



PM orders tougher action against air, noise pollution; seeks AI-based horn control

Staff correspondent

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Saturday directed the authorities concerned to intensify efforts to curb air and noise pollution, stressing the need for tougher enforcement against polluting vehicles, brick kilns and excessive use of vehicle horns. He gave the directives while chairing a meeting on environmental pollution at the Prime Minister's Office.

The meeting discussed a range of measures to reduce air and noise pollution across the country, with particular focus

on improving environmental condition in the capital, said a press release issued by the PM's Press Wing. The Prime Minister instructed the authorities to take effective steps to curb air pollution caused by brick kilns and emphasised the use of environmentally friendly technologies in brick production. The meeting also reviewed ways to control the excessive use of vehicle horns in Dhaka. Tarique Rahman directed law enforcement agencies to strengthen enforcement to reduce unnecessary honking and discussed the possibility of using artificial intelligence (AI) to monitor

and control horn use, similar to the AI-based traffic camera system already being introduced for traffic management. He also laid emphasis on the swift removal of unfit, expired and highly polluting buses, trucks and other vehicles from the streets of the capital. The Prime Minister instructed the authorities to install automatic traffic light systems at least 50 more locations in Dhaka as quickly as possible to improve traffic management and reduce congestion. City & Local Guides Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Abdul Awal

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Rain-Driven Death Trap on Dhaka-Chattanooga Highway's Feni Section: Accident Risks Soar

Jahangir Alam, Staff Reporter

Continuous heavy rainfall has left the Feni section of the Dhaka-Chittagong highway in a severely dilapidated state. Numerous small and large potholes have emerged at various critical points along the highway, turning the entire area into a virtual "death trap."

As rainwater accumulates in these potholes, drivers are unable to gauge their depth, constantly putting themselves at risk. Consequently, local residents and commuters fear a major accident could happen at any moment.

On-site observations revealed that the pitch and stones have worn away, creating countless craters across the Feni stretch of the highway. Navigating this route has become excep-

tionally hazardous, particularly for small and medium vehicles like motorcycles, private cars, and minibuses. While drivers manage to navigate the road with caution during the day, the situation becomes far more perilous at night. A lack of adequate lighting, combined with rainwater masking the potholes, has already led to frequent minor accidents. "Because of the rain, the potholes stay filled with water. There's no way to tell how deep they are from a distance. Riding a motorcycle here at night is literally like risking your life," said a frustrated motorcyclist.

According to local conscious citizens, if this situation persists on the country's most vital economic lifeline, it will not only increase accidents but also trigger severe traffic congestions, potentially

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Korerhat's Azinnagar Gets Deep Tube Well and Road Renovation

Residents Express Satisfaction with Rezaul Karim Hoksab's Initiative

Mirsharai Correspondent

Residents of the hilly Azinnagar area under Korerhat Union in Joraganj Police Station, Mirsharai Upazila, Chattogram, have expressed relief after the installation of a deep tube well to address the long-standing shortage of safe drinking water and the renovation of several important roads and culverts. The local community has welcomed the initiative, saying it has eased years of hardship.

According to local residents, these public welfare projects were implemented through the initiative of Jubo Dal leader and social worker Rezaul Karim Hoksab. They also stated that the work was completed with the guidance and support of Nurul Amin, Member of Parliament for Chattogram-1 (Mirsharai). Residents said that people in the hilly Azinnagar area had been suffering from an acute shortage

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BNP wants to further strengthen geopolitical, business ties with China: Fakhru

Staff correspondent

BNP Secretary General and LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir today said the ruling BNP wants to further strengthen its geopolitical, economic, and commercial relations with China. He said the existing relationship between the two countries had been further reinforced through the recent visit of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to China. Mirza Fakhru was addressing a discussion titled "Long Live Bangladesh-China Friendship" at a hotel in the city organized by the Bangladesh-China Friendship Association following the premier visit to China. Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism M. Rashiduzzaman Millat were present while Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen attended the event

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Govt to provide comprehensive assistance to flood victims: Salahuddin

Staff correspondent

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed today said the government will provide comprehensive assistance to people affected by the recent floods, including homeless families, farmers, fish farmers and livestock keepers, reaffirming its commitment to stand by citizens during times of disaster. Addressing a house handover programme for flood-affected homeless families at the Pekua Upazila Parishad premises in Cox's Bazar, the minister said the government's politics is centred on ensuring the welfare of the people. "The main goal of the government's politics is to ensure the welfare of the people. As a government elected by the people's votes, it is our responsibility and commitment to stand by the people in any danger or adversity," he said. He added that the administration is working under the principle of "Bangladesh First, People Before Power." Salahuddin said the government's assistance programme will not be limited to families whose homes were damaged by the floods. "Farmers, fish farm

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Muktadir seeks 3 years extension to LDC graduation preparatory period

Staff correspondent

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Mukhtar has urged stronger international support to ensure Bangladesh's smooth, sustainable and stable graduation from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category and seeking a three-year extension to the country's graduation preparatory period. During separate bilateral meetings with the President and Vice-President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), at the UN Headquarters, the commerce minister explained to ECOSOC President and Permanent Representative of Nepal Ambassador Lok Bahadur Thapa and ECOSOC Vice-President and Permanent Representative of Algeria Ambassador Amar Bendjama the rationale behind Bangladesh's request for extending the preparatory period by three years. Mukhtar said Bangladesh

could not fully utilise the originally scheduled preparatory period due to the country's ongoing economic and political transition, global economic uncertainties, the energy crisis, disruptions in supply chains, the multidimensional impacts of climate change and other external challenges, said a ministry press release.

The minister reaffirmed Bangladesh's firm commitment to graduating from the LDC category, saying the request for an extension was not intended to delay graduation but to make the transition smoother, more sustainable and more resilient. He said the additional time would enable Bangladesh to consolidate structural reforms, strengthen governance, restore macroeconomic stability, reinforce the financial sector, create a more investment-friendly environment, improve infrastructure and effectively implement a comprehensive Smooth Transition

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Strike in Fatikchhari North Over District Headquarters Location: Dhaka-Chittagong-Khagrachhari Highway Paralyzed

Jahangir Alam Staff Reporter

A day-long strike (dawn-to-dusk hartal) is being observed yesterday in the northern region of Fatikchhari, Chittagong, demanding the relocation of the newly formed Fatikchhari North Upazila headquarters to a "logical and central location." The strike, enforced by

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US-Bangla Airlines completes an era in its 13th year

Syed Bashir Ahmed, Staff Reporter

US-Bangla Airlines, one of the country's leading private airlines, has successfully crossed 12 years and entered its 13th year. In a press release on July 17, the company said that US-Bangla, which started its journey on the Dhaka-Jashore route on July 17, 2014 with a Dash-8 Q400 aircraft, is currently operating flights to 20 domestic and international destinations with a fleet of 25 aircraft. The release said that the current fleet includes 3 Airbus A330-300, 9 Boeing 737-800, a total of 25 aircraft. Since its inception, the company has maintained a record of operating more than 90 percent on-time

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Bangladesh plans long-term energy transition with audits, renewables

Staff correspondent

The government has taken a move to strengthen energy audits across major industries as part of a broader strategy to curb energy waste, reduce dependence on imported fuels and build a more efficient and financially sustainable power sector. The initiative, outlined in the national

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Rain likely to continue across country

Staff correspondent

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind are likely to continue across the country over the next five days, with heavy to very heavy rainfall expected at places, according to the latest weather bulletin issued by the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD). The BMD said light to moderately heavy rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty wind are likely to

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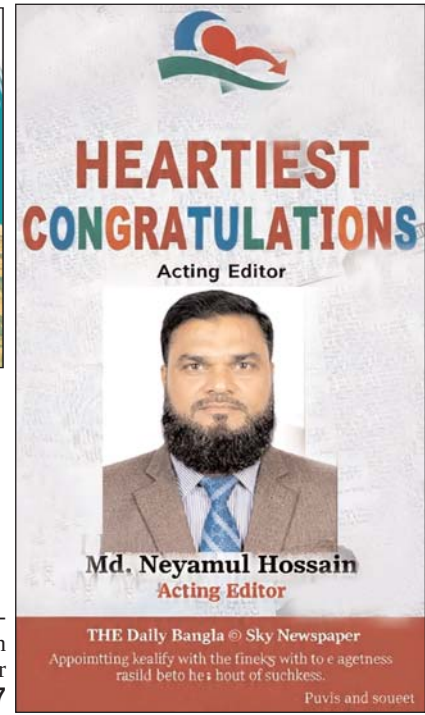
Violence against women, children: HC delivers 10 landmark verdicts in a month

Staff correspondent

High Court (HC) has delivered 10 verdicts over the past month after giving priority to the hearing of death references and appeals in cases filed under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, signalling a renewed focus on the speedy disposal of some of the country's most serious criminal cases.

Chief Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury on June 10 constituted a dedicated HC bench, on a priority basis, to dispose of death references for confirmation of death sentences awarded under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, as well as

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Prepare our youth for the AI economy

As artificial intelligence continues to rapidly transform economies, workplaces and education all around the world, experts at a recent roundtable in Dhaka have rightly pointed out that the country’s success in the AI era will depend not simply on expanding digital access but on building the skills, institutions and innovation ecosystem needed to productively use this technology. The question is: where do we stand in this preparedness? The roundtable revealed that nearly 90 percent of our young people use AI mainly for social media and entertainment, not to acquire skills to meet the present job market demands. This is a worrying trend considering the fact that around 22 lakh young people enter the country’s labour market every year. If this skills gap is not closed quickly, our youth face the risk of being left behind in an increasingly AI-driven job market.

The question is: where do we stand in this preparedness? The roundtable revealed that nearly 90 percent of our young people use AI mainly for social media and entertainment, not to acquire skills to meet the present job market demands. This is a worrying trend considering the fact that around 22 lakh young people enter the country’s labour market every year. If this skills gap.

Experts said Bangladesh needs to turn its digital readiness into AI capability in order to keep up with the market demands. We could not agree more. However, doing so requires an education system that develops critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and ethical judgement alongside AI literacy. Universities must update their curricula, train faculty members, and introduce clear guidelines for responsible AI use. As AI becomes integrated into almost every profession, these skills will be just as important as technical knowledge. The link between education and employment must be strengthened as well. While the graduate unemployment rate stands at 28 percent, employers in Bangladesh struggle to find employees with the skills they need. Technical and vocational education must be modernised, universities must work more closely with the industry, and workers should have opportunities to upgrade their skills throughout their careers. These reforms are essential if graduates are to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving job market.In this regard, the government’s plan to formulate a national AI policy and expand technical and vocational education is a welcome step. We must also aim to become more than a consumer of imported AI technologies. Investing in Bangla-language datasets, applied AI research, data annotation, local innovation, and AI entrepreneurship will help build a stronger AI ecosystem in the country while creating new jobs. However, these goals can only be achieved through effective implementation. Policies alone will not build AI capability unless educational institutions, businesses and government agencies work together to develop practical skills, support research, and create opportunities for innovation.

PM orders tougher action

Mintoo, State Minister Sheikh Faridul Islam, State Minister for Water Resources Farhad Hossain Azad, the Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Environment, Forest and Climate Change Dr Saimum Parvez, Dhaka South City Corporation Administrator Md Abdus Salam, Dhaka North City Corporation Administrator Md Shafiqul Islam Khan, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, Additional Commissioner (Traffic) Md Anisur Rahman and senior officials from different ministries and agencies attended the meeting.

Govt to provide comprehensive ers and livestock keepers who suffered losses will also receive support," he added. He said farmers whose seedbeds, seedlings or agricultural land were damaged would be provided with necessary agricultural inputs, including seeds and fertilisers. Assistance would also be extended to the fisheries and livestock sectors following assessments of the damage, he said.The minister said the government would take immediate steps to repair flood-damaged infrastructure, including schools, colleges, madrasahs and roads, to restore normalcy as quickly as possible.Reiterating the government’s commitment to disaster response, he said it would continue working to ensure justice and provide necessary support to affected communities across the country.He also sought the blessings of the people for Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, saying the government is pursuing people-friendly and pro-poor policies to ease the burden on ordinary citizens and ensure public services reach their doorsteps.At the programme, organised by a private organisation, houses were handed over to 20 families left homeless by the floods. Each family also received essential household items, including a cot, from the Home Minister.

Muktadir seeks 3 years

Strategy.Bangladesh delegation included Prime Minister's Adviser on Finance and Planning Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir, State Minister for Planning Zonoed Abdur Rahim Saki, Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Md Shahriar Kader Siddiky, Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury, President of the Leather Goods and Footwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association of Bangladesh (LFMEAB) Syed Nasim Manzur, and President of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Mahmud Hasan Khan.ECOSOC President and Vice-President highlighted the global challenges facing developing countries in their graduation from the LDC category and expressed their commitment to working closely with Bangladesh to ensure its smooth, sustainable and stable transition.

Relief must reach every

region to assess the overall flood situation and discuss the necessary course of action.Saching Pru, MP and Adv Madhabi Marma, MP, attended the meeting with Md. Sanul Ferdous, Deputy Commissioner of Bandarban in the chair.Besides, representatives from the hill districts and senior officials from different government departments also attended the meeting, among others. Addressing the officials, the State Minister instructed them not to undertake fragmented or independent relief activities. He stressed that uncoordinated efforts often compromise the quality and effectiveness of public services."This is not the time to compete over who has done more or which organization has contributed the most," he said. "Our foremost responsibility is to ensure a unified and coordinated response involving government agencies, non-government organizations and all other stakeholders." Highlighting the importance of sustainable development in the

Economic diplomacy is no longer optional for Bangladesh

Md. Neyamul Hossain

The same logic applies to trade. Once Bangladesh graduates from LDC status, the preferential access that fuelled so much of our export growth will start to fade. From that point on, success will hinge on what we can negotiate, including bilateral deals, regional arrangements, new markets, and new products. Economic diplomacy will be one of the few tools left for protecting what we've built and finding the next source of growth. But the biggest opportunity is in technology. We're entering an era where data, AI, and innovation are becoming the real currency of national competitiveness. Digital services, creative industries and knowledge-based exports are no longer niche sectors; they're becoming central to how countries compete. The ones who get in early will reap bigger rewards.Bangladesh has long been known for garments and remittances. Both still matter enormously, but they can't be the whole story anymore. The next chapter must include innovation, digital talent, and intellectual capital, and that means economic diplomacy needs to widen its scope, not just by chasing foreign direct investment but by research partnerships, AI cooperation, startup ecosystems, and talent mobility. In this century, attracting good ideas might matter just as much as attracting capital. It all, however, comes down to whether we're willing to build our economic diplomacy.

For most of its history, Bangladesh has approached the world through a fairly traditional lens—political ties, development partnerships, and multilateral diplomacy. That approach has served us well, bringing in goodwill, aid, and strategic friendships at moments when we badly needed them. But the world has changed, and so has what diplomacy needs to deliver.The countries that will do well over the next decade won't necessarily be the ones with the biggest populations or the cheapest labour. They'll be the ones who know how to turn diplomatic relationships into trade deals, investment, and technology transfer. For Bangladesh, that means making economic diplomacy the main tool of national development. This is especially needed as we head towards LDC graduation by late 2029, if Bangladesh's request for extending the preparatory period by three years is accepted. By that time, we would be competing harder than ever for capital that can move anywhere in the world, navigating a more fractured geopolitical landscape, and trying to keep up with technological change that shows no signs of slowing down. Today, global supply chains are being redrawn. Investors are pickier than ever. Everyone is fighting for essentially the same markets, the same technology, the same talent.

In that kind of environment, diplomacy that doesn't translate into tangible economic results starts to feel more like a ceremony than a strategy. This isn't a fringe view anymore. Embassies everywhere are being asked to do more than represent their countries politically; they are expected to explore investment opportunities, spot commercial opportunities, push exports, and broker innovation partnerships. We need to think in the same way. The recent push to brand Bangladesh as stable, predictable, and open for business is a good start, and honestly, overdue. But a good reputation only gets you so far. Investors aren't just weighing Bangladesh against its neighbours anymore; they're comparing us to Southeast Asia, the Gulf, Eastern Europe, Africa, anywhere capital can flow easily. And capital today is restless. It goes where friction is low, policy is steady, and reform is visible. That's the bar we're being measured against. This means economic diplomacy has to be about more than trade missions and ribbon-cuttings.

Embassies shouldn't just be in the business of political reporting and protocol, but also need to function as economic outposts, scouting investors, building partnerships, gathering market intelligence, and clearing paths for Bangladeshi businesses abroad. But none of that works if we don't get our house in order first. No amount of international charm offensive can paper over domestic obstacles that scare investors away. If we want more foreign investment, more technology partnerships, more diversified exports, diplomatic outreach has to be matched, step for step, by reforms that make doing business simpler, more predictable, and less bureaucratic.Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury has repeatedly pointed out that competitiveness and growth ultimately come down to confidence in how the economy is governed. His emphasis on deregulation and private-sector-led growth gets at something important: diploma-

roads by burning tires and placing large logs across the tarmac. The demonstrators were also seen holding continuous protest rallies and picketing throughout the morning. According to the protest coordinators, the headquarters of the newly established upazila must be situated in a geographically centralized location. This would ensure that residents from all six constituent unions have equal access and can easily avail themselves of government services. Expressing deep frustration, a local resident leading the protest stated: "The location currently announced for the headquarters is completely biased toward one corner. If the administrative offices are set up there, the majority of the upazila's population will face severe hardships, wasting both extra time and money on travel. We have long been holding human chains, press conferences, and submitting memoranda. However, since the administration turned a deaf ear to our demands, we were forced to take to the streets." Meanwhile, the suspension of long-distance buses, freight trucks, and local transport due to the strike has brought the entire region to a standstill. The disruption has hit emergency commuters the hardest, as direct communication between Khagrachhari and Chittagong remains completely severed. To prevent any untoward incidents or violence, additional police and law enforcement personnel have been deployed at key intersections of the upazila and along the highway. According to the latest reports, a tense situation prevails in the area, though no major clashes or violence have been reported so far.

Rain likely to continue

occur at most places over Rangpur, Mymensingh, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions and at many places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna and Barishal divisions during the next 24 hours beginning at 9:00 am today.Heavy to very heavy rainfall may occur at places over Rangpur Division, it added. The weather office said the well-marked low over North Odisha and adjoining Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal has weakened into a low-pressure area over Bihar and adjoining areas and is likely to weaken gradually and merge with the monsoon axis.The monsoon remains active over the northern part of Bangladesh and fairly active elsewhere in the country, while it is moderate to strong over the North Bay.The forecast said rainfall activity is expected to continue over the next five days. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers with temporary gusty wind are likely at most places across all divisions from July 20 to July 22, with moderately heavy to very heavy rainfall at places over the country. Day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged today and tomorrow. From July 20, day and night temperatures may fall slightly before remaining nearly unchanged again on the fifth day.During the last 24 hours until 6:00 am today, the highest rainfall of 129 millimetres was recorded at Tetulia, followed by 99 millimetres at Sylhet and 90 millimetres at M.Court in Chattogram.Yesterday's highest temperature was recorded at 35.6 degrees Celsius in Tetulia, while today's lowest temperature was 23.2 degrees Celsius, also in Tetulia. In Dhaka, winds may blow from the south or southeast at 10 to 15 kilometres per hour. Relative humidity at 6:00 am was 85 percent.The sun will set in the capital at 6:48 pm today and rise at 5:22 am tomorrow.

US-Bangla Airlines

flights. In addition to five domestic destinations in the country, US-Bangla operates regular flights to various routes in India, Nepal, Maldives, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and China. The company said that it plans to add 21 more Boeing aircraft to its fleet by 2027. At the same time, in addition to resuming flights on the Kathmandu route, it plans to operate flights to several new international destinations including Kuwait,

cy might open the door and get people interested, but it's reform that actually convinces them to walk through it. The two are inseparable. One creates the opportunity; the other makes it real.

The same logic applies to trade. Once Bangladesh graduates from LDC status, the preferential access that fuelled so much of our export growth will start to fade. From that point on, success will hinge on what we can negotiate, including bilateral deals, regional arrangements, new markets, and new products. Economic diplomacy will be one of the few tools left for protecting what we've built and finding the next source of growth. But the biggest opportunity is in technology.

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It all, however, comes down to whether we're willing to build our economic diplomacy in deciding how the state functions and what its future priorities should be. Such diplomacy can't run on individual enthusiasm or the occasional conference. It needs targets, coordination across ministries, and someone accountable for results. Our missions abroad should be judged increasingly on what they deliver in terms of facilitating investments, securing market access, forming partnerships, etc. Put it in a transparent framework. What gets measured tends to get done if there is enough seriousness.

One concrete step would be setting up dedicated AI and New Economy desks within key missions abroad, so that Bangladesh has people actively chasing technology partnerships, research collaborations, and digital trade opportunities. For this to be conducted under a more organised workflow, an economic dashboard could be created for all our foreign missions. What are the goals they are setting, what kind of opportunities they are creating, how much investment they are able to secure, who they are meeting for this—all of this could be displayed there. This would ensure that ideas take momentum, making it easy to visualise progress.

Bangladesh has a relatively large market, strategically useful geography, a young population, and a proven track record of bouncing back from setbacks. These are real advantages. But advantages don't convert themselves into outcomes. Pursuing proper economic diplomacy and nurturing supportive environments on the ground is how we make that conversion happen.

Bahrain, Medina, Dammam, Colombo, Jahorinha, Penang and Hong Kong. The company has set a goal to launch flights on London, Rome, New York, Toronto and Sydney routes in the future.US-Bangla said that it has won the 'Best Domestic Airline' award for four consecutive years from 2022 to 2025. Currently, about 4,000 officers and employees are working in the country and abroad and the company plays an important role in cargo transportation in addition to passenger services. On the occasion of the anniversary, US-Bangla Airlines Managing Director Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mamun said, "Our goal is to ensure the highest quality travel experience for passengers through modern aircraft and advanced services in the competitive global market. We express our gratitude to passengers, government and private organizations, travel agents, civil aviation authorities, corporate organizations, media personnel and officials and employees for this progress of the company."

Violence against women

appeals arising from the same judgments. To conduct the cases before the bench, the state formed a special prosecution team led by Attorney General Barrister Md Ruhul Quddus Kazol. The team comprises Deputy Attorneys General Mohammad Imam Hossain Tarek and Syed Ejaz Kabir, along with Assistant Attorneys General Mahbuba Tasnim Akhi, Mostafizur Rahman Mukul, Ashraful Alam, Rohani Siddika and Al Amin Siddiqui.The High Court Division bench comprising Justice Bishmadedv Chakrabortty and Justice KM Rasheduzzaman Raja enlisted 20 death references and criminal appeals for hearing. Over the past month, the bench delivered verdicts in 10 cases after hearing the matters, including the rape and murder of schoolgirl Rima in Shariatpur, the Jhama murder case in Pirojpur, and several cases involving the murder of women killed by their husbands.Talking to BSS, Deputy Attorney General Mohammad Imam Hossain Tarek, who represented the state before the bench, said that 10 judgments had been delivered between June 14-the bench's first working day-and July 15.

"Delivering verdicts in as many as 10 death reference and appeal cases within just one month is undoubtedly unprecedented," he said.Tarek attributed the swift disposal of the cases to the coordinated efforts of both the prosecution and the court. "Following the instructions of Attorney General, the state never sought adjournments or additional time during the hearings. At the same time, the court remained committed to expeditiously disposing of these cases, making it possible to deliver so many judgments within such a short period," he added. When the death reference in the rape and murder case of eight-year-old Ramisa from Pallabi in the capital came up before the special High Court bench on June 16, the court directed the appointment of state defence counsel for the two convicts, Soheli Rana and his wife, Swapna Akter.The bench has also enlisted the death references and appeals in the high-profile murder case of Sonagazi madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi and the rape and murder case of eight-year-old Achhiya in Magura. Deputy Attorney General Mohammad Imam Hossain Tarek told BSS that hearings in both cases are expected to begin within the next two weeks.Under Section 374 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, every death sentence imposed by a trial court must be confirmed by the High Court before it can be carried out. To facilitate this mandatory judicial review, the trial court forwards its judgment along with the complete case records to the High Court in the form of a death reference. The High Court then hears the death reference together with any appeal filed by the condemned prisoner or a jail appeal submitted from prison before delivering its final judgment on the conviction and sentence.



16 spillway gates of Kaptai dam opened as lake water level rises

Staff correspondent

Authorities on Saturday opened 16 spillway gates of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Station as the water level of Kaptai Lake approached the danger mark amid continuous rainfall and upstream water flow. The gates were opened by six inches each simultaneously at 11:20 am, releasing around 9,000 cusecs of water per second into the Karnaphuli River, said Mahmud Hasan, manager of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Station. The water

level of Kaptai Lake reached 104.08 feet above mean sea level (MSL) at 10:00 am on Saturday, he said. The lake's maximum water holding capacity is 109 feet MSL.

"The decision to open the spillway gates was taken to control the rising water level caused by heavy rainfall and increased flow of water from upstream," he said. Besides, five units of the power station are currently operational, generating an average of 222 megawatts of electricity while around 32,000 cusecs of water per second are being discharged

through turbines, he added. Depending on the situation, more gates may be opened gradually to increase water release, said Mahmud Hasan. Authorities have advised residents living in low-lying areas along the Karnaphuli River to remain alert, saying the situation is being monitored continuously. Meanwhile, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Nazma Ashrafi inspected the water release situation at the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Station. Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Md Ruhul

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Damaged roads, highways to be repaired swiftly: Habib

Staff correspondent

State Minister for Road Transport and Bridges and Railways Habibur Rashid Habib has said the government has launched an extensive drive to repair roads and highways damaged by recent heavy rainfall and floods, with the worst-affected areas in Chattogram, Cox's Bazar and the hill districts receiving top priority.

In an interview with Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS) at his Secretariat office, the state minister said the government is determined to restore transport connectivity as quickly as possible to ease public suffering and ensure uninterrupted economic activities. "We will not allow the country's transport network to remain disrupted for long due to the disaster. Damaged roads are being repaired on a priority basis so that people can travel safely and economic activities continue without interruption," he said. Habib said persistent rainfall and flooding have caused extensive damage to road infrastructure across several regions. In many places, road surfaces have been washed

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Chinese firm Huarun Tex to invest \$30m in BEPZA Economic Zone

Staff correspondent

Chinese company Huarun Tex Co. Ltd. is set to invest US\$30 million to establish a textile manufacturing factory at the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) Economic Zone in Mirsharai of Chattogram. Dhaka city guide Once fully operational, the factory will produce 24,000 tonnes of yarn and 20 million metres of grey woven fabric annually, while creating employment opportunities for 580 Bangladeshi nationals, said a press release. A land lease agreement was signed between BEPZA and Huarun Tex Co. Ltd. at the BEPZA Complex in Dhaka recently. Md Tanvir Hossain, Member (Investment

Promotion) of BEPZA, and Bin Wang, Managing Director of Huarun Tex Co. Ltd., signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organisations. BEPZA Executive Chairman Major General Mohammad Moazzem Hossain witnessed the signing ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, the BEPZA Executive Chairman thanked Huarun Tex Co. Ltd. for selecting Bangladesh, particularly the BEPZA Economic Zone, as its investment destination. He said BEPZA remains committed to providing a safe, modern and investor-friendly business environment and assured the company of full support to ensure the smooth implementation and operation of the project.

BGB chief reviews border management, flood relief activities in Cox's Bazar

Staff correspondent

Director General (DG) of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui visited Cox's Bazar and adjacent border areas on July 17-18 to review border management, operational preparedness and humanitarian assistance activities. During the visit, he was briefed on the overall security situation along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border and reviewed ongoing border security operations, according to a press release of the Paramilitary Force issued today. The BGB chief exchanged views with offi

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Hatiya lifeline has collapsed extreme suffering on the Chattogram-Hatiya route

Staff Correspondent

Chattogram The only connection between the sea-girt island upazila of Hatiya in Noakhali and the mainland is the Chattogram-Hatiya water route. Yet due to dilapidated vessels, broken jetties, and irregular schedules, this "life-line" is now practically dead. 500,000 people are spending each day in extreme hardship.

From Chattogram Sadar Ghat, passengers first travel by sea-truck and launch to Nalchira or Tamruddi Ghat. From there they must take trawlers or small boats to different unions of Hatiya. With no road connection, this waterway is literally a matter of life and death for the people of Hatiya. Current Major Problems, Vessel Shortage, There is demand for 10 launches, but only 3 are in service.

As a result, each launch carries double the passengers. People travel standing and even on the roof. Dilapidated Ghats, The jetties at Chattogram Sadar Ghat and Tamruddi Ghat in Hatiya are broken.

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Chattogram Job Fair 2026' at CU to be held on Monday

Chattogram Correspondent

Chattogram Job Fair 2026, jointly organized by the Chittagong University Central Students' Union (CUCSU) and Excellence Bangladesh, will be held on Monday (July 20) at the Buddijibi Chatter and the Central Shaheed Minar premises of the Chittagong University (CU). The announcement was made at a press conference

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Economy is the foundation of Bangladesh's foreign policy: Swapon

Staff correspondent

Information and Broadcasting Minister Zahir Uddin Swapon today said Bangladesh's foreign policy is guided by economic priorities rather than geopolitical considerations, with trade, investment, remittances and overseas employment shaping the country's diplomatic engagements. Addressing a seminar titled "Long Live Bangladesh-China Friendship", organised by the Bangladesh-China

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Tourist Presence Drops at Cox's Bazar Sea Beach Due to Bad Weather

Cox's Bazar, Correspondent

Due to continuous bad weather and rough seas, the number of tourists at Cox's Bazar Sea Beach, the country's main tourist city, has dropped significantly. Visits to various points of the beach since Thursday morning showed that tourist numbers are much lower compared to normal times. Only a few tourists were seen at Laboni, Sugandha and Kolatoli points, while

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BNP Distributes Relief in Four Unions of Sitakunda

I Will Always Stand by the People in Their Joys and Sorrows : Aslam Chowdhury

Md. Omar Faruk, Special correspondent

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has launched a large-scale relief distribution campaign across Sitakunda Upazila following the widespread damage caused by recent heavy rainfall and flash floods triggered by hill runoff.

On Saturday (July 18), relief assistance was distributed among affected families in Muradpur, Barabkunda, Banshbariya, and Kumira unions as part of the second day's activities under the initiative of the Sitakunda Upazila BNP and its associate bodies.

The programme follows the formal inauguration of the relief campaign on Friday (July 17), when relief materials were distributed in Syedpur Union, Baraiyadhala Union, and Sitakunda Municipality.

The relief distribution programme was attended as the chief guest by Mohammad Aslam Chowdhury FCA, former Joint Secretary General of the BNP and the elected Member of Parliament from the Chattogram-4 constituency.

Addressing the gathering, Aslam Chowdhury said the BNP has always stood beside the people during every national disaster and humanitarian crisis and will continue to do so in the future.

"Alongside the government's relief efforts, BNP leaders and activists are actively extending support to those affected. I want to assure the people that I am with you in your joys and sorrows, and I will continue to stand by you. With our collective efforts, we will overcome this crisis, Insha'Allah," he said. He further stated that the party's relief operations would continue in the coming days and would be expanded to reach more affected families across the constituency.

Leaders and activists of the Upazila BNP, Union BNP, Jubo Dal, Swachchasebak Dal, Chhatra Dal, and other affiliated organisations took part in the programme and distributed relief materials among flood-affected residents. Local people expressed appreciation for the humanitarian initiative and welcomed the party's continued support during the difficult time.

লোডশেডিং কেন হয়?

আসুন সত্যটা জানি

বিদ্যুৎ ব্যবস্থা পরিচালিত হয় ৩টি ধাপে

উৎপাদন

দেশের বিভিন্ন বিদ্যুৎ কেন্দ্রে বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদন করা হয়।

সঞ্চালন

জাতীয় সঞ্চালন লাইনের মাধ্যমে সেই বিদ্যুৎ দেশের বিভিন্ন অঞ্চলে পৌঁছে দেওয়া হয়।

বিতরণ

প্রতিটি বিতরণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে বিদ্যুৎ গ্রাহকের কাছে পৌঁছে যায়।

দেশের মোট উৎপাদন ও চাহিদার ভিত্তিতে প্রতিটি বিতরণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের জন্য নির্দিষ্ট **বিদ্যুতের বরাদ্দ** নির্ধারণ করা হয়।

যখন উৎপাদন বা সরবরাহ চাহিদার তুলনায় কম থাকে, তখন **NLDC** জাতীয় গ্রিডের ভারসাম্য রক্ষার জন্য বিভিন্ন বিতরণ সংস্থাকে তাদের **বরাদ্দ অনুযায়ী** বিদ্যুৎ প্রবাহের নির্দেশ দেয় বা বাধ্য করে।

কোনো বিতরণ প্রতিষ্ঠানের চাহিদা তার প্রাপ্ত বরাদ্দের চেয়ে বেশি হলে, সেই বরাদ্দের মধ্যেই বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ নিষিদ্ধ করতে সাময়িকভাবে কিছু এলাকায় বিদ্যুৎ বন্ধ রাখতে হয়। এটিই **লোডশেডিং**।

অর্থাৎ, পল্লী বিদ্যুৎ সমিতি **নিজে থেকে** লোডশেডিংয়ের **সিদ্ধান্ত নেয় না**; জাতীয়ভাবে নির্ধারিত বরাদ্দ অনুযায়ী বিদ্যুৎ সরবরাহ পরিচালনা করে।

আসুন, সঠিক তথ্য জানি, গুজব নয়।

বিদ্যুৎ সাশ্রয় করি, জাতীয় সম্পদ রক্ষা করি।

World Cup fever fuels internet subscriber growth

Staff correspondent

The ongoing FIFA World Cup appears to have given a strong boost to internet usage in Bangladesh, with industry insiders attributing a sharp rise in internet subscriptions to increased data consumption during the global football spectacle alongside some others aspects. Latest data released by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) showed internet subscriptions increased by 50.8 lakh to 13.41 crore at the end of May from 12.89 crore in January, while active mobile subscribers rose by

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Youth held for 'hacking NBR customs system' to facilitate smuggling

Chattogram Correspondent

The Counter Terrorism Department of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) has arrested a youth for allegedly hacking into the National Board of Revenue's (NBR) customs server and helping an organised syndicate attempt to smuggle foreign liquor and cigarettes through Chattogram Port. Sheikh Sejan, 26, was apprehended

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Sundarbans Pirates Fear Still Haunts People Living Near the Forest

Staff Correspondent, Khulna

The Sundarbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. On one side is biodiversity, on the other is the sole source of livelihood. Yet people living along the coast of this forest spend their nights in fear. Because the fear of river pirates has not completely ended.

Although the government declared the Sundarbans pirate-free in 2018, locals say, The pirates are gone, but the fear remains. Around 3 million people in Satkhira, Khulna, and Bagerhat districts including Shyamnagar, Koyra, Dacope, Mongla, and Rampal, depend directly or indirectly on the forest.

Honey collectors, woodcutters, fishermen, and loggers have to stay in the forest for 15-20 days a month for their livelihood. Before 2018, large gangs were involved in extortion, kidnapping, and murder. They surrendered following government operations. But locals say small groups of 5-7 people are now robbing boats in rivers and canals. At night they intercept boats and loot fish, honey, and nets. Attacks Evading RAB-Coast Guard Patrols are thinner during deep nights, fog, or storms. Criminals take advantage of this. Fishermen say, We are safe during the day. But our hearts tremble at night. Extortion

has also changed. Instead of large sums, they now collect 2,000-5,000 BDT as ghat cost per boat. If not paid, they cut nets and take away engines. So even after going to the forest, there's no profit. Even with legal passes, there are checkpoints everywhere. And once inside the forest, there's the fear of pirates.

Caught in the middle, ordinary people are becoming destitute. Voices of the Victims Abdul

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The best of all is also a scholar, and the worst of all is also a scholar - Pir Saheb of Sarchina

Syed Bashir Ahmed, Staff Reporter

Ameer-e-Hizbullah Sarchina Darbar Sharif's Pir Saheb Alhaj Hazrat Maulana Shah Abu Nasr Nesaruddin Ahmed Hussain (MA.Z.A.) said - The status of scholars in society is very high. Because they, as the successors of the prophets, convey the correct teachings of religion to people.

An ideal scholar enlightens the society through his knowledge, deeds, piety and good character. On the other hand, if a scholar deviates from his responsibilities, gives priority to personal interests or does not apply his knowledge properly, then his negative impact on society is also very high. In a word, it can be said that 'the best of all is also a scholar, and the worst of all is also a scholar.

Pir Saheb Qibla also said that the purpose of this statement is not to belittle the scholar society; Rather, it is to highlight the importance of their responsibility and accountability. A true scholar is a mercy, a guide, and a model of morality for people. Therefore, scholars should lead society with honesty, fairness, humility, and piety, following the ideals of the Quran and Sunnah.

Each of us must protect the dignity of knowledge and develop such a character that people can appreciate the beauty of Islam by looking at scholars. The true identity of a scholar should be not the per-

son, but the pursuit of truth and justice. On Saturday, July 18, at the Abidur Reza Pilot Model Government High School ground under Faridganj Upazila of Chandpur district, Hazrat Pir Saheb Qibla said this in a discussion as the chief guest at the Isal-e-Shwab Mahfil organized by Bangladesh Jamiat-e-Hizbullah and its affiliate Faridganj Upazila branch to mark the 2nd death anniversary of the late Pir Saheb Qibla Mujaddide Zaman, Bahre Shariat, Shaikhul Mashayek Shah Sufi Hazrat Maulana Mohammad Mohebbullah (R.A.). The gathering, which lasted from after Asr until late at night, was further discussed by, among others, Bangladesh Jamiat Hizbullah's Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer Alhaj Hazrat Maulana Hafez Shah Abu Bakr Mohammad Saleh Nesarullah, Organizing Secretary Maulana Md. Hemayet Bin Tayyeb, Mufti of Charchina Daruchhunnat Jamiat Nesariya Diniya Maulana Md.

Haider Hossain, and Hazrat Pir Saheb Qibla's traveling companion Maulana Mohebbullah Al Mahmud.Among others present at the mahfil were - Additional Nazim-e-Ala Maulana Md. Ali Akbar, Additional Nazim-e-Ala Maulana, President of Chittagong District Jamiat-e-Hizbullah, Md. Khorshed Alam, President of Chandpur District Jamiat-e-Hizbullah, Maulana Md. Saifuddin Khandaker, etc.

ment's goal is not only to rehabilitate flood-damaged roads but also to build safer, stronger and climate-resilient transport infrastructure capable of withstanding future natural disasters. He expressed optimism that, weather permitting, most priority repair works would be completed soon and the country's transport network would return to normal at the earliest.

BGB chief

cers and troops deployed in the region and praised their professionalism, dedication and vigilance in carrying out duties in remote and challenging border areas.He also provided necessary directives to further enhance operational efficiency, maintain discipline and strengthen border security. As part of the government's humanitarian assistance programme for flood-affected people in Cox's Bazar, the BGB personnel distributed relief materials among flood victims in Chakaria Municipality, Lakshyarchar Union and Kakara Union.A medical camp was also arranged to provide healthcare services to the affected people, the release said.Speaking on the occasion, the BGB DG reaffirmed his commitment to safeguarding the country's borders and serving the people.He directed all BGB personnel to remain alert and perform their duties with professionalism and responsibility to effectively address any emerging challenges. The BGB chief also urged members of the force to discharge their responsibilities with sincerity and dedication to uphold the confidence and trust of the people.

Hatiya lifeline

There are no lights at night. During storms and rain, passengers get soaked under the open sky. Suspended for Weather,Even with slight waves, water transport is shut down for 3-4 days. At that time Hatiya becomes completely isolated. Emergency patients, medicine, and food get stuck. Excess Fare and Harassment,The fixed fare is 400 BDT, but during peak season 700-800 BDT is charged. Ticket black-marketing and extortion at the ghats are daily occurrences.

Risky Goods Transport,Rice, gas cylinders, and construction materials come on risky trawlers. Prices go up 2-3 times during disasters. Rahima Begum, a resident of Jahajmara Union, Hatiya, said, My child was sick. Because the launch was closed, I could take him to Chattogram after 2 days. Md. Selim, a businessman from Hatiya Bazar, said, Goods were stuck for 5 days. They rotted and were ruined. How can we do business like this? Operate 3 modern passenger launches and 2 cargo sea-trucks daily on a regular schedule Urgent renovation of Sadar Ghat and Tamruddi Ghat and construction of modern jetties Fixed fares and strict monitoring by BIWTA. The Chairman of Hatiya Upazila said, This is not just a water route. This is the artery of Hatiya. Development of the island is not possible without fixing this.

BIWTA authorities said, Once we get the budget, we will renovate the ghats and bring in new vessels. For the people of Hatiya who fight to survive against nature, the water route is gtheir last hope. But that very hope is now the most unsafe place. If this lifeline is not repaired quickly, the suffering of the island's people will only increase.

Chattogram Job Fair

held on the CUCSU building today, by General Secretary (GS) Sayed Bin Habib and Executive Member Sohanur Rahman Sohan.

In a written statement, they said the fair will run from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm and will serve not only as a job fair but also as an effective bridge between students and the industrial and corporate sectors, playing a significant role in shaping participants' future careers.

They said this year's event will feature some of the country's leading corporate organizations, including PRAN-RFL Group, IFAD Group, Meghna Group, as well as City Bank, Islami Bank, Pubali Bank and several other companies from the service sector.

The CUCSU leaders said participating students will have access to CV collection, on-the-spot CV screening, spot interviews, career counselling, corporate networking and direct interaction with recruiters.

They will also be able to explore and apply for full-time, part-time and internship opportunities.

According to the organizers, more than 8,000 students, job seekers and young professionals are expected to attend the day-long event. Besides CU students, participants from various public and private universities and other educational institutions across the Chattogram region will also join the fair.

Alongside the job fair, the Career Summit 2026 will be held on the same day at the Faculty of Business Administration Auditorium from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. The summit will feature leading corporate executives, human resource professionals, entrepreneurs, and career mentors, who will conduct sessions on career planning, leadership, skill development, job preparation, and future workplace opportunities.

Under the summit's participation policy, five fourth-year and master's students from each academic department of the university will be selected through a prescribed process to attend the exclusive career summit.

The organizers said that, in coordination with the university administration, comprehensive arrangements have been made to ensure security, volunteer support, directional assistance and overall event management in anticipation of a large turnout.

The job fair will remain open from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Also present at the press conference were CUCSU Career Development Secretary Mehedi Hasan Sohan, Convener Sohanur Rahman Sohan, Co-convener Adnan Sharif, Corporate Affairs Team Lead (Team Secretary of Excellence Bangladesh) Sanu Akter Nodi, along with other organizers.

Economy is the foundation

Friendship Association (BCFA) at a hotel in the capital, he said China has the potential to become one of Bangladesh's most strategic and dependable partners in its economic advancement.

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir addressed the event as the chief guest.Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen was present as the guest of honour, while Bangladesh-China Friendship Association President and Adviser to the BNP Chairman Advocate Nazmul Haque Nannu chaired the programme. State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism M Rashiduzzaman Millat also addressed the seminar as a special guest. Lawmakers Sanzida Islam Tuli and Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, among others, attended the event.Referring to the growing economic partnership between Bangladesh and China, Swapon said China is Bangladesh's second-largest source of foreign direct investment (FDI), while bilateral trade has reached nearly US\$20 billion.Noting that Bangladesh's exports to China remain below US\$1 billion, he said the Chinese government is keen to support Bangladesh in expanding its export capacity.

The minister said China could emerge as Bangladesh's most important development partner in the coming years under the vision of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Emphasising the importance of regional connectivity for economic growth, Swapon said no country can achieve rapid development without improving transport links and regional integration.

He said a significant strategic initiative had recently been completed through the efforts of Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen, leading to an understanding between Bangladesh and China to establish road connectivity.

Swapon said that overcoming several long-standing complexities, the process of establishing road connectivity among China, Myanmar and Bangladesh is set to begin.

In the interest of regional development, any other country, including India, would be welcomed to join the initiative which would be regarded as a major strategic victory for the region's economy, he added.

Turning to the Rohingya crisis, Swapon said Bangladesh expects China to play a stronger and more effective role in facilitating a lasting solution through dialogue between Bangladesh and Myanmar.

"The Chinese government has attached importance to the mutual interests of Bangladesh and Myanmar and we hope China will make meaningful contributions to resolving the Rohingya issue," he said.

Clarifying the foundation of Bangladesh's diplomatic outlook, the minister said, Bangladesh believes in a pragmatic policy. Geopolitics is not our primary objective; our priority is the economy.

We import from China and India, export to the United States and Europe and receive remittances from the Middle East and Malaysia. Our foreign policy reflects these economic realities and China attaches great importance to this position," he said. Swapon also praised Chinese Ambassador Yao Wen, describing him as one of the key figures in strengthening Bangladesh-China friendship and expanding political and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Tourist Presence Drops at

bookings at most hotels and motels have also declined. Tourist Police and lifeguards are using loudspeakers to warn tourists not to enter the sea. Hotel owners said the crowd will increase again once the weather returns to normal. The Cox's Bazar Weather Office reported that due to the low-pressure system, rain and gusty winds may continue for another 2-3 days.

World Cup fever fuels

28 lakh to 18.86 crore from 18.58 crore over the same period.Industry insiders said internet traffic surged as millions of football fans streamed World Cup matches on mobile devices, while uninterrupted electricity supply helped sustain online activity.They also cited increased digital communication during the Eid holidays, online activities related to the HSC examinations and fully withdrawn of the Taka 300 tax on mobile phone SIM cards, which they said encouraged new mobile connections.Talking to BSS, Robi Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs Shahed Alam today said the ongoing FIFA World Cup, along with several other factors, contributed to higher data consumption, driving growth in internet traffic. "Bangladesh witnessed the second-highest internet traffic in its history during the Argentina-Switzerland World Cup quarterfinal match," he said.

He also identified the complete withdrawal of the SIM tax as a key driver of subscriber growth and expressed hope that the industry would witness further growth from the measure in June and the coming months.The BTRC statistics showed mobile internet remained the dominant mode of connectivity, accounting for nearly 89 percent of total internet subscriptions. Of the 13.41 crore internet users recorded in May, 11.91 crore accessed the internet through mobile networks, while 1.49 crore used fixed broadband services provided by internet service providers (ISPs) and PSTN operators.The data indicated that almost the entire increase in internet subscriptions came from mobile internet users, whose number rose from 11.42 crore in January to 11.91 crore in May, an increase of nearly 49 lakh users during the period.In contrast, fixed broadband subscriptions remained almost unchanged at 1.47 crore between January and March before increasing to 1.49 crore in April and remaining at the same level through May.

Youth held for

on July 15 at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka with assistance from the Immigration Police while allegedly attempting to flee to Nepal, CMP Additional Police Commissioner Md Faisal Ahmed disclosed the information at a press briefing on Friday. Maps

He said Sheikh Sejan's involvement emerged during the investigation into two cases filed with Bandar Police Station. According to police, one case involves the alleged attempt to import 11,676 litres of foreign liquor from China by falsely declaring the consignment as duty-free fabric imported under bonded warehouse facilities.

The second case relates to an alleged attempt to import around five million sticks of foreign cigarettes and secure their release from Chattogram Port through fraudulent customs clearance. Investigators said the syndicate illegally accessed the NBR's ASYCUDA World System and the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) online portal by using other users' credentials, changing passwords and manipulating customs processes. Police estimate the alleged fraud could have resulted in revenue losses of Tk 10-12 crore.

According to CMP, Sheikh Sejan was identified based on information gathered during the interrogation of seven suspects arrested earlier in connection with the two cases.

Police said Sejan, who is skilled in information technology, admitted during preliminary interrogation to providing technical assistance in gaining unauthorised access to the customs and port servers.

Investigators also found digital evidence indicating that on May 20, 2024, an unauthorised login was made to a customs officer's account using a mobile internet connection. The same account was allegedly used later to complete LC-GI registration and other customs procedures related to the cigarette-smuggling attempt.

Police said a previous raid at Sejan's house in Lohagara upazila of Narail failed to arrest him as he had gone into hiding. However, officers seized a Samsung mobile phone allegedly used to access the ASYCUDA World System and carry out LC-related activities.

CMP also said Sejan had previously been arrested in a joint operation by CMP and the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police on charges of cloning government websites and forging

A Final Salute and Armed Salute A Freedom Fighter's Eternal Farewell; Mourning in Sarankhola

S A Kalam Bagerhat

Sarankhola has bid farewell to a man of golden heart and great courage.Md. Nazrul Islam Lal, founding General Secretary of Sarankhola Upazila BNP, former convener of BNP, and one of the key organizers of the Sundarbans Sub-Sector during the Liberation War, passed away on Friday night, July 17, while undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital. He was 85.

Nazrul Islam Lal was widely known in the area as a friendly and kind-hearted person. During the Liberation War of 1971, he played a significant role as an organizer in the Sundarbans Sub-Sector.In a tragic turn, his only wife also passed away on Tuesday, July 7, while undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

The childless couple has left no one behind. During his lifetime, he donated a portion of his land to an orphanage.The funeral prayer for the deceased will be held today, Saturday, July 18, after Asr prayers at Amragachia School Ground in his home village.

The passing of this valiant freedom fighter from the 1971 war has cast a shadow of grief over all of Sarankhola,Bagerhat.



digital government documents, including national identity cards, land development tax receipts, birth registration certificates and vaccination certificates. Maps He is facing seven cybercrime and fraud cases filed at different police stations across the country, police said. Earlier in the investigation, police arrested Hafez Trading Private Limited Chairman Bakir Hossain, Director Khaled Hossain Mamun, company employees Khorshed Alam Ripon and Mizan, along with alleged syndicate members Ashraf Hossain Raju, Khayez Ahmed alias Arif and Boro Raju. They have all been produced before the court.

Sundarbans Pirates Fear

Gaffar, a fisherman from Shyamnagar, said Last month, 8 people surrounded us in Kotka canal. They took fish worth 30,000 BDT and our engine. Filing a GD at the police station was useless. They come back the same night.Rabea, wife of a honey collector from Koyra, said,I can't sleep for 10 days when my husband is in the forest.

I hear on TV that pirates are being arrested. But people still come to our village to demand extortion.A Coast Guard official said,There are no organized pirate gangs anymore. Now there are some unruly groups. We conduct regular patrols. We launch operations as soon as we get complaints. The Forest Department said: CCTV cameras and surveillance inside the forest have been increased. Increase joint Coast Guard and River Police patrols in rivers and canals at nightSet up a free hotline and rapid response team in every union for emergencies Properly monitor the rehabilitation of surrendered pirates so they don't return to crim. If the Sundarbans survive, people will survive. If people survive, the forest will survive.

But if the very people who risk their lives for the forest live in insecurity, forest conservation itself will be at risk.Although the government has declared the Sundarbans pirate-free on paper, the fear of pirates has still not been erased from the minds of people living near the Sundarbans.

Residents Express Satisfaction

of safe drinking water for many years. They had to travel long distances to collect water. With the installation of the new deep tube well, around 50 families are now receiving access to safe drinking water, making daily life easier and helping reduce health risks.

At the same time, several important roads and culverts that had remained in poor condition for years have been repaired. During the rainy season, students, farmers, laborers, and pedestrians faced severe difficulties due to muddy, damaged, and pothole-ridden roads. Following the renovation, transportation has become much safer and more convenient. Local residents said that Rezaul Karim Hoksab's public service initiatives are playing an important role in the development of the area. They expressed gratitude for his efforts and hoped that such development activities would continue in the future. Many also prayed for his good health and long life.

BNP wants to further strengthen

as the guest of honour.President of the Bangladesh-China Friendship Association and BNP chairman's adviser Advocate Nazmul Haque Nannu chaired it. Fakhru said Tarique Rahman's visit to China has further energized bilateral relations while Bangladesh youths are going to China in different occasions and building relationships there."The BNP wants to maintain relations with China based on geopolitical interests. We also want to maintain economic and political relations with India and the United States," Fakhru said.He said relations between China and Bangladesh are now at a very high level. Bangladesh seeks China's technological assistance, he said adding, "We also need China's support to provide technical and vocational education for Bangladeshi youth."Fakhru noted that Bangladesh would benefit from greater Chinese technological support in road and infrastructure construction, solar energy, and green energy development.He also said, "We are optimistic. The BNP shares ideological similarities with China. We have business relations with China. We will import from China and export to China, and China will likewise import from and export to Bangladesh. Bangladesh looks to China's leadership as a force against hegemony."

Addressing the meeting, Chinese ambassador Yao Wen said China is interested in introducing its high-speed rail technology in Bangladesh in the future. He said it would be possible to connect Chattogram, Dhaka, and Sylhet through such a high-speed rail network.The ambassador also assured Bangladesh of China's fullest cooperation in the repatriation of the Rohingyas. He said Tarique Rahman's visit had marked the beginning of a new chapter in bilateral relations.

Bangladesh plans long-term

budget document, seeks to promote the use of energy-efficient equipment and encourage designated industrial consumers to optimise electricity consumption at a time when rising fuel costs and growing demand continue to put pressure on the country's energy system. The move comes as Bangladesh grapples with mounting electricity generation costs driven by dwindling domestic gas reserves and increasing reliance on imported liquefied natural gas (LNG). Dhakacity guideMore than 40 percent of the country's electricity generation capacity is gas-based, making the sector particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in global fuel prices. Shift towards renewable energyTo address these challenges, the government plans to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels by expanding renewable energy and making better use of indigenous energy resources.The budget document says investors will receive incentives to manufacture renewable energy equipment locally, including solar panels, wind turbine components and battery storage systems.



US and Iran intensify Middle East strikes as bridges, port Infrastructure, water plant hit

International Desk

The United States and Iran stepped up their military campaign across the Middle East on Friday, exchanging attacks on key infrastructure and military sites as tensions over the Strait of Hormuz continued to escalate.

The United States broadened its offensive by striking additional bridges, energy facilities, and a surveillance tower at Iran's strategic Chabahar port. The attacks align with President Donald Trump's pledge to increase pressure on Tehran over its control of the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global shipping route for oil and gas.

Iran responded by launching missile attacks against U.S.-aligned countries, including Qatar and Kuwait. In Kuwait, a missile strike damaged a desalination plant, a critical source of the country's drinking water, while Qatar reported injuries from falling debris after its air defenses intercepted incoming missiles.

After days of escalating exchanges, the conflict remains centered on control of the Strait of Hormuz. An earlier ceasefire has collapsed, leaving little indication that the war—now more than four months old—will end soon.

The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) said Friday's operation marked the seventh consecutive night of strikes targeting Iran's military infrastructure. According to the military, the attacks struck surveillance facilities, logistics hubs, underground weapons depots, and maritime assets.

Iranian officials said recent U.S. airstrikes have killed dozens of civilians and injured hundreds, while the U.S. military acknowledged additional injuries among American service members.

Early Saturday, Iran claimed two oil tankers exploded after entering a mined section of the Strait of Hormuz. The country offered no evidence, and CENTCOM rejected the allegation, calling it false.

Since the conflict began in late February, Iran has effectively restricted shipping through the strait, pushing global oil prices above \$86 a barrel and significantly reducing maritime traffic. Shipping activity has fallen to its lowest level in three weeks, according to international tracking data.

In a televised address Thursday, President Trump said U.S. operations were succeeding and predicted the results would soon become evident. Before the war, Washington and Tehran had been negotiating over Iran's nuclear program, but Trump now faces growing political pressure to end the conflict and avoid a prolonged military engagement.

Bridges and Power Infrastructure Targeted

Iranian state media reported that overnight U.S. airstrikes struck bridges in Hormozgan province, including routes connecting Bandar Abbas—Iran's largest port—to the country's interior. The attacks also affected Bandar Khamir along the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's Energy Ministry acknowledged attacks on electrical infrastructure for the first time, urging residents in southern provinces to conserve electricity during

extreme summer temperatures, although officials did not specify the damaged facilities.

Authorities said at least 46 people have died and more than 400 have been injured in recent U.S. strikes, including eight fatalities in Friday's bridge attack. Meanwhile, the Pentagon confirmed 13 additional U.S. service members were wounded this week, bringing total American casualties since the war began to 14 killed and 427 injured.

Strategic Port Tower Destroyed

Friday's strikes also brought down a surveillance tower at Iran's Chabahar port on the Gulf of Oman, an important commercial gateway serving Afghanistan and regional trade. Iranian officials described the structure as part of the port's commercial operations, while CENTCOM said it supported Iran's Revolutionary Guard by monitoring commercial shipping and identifying potential maritime targets.

Iranian media later reported explosions in several provinces, including Khuzestan, Fars, Yazd, and Hormozgan, though authorities provided few details.

Iran Expands Retaliatory Attacks

Iran broadened its retaliation by firing missiles toward Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Qatar activated air defenses twice, with one child reportedly injured by falling debris. Kuwait said a missile strike damaged a power and desalination facility, temporarily disrupting a key source of drinking water.

Kuwaiti officials also reported Iranian drone attacks on military installations that wounded several personnel. Jordan's military intercepted three incoming Iranian missiles, while explosions were reported in northern Iraq's Kurdish region. Local officials said an attack targeting the Iranian Kurdish opposition group Komala killed at least nine people.

Separately, British maritime authorities reported that a commercial tanker sustained minor damage while sailing through the Strait of Hormuz near Oman. No injuries were reported, and Iran did not comment on the incident.

Strait of Hormuz Remains the Conflict's Focus

Iran continues to insist that the Strait of Hormuz falls under its exclusive authority and has argued that ships passing through should pay transit fees, despite the waterway being internationally recognized as open to global navigation.

President Trump has repeatedly threatened further attacks on Iranian infrastructure—including bridges and power facilities—to pressure Tehran into loosening its grip on the strait. The United States has also reinstated a naval blockade on Iranian ports in an effort to restrict the country's oil exports.

Although some regional energy exports have shifted to pipelines, analysts say alternative routes cannot fully replace the shipping capacity of the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil and natural gas trade normally passes. Recent data show vessel traffic through the waterway has dropped to its lowest level in weeks, underscoring the conflict's growing impact on global energy markets.

Ukrainian drone attacks kill 7, injure over 50 across Russian regions

International Desk

At least seven people were killed and 51 others injured in overnight Ukrainian drone attacks on multiple Russian regions, Russian officials said on Saturday, as Kyiv intensified strikes on logistics and energy facilities deep inside Russia.

The attacks hit two large warehouses operated by Russia's leading online retailer Wildberries—one in Kotovsk in the Tambov region, around 360 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, and another in Elektrostal, about 50 kilometres east of Moscow.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the long-range strikes targeted two major logistics facilities in the Moscow and Tambov regions that were allegedly used to supply sanctioned components for drone production and navigation systems. He also said an oil facility was struck, while Ukrainian special operations carried out attacks in the Sea of Azov and Russian-occupied territory.

Tambov Governor Yevgeny Pervyshov said seven workers on the night shift were killed and 25 others injured when the warehouse in Kotovsk was hit.

In the Moscow region, Governor Andrei Vorobyov said 24 people were wounded in Elektrostal. Two more people were injured in the nearby city of Noginsk, where a drone strike sparked a fire at an oil depot. Authorities evacuated a nearby maternity hospital and a residential building in Noginsk as a precaution, Vorobyov added.

In Vladimir, about 180 kilometres east of Moscow, a Ukrainian drone struck a residential building, causing a brief fire but no casualties, according to regional Governor Alexander Avdeyev.

Russia's Defence Ministry said its air defence systems intercepted and destroyed 379 Ukrainian drones overnight over 19 Russian regions, as well as over the illegally annexed Crimean Peninsula, the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea.

Ukraine has increasingly targeted military, logistics and energy infrastructure inside Russia in an effort to disrupt Moscow's war effort as the conflict, now in its fifth year, continues.

Iran urges UN action over alleged US attacks on civilian facilities

International Desk

Iran's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Amir-Saeid Iravani, has condemned the United States over what he described as attacks on Iran's civilian infrastructure in a letter addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

According to the letter, the US attacks caused extensive damage to key civilian facilities, including ports, transportation networks, communications infrastructure, logistics hubs, radar installations, coastal defence systems and other assets essential to the civilian population and the functioning of Iran's national economy.

Israeli forces arrest 10 Palestinians in Hebron raids

Iravani also said the United States bears full international responsibility for all deaths, injuries, destruction of critical infrastructure and environmental damage resulting from the attacks.

He further warned that the continued attacks constitute a serious threat to international peace and security, freedom of navigation, regional stability, and the security of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.



Rescuers search for survivors after landslide kills 8, leaves 34 missing in southwest China

International Desk

Rescue teams continued searching for survivors on Saturday after a landslide in southwest China's Chongqing municipality killed at least eight people and left 34 others missing.

The landslide struck Pengshui County on Friday morning when a huge mass of rocks and soil rushed down a hillside, burying more than 10 residential buildings, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

Ten people were rescued and taken to hospital, while more than 1,100 residents have been evacuated from the area.

Photos and video from the scene showed massive boulders scattered across the steep hillside. One of the rocks appeared larger than a multi-storey building. Several homes were badly damaged, with one building's upper section crushed and a car partially buried under debris.

Officials said the landslide involved around 18,000 cubic metres of rocks and debris. The largest single boulder measured about 3,000 cubic metres, according to Wang Chuanjun, head of Planning and Natural Resources in Pengshui County.

Rescue efforts were made more difficult by heavy rain, which continued from Friday night into Saturday morning. CCTV reported that nearly 19.2 centimetres (about eight inches) of rainfall was recorded at a local weather station.

As the rain eased, rescue workers resumed ground searches around collapsed buildings and along the nearby riverbank.

State media reported that rescuers are currently searching around the giant rocks before moving underneath them, where unstable boulders could pose a serious risk. After checking surrounding areas, teams plan to drill into the largest rocks and use controlled explosives to break them apart and continue the search.

Search dogs have also been deployed to help locate survivors trapped beneath the debris.



China's National Development and Reform Commission has allocated 30 million yuan (about US\$4.4 million) in emergency funding to help restore damaged infrastructure and public services in the affected area.

The landslide occurred near the Wujiang River, which flows through the mountainous region of Pengshui County in southeastern Chongqing, close to the provinces of Hubei and Guizhou.

Why Britain is getting a new prime minister without holding a general election

International Desk

Britain is set to have a new prime minister on Monday without holding a general election, as veteran Labour politician and former Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham prepares to replace Keir Starmer.

Burnham was elected leader of the governing Labour Party after securing the support of 349 of the party's 401 lawmakers. Since Labour has a majority in Parliament, its leader automatically becomes the country's prime minister.

Although Burnham was confirmed as Labour leader at a special party conference on Friday, he will officially take office on Monday after meeting King Charles III at Buckingham Palace. Until then, Starmer will remain caretaker prime minister.

Why no general election?

Under Britain's parliamentary system, a governing party can change its leader during its term in office without calling a general election. If the ruling party has a majority in Parliament, its new leader automatically becomes prime minister. The next UK general election is not due until 2029, five years after the last national vote in 2024.

Starmer announced his resignation as Labour leader on June 22 after serving for less than two years as prime minister. His leadership came under increasing pressure following a series of political controversies, including his appointment of a man with close ties to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein as Britain's ambassador to the United States.

Labour's poor performance in local elections in May also triggered growing calls from party lawmakers for him to step down. Pressure increased further after Burnham won a parliamentary by-election, strengthening support for him to take over the party leadership.

Under Labour Party rules, a leadership contest is triggered when a challenger secures the backing of at least one-fifth of Labour lawmakers. Burnham was the only candidate to meet that requirement.

Seventh prime minister in 10 years

Burnham will become Britain's seventh prime minister in the past decade. Leadership changes without a general election are common under the UK's parliamentary system. Former Conservative prime ministers Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak all took office after winning internal party leadership contests rather than national elections.

The frequent changes in leadership have marked a turbulent period in British politics following the country's departure from the European Union.

Formal transfer of power

The change of leadership will follow Britain's long-established constitutional process. On Monday, Starmer will deliver a farewell statement before travelling to Buckingham Palace, where he will formally resign during a meeting with King Charles III.

Burnham will then meet the King, who will invite him to form a new government. The ceremony, traditionally known as the "Kissing of Hands," no longer involves kissing hands and usually consists of a formal handshake. After the meeting, Burnham will travel to 10 Downing Street, the official residence of the British prime minister, where he is expected to deliver his first speech as the country's new leader.

The entire transition is expected to be completed within a few hours and will be broadcast live across the UK.

Indian police hospitalize activist after health worsens during hunger strike over education reform

International Desk

Indian police on Saturday shifted prominent activist Sonam Wangchuk to a hospital after his health deteriorated during a 20-day hunger strike demanding education reforms.

Security was tightened around Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, the city's designated protest site, where Wangchuk had been staging the hunger strike with students and activists from the Cockroach Janta Party.

The protesters are demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan following allegations that examination papers were leaked before tests. They are also calling for major reforms to the country's examination system and compensation for families of students who died by suicide following the alleged leaks or exam results.

ExecutiveBranch

Wangchuk, a 59-year-old engineer and education reform campaigner, has become the face of the movement, which emerged in May after Supreme Court Chief Justice



Surya Kant compared some unemployed young people to "cockroaches" during a court hearing on an unrelated matter.

Supporters later adopted the term as a symbol of resilience, launching a satirical political movement that quickly gained more than 21 million followers on Instagram.

Delhi Police said Wangchuk was taken to hospital on medical advice and under a court directive after his condition worsened due to the prolonged hunger strike.

Police said a brief scuffle broke out when some protesters tried to stop the authorities from moving him to hospital. However, the Cockroach Janta Party claimed in a social media post that Wangchuk had been "forcefully abducted" by the government without his or his family's consent.

Authorities deployed additional police and paramilitary personnel and set up extra barricades around the protest site. Police said the increased security was a precautionary measure and urged protesters to cooperate with law enforcement.



10 songs to build excitement for the World Cup final

Entertainment Desk

As football fans around the world prepare for Sunday's FIFA World Cup final between Argentina and Spain, music can be the perfect way to build the excitement. Whether fans are cheering for defending champions Argentina to win back-to-back World Cups or hoping Spain's teenage star Lamine Yamal shines on the biggest stage, these 10 songs capture the spirit, energy and celebration of the tournament. Maps Here are AP's picks:

1. "Dai Dai" — Shakira and Burna Boy (2026)
The official song of the 2026 World Cup combines Latin rhythms with Afrobeats in a multilingual anthem celebrating unity, passion and victory. Colombian singer Shakira said a World Cup song should reflect the emotions and excitement that football brings to people around the world.
2. "DNA (More Than A Game)" — Andrea Bocelli, David Guetta, EJAE and Megan Thee Stallion (2026)
This unique collaboration blends opera, pop, electronic dance music and rap in English, Italian and Korean. The song highlights football as more than a sport, describing it as part of people's identity.
3. "La Copa de la Vida (The Cup of Life)" — Ricky Martin (1998)
One of the most memorable World Cup anthems ever released, Ricky Martin's energetic hit became the soundtrack of the 1998 tournament in France and remains a fan favourite.
4. "Despechá" — Rosalía (2022)
The upbeat Latin pop hit has become a celebration song for Spain's national team, often played after goals and victories. It is expected to feature again if Spain suc-

- ceeds in the final.
5. "Mi Gran Noche" — Raphael (1967)
Spanish music legend Raphael's classic song has become a regular feature of football celebrations across Spain, thanks to its lively melody and timeless appeal.
6. "La Roja Baila" — Sergio Ramos, Niña Pastori and RedOne (2016)
Recorded as Spain's official anthem for the 2016 European Championship, the song celebrates the national team's nickname, "La Roja," and continues to be popular among Spanish supporters.
7. "La Cumbia de los Trapos" — Yerba Brava (2000)
This energetic cumbia track has become closely linked with Argentina's football team. It was widely associated with the country's World Cup triumph in Qatar in 2022 and remains a favourite among Argentine fans.
8. "Matador" — Los Fabulosos Cadillacs (1993, remastered 2008)
Often played after Argentina scores, the song combines ska, reggae and Latin rhythms. While known as a football anthem, it also carries a deeper message about Argentina's military dictatorship.
9. "Dumbai" — CaTriel & Paco Amoroso (2024)
The Argentine duo's modern Latin pop hit mixes trap, electronic and tropical sounds, making it a popular addition to football celebrations.
10. "Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)" — Shakira featuring Freshlyground (2010)
Widely regarded as one of the greatest World Cup songs ever made, the official anthem of the 2010 tournament in South Africa remains a global favourite for football fans. Its catchy rhythm and uplifting message continue to make it a must-play during every World Cup season.

Actors worried about current situation, future of artistes

Entertainment Desk

Small screen actors have expressed their concerns about the current situation and future of the artistes. Their also concerns over future of the country's entertainment industry, warning that declining local productions on television, growing presence of dubbed foreign TV serials and a lack of policy support are shrinking employment opportunities for performers and other creative professionals. The concerns were raised at the annual general meeting of Actors' Equity Bangladesh held at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in the capital recently. Actors claimed that although the number of TV channels in the country has increased, the importance of the industry has decreased. Due to the abundance of foreign TV serials, the number of local programmes is decreasing, and the work space of the artistes is shrinking. The artistes are being forced to change their professions. Noted actor Shahiduzzaman Selim criticised the excessive broadcasting of Bengali dubbed foreign TV serials. He believes that TV channels are regularly broadcasting foreign serials due to audience demand. This has affected artistes and producers. Many are spending time without work. Many are forced to decide to change their profession. Shahiduzzaman Selim said, "A terrible situation is being created due to the foreign serials dubbed in Bengali being broadcast on the country's TV channels. Television channels are buying serials at low cost and dubbing them, which is narrowing the scope of work for artistes. Earlier, there was a policy that these serials should not be broadcast during peak hours. If that policy can be strictly followed, then the scope of work for artistes and producers will be created." "Many artistes and producers are living in poverty. The industry needs government patronage. The government is certainly committed to providing this patronage. They

just need to be told what tasks to do," he added. Expressing concern about the future of artistes due to decrease in work, actor Tauquir Ahmed said, "The number of TV channels in the country is more than necessary. But most of the channels are now dependent on commercials and news. The importance of drama, movie and art has decreased. As a result, even though the number of channels has increased, the work opportunities for film, TV and stage artistes are continuously shrinking. Far from recognition of the profession, we have no job prospects. This is a matter of great concern. We should discuss this with the policy makers of the state. The right steps should be taken now." Azad Abul Kalam, President of Actors' Equity Bangladesh, believes that artistes should stand by each other. He said, "As actors, we do not have any state recognition. This is both painful and contemptuous of the state. We should question this and start a movement. Bangladesh market research It has become difficult to live a life with acting as a profession. Many are living a miserable, sometimes inhuman life. Professional artistes should also come forward. My request to them is, do not just look at yourself, but stand by your colleagues. Not just financial cooperation, but cooperation in the workplace. Think about whether you can connect with the desire and right of artistes to live with dignity." Veteran actors Mamunur Rashid, Dilara Zaman, Ferdousi Majumdar, etc also participated in the discussion. The concerned people feel that necessary steps need to be taken now to protect the country's art practice and artistes. To build a beautiful future and a prosperous nation, various initiatives and patronage are needed at the state, social, party and personal levels for fair art and culture practice.



Wildfire smoke sparks hazardous air quality across US

Entertainment Desk

Thick wildfire smoke blanketed large parts of the United States on Thursday, stretching from the Great Lakes to the East Coast, prompting health warnings as air quality deteriorated to unhealthy and hazardous levels. The smoke, mainly from wildfires in Canada and northern Minnesota, reduced visibility and darkened skies across several states. Officials urged residents to stay indoors or wear protective masks, warning that the polluted air could affect everyone regardless of health status. Air quality in Detroit ranked among the worst globally for major cities. Authorities issued hazardous air quality alerts across Michigan, much of Minnesota and parts of Illinois, while New York City moved outdoor activities indoors, opened cooling centres and distributed thousands of face masks. Philadelphia also advised residents to avoid strenuous outdoor activities. Health experts warned that microscopic particles in wildfire smoke can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory, cardiovascular and other long-term illnesses. A study published this

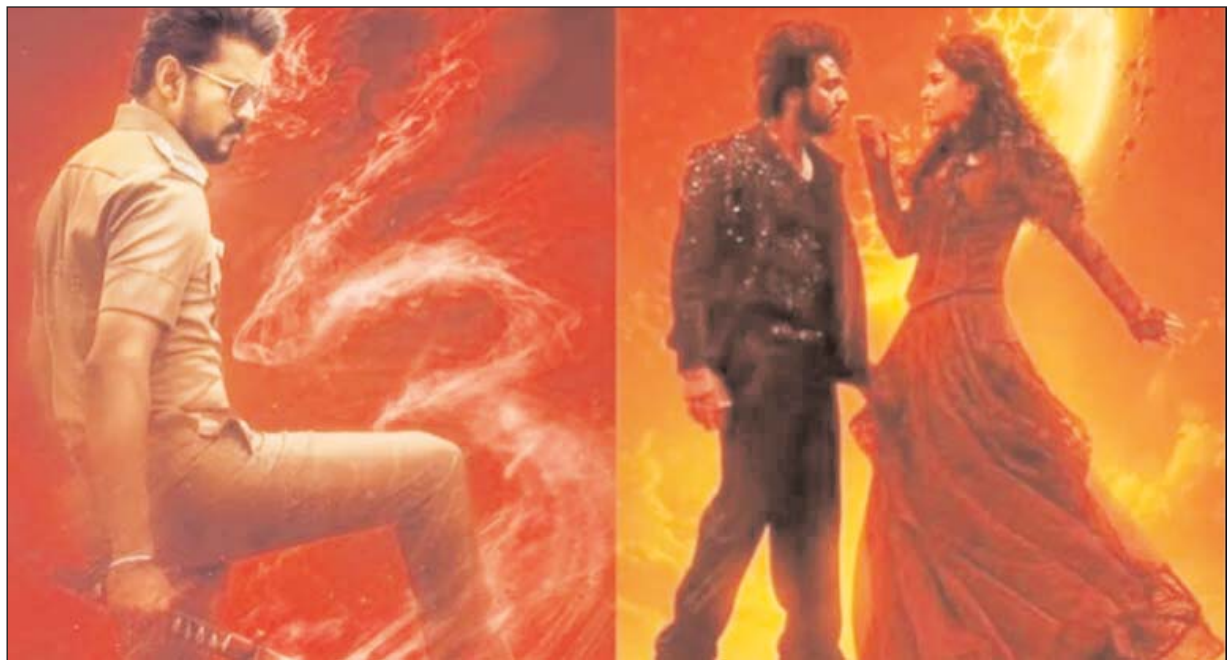


year estimated such exposure contributes to about 24,100 deaths annually in the contiguous United States. Meanwhile, wildfires continued spreading in Minnesota despite firefighting efforts. Officials said smoke hampered helicopter operations, while Canada's Royal Air Force evacuated 11 Minnesota teenagers and four staff members from an Ontario provincial park threatened by the fires. Authorities warned smoky conditions could persist for weeks or even months.

Orchita Sporshia speaks out on post-flood humanitarian issues

Entertainment Desk

The ongoing flood situation in the country has ended, but it is leaving long-term scars. As the water recedes, a new silent crisis is now emerging. And in this difficult time, popular TV actress Orchita Sporshia has called for humanity towards homeless people and helpless animals. In an emotional post on social media, she urged everyone to be responsible and aware from their respective places. In her post, Sporshia expressed deep concern about the post-flood health risks. She wrote, "Flood water eventually recedes. But the wounds it leaves behind will take a long time to heal. Another silent crisis begins after the water recedes. Contaminated water spreads various infections including diarrhea, fever, skin diseases. So, drink pure water from now on, store food properly, stay clean and make people around you aware." Urging special attention to those most at risk in society during this time of disaster, the actress said, "Pay special attention to our most vulnerable people. This disaster is much harder for elderly members of the household, pregnant mothers, young children, and sick people." In her words, "Another thing that we often forget. Our domestic animals and stray animals on the streets also have the right to live. They too are afraid, they too are hungry, they too seek shelter. If you can afford it, arrange a dry place and a meal. Your small act of humanity may save a life." She concluded by writing, "The biggest need in this disaster is not just money, but a sense of responsibility, awareness, and the mentality of standing by each other. Because a strong country is not built just on big structures; it is built with people who hold each other's hands in times of crisis."



GV Prakash postpones Immortal to avoid box office clash with Vijay's Jana Nayagan

Entertainment Desk

Actor-composer GV Prakash Kumar has postponed the release of his upcoming supernatural horror film Immortal to avoid a clash with Vijay's much-awaited film Jana Nayagan. Movies Immortal was originally scheduled to hit theatres on July 23, the same day Jana Nayagan is now set for release. Following the announcement of Vijay's release date, several Tamil filmmakers have reportedly adjusted their schedules, with GV Prakash becoming the first to move his film. Announcing the decision on X, GV Prakash described it as a mark of respect for Vijay. "When Thalapathy arrives, one has to step aside. Especially for this one, the last time. Best of luck, Team Jana Nayagan," he wrote. He also confirