Ashram and proceed through Joykali Temple, Ittefaq Intersection, Shapla Chattar, Dainik Bangla Intersection, Paltan Intersection, Jatiya Press Club, High Court, Doel Chattar, Shaheed Minar and Palashi Intersection before reaching Dhakeshwari National Temple. The return Rath Yatra will begin from Dhakeshwari Temple on the afternoon of July 25 and conclude at Swamibagh Ashram following the opposite route.

Nitai Swami said several meetings have been held with the government, administration and police authorities regarding security arrangements, and they have assured all-out security support.

He said law enforcement agencies, including police, will be deployed, while 500 ISKCON volunteers will remain on duty to maintain discipline during the procession.

He added that there is no reason to be concerned about security. Besides, Rath Yatra processions will also be held at Shree Shree Jagannath Jau Thakur Mandir in Tanti Bazar of Old Dhaka, Ramsita Temple on Joykali Road, Shankhari Bazar Eknam Committee and other temples across the country.

Bangladesh, Canada explore

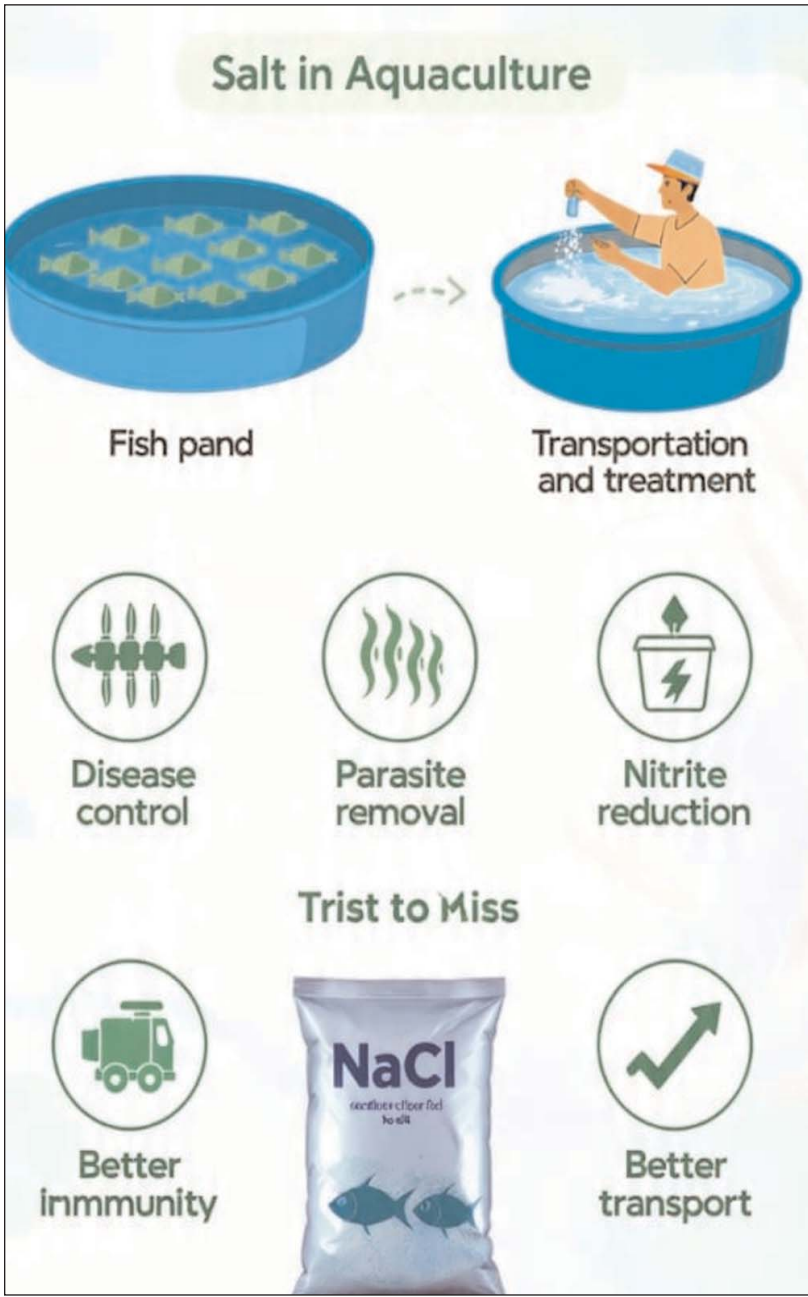
Bangladesh's capacity in the sector. Geographic Reference Welcoming the Bangladeshi delegation, CFIA Director General expressed interest in bolstering mutual cooperation to improve food safety, animal health, and regulatory frameworks, and hoped the exchange of knowledge, technology, and experience between institutions of the two countries would increase in the future. Both sides expressed optimism that the meeting would open new horizons for long-term cooperation in livestock development, safe food production, and international trade between Bangladesh and Canada.

Any extradition is a legal issue

stance, he said Sheikh Hasina will have no opportunity to surrender as she is already a convicted person. "If she returns, she will be arrested immediately, and the verdicts will be executed. If there is any scope for appeal, that will be decided by the court," Salahuddin said.

HSC Examinees Stage Protest in

frustration over recent academic decisions, exam management



Salt Application & Usage Guidelines

1. To Increase Energy & Immunity

Conditioning fry and adult fish + during transportation: Salt destroys germs, increases mucus, increases body energy, and

reduces mortality during transport.

After harvesting fry, before selling or transferring, keep them in 3-6 ppt saline water until sale or transfer.

For transporting fry and adult fish, apply 5-8 ppt salt in the transport container water.

Salt in Feed: After transferring fish/fry to another pond, it's best to mix 10-15 gm salt per 1 kg feed for 4/5 days.

If pellet feed already contains this amount during manufacturing, no need to add again.

If pellet feed contains 15 gm salt per 1 kg, it helps body growth.

Feed mills should mix 150 gm salt per 10 kg feed.

If not mixed, you can do it yourself: Mix 150 gm salt in 1 liter water and spray on 10 kg pellets, then dry and feed.

2. For Disease & Germs: If any type of parasite is on gills or skin: Catch the fish and dip in 50 ppt salinity for 30 seconds to 3 minutes, OR dip in 20-30 ppt for 10-30 minutes for 3 consecutive days, OR dip in 5-10 ppt for 6 to 12 hours for 3 consecutive days.

If there are wounds on gills, fins, or tail: Dip in 20-30 ppt for 10-30 minutes.

In Biofloc & RAS: Maintaining 3 ppt salt prevents fungal and gill infection diseases and reduces nitrite toxicity.

Disinfecting fish eggs:

Dipping fish eggs in 20-30 ppt every day or every other day controls fungal infection.

Keeping 3-5 ppt salinity in hatching water for tilapia and other freshwater fish prevents fungal infection and increases hatch rate.

3. Reducing Nitrite Toxicity: Sometimes nitrite levels can increase in biofloc. The best way to control nitrite is by applying salt. 3 ppt salt can be given during biofloc tank preparation.

Important Note:

Chloride in pond water is usually 20 ppm. If there is 20 ppm chloride, nitrite toxicity does not occur.

If less than 20 ppm, it must be increased.

When nitrite is 0.3 ppm, stress starts in fish.

At 0.7 mg/L or 0.7 ppm, toxicity starts.

Applying salt reduces/eliminates nitrite toxicity. Salt contains 60% chloride.

This chloride blocks nitrite entry through the gills. Ideal ratio: Chloride : Nitrite = 6 : 1. Easy method: If nitrite in water is 1, apply salt at 10 ppm (10 mg/L).

Formula to calculate required salt to maintain 6:1 ratio - Boyd 1998: Assume a pond has 0 chloride and 1 ppm nitrite. Salt dose = [(6 x 1) x Chloride in water (here 0)] ÷ 0.6 = 10 gm salt/cubic meter = 10 ppm

So, for 1 acre pond with 1.5m depth and 1 ppm nitrite, you need 60 kg salt. For 1m depth, you need 40 kg salt.

This salt will work to eliminate nitrite toxicity on one hand, and reduce osmosis in fish on the other.

event to distribute the aid to the local community. An experienced medical team from the BGB operated a day-long medical camp, providing free prescriptions and essential medicines to a large number of helpless and underprivileged people from remote border areas.

In addition to the healthcare services, notebooks, pens, and various other educational materials were gifted to local school children to encourage them in their studies. The students expressed great joy upon receiving these gifts from the BGB. Meanwhile, considering the geographical location of the Feni region, a special meeting was organized to raise awareness among locals about tackling potential natural disasters. During the meeting, BGB officials provided crucial guidelines on pre-flood preparations, what to do during a flood, and emergency contact procedures. Later, awareness leaflets were distributed among the attendees.

BGB officials stated that along with safeguarding the borders, standing by the border residents and working for their welfare is a regular and moral responsibility of the BGB. The 4 BGB remains fully committed to improving the quality of life for local communities and supporting them during any disaster.

Local representatives and civil society members warmly welcomed this exceptional and humanitarian initiative by the BGB. They remarked that the BGB's efforts to address the health, education, and awareness of ordinary people—in addition to guarding the borders—are truly commendable.

Saudi Arabia keen

He said Saudi Arabia aims to become a global logistics hub and is keen to create greater opportunities for Saudi companies to invest in Bangladesh, while also supporting Bangladeshi businesses interested in expanding into the Saudi market. The meeting also discussed the operations of Red Sea Gateway Terminal (RSGT) in Bangladesh, where over 98 percent of employees are Bangladeshis. The company is exploring further opportunities to modernise terminal operations by introducing advanced technologies and improving operational efficiency. Both sides underscored the importance of capitalising on the current momentum to advance mutually beneficial projects and deepen bilateral investment cooperation. Speaking after the meeting, Ashik Chowdhury said discussions focused on sectors where Saudi interest closely matches Bangladesh's development priorities, particularly logistics and supply chain infrastructure, including cold storage facilities and port development. He added that Bangladesh is also prioritising investment cooperation in financial services and is already engaging with several Saudi companies to showcase investment opportunities and facilitate meaningful investment partnerships.

Security tightened in Dhaka

tions. As of around 1:15pm, no large gathering or procession linked to the announced long march had formed. Most examinees left the centres promptly with their parents or guardians. HSC and equivalent examinations are being held in 59 districts across the country on Wednesday. Student protesters have called for demonstrations nationwide after the examinations conclude.

Students in Dhaka have announced plans to assemble at several designated locations—including in front of the BNS Centre in Uttara, as well as Shahbagh, Science Lab, and Maghbazar before beginning their "Long March to the Ministry of Education." The demonstrations stem from growing dissatisfaction over the conduct of this year's HSC examinations. On Monday, HSC and equivalent examinations were held across the country despite adverse weather conditions, except in five districts of Chittagong Division. In several areas, examinees were seen wading through waist-deep floodwater to reach their examination centres. Public criticism intensified after a video of an alleged phone conversation involving the education minister circulated on social media. Protesters claimed the minister referred to HSC candidates as "farm chickens."



UNGA President-elect Khalilur meets European leaders in New York

Staff correspondent

President-elect of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Dr. Khalilur Rahman has held separate meetings with senior leaders from Slovakia, Georgia and North Macedonia to exchange views on the priorities of the upcoming UN General Assembly session.

Foreign and European Affairs Juraj Blanár, Georgian Deputy Foreign Minister Lasha Darsalia, and North Macedonian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Zoran Dimitrovski in New York on Tuesday, foreign ministry said here this morning. During the meetings, the leaders discussed key priorities for the 81st session of the UN General Assembly and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. The president-elect reaffirmed

his commitment to leading an open, inclusive and member. state-driven presidency, underscoring the importance of close engagement and broad-based cooperation with all UN member states throughout the session. The meetings formed part of Dr. Rahman's ongoing consultations with representatives of UN member states ahead of the opening of the 81st session of the General Assembly.

Flood toll climbs to 56 as Teesta swells, north on alert

Staff correspondent

Bangladesh's flood emergency entered a new phase on Tuesday as the death toll from heavy rain, flash floods and landslides rose to 56, while authorities warned that although floodwaters are receding in the northeast, swelling northern rivers could trigger fresh inundation in Rangpur and adjoining districts over the coming days. According to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, seven districts have been affected by the disaster, leaving 56 people dead, 39 injured and one person missing.

A total of 329 shelters are now housing 10,854 displaced people, while flooding has affected 59 upazilas, 334 unions and 12 municipalities. Cox's Bazar remains the worst-hit district, accounting for 31 deaths, including 13 Rohingya and 18 local residents. Chittagong has reported 15 deaths, followed by Bandarban (6), Rangamati (3) and Moulvibazar (1). The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said water levels in the

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Students who missed HSC exams over adverse weather to get another chance: Education Minister

Staff correspondent

Education Minister Dr A N M Ehsanul Haque Milon on Wednesday announced that HSC examinees who were unable to attend examinations due to adverse weather or other unavoidable reasons will be allowed to sit for the missed papers. Making a statement in Parliament under Rule 300, the minister said the special arrangement has been made considering the importance of the HSC examination in students' academic lives. He said a total of 12, 70,583 candidates are taking the HSC and equivalent examinations this year at 2,697 examination centres across the country. The minister said examinations have already been postponed in five districts under the Chattogram Education Board- Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban due to heavy rainfall and adverse weather condition. He added that apart from tChattogram

Education Board, some candidates in Dhaka and several other districts were also unable to sit scheduled examinations because of inclement weather and various unavoidable circumstances.

"Candidates who could not participate in any subject of the ongoing HSC and equivalent examinations due to adverse weather or other unavoidable reasons will be allowed to sit those examinations on the same date and at the same time fixed by the Education Ministry for the already postponed examinations under the Chattogram Education Board," the minister told Parliament. He said the examinations would be held using identical question papers for the relevant subjects. The minister also updated Parliament on the controversy surrounding the Physics First Paper examination. He said the officials responsible for preparing the erroneous question paper have already been suspended. Reiterating

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Pubali Bank PLC inaugurates 'Cashless Pirojpur' program and digital banking service in Pirojpur

Syed Bashir Ahmed, Pirojpur, Correspondent

With the aim of building a digital Bangladesh and further involving customers with modern banking services, a public awareness discussion on digital banking and Bangla QR code titled 'Cashless Pirojpur' was held in Pirojpur. This discussion was organized by Pubali Bank PLC at the second floor hall of Pirojpur

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Ctg restaurant fined Tk 3 lakh for health violations

Staff Correspondent

A mobile court today fined the proprietor of Sadiya's Kitchen, a restaurant in the city's East Nasirabad area, Tk 3 lakh for multiple food safety and hygiene violations. The drive was conducted by Assistant Commissioner (Land) and Executive Magistrate Shifat Binte Ara.

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Ctg Health Department calls for stronger dengue surveillance

Staff Correspondent

Chattogram Divisional Health Director Dr Sheikh Fazle Rabbi has called for enhanced surveillance to curb the spread of mosquito-borne diseases, particularly dengue. He said dengue has emerged as a major public health concern and that the Health Department is fully prepared to ensure the safety of Chattogram residents and keep the city dengue-free. However, he said achieving this goal would require greater public awareness and active community participation alongside government efforts. He made the call while addressing a coordination meeting on 'Strengthening the Dengue Surveillance System', organised in collaboration with M,decins Sans Frontières (MSF) at the office of the Divisional Health Director on Tuesday. He noted that both the government and the NGO MSF are collaborating to address the dengue issue. An agreement has already been established among the Chattogram City Corporation, Health Department, Chattogram Veterinary and Animal Sciences

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Kishor Kuri Sangha Stands by Flood Victims in Chittagong, Distributes Humanitarian Aid

Staff Reporter, Chagolnaia, Fani.

'Kishor Kuri Sangha', a traditional social and voluntary organization based in Chhagalnaiya, Feni, has extended a helping hand to the helpless and waterlogged people affected by the devastating floods in Chittagong. As part of the organization's humanitarian aid initiative, dry food, pure drinking water, and essential relief materials were distributed among waterlogged families in various remote areas of Banshkhali Upazila in Chittagong.

A pickup van carrying the relief materials left Chhagalnaiya for Banshkhali. A dedicated team of youth and volunteers from the organization arrived directly at the flood-affected areas to distribute the humanitarian aid to the people in need. Omar Faruk, the expatriate advisor of the organization, provided special guidance and overall cooperation from abroad to make this humanitarian initiative a success.

Among others present at the field level who directly participated in the relief distribution were Mohammad Javed, President of the organization; Arfat Ilyas Imon, Vice-President; and Md. Johir Khan, Organizing Secretary, along with other officials and volunteers.

During the distribution, the leaders of the organization stated: "The flood situation

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Ceremony held in Kaukhali on the occasion of Prime Minister's Tree Plantation Program and Primary Education Award-2026

Pirojpur Correspondent

A discussion meeting was held on Wednesday (July 15) morning in the classroom of Kachuakati Government Primary School in Kaukhali, Pirojpur to mark the inauguration of Honorable Prime Minister's Tree Plantation Program-2026 and the live broadcast of the Primary Education Award-2026 award distribution ceremony. The ceremony, organized by the Upazila Primary Education

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State Minister Aninda Islam pledges equal support for all flood victims in Bandarban

Bandarban Correspondent

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Aninda Islam Amit on Wednesday said the government is making its highest effort to ease

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Zonayed Saki for stronger global support to achieve SDGs

Staff correspondent

State Minister for Planning Zonayed Abdur Rahim Saki today called for stronger international support, including grants, concessional financing and technology transfer, to help Bangladesh accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Delivering Bangladesh's country statement at the General Debate of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, Zonayed Saki said the country remains firmly

committed to achieving the SDGs despite significant economic and financial challenges. He said Bangladesh joined the forum with a renewed mandate from its people following the February national election and that the new government had adopted a "3R Strategy" - Recovery, Restoration and Reconstruction - to restore economic stability, rebuild institutions and lay the foundation for sustainable development. The state minister said Bangladesh faces an annual SDG financing gap of more than US\$132 billion until 2030, particularly in clean energy, economic growth and

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বাংলাদেশ পল্লী বিদ্যুতায়ন বোর্ড

আলোকিত গ্রাম, উন্নতির বাংলাদেশ

৮০ টি পল্লী বিদ্যুৎ সমিতি

বিদ্যুৎ বিল নিয়ে অভিযোগ আছে?

বিদ্যুৎ বিল সংক্রান্ত যেকোনো অভিযোগ জানাতে আমাদের অফিসিয়াল চ্যানেলের মাধ্যমে যোগাযোগ করুন।

অভিযোগ জানান আমাদের অফিসিয়াল হেল্পলাইন

হেল্পলাইন নম্বর **১৬৮৯৯** (সারা দেশে ২৪/৭)

সরাসরি উপস্থিত হোন সংশ্লিষ্ট পল্লী বিদ্যুৎ অফিসে আপনার অভিযোগ সর্বোচ্চ গুরুত্ব সহকারে সমাধান করা হবে

গ্রাহক অভিযোগ নিরসনে আমরা সদা তৎপর

সর্বোচ্চ গ্রাহক সেবা নিশ্চিত আমাদের বন্ধপরিচর

বিদ্যুৎ আছে, উন্নয়ন আছে আলোকিত হোক প্রতিটি ঘর

Flood toll climbs to 56 as

Surma-Kushiyara river system have started to decline after several days of flooding.

If current trends continue, flood conditions in low-lying areas of Sylhet and Sunamganj are expected to improve further within the next 24 to 48 hours.

River levels have also fallen in parts of Sylhet and Mymensingh divisions, including the Jadukata, Bhugai-Kangs and Sarigowain rivers.

Although the Someshwari River continues to rise, officials expect the situation in Netrakona to remain stable before gradually improving.

Despite the improvement, the FFWC said five monitoring stations on four rivers remain above the danger level: the Teesta at Dalia, Surma at Chhatak, Kushiyara at Markuli and Fenchuganj, and the Someshwari at Kalmakanda.

Fresh flood fears in the northAttention is now shifting to northern Bangladesh, where continuous rainfall and upstream runoff from India have pushed the Teesta above the danger level for the third time this monsoon.

At Dalia in Nilphamari, the river was flowing 4 centimetres above the danger level on Tuesday morning after peaking at 10 centimetres above the previous evening.

Water has already entered low-lying villages in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas, prompting residents to prepare for further flooding.

Authorities have opened all 44 sluice gates of the Teesta Barrage to manage the increased flow.

The FFWC warned that the Teesta, Dharla and Dudhkumar rivers could rise further over the next 24 to 48 hours, causing short-term flooding in parts of Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur and Kurigram.

The Kaunia point on the Teesta may temporarily cross the danger level, while riverbank communities have been advised to move to safer ground if conditions deteriorate.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department has forecast moderate to moderately heavy rainfall across much of the country and adjoining upstream areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and West Bengal over the next 72 hours.

While forecasters expect flood conditions to continue improving in the northeast, they warned that renewed rainfall and upstream flows could prolong flooding in parts of northern Bangladesh before river levels begin to recede later in the week.

Students who missed HSC

the government's assurance to examinees, Milon said all candidates would receive full marks for Questions 6 and 7 of the Physics First Paper, where errors were identified. He said the government remained committed to ensuring that no student would be affected because of mistakes in the examination process or circumstances beyond their control.

Pubali Bank PLC inaugurates

Town Club today, Wednesday (July 15).Alamgir Hossain, a member of the Central Executive Committee of the Central BNP and Administrator of Pirojpur District Council, was present as the chief guest at the event. Pirojpur Municipality Administrator Mahmudur Rahman Mamun, Pirojpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Gazi Wahiduzzaman Lavlu, Pirojpur District Businessmen's Association General Secretary Ahsanul Kabir, District Jubo Dal Member Secretary Imdadul Haque Masud and Pubali Bank PLC Regional Office Assistant General Manager Ujjal Halder were present as special guests. Pubali Bank PLC Pirojpur Branch Manager Mrinal Kanti presided over the program.

The speakers at the discussion meeting said that it is possible to ensure safe, fast and transparent financial transactions by expanding digital banking services. Emphasis was placed on increasing the use of various modern banking services including Bangla QR codes to reduce the use of cash and develop the habit of digital transactions.

At the end of the meeting, a colorful rally was taken out to increase public awareness. At the same time, a two-day temporary digital banking booth was inaugurated on the Town Club premises.Customers are being given an idea about the modern digital services of Pubali Bank PLC at the booth. In addition, interested parties are getting the opportunity to avail various digital banking facilities including instant bank account opening through Bangla QR Code, PI Internet Banking, Credit and Debit Card services and e-KYC. Bank officials and employees, businessmen, representatives of various organizations, political leaders and local dignitaries were present at the event.

Ctg restaurant fined Tk 3

During the inspection, the mobile court found rotten eggs and breadcrumbs, along with infestations of rats, cockroaches, mosquitoes and flies.

Officials also detected several unhygienic food storage practices, including storing raw chicken with leftover food in the same freezer, operating a chicken farm at the food processing site, open drainage near the premises and keeping yogurt alongside meat in unsealed containers.

The authorities said the conditions posed serious risks to public health, prompting the court to impose the fine.

Ctg Health Department calls for

University (CVASU), and MSF to combat vector-borne diseases.

He reported that Aedes mosquito larvae are present in one out of every four homes within the Chattogram City Corporation area. In June, the dengue patient count in the Chattogram division reached 405, and by the second week of July this year, this figure had risen to 485. He expressed concerns that the dengue outbreak may escalate further during the monsoon season. During the meeting, Chattogram Civil Surgeon Dr Jahangir Alam stated that, in addition to government initiatives, collaborative efforts involving MSF and other NGOs are essential to effectively combat dengue.

The meeting, which was facilitated by MSF Medical Team Leader Dr. Francisco Raul D. Salvador and Medical Liaison Officer Dr. Fatema Ferdousi, included the participation of Chattogram Medical College Hospital Director Brigadier General Mohammad Taslim Uddin, BITID Director Dr. Iftekhar Ahmed, Deputy Director of the Divisional Health Director's Office Dr. Kamrul Azad, Acting Director of Chattogram General Hospital Dr. Md. Ekram Hossain, along with various officials from the Health Department, medical professionals, and representatives development partner organizations were present.

Speakers: Front-of-package labelling to

vascular diseases, account for approximately 71% of all deaths in Bangladesh, with 19% of these occurring prematurely. The growing consumption of ultra-processed foods high in salt, sugar, and saturated fat is further driving the country's NCD burden.

Currently, consumers often struggle to understand the complex nutrition information provided on the back of food packages and the associated health risks. However, the introduction of FOPL would enable consumers to identify unhealthy products more easily and make healthier food choices.Professor Dr Mohammad Shoeb, member of the Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA), said: “The draft regulation on mandatory FOPL will be finalized soon, and the necessary steps for its swift implementation will be taken.”Abu Ahmed Shamim, associate scientist at the BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health, said: “The implementation of warning-based

FOPL has reduced the consumption of unhealthy foods in many countries around the world. It is imperative to introduce this system in Bangladesh as well.”Muhammad Ruhul Quddus, Bangladesh country lead of GHAI, said: “Clear warning labels displayed on the front of ultra-processed food packages will help consumers make healthier food choices and play an effective role in reducing long-term health risks.”Sajjadur Rahman, deputy editor of The Business Standard, said: “Regular media coverage highlighting the importance of FOPL in preventing NCDs can create positive pressure on policymakers to take timely action.” Other speakers at the workshop included Mortuza Haider Liton, convener of Anti-Tobacco Media Alliance-ATMA; Nadira Kiron and Mizan Chowdhury, co-conveners, ATMA; and ABM Zubair, executive director, PROGGA. The presentations in the workshop were delivered by PROGGA's Head of Programs, Md Hasan Shahriar and Program Officer, Shabnam Mostofa.

Ceremony held in Kaukhali on the

Office, was presided over by Kaukhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Asaduzzaman.The program was addressed by Kawkhali Upazila BNP General Secretary HM Deen Mohammad, Upazila Primary Education Officer Ohidul Islam, Upazila Assistant Primary Education Officer Md. Rafiqul Islam, Sabuj Keli Sikder, Upazila BNP former joint convener Badruddoza Mia, Training Center instructor Md. Lutfar Rahman, Kachuakati Government Primary School headmaster Shamsunnahar Rupali, Kaukhali Press Club president senior journalist Riyad Mahmud Sikder, senior journalist Enamul Haque and others.The program was attended by students, headmasters, assistant teachers and well-wishers of educational institutions.

Upazila BNP Organizing Secretary Rafiqul Islam Rafiq hosted the program.The speakers said that there is no alternative to tree plantation to protect the balance of the environment, combat the adverse effects of climate change and create environmental awareness among students. In addition, the Primary Education Medal is playing an important role in improving the quality of primary education and encouraging teachers.

The event witnessed the inauguration of the Prime Minister's Tree Plantation Program-2026 and the live broadcast of the Primary Education Medal-2026 award distribution ceremony.Kaukhali Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Asaduzzaman said that the Prime Minister's Tree Plantation Program is a timely initiative. To protect the environment and build a green Bangladesh, everyone should take responsibility for planting at least one tree and taking care of it.Message SenderSyed Bashir AhmedPirojpur.

State Minister Aninda

the suffering of people affected by heavy rainfall and flash floods in Bandarban. NaturalDisasters

Speaking to reporters after distributing relief among flood victims at Amtali Para in Bandarban municipality, the state minister said the government would stand by all affected people. “No one affected by the disaster will be abandoned. Whether they are indigenous people, Bengalis or members of any other community, everyone has suffered equally. There will be no discrimination, and the government is working with utmost sincerity to reduce their hardship,” he said.

Amit said he visited Bandarban on the instructions of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to assess the situation and oversee relief efforts.

He said local lawmaker Saching Pru Jerry, the district administration, police and other government agencies have been carrying out rescue, relief and rehabilitation activities since the first day of the flooding.

Cooked meals are being provided to people staying at flood shelters, while dry food is being distributed to those outside the shelters and medical teams are also providing healthcare services to affected residents, he said .

He said the government would launch food assistance and food-friendly programmes within the next few days to enable flood victims to purchase essential commodities at subsidised prices, easing their financial burden.

Amit also said the government would gradually repair or rebuild houses damaged or destroyed by the floods so that affected families could return home and resume normal life as quickly as possible.

Referring to the post-flood situation, he said receding water has left many areas covered with mud and waste, creating unhealthy conditions.

He said coordinated clean-up operations involving the local administration, municipality, elected representatives and political activists would be launched to minimise the risk of disease outbreaks and restore affected areas to a habitable condition.

Kishor Kuri Sangha Stands

in Chittagong is extremely dire. Waterlogged people are passing their days in immense suffering. Driven by social responsibility, 'Kishor Kuri Sangha' has always stood by the helpless and distressed. We believe our small effort will mitigate the sufferings of the flood-affected people to some extent. Our humanitarian activities and voluntary services will continue in any social or natural disaster in the future."

Zonayed Saki for stronge

infrastructure.He also highlighted the continued burden of hosting around 1.3 millionRohingyas, noting that the humanitarian response faces a 37 percent fundinggap, including an immediate shortfall of about US\$261 million.Despite these challenges, Zonayed Saki said Bangladesh has continued makingprogress in reducing extreme poverty, achieving near-universal primary school enrolment and strengthening climate resilience.

He said the country, under the leadership of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman,is pursuing a transformative development agenda aligned with the Five-YearStrategic Framework, the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and preparations for graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category.Highlighting the government's priorities, Zonayed Saki said Bangladesh plansto increase public spending on education and health to 5 percent of GDP.

He said the government will dredge 20,000 kilometres of rivers and canalsover the next five years to improve water security, reduce flood risks andrestore ecosystems.The state minister also announced plans to plant 250 million saplings, expandrenewable energy, promote green industries and sustainable transport, anddevelop a carbon market to mobilise green investment and carbon-credit opportunities.He said the government is strengthening domestic resource mobilisation toexpand social protection and promote inclusive development through universal life-cycle-based social security programme with a special focus onwomen. Zonayed Saki also said the newly introduced Farmers Card initiative will strengthen rural livelihoods, enhance food security and improve agricultural-productivity.Concluding his statement, the state minister urged development partners to enhance financial and technical support for Bangladesh's sustainable development efforts, reaffirming the country's commitment to reform, invest and deliver on the SDGs while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Bangladesh eyes smarter

assessing poverty and determining eligibility across different social programmes.

Officials said this will reduce duplication, improve targeting and ensure that government resources reach those who need them most.Building on a digital foundation

The reform builds upon the Single Registry System, already introduced by the Finance Division to streamline beneficiary management.Under the system, social protection payments are transferred directly into beneficiaries' mobile financial service or bank accounts through the Government-to-Person (G2P)

payment mechanism.The registry currently contains information on around 4 crore beneficiaries and can verify another 2 crore citizens.

According to the budget document, the digital registry has already improved transparency in beneficiary selection, strengthened account verification and eliminated duplication in fund disbursement.

A life-cycle approachThe budget outlines plans for a life-cycle approach to social protection, bringing every citizen—from birth through old age—under a comprehensive support framework.

Officials say the strategy aims not only to provide financial assistance but also to promote economic empowerment and self-reliance while ensuring that vulnerable groups remain protected during different stages of life.

The document also reiterates the constitutional commitment to ensuring food, clothing, shelter and employment for every citizen, while acknowledging that persistent poverty and unequal distribution of resources continue to drive inequality.Family Card Programme at the centreThe government's flagship initiative is the Family Card Programme which represents a significant departure from individual-based welfare schemes.

Built on the philosophy that “the family, not the individual, is the fundamental unit of development,” the programme seeks to identify poor households and provide them with integrated support covering food security, healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities.Unlike many existing programmes, the Family Card is issued in the name of the mother or female head of household, a move aimed at strengthening women's financial and social position within families.

Each beneficiary household receives Tk 2,500 per month directly through the G2P payment system—almost three times higher than allowances under many existing safety-net programmes.

The government is also incorporating household family-tree information into the database, creating a more comprehensive digital record of beneficiaries.Ultimately, authorities plan to transform the Family Card into a Universal Social ID Card for every citizen by 2030, replacing the allowance-based components of many existing social protection programmes.During the pilot phase, 60,044 female heads of households have been receiving benefits.

In the coming fiscal year, the government plans to issue Family Cards to 41 lakh women, backed by a proposed allocation of Tk 14,500 crore.Expanded benefits across programmes Alongside structural reforms, the government has proposed expanding several existing social safety programmes.The Old Age Allowance Programme will add 100,000 beneficiaries, increasing total coverage to 62 lakh, while the monthly allowance will rise from Tk 650 to Tk 700.The Widow and Destitute Women Allowance Programme will also expand by 100,000 beneficiaries to 30 lakh, with monthly payments increasing to Tk 700.

Under the Disability Allowance Programme, beneficiary numbers will increase from 34.5 lakh to 38 lakh, while monthly payments will rise from Tk 900 to Tk 1,000.The government also plans to expand educational support for students with disabilities by increasing beneficiaries from 81,000 to 100,000 and raising stipend rates across all education levels.Support for pregnant women and newborns will continue through the Mother and Child Assistance Programme, with beneficiaries increasing to nearly 19 lakh and an allocation of Tk 1,944.70 crore proposed for the next fiscal year.Financial assistance for patients suffering from cancer and five other chronic diseases will also be strengthened, with one-time grants doubling from Tk 50,000 to Tk 100,000.Pension and legal reformsThe budget also proposes measures to improve the Universal Pension Scheme, including better management of pension funds and allowing participants to withdraw 30 percent of accumulated savings as a one-time gratuity.In addition, the government plans to establish a state-funded welfare programme for destitute orphan children and amend weaknesses in the Parents' Maintenance Act, 2013 to improve its implementation.Challenges aheadWhile the reform agenda is among the most comprehensive attempts to modernise Bangladesh's social protection architecture, successful implementation will depend on several factors. Dhakacity guideMaintaining accurate and regularly updated household data, ensuring digital access in remote areas, protecting personal information and coordinating among multiple ministries will all be critical to achieving the programme's objectives.There will also be pressure to ensure that genuinely poor households are not excluded during the transition from existing schemes to a unified digital system.

China's economic growth hits slowest pace in more than three years

International Desk

China's economy grew at its weakest pace in more than three years during the second quarter, data showed Wednesday, missing expectations even as strong exports driven by the global AI boom helped offset trade disruptions caused by the Middle East war.The 4.3 percent year-on-year expansion reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) for April-June, was short of the 4.5 percent forecast in an AFP survey of economists and the slowest growth since the fourth quarter of 2022.It was also short of the 4.5-5.0 percent annual rate targeted by Beijing, which is the lowest in decades.A years-long crisis in the property sector and a persistent slump in domestic spending have left leaders reliant on exports to meet growth targets.However, the US-Israeli war on Iran has threatened that as it chokes shipping through the Strait of Hormuz -- a vital transit route through which a fifth of global oil and natural gas normally passes.

"In the first half of the year, the national economy operated within a reasonable range," the NBS said in a statement."There are many unstable and uncertain external factors, and the domestic contradiction of strong supply and weak demand is prominent. The foundation for the economy to improve still needs to be consolidated," it added.The NBS data also showed retail sales grew 1.0 year-on-year in June, beating a Bloomberg forecast of a 0.1 percent drop. And industrial production rose 5.3 percent last month, topping a Bloomberg estimate of 4.6 percent.But in a gloomy sign, fixed-asset investment slid 5.7 percent on-year in the first half.

- AI-driven export boom -Domestic demand dampened by low income expectations remains China's "weakest link", Yue Su of The Economist Intelligence Unit told AFP.

"We therefore expect policymakers to place greater emphasis on boosting consumption in the second half of the year and into early 2027" through fiscal stimulus packages, increased minimum wages or directing wage growth towards frontline workers, she said.But analyst Zhang Zhiwei said the government was unlikely to change its policy stance in the coming months as a result of the latest figures.

"We need to keep in mind that the first-quarter GDP growth was strong at five percent. This means the government is still on track to deliver growth in line with the official (annual) target they set at 4.5-5 percent," Zhang wrote in a note.

"The export boom just continues to beat expectations, and it will likely remain strong in the short term," he added.The closely watched figures followed data Tuesday that showed exports surged a forecast-topping 27.0 percent year-on-year in June as the global AI boom helped fuel demand for chips and computing equipment.China's semiconductor exports more than doubled in value in June year-on-year, while data-processing equipment shipments rose 53.1 percent from a year earlier.But that expansion was "entirely a price story caused by

the ongoing shortage of memory chips", Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said Tuesday, noting that the volume of semiconductor exports actually fell year-on-year in June.Tensions with the United States and European Union remain a source of friction.China remains locked in a simmering trade feud with the EU, with which it recorded a trade surplus of \$32.9 billion in June.

And while ties between Washington and Beijing have stabilised since US President Donald Trump visited Beijing in May, a trade imbalance and rivalry over chip production persist.

ISPs threaten service shutdown unless extortionists arrested in 24 hours

Staff correspondent

Internet service providers (ISPs) on Wednesday warned that countrywide internet services could face disruption if the authorities concerned fail to arrest within the next 24 hours those behind a spate of attacks, vandalism, looting, and extortion targeting ISP offices, network infrastructure and staff.The warning came at a human chain organised by the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Consumers Association (BMPCA) in front of the Jatiya Press Club, protesting the recent wave of attacks on ISP establishments across the country. GeographicReferenceSpeaking at the programme, Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB) President Aminul Hakim said suspects behind an incident in Chattogram remained at large 24 hours after it occurred, leaving ISP owners and employees fearful.He warned that if the extortionists are not arrested within the next 24 hours, service could collapse on its own as providers struggle to maintain uninterrupted operations.ISPAB Secretary General Nazmul Karim Bhuiyan said the association's mandate is not street agitation, but that ISPs have been forced onto the streets to demand their own security after extortionists went unarrested despite the presence of law enforcement in Chattogram.He said a decision on tougher action would be taken if steps are not taken within 24 hours, urging the government not to force them into further programmes.

Speakers at the human chain said the continued attacks, vandalism, looting, land-grabbing and extortion against ISPs are disrupting not only entrepreneurs but the daily lives, education, healthcare, business, freelancing, e-commerce, mobile banking and government digital services of millions of internet subscribers, describing internet connectivity as essential digital infrastructure rather than merely a commercial service. BMPCA President Mohiuddin Ahmed said deliberately disrupting internet service is a serious offence, and attacks, vandalism, looting, extortion or destruction of networks that deprive the public of internet access should be treated with equal severity.The human chain placed a five-point- maximum security for internet infrastructure, data centres, fibre optic networks, towers and ISP offices, swift arrest and exemplary punishment under existing law for those involved in attacks, vandalism, looting, land-grabbing and extortion, treating disruption of internet services causing public suffering and digital economic losses as a serious economic and digital offence, with necessary legal action, coordinated security for ISPs involving law enforcement agencies, local administration and the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC); and top priority for internet infrastructure security to keep the digital economy, online education, healthcare, e-commerce, mobile banking and government digital services running smoothly. GeographicReference Speakers urged the government, law enforcement agencies and relevant authorities to take immediate, strict and effective action against the perpetrators and ensure exemplary punishment.

100 more beds approved for RMCH

Staff correspondent

Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) has received administrative approval to increase its bed capacity by 100 after a long gap of 13 years, paving the way for expanding critical care services, including a government-recognised Intensive Care Unit (ICU).The approval was issued by the Health Services Division on Monday. With the approval, the hospital's total bed capacity will rise from 1,200 to 1,300, enabling the authorities to formally launch services in the newly added beds for ICU facilities.Deputy Secretary of the Health Services Division Kazi Sharif Uddin Ahmed sent a letter in this regard to the Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services on Monday.The letter said administrative approval was granted to upgrade RMCH's capacity from 1,200 to 1,300 beds and start service operations in the additional beds, subject to compliance with all relevant rules and regulations.

The bed capacity of the hospital was last increased to 1,200 in 2013.Under the hospital's initiative, 46 ICU beds have already been set up. Of these, 12 are for adult patients, 16 for elderly patients, 12 for children and six for patients requiring intensive monitoring after complex surgeries. These beds will now receive government recognition as ICU beds.Besides, 54 new beds will be added to expand critical care services. Of these, 15 beds will be allocated for pregnant and postpartum mothers, 10 for newborns, 10 for cancer and other critically ill patients, and 19 for patients under the One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC). With the existing and new facilities combined, the ICU will have a total of 100 beds, ICU in-charge Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal of RMCH informed."We have received approval for a government-recognised ICU. This will help ensure better services for critically ill patients as there will be dedicated budgetary support and improved management," he said.

2 to die, 10 get life term for killing deed writer in Mymensingh

Staff correspondent

A Mymensingh court on Wednesday sentenced two people to death and 10 others to life imprisonment for killing a deed writer in 2013.Judge of the Mymensingh Special Sessions Judge Court Farhana Ferdous handed down the judgment. The condemned convicts are Md Farid, 48, son of Janab Ali, and Md Masud Mia, 41, son of Abdus Samad, both of the Narangi area in Bhaluka upazila. The court also fined them Tk 30,000 each.

Those sentenced to life imprisonment are Abdus Samad, 68, A Matin, 45, Mosharrarf Hossain, 58, Mokhlesur Rahman, 53, Mofazzal Hossain, 58, Tofazzal Hossain, 48, Nazmul Mia, 43, Shahjahan Akond, 48, Atiqul Akond, 39, and Siddik Mia, 63.Of them, Siddik Mia was tried in absentia.The court also fined each of them Tk 50,000, in default, to suffer, six months more in jail.According to the prosecution, Abu Zakaria Mintu, a deed writer, was stabbed to death in an attack by the convicts over a land dispute in Narangi of Bhaluka upazila on August 14, 2013.Latifah Khatun, Mintu's wife, filed a case against 16 people with Bhaluka Model Police Station.

After examining the case records and hearing testimony from 18 witnesses, the Mymensingh Special Sessions Judge Court delivered the verdict.



Top EU official visits Kyiv, reaffirms support for Ukraine against Russia

International Desk

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen visited Kyiv on Wednesday to mark Ukraine's Statehood Day, reaffirming the European Union's continued military and financial backing for the country as it continues to resist Russia's full-scale invasion, now in its fourth year.

Ukraine has faced ongoing threats to its sovereignty since Russia occupied and illegally annexed Crimea in 2014. Eight years later, Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022. Statehood Day, observed as a national holiday, celebrates Ukraine's independence and self-determination.

The war has claimed thousands of military and civilian lives, displaced millions, devastated cities and heightened concerns that the conflict could escalate into a broader confrontation between Russia and NATO, whose members have continued to support Kyiv. Despite diplomatic efforts, there is still no sign of a peace agreement.

Senior officials from several southeastern European countries were also expected in Kyiv on Wednesday for a regional summit focused on Black Sea and broader security issues. A similar meeting held in the southern city of Odesa last year reaffirmed support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In recent weeks, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has secured renewed commitments of assistance from the Group of Seven (G7) industrialized nations and the Coalition of the Willing.

Von der Leyen, making her 11th wartime visit to Ukraine, said Europe remains alert to Russia's wider ambitions and has already provided Ukraine with billions of euros in financial aid, military assistance and diplomatic support.

She said the EU would announce new measures to

strengthen cooperation between European and Ukrainian defense industries and provide additional assistance to improve Ukraine's air defense systems ahead of winter, when Russia has repeatedly targeted the country's energy infrastructure.

Her visit comes as Western officials and analysts say Ukraine has stepped up long-range drone and missile strikes deep inside Russian territory, hitting strategic targets, disrupting military supply routes and contributing to fuel shortages in some areas.

"It's a special moment," von der Leyen wrote on social media. "Ukraine has built a strong military momentum. The tide is turning." Also attending the Southeast Europe Summit in Kyiv was Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, whose country maintains close ties with Moscow. Although Serbia officially supports Ukraine's territorial integrity, it has declined to join Western sanctions against Russia following the invasion, largely because of its heavy dependence on Russian energy supplies.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian authorities said Russian aerial attacks killed at least eight civilians and injured 11 others on Wednesday. In the northern Sumy region, Russian forces dropped six glide bombs, mainly targeting infrastructure, killing three people and injuring seven, according to regional military administration chief Oleh Hryhorov. Another Russian strike on the southern city of Odesa killed three people and wounded three others, local military administration head Serhii Lysak said. In the northern Chernihiv region, Russian drone attacks killed two people and seriously injured an 18-year-old, according to regional military administration chief Viacheslav Chaus.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defense systems intercepted 93 Ukrainian drones overnight over several Russian regions, as well as over Crimea, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea.

Trump to address defense summit as Iran war strains US missile stockpiles

International Desk

President Donald Trump is set to speak at a defense technology summit at the U.S. Army War College on Wednesday, where he is expected to highlight major investments in military technology as the recent conflict with Iran has significantly reduced U.S. stockpiles of key missiles.

The summit, held in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is being organized by Republican Senator David McCormick. It has brought together top military, intelligence and business leaders, including Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine, Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, CIA Director John Ratcliffe and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz.

The White House said the event aims to bring together senior defense officials and leading global investors to discuss national security priorities and explore investment opportunities in the defense sector.

Among those attending are JPMorgan CEO Jamie Dimon, Blackstone President Jon Gray, Lockheed Martin CEO Jim Taiclet, General Dynamics CEO Phebe Novakovic, Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg, SpaceX director Antonio Gracias and Palantir Chief Technology Officer Shyam Sankar.

Trump has made frequent visits to Pennsylvania, a key political battleground, including a trip last month to a Mack Trucks factory near Allentown to support Republican Congressman Ryan Mackenzie's reelection campaign.

Although McCormick is not facing reelection this year, Republicans are increasingly concerned about the political impact of the Iran conflict, the continuing high cost of living and Trump's low approval ratings as they seek to retain control of Congress in November's midterm elections.

Trump spoke at a similar summit hosted by McCormick in Pittsburgh last year, where the senator announced \$90 billion in pledged investments for energy technology and robotics projects across Pennsylvania.

This year's summit began on Tuesday. Ahead of Trump's address, Pennsylvania-based artificial intelli-



gence company ZeroEyes announced plans to invest \$10 million in AI and machine learning research and development.

Pittsburgh-based Gecko Robotics also announced plans to open a new 10,000-square-foot manufacturing facility to expand the use of robotics in defense production and strengthen the country's defense industrial base.

The summit comes as concerns grow over U.S. weapons supplies. A report released in May found that defense contractors may need at least three years to rebuild stockpiles of Tomahawk cruise missiles, Patriot air defense missiles and THAAD interceptors, which have been heavily used in military operations, including recent strikes on Iran.

The shrinking inventory has raised concerns that the U.S. could face shortages if a future conflict breaks out with China.

China has said it wants its military to be capable of taking Taiwan by force, if necessary, by 2027, although experts view that timeline as an ambition rather than a fixed deadline. During Trump's recent visit to Beijing, Chinese President Xi Jinping warned that poor handling of U.S.-Taiwan relations could increase tensions and potentially lead to direct conflict between the two countries.

Trump has also pledged to allow Ukraine to produce Patriot air defense systems under license, although experts say it could take years before such production becomes operational.

To strengthen U.S. military capabilities, Trump has proposed a record \$1.5 trillion defense budget for 2027. However, the spending package remains stalled in Congress, and even if approved, expanding production capacity for advanced weapons would take considerable time.

Jake Loosararian, co-founder and CEO of Gecko Robotics, said U.S. defense manufacturers need to significantly strengthen supply chains to speed up production of advanced military technologies.

"President Trump uniquely understands the importance of pragmatic impact yesterday," Loosararian said. "He also understands big, beautiful things for tomorrow."

Iran threatens to halt regional energy exports as US reinstates blockade

International Desk

Iran on Wednesday threatened to stop all oil and gas exports from the Middle East after the United States reinstated its naval blockade and intensified airstrikes against the country, further escalating tensions that have pushed the region closer to a wider conflict.

The latest exchange of attacks follows the collapse of an interim agreement aimed at ending hostilities between Washington and Tehran, with renewed fighting centred on the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global energy shipping route.

According to Iranian officials, US airstrikes targeted several military sites, including a barracks belonging to Iran's 388th Mechanized Infantry Brigade in Sistan and Baluchestan province. At least seven Iranian troops were killed and more than 260 people were wounded in overnight strikes, while government spokeswoman Fatemeh Mohajerani said more than 30 people had been killed in recent days.

Iran's state television reported that at least 13 missiles struck the military base, killing both conscripts and professional soldiers. Iranian authorities said the army would respond decisively to what it described as American aggression.

The US military's Central Command said it carried out strikes on dozens of targets during a seven-hour overnight operation and resumed attacks during daylight hours, signalling an increase in the pace of military operations.

The renewed hostilities come after Washington restored the naval blockade it had first imposed in April before lifting it last month following an interim deal that suspended fighting for 60 days to allow negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme and other issues. Those talks have since stalled as tensions over the Strait of Hormuz intensified.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned that if the blockade continues, no country in the region would be allowed to export oil or gas.

"The export of oil and gas from the region will be either for everyone or for no one," the IRGC said in a statement.

The Strait of Hormuz remains central to the dispute, with about one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas trade passing through the waterway during normal times. Iran



had effectively disrupted shipping through the strait during the early stages of the conflict, causing global energy prices to surge.

Although some commercial vessels resumed using an alternative route near Oman under US military protection during the ceasefire, Iran recently targeted ships using that corridor, triggering another round of military exchanges.

Iran also launched missile and drone attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan on Wednesday, according to regional authorities. Missile warning sirens sounded in Bahrain and Kuwait, while Jordan said it intercepted three incoming Iranian missiles. Tehran claimed responsibility for the attacks, targeting countries that host US military forces.

US Central Command chief Adm. Brad Cooper said Iran had launched dozens of missiles and drones toward Gulf Arab states in recent days.

Politics(Right)

US President Donald Trump warned that American military operations would continue unless negotiations resumed.

"You better make a deal, or you're not going to have anything left," Trump said, indicating that bridges, power plants and other infrastructure could become future targets. Iran's Ambassador to the United Nations, Amir Saeid Iravani, accused Washington of escalating the conflict, saying in a letter to the UN that "the US is the aggressor, not the victim."

The renewed fighting has also affected global energy markets. Brent crude traded above \$85 per barrel on Wednesday, more than 15 percent higher than before the conflict began, although still below the peak levels reached earlier during the war.

Trump had earlier proposed imposing a 20 percent fee on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz but later abandoned the plan, saying Gulf allies instead pledged major investment in the United States.

Regional mediators continue efforts to bring the United States and Iran back to the negotiating table, though prospects for renewed diplomacy remain uncertain amid the ongoing military escalation.

Biden to release memoir 'Promise Me, America' after US midterm elections

International Desk

Former US President Joe Biden will publish a new memoir this November reflecting on his presidency, key policy decisions and his decision to withdraw from the 2024 presidential race, his publisher announced on Wednesday.

The memoir, titled "Promise Me, America," is scheduled for release on November 17, about two weeks after the US midterm elections in which Democrats hope to regain control of Congress.

According to publisher Little, Brown and Company, the book will cover a range of topics, including the US economy, major domestic and foreign policy decisions, and Biden's choice to end his bid for a second term in office.

In a video released alongside the announcement, Biden said the memoir focuses on the challenges the United States faced during his presidency and the decisions he made while in office.

"'Promise Me, America' is about the challenges we faced as a nation. It's about the decisions I made and why I made them. Most of all, it's about my faith in the promise of America," he said.

The timing of the book's release has drawn attention as it comes shortly after the congressional elections. Some Democrats remain divided over Biden's political legacy and his decision to initially seek re-election before stepping aside following a widely criticised debate performance against Republican Donald Trump in June 2024.

Party leaders have sought to keep the election campaign focused on President Donald



Trump's record rather than renewed debate over Biden's presidency.

Biden, who will turn 84 three days after the book's publication, joins a long tradition of former US presidents publishing memoirs about their years in office. Financial details of the publishing agreement were not disclosed, though presidential memoirs have traditionally commanded multi-million-dollar book deals.

The title echoes Biden's 2017 memoir, "Promise Me, Dad," which chronicled the illness and death of his son Beau Biden.

Biden's presidency began amid the COVID-19 pandemic and shortly after the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol. His administration was marked by major infrastructure and economic legislation, as well as responses to conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

The memoir is also expected to address questions surrounding Biden's health during his presidency. Concerns intensified after his debate performance in June 2024, which ultimately led him to abandon his re-election campaign. Then-Vice President Kamala Harris became the Democratic nominee but lost the election to Trump.

Former first lady Jill Biden wrote in her recent memoir that she feared her husband had suffered a medical emergency during the debate because he appeared unusually weak and disoriented. She also acknowledged that the White House's explanation that Biden had a cold failed to satisfy many observers.

Questions over Biden's health continued throughout his presidency, with both Republicans and Democrats criticising his administration over its handling of the issue. In 2025, journalists Jake Tapper and Alex Thompson published "Original Sin," examining Biden's physical decline and his decision to seek another term.

Also in 2025, Biden announced he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. In his video message announcing the memoir, he said he has been undergoing treatment and that it is progressing well.

"I've been spending a lot of time with my family. I'm dealing with a cancer diagnosis, been getting treatment, and it's going really well," Biden said, thanking supporters for their prayers and well-wishes.

The publisher said Biden plans to promote the memoir through interviews and a book tour following its release.

US strikes strategic Greater Tunb Island as tensions with Iran escalate

International Desk

The United States on Wednesday launched airstrikes on Iran's Greater Tunb Island in the Strait of Hormuz, targeting military facilities that Washington said were being used to threaten commercial shipping in one of the world's most critical energy corridors.

The US military's Central Command (CENTCOM) said the 90-minute operation targeted Iranian defence positions and missile sites on the island, which has been under Iranian control since 1971 after being seized from what later became the United Arab Emirates.

According to CENTCOM, the strikes were intended to further reduce Iran's ability to launch attacks on commercial vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz.

"The strikes further degraded Iran's ability to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz," the command said in a statement.

The latest operation comes as the United States has reinstated a naval blockade on Iran and expanded its military campaign in response to Tehran's attacks on vessels operating in the strategic waterway.

The renewed confrontation has effectively derailed a temporary agreement reached last month that had paused hostilities for 60 days to allow negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme and other disputes.

Tensions have intensified in recent days as both countries exchanged military strikes across the region, raising fears that the conflict could escalate into a broader regional war.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) warned earlier Wednesday that it could halt all oil and gas exports from the Middle East in response to the renewed US blockade.

"The export of oil and gas from the region will be either for everyone or for no one," the IRGC said.

The Strait of Hormuz remains at the centre of the confrontation. The narrow waterway handles roughly one-fifth of the world's seaborne oil and natural gas trade, making any disruption a major concern for global energy markets.

Washington first imposed the naval blockade on Iran in April before lifting it last month following the interim agreement. However, negotiations later stalled amid renewed clashes over shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, prompting the United States to restore the blockade and intensify its military operations against Iranian targets.



What to know about IMAX, 70mm and Dolby as Christopher Nolan explains his favourite big-screen formats

Entertainment Desk

Christopher Nolan has long dreamed of making films for IMAX screens. The Oscar-winning director of *Oppenheimer*, *Inception* and *The Dark Knight* trilogy says his fascination began in childhood after watching nature documentaries at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry. He often wondered what it would be like to create a major Hollywood film for that format. That dream has now become reality with *The Odyssey*, the first feature film shot entirely on IMAX film.

A milestone for IMAX filmmaking Nolan said the project became possible after years of technical improvements. Earlier IMAX cameras were too loud for dialogue-heavy scenes, but following *Oppenheimer*, filmmakers worked with IMAX to develop a special camera enclosure, known as "the blimp," that reduced the noise.

The new camera system, named The Keighley after longtime IMAX executives Patricia and David Keighley, is dedicated to David Keighley, who died three weeks after completing his work on *The Odyssey*. The new setup also brought challenges. The camera weighed about 300 pounds once enclosed, film had to be reloaded every two-and-a-half to three minutes, and a mirror system had to be created so actors could see one another around the large camera during filming. Despite the difficulties, Nolan said the goal was to give audiences "something special."

"They're looking for something new and exciting, and that's what we're trying to offer," he said. Many viewing options As *The Odyssey* opens in theatres on Friday, moviegoers can choose from several formats, including IMAX 70mm, standard 70mm, IMAX digital, 35mm, Dolby Cinema and other premium large-format screens. Speaking to The Associated Press in 2023, Nolan explained why he prefers certain formats and why he believes seeing films in cinemas offers an experience that cannot be matched at home. "If they can find an IMAX screen to see the film on, that's great," Nolan said. "It really is just a great way of giving people an experience that they can't possibly get in the home."

Why IMAX 70mm stands out Nolan's previous films — *Dunkirk*, *Tenet* and *Oppenheimer* — were shot using large-format film, combining IMAX 65mm and Panavision 65mm, before being projected in 70mm. He said IMAX 70mm offers unmatched sharpness, clarity and depth, making viewers feel immersed in the film without the need for 3D glasses. "The screen disappears," Nolan said, explaining that the large image fills the audience's field of vision and creates a highly immersive experience. He first used IMAX cameras in *The Dark Knight*, which opened with an IMAX 70mm aerial shot.

"Every time we screened that, we would get a gasp," he recalled. "It was something no one had seen before." Technically, IMAX film delivers nearly 10 times the resolution of a traditional 35mm projector. Each frame contains roughly 18,000 pixels of detail, compared with 1,920 pixels on a standard home HD display.

Why shoot on 65mm but project in 70mm? Nolan explained that the extra 5mm originally provided space for the soundtrack on film prints. Yesterday, with digital sound, that space remains as part of the traditional format and serves as a visual enhancement.

Framing for different screens Nolan said shooting with IMAX requires careful planning because different cinemas use different screen shapes, known as aspect ratios.

His team uses a technique called "center punching the action" to ensure key visual elements remain visible across all formats. Cinematographer Hoyte van Hoytema also monitors framing for various screen sizes while filming. On giant IMAX 1.43:1 screens, viewers see the full image. In other formats, including 35mm, digital and CinemaScope, parts of the top and bottom are cropped. Nolan said this does not compromise the artistic composition of the film.

Nolan's preferred formats For Nolan, IMAX 70mm remains the best way to experience a movie.

However, such screenings are rare, with only 32 theatres in the United States and Canada showing films in that format. He also praised standard 70mm prints, calling them "a fabulous presentation."

"The two formats are sort of different and I love them both," he said. Digital formats still offer a strong experience Most audiences will watch *The Odyssey* in digital formats, including IMAX digital, laser projection and other premium large-format systems such as Regal RPX, Cinemark XD and Cineplex UltraAVX.

Nolan said his team spends months preparing digital versions from the original IMAX film to ensure the highest possible image quality across all screens. He also praised modern laser projectors used in IMAX and Dolby Cinema theatres for their excellent picture quality and contrast.

According to Nolan, IMAX's influence over the past two to three decades has encouraged cinemas to improve picture and sound quality, benefiting both filmmakers and audiences.

Nolan's favourite seats When it comes to choosing a seat, Nolan says it depends on the type of theatre. For CinemaScope screens, he prefers sitting near the front, around the middle of the third row. For large IMAX 1.43:1 theatres, he recommends sitting slightly behind the centre of the auditorium to get the best overall view.

Sanjay Dutt was 'trembling' after 1993 Arms Act verdict

Entertainment Desk

Sanjay Dutt's link to the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts is still one of the most debated chapters of his life. While the court eventually cleared him of terrorism and conspiracy, he was found guilty under the Arms Act for keeping illegal weapons. Years later, special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam shared what actually happened in the courtroom the moment the verdict dropped. According to him, Sanjay was terrified when the judge ordered him back into custody.

Speaking to Lallantop, Ujjwal Nikam reflected on the intense criticism he navigated throughout the trial due to Sanjay Dutt's sympathetic public image. Nikam pointed out that whenever the actor broke down in tears, the public placed the blame directly on him. Highlighting the media's immense power to shape public perception, he recalled the tense moment the verdict was delivered. He noted that Sanjay was understandably terrified, as the actor had been living out on bail before the court ultimately ordered him to be taken back into custody.

Ujjwal Nikam said he strongly opposed granting Sanjay Dutt relief under the Probation of Offenders Act. Explaining his position, he said, "My argument was that Sanjay Dutt should not get the benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act. He was convicted under the Arms Act,



though the court acquitted him of conspiracy charges, and we had no objection to that. However, I argued that he should be sentenced to seven years under the Arms Act." He further explained that Dutt's legal team had sought leniency by arguing it was his first offence. He added, "His lawyer contended that since it was his first offence, he should be released on bond. I objected because the pistol he possessed had come from the number one shooter of Dawood Ibrahim. If he accepted a weapon from such a person, he was fully aware of his criminal background. The benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act is meant for first-time offenders who are genuinely innocent but get trapped in unfortunate circumstances. That was not the case with Sanjay Dutt."

Urvashi Rautela wants to make 'Titanic' this time

Entertainment Desk

Bollywood's glamour queen, beauty pageant record breaker, and social media sensation Urvashi Rautela creates more storms on screen than she does on her own with strange comments.

In a recent interview with 'Instant Bollywood', when she was asked about directing films, she said without any hesitation, "Yes, I also sing. And I love directing films very much, so I will definitely come into direction in the future."

When asked what kind of movie she wants to make, the actress said, "As a person, I am very emotional. So, as my first film, I want to direct a pure love story. You could say I want to make something like the famous movie 'Titanic'."



From Holland to Sweeney, actors who want to be James Bond



Entertainment Desk

So far, the James Bond film series boasts of 25 movies revolving around 007, produced by Eon Productions, and 27 films counting non-Eon productions. The journey began with Sean Connery's *Dr. No* (1962). In 2021, Daniel Craig shined onscreen as James Bond for one last time with *No Time to Die*, before announcing his retirement from the series. As the hunt for his successor officially gets underway, the queue of hopefuls is longer than you might think. See for yourself:

Spider-Man stepping into a tuxedo has been fan-casting gold for years, and Tom Holland himself has finally stopped being coy about it. In a recent interview, he described carrying on the franchise as the dream of every young English actor in the industry. When asked if he's interested in the role, Tom told *Esquire*, "I mean, of course, I'm young and British, and, you know, I've always been a huge fan of espionage movies," before

adding, "I've grown up with all of the Bond films, and I remember going to see *Casino Royale* for my birthday." England's standout star at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, Jude Bellingham revealed on Fox's *World Cup After Hours* show that playing James Bond tops his list of post-football ambitions. The 23-year-old Real Madrid midfielder shared, "I'd love to be in a movie. People always ask me, 'What's the thing I'd want to do out of football?' And I never really give it that much thought, but when I have, I always come to 'I'd love to be in a film'. I'd love to be James Bond."

The most straightforward declaration on this list came from the *Love Story* actor Paul Anthony Kelly at an event in Los Angeles last month. Asked what his dream role would be, Paul did not hesitate: "I want to be James Bond." When asked if he could pull off a British accent, the 37-year-old American actor replied, "Absolutely not," before adding, "No, I'm kidding. That would be amazing."

Nancy complaints against her paternal uncle



Entertainment Desk

Family disputes over land are common everywhere. Singer Nazmun Munira Nancy is no exception. She alleged that her paternal uncle has encroached on their

land. The singer brought the issue to the fore with a video on her verified Facebook page recently. Along with it, Nancy wrote, "My village home is in Baradia, Narail district. Almost half of the land adjacent to the bus stand there is our land. During the Awami League era, 'Sejo Chacha' (3rd eldest paternal uncle) seized the power of the then local league leader."

Nancy said that at that time, she asked for help from the local administration, but did not receive it.

The singer wrote, "I did not receive legal assistance. Recently, my elder brother went, and at first, my uncle did not agree to open the gate! You see what they have done to the land in front, saying that they are going to build a madrasa."

Finally, Nancy indicated that she will take strong action on the matter soon. She also hopes for justice.

Many people suggested filing a lawsuit in Nancy's post. In response, the singer said, "I did, but it didn't work. He then used political pressure and took over the entire land in 2021 by enclosing it."

Incidentally, Nancy has also said in various interviews that she was subjected to various deprivations during the previous Awami League government. She even complained

that she was deprived of many things in her professional work. However, now she is back to singing. She can often be found singing new songs and performing in events.



Spain deliver World Cup masterclass against France to reach final

Sports Desk

Spain ended France's dream of a third World Cup triumph on Tuesday, taming their star-studded attack in a 2-0 victory to reach the final against England or Argentina. Didier Deschamps' men were hot favourites to lift the trophy after a string of breathtaking attacking displays in the United States but they met their match against the slick European champions in the semi-finals. Mikel Oyarzabal opened the scoring for the 2010 winners with an emphatic penalty in the first half in Arlington, Texas, and Pedro Porro doubled their lead in the second half. Shell-shocked France could not find a way back into the match despite their wealth of attacking riches on a bitterly disappointing day for the two-time winners. "We started almost four years ago with an idea and we've been faithful to that idea and it's brought us here," said Spain coach Luis de la Fuente. "These players deserve everything," he added. "Day after day they've shown their commitment, their solidarity, their generosity, their talent. They make the difficult look easy." The game at the AT&T Stadium caught fire midway through the first half when Salvadoran referee Ivan Barton pointed to the penalty spot after a reckless challenge by France left-back Lucas Digne on Spain winger Lamine Yamal. Oyarzabal hammered the ball past

France goalkeeper Mike Maignan for his fifth goal of the World Cup to leave France trailing for the first time in the tournament. It was the Real Sociedad forward's 18th goal in his past 20 games for Spain. Deschamps threw on Desire Doue for Bradley Barcola in the 57th minute in a bid to supercharge his attack but a minute later they were 2-0 down after a stunning team goal for Spain involving Dani Olmo and defender Porro. Spain, who have conceded just once in the entire tournament, are the first team in World Cup history to keep six clean sheets at a single edition. They have now gone 37 games without defeat in all competitions, equalling the record unbeaten streak by a European nation. But defeat in Texas is a bitter blow for a France team that reached the past two finals, winning in 2018 and finishing as runners-up four years ago. Real Madrid forward Kylian Mbappe was just one cog in a star-studded attack that also included Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele and the elegant Michael Olise. Defeat leaves just the third-place play-off on Saturday for long-serving coach Deschamps, who is stepping down after 14 years in charge. The 57-year-old, who has won the World Cup as a coach and player, said his players were "devastated". "First of all, it's our fault, I don't want to blame anyone," he said.

But Deschamps could not resist a dig at referee Barton. "I'll ask a loaded question and I won't answer it," said the France coach. "Is the referee at the level required to officiate a World Cup semi-final?" "And I'm not saying this just because we lost yesterday. There were quite a few situations. There were some favourable calls, too," he added, without elaborating. - Kane v Messi - In the other semi-final in Atlanta on Wednesday, England and Argentina will lock horns in the latest chapter of one of the game's most compelling rivalries. The history of matches between the nations is peppered with incidents, set against a lingering sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands, known in Spanish as the Malvinas, in the South Atlantic Ocean. The encounter takes place 40 years after Diego Maradona's infamous "Hand of God" goal helped Argentina to a 2-1 win at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. England captain Harry Kane, who is competing wity Lionel Messi and Mbappe for the Golden Boot, said his team would not be distracted by emotional baggage around the fixture. "From a player's point of view it's us against a great team, who are smart, who are tactical, who know how to buy fouls, know how to slow the game down -- like many different teams you come up against throughout your whole career," Kane told ITV.



Sports Desk

Midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni was named in France's starting line-up for Tuesday's World Cup semi-final clash against Spain while coach Didier Deschamps recalled Bradley Barcola to start on the left flank. Tchouameni returns to Les Bleus' line-up after a two-game absence as France aim to reach a third consecutive World Cup final. Barcola takes his place in France's star-studded front four ahead of Paris Saint-Germain's Desiree Doue. Barcola lines up on the left side of the front three with Michael Olise in the centre and Ousmane Dembele on

the right flank, with captain Kylian Mbappe the striker. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente meanwhile named an unchanged starting line-up for the game at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas. De la Fuente has kept faith with the team that defeated Belgium 2-1 in Friday's quarter-final in Los Angeles. Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Fabian Ruiz gets the nod ahead of Barcelona's Pedri to partner Rodri at the base of the Spanish midfield. Lamine Yamal takes his usual position on the right wing, with Atletico Madrid's Alex Baena on the opposite flank. Dani Olmo is in the middle behind striker Mikel Oyarzabal.

Tchouameni, Barcola back for France, Spain unchanged

South Asian Karate championship to begin Saturday

Sports Desk

he 10th Cadet, Junior, Under-21 and Senior South Asian Karate Championship and the second South Asian Under-14 Karate Cup will be held in Dhaka from July 18-19. The two-day tournament is being organised by the South Asian Karate Federation with the support of the Bangladesh Karate Federation (BKF). Ahead of the championship, a two-day referee and coaches' licensing examination begins tomorrow (Thursday) at the Parbotto Complex Auditorium in the capital. More than 150 referees and coaches from Bangladesh as well as several South Asian and Asian countries are

expected to take part in the examination. The championship, to be staged at the Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in Mirpur, will feature 565 athletes from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka, competing in various categories. Ahead of the tournament, a press conference was held yesterday (Wednesday) at the Bangladesh Olympic Association (BOA) Auditorium to provide all the details of the meet. BKF President Md. Shahzada Alam, its General Secretary Md. Moyazem Hossain Sentu, Joint General Secretary Kabir Akbar Chowdhury Taj, Executive Committee Members Abul Kalam Azad and Masudul Islam were, among others, present in the press conference.

'Immense disappointment': Mbappe rues end of World Cup dream

Sports Desk

Kylian Mbappe rued the end of France's World Cup dream on Tuesday, blaming tactical and technical blunders for his side's 2-0 semi-final defeat to France. Mbappe had emerged as one of the stars of the tournament during France's run to the last four, rattling in eight goals at the tip of a free-scoring attack that delighted fans worldwide. But the 27-year-old French captain's dreams of a third straight World Cup final appearance ended abruptly as Spain outplayed Les Bleus at the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas. Mbappe told French broadcaster M6 that the loss had been a "huge disappointment" for the French squad. "I don't think we played the match we wanted to play -- whether tactically, technically, or in terms of our overall performance level," Mbappe said. "And when you don't do what you're supposed to do in a World Cup semi-final, you don't win," the Real Madrid star added. "Our goal was to press them high up the pitch to prevent them from settling into that slow, controlled rhythm -- because when it comes to controlling the game, they are better than us. We failed to do that." Mbappe pinpointed the crux of the problem in midfield, where France's duo of Adrien Rabiot and Aurelien Tchouameni rapidly found themselves over-run by Spain's triumvirate of Rodri, Dani Olmo and Fabian Ruiz. "We kept finding ourselves outnumbered 3-on-2 in midfield," Mbappe said. "And against Spain, that's a real problem...When you put it all together, the result is a defeat. It's a huge disappointment." Mbappe said France's crestfallen squad were deter-



mined to bounce back after digesting the lessons of the loss. "It was a dream for us to reach the final, to give our country the chance to keep dreaming and to make history," he said. "Now, it is something we have to face with our heads held high. I believe that when you win, you win with your head held high; so when you lose, you have to lose with your head held high, too. "But right now, there is immense disappointment. I find it hard to put into words just how disappointed the squad and I are. "Yet even if it might seem a bit robotic at times, we have to pick ourselves up, go on vacation, and move on to the next chapter. Because football waits for no one. We have to start over, put this failure behind us, and learn



Sports Desk

Pedro Porro, who scored Spain's second goal in the 2-0 defeat of favourites France on Tuesday, said reaching the World Cup final was "a dream come true". "(I am) very happy with the team's attitude from start to finish. I think we played a great match, we did everything we had to do yesterday to reach the final," said the Tottenham defender.

Spain's Porro says 'dream come true' to reach World Cup final

"It's a dream come true... We knew (France) was a very, very tough team, one that had been doing things really well, and honestly, this is the team's achievement, not mine at all," he added. The 26-year-old said Spain had played a "fantastic match" to beat the two-time world champions. They move on to Sunday's final against the winner of Wednesday's semi-final between England and Argentina. 6



Viva! Delirium in Madrid as Spain reach World Cup final

Sports Desk

Roars of joy and honking car horns reverberated through Madrid on Tuesday as Spaniards celebrated their team overcoming France and moving to the cusp of a second World Cup crown. "I am so happy and very proud of the team," a euphoric Jaime Sanchez, 19, told AFP as thousands of revellers streamed out of the official fan zone in central Madrid after watching the 2-0 win. "People didn't give us a chance, but we were able to beat France and we will beat whoever it may be in the final," the student said. Swarms of people sporting Spain football shirts milled around central Madrid with the red and yellow Spanish flag draped over their shoulders or painted on their cheeks. "Long live Spain!", "I am Spanish!", they chanted, capturing the moment on their phones and dancing to popular stadium tunes. People who were turned away from the fan zone in Colon Square occupied a bus lane, sat on patches of grass or on walls, craning their necks to glimpse the giant screen. Others crowded around overflowing bars and restaurants showing the match and followed it from the streets. The showdown in Arlington, Texas had been viewed as worthy of a final, with pundits pointing to France's fearsome attack that boasts superstar Kylian Mbappe and Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele. But Spain managed to snuff out Les Bleus as a Mikel Oyarzabal penalty and a goal from Pedro Porro took Luis de la Fuente's side to Sunday's final in New Jersey

with a superbly controlled display. - 'Players look confident' - Before the game, 17-year-old student Erika Barea admitted that the French attack "scares me a lot, because the only thing I don't want is for France to win". But she pointed to Spain's superior record in recent encounters against France as a cause for optimism. La Roja knocked France out of Euro 2024 en route to the title and defeated Didier Deschamps's men in last year's Nations League semi-finals. Jaime Lopez, a 19-year-old music student, had insisted Spain's collective strength was enough to get over the line against star-studded France -- and he was right. "In general, I think they form a good team. They don't have very big stars, but they have a good team that knows how to play well," he told AFP. The form of Spain forward Lamine Yamal, who celebrated his 19th birthday on Monday, had been subject to scrutiny after he arrived at the World Cup still recovering from an injury. Yet the teenage superstar played an important role as he won the first-half penalty that broke the deadlock. "I think he's been getting better," insisted Celia Vazquez, a 50-year-old administrator who lives in Barcelona. "He's been a bit quiet, but always when you go out onto the pitch, being in a game like that, I think it motivates you, you get fired up," Vazquez said. Contemplating the prospect of Spain repeating their 2010 World Cup triumph in South Africa, student Sanchez remembered celebrating with his family as a young child and hoped to live the experience again. "Enjoy this moment as much as possible, you only live it, not once in life, but twice if we win this World Cup," he said.



Collective actions need to combat adverse effects of climate change: Riton



Rajshahi Correspondent

Rajshahi City Corporation Administrator Mahfuzur Rahman Riton has called for collective actions to combat the adverse effects of climate change. He said that climate change, environmental pollution and degradation of natural resources are among the biggest challenges in the world yesterday. To tackle this crisis, the government, local government institutions, civil society, youth and the private sector must work together. He said this while speaking as the chief guest at a high-level dialogue organized under the Green Voice project by The Earth Society at the conference room of Hotel X yesterday. At the event, RCC Administrator Mahfuzur Rahman Riton said, as part of implementing the program of planting 25 crore trees in 5 years announced by Prime Minister Tareque Rahman, Rajshahi City Corporation has set a target of planting two and a half lakh trees in one year. Currently, the tree sapling plantation program is ongoing. In addition, initiatives have been taken to create

afforestation and bird sanctuaries along the Padma River, which will play a role in increasing tourism and employment besides conserving the environment. He further said that various initiatives are being implemented including tree plantation on road islands, beautification, and street light development to build Rajshahi not just as a 'Green City, Clean City' in name, but as a truly modern, clean and environment-friendly city. However, public awareness and participation are essential to make these initiatives successful. If everyone fulfills their own responsibilities, Rajshahi will become an even cleaner and greener city. The Rajshahi City Corporation will continue to cooperate in various initiatives for environmental and climate protection in the future. RCC Administrator called on the young generation to play a more active role in the country's development and environmental protection. At the divisional dialogue and exchange of views between policymakers and youth leaders on the participation of women and youth in climate policy, emphasis was placed on formulating inclusive policies to combat climate change, ensuring meaningful participation of women and youth in climate decision-making processes, and strengthening effective cooperation among relevant stakeholders. In the program, besides presenting the achievements, experiences and policy recommendations of the Green Voice project, various aspects of increasing the participation of women and youth in climate policy and decision-making were discussed. Executive Director of The Earth Society Anwar Hossain and stakeholders from government and non-government organizations were present at the dialogue.

2.3 lakh farmer families become debt-free thru RAKUB

Rajshahi Correspondent

As the first bank in the country, Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB) has successfully implemented the government's special initiative to provide financial relief to small and marginal farmers. Under the initiative, agricultural loans up to Taka 10,000 have been repaid in terms of both interest and principal. Under this programme, loans totaling Taka 225 crore 74 lakh 99 thousand for a total of 229,933 farmer families have been repaid through the government. According to bank sources, under this programme, loans of Taka 178 crore 92 lakh 48 thousand for 179,278 farmer families in Rangpur Division and loans of Taka 46 crore 81 lakh 39 thousand for 50,637 farmer families in Rajshahi Division have been repaid through the government. Concerned officials said that as the beneficiary farmers are freed from the long-standing debt burden, they will get the opportunity to reinvest in agriculture. It is expected that this will have a positive impact on increasing agricultural production, improving the financial capacity of farmers, and on the rural economy. The management of RAKUB expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for providing this special benefit to the farmers. The bank has completed the activities in the shortest possible time by following the prescribed process to implement this initiative taken by the government for the welfare of farmers.



Joint assessment of rain damage launched in Narsingdi's Monohardi, repairs prioritized

Narsingdi Correspondent

The Monohardi upazila administration has launched a coordinated assessment of waterlogging, damaged roads and culverts and riverbank erosion caused by days of heavy rainfall, with authorities pledging swift repairs and long-term mitigation measures. The initiative follows directives from Health and Family Welfare Adviser Alhaj Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bokul. An emergency meeting of the Upazila Disaster Management Committee, chaired by Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) M A Muhaimin Al Jihan, was held at the UNO's office on Tuesday. Officials from government departments, political leaders, journalists, teachers and civil society representatives attended. The committee decided to immediately inspect affected areas and coordinate response efforts through the relevant government agencies. Following the meeting, the UNO led a field visit with officials from the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), local political leaders and journalists. The team inspected erosion along the Chalakchar-Borochapa road, riverbank erosion threatening homes in Paikan village of Borochapa union, damaged roads in Kaytergaon village, the collapsed culvert on the Kaytergaon-Jamalpur road and damaged sections of the road from the Monohardi Girls' School intersection to Drenerghat. They also reviewed waterlogging and disruptions to communication across parts of the municipality and the upazila. Officials said the upazila administration, BWDB, LGED, the Upazila Project Implementation Office, local public representatives and political leaders would jointly prioritise repairs to damaged infrastructure while pursuing permanent solutions to reduce future flood-related risks. Separately, Assistant Commissioner (Land) and Khidirpur Union Administrator Md Sajib Mia inspected waterlogged and damaged areas in Khidirpur union and initiated immediate remedial measures.



Vulnerable women get sewing machines to improve livelihoods

Dinajpur Correspondent

LAMB distributed sewing machines to six vulnerable women of Harirampur union under Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur. LAMB helped them establish sustainable income-generating opportunities and improve their livelihoods. The distribution ceremony was held at the project office of Dinajpur-Rangpur Food Security (DRFS) project, supported by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Bangladesh and funded by Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGF), on Tuesday. The project has been operating since 2025 to strengthen food security and improve the economic resilience of vulnerable communities in its working area, a press release said yesterday. Speaking at the event, the Director of LAMB's Community Health and Development Programme (CHDP) department, Utpal Minj, emphasized the importance of equipping women with practical skills and productive assets to achieve economic self-reliance. "Empowering women through livelihood opportunities not only improves household income but also contributes to their community development and poverty reduction," he said. Before receiving the sewing machines, the six women completed a month-long tailoring training course organized by the project. The training equipped them with practical skills to start small tailoring businesses and generate regular income

for their families. The beneficiaries are Mostarina, 25, wife of Azizul Islam; Rima Murmu, 24, wife of Robi Ram Soren; Anita Baroar, 35, wife of Dagane Lakra; Lipi Linduar, 30, wife of Milon Panna; Sabrina Hembrom, 30, wife of Churka Murmu; and Sabina Hasda, 28, wife of Samuel Murmu from different villages in the union. The DRFS project currently supports 400 vulnerable households through a range of livelihood development interventions. These include training on on-farm and off-farm income-generating activities, improved agricultural technologies, market system development, and awareness of social development issues. The project also promotes homestead gardening to improve household nutrition while creating additional sources of income through the sale of surplus produce. Project team leader Robert Marandi said that each beneficiary will now receive individualized business planning and regular follow-up support over the next year to help establish profitable tailoring enterprises. The initiative is expected to strengthen women's economic empowerment, enhance household resilience, and contribute to sustainable poverty reduction in the project area. "LAMB continues to implement integrated development initiatives that combine livelihood promotion, food security, skills development, and community empowerment to improve the well-being of vulnerable families in its working areas," he said.

Man held with 600 pieces of Tapentadol tablets in Dinajpur

Rangpur Correspondent

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB)-13 arrested an alleged drug dealer with 600 pieces of contraband Tapentadol tablets from his house in Nurpur village under Ghoraghat police station in Dinajpur on Tuesday evening. On a tip-off, a team from the RAB-13's Dinajpur Camp conducted a raid in the village, seized the contraband drugs and arrested him at 6:30 pm, said a RAB press release. The arrestee is Md Iqbal Hossain, 43, son of Iman Ali of the same village under Ghoraghat police station of Dinajpur district. After filing a case in this incident, the elite force handed over the seized drugs and arrested persons to Ghoraghat police station of Dinajpur for further legal action, the release added.

Miscreants open fire at journalists in Khulna; no casualties reported

Khulna Correspondent

Unidentified criminals opened fire at a group of journalists in Khulna city early Wednesday though no casualties were reported. The incident occurred around 12:30am in front of a tea stall on the western side of the United Nations Shishu Park in the city. According to witnesses, several journalists had gathered at the tea stall after work, as they regularly do, when two young men arrived on a motorcycle and opened fire at them. The bullet missed its intended target and struck the leg of a chair. Fragments from the bullet reportedly grazed the chest of journalist Awal, causing a minor injury. He is now out of danger, fellow journalists said. SA TV correspondent Mati said six journalists were chatting at the spot when the attackers suddenly fired at them before fleeing the scene. Senior Staff Reporter of the Daily Khulanchal, Syed Rana Kabir, said the bullet lodged in a chair after missing the journalists, while a fragment lightly injured Awal. On receiving information, police rushed to the scene and recovered part of a bullet. Officer-in-Charge of Khulna Police Station Md Shafiqul Islam said no casualties were reported.



Prayer meeting held in memory of freedom fighter Azmal in Narsingdi

Narsingdi Correspondent

A discussion and prayer meeting was held yesterday in memory of late freedom fighter Mohammad Azmal Bhuiya who played significant role in expanding education in Hossainnagar of Belabo upazila, Narsingdi. Shaheed Muktijoddha Najib Uddin Khan College organized prayer meeting as freedom fighter Azmal was a lifetime donor member of the college. Teachers, students, members of the governing body of the college and local dignitaries attended the event held at the college auditorium. The speakers paid rich tribute to late Mohammad Azmal Bhuiya, recalling with deep respect his bravery during the Liberation War and the sacrifices he made after being wounded in the war. Acting principal of the college Abdullah Al Mamun chaired the event which was moderated by assistant teacher Md Sazzad Hossain. Former acting principal of the college Srimanta Lal Pal, social worker and education enthusiast Haji Md Rahmat Ali Molla, former female vice-chairman of Belabo Upazila Parishad Nazmunnahar Amena, Nazrin Haque Hena, general secretary of the Belabo organisation district unit of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, legal aid secretary Rokhsana Akter, social worker Md Mizanur Rahman and Abul Bashar, general secretary of Ward No. 5 BNP, were present.

HSC exam centre changed in Cumilla after waterlogging sparks outcry

Cumilla Correspondent

The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Cumilla on Tuesday shifted an HSC examination centre following widespread criticism after severe waterlogging forced examinees to wade through waist-deep water to sit Monday's examination. An emergency press conference held at the board office, Chairman Prof Md Ahsan Parvez said the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination scheduled for Wednesday will no longer be held at Cumilla Government Women's College. Instead, the centre has been shifted to Bhasha Soinik Ajit Guha College to ease the suffering of examinees, he said. Ahsan Parvez said the education board made every effort to conduct Monday's examination smoothly and sudden heavy rainfall in the early hours left no opportunity to suspend the examination immediately. "Our priority was to ensure that students could complete their examinations and return home safely," he said. The chairman said the Cumilla City Corporation, district administration, the education board and other stakeholders worked in coordination to facilitate the examination despite the adverse conditions.

100 more beds approved for RMCH

Rajshahi Correspondent

Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) has received administrative approval to increase its bed capacity by 100 after a long gap of 13 years, paving the way for expanding critical care services, including a government-recognised Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The approval was issued by the Health Services Division on Monday. With the approval, the hospital's total bed capacity will rise from 1,200 to 1,300, enabling the authorities to formally launch services in the newly added beds for ICU facilities. Deputy Secretary of the Health Services Division Kazi Sharif Uddin Ahmed sent a letter in this regard to the Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services on Monday. The letter said administrative approval was granted to upgrade RMCH's capacity from 1,200 to 1,300 beds and start service operations in the additional beds, subject to compliance with all relevant rules and regu-



lations. The bed capacity of the hospital was last increased to 1,200 in 2013. Under the hospital's initiative, 46 ICU beds have already been set up. Of these, 12 are for adult patients, 16 for elderly patients, 12 for children and six for patients requiring intensive monitoring after complex surgeries. These beds will now receive government recognition as ICU beds. Besides, 54 new beds will be added to expand critical care services. Of these, 15 beds will be allocated for pregnant and postpartum mothers, 10 for newborns, 10 for cancer and other critically ill patients, and 19 for patients under the One Stop Crisis Centre (OCC). With the existing and new facilities combined, the ICU will have a total of 100 beds, ICU in-charge Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal of RMCH informed. "We have received approval for a government-recognised ICU. This will help ensure better services for critically ill patients as there will be dedicated budgetary support and improved management," he said.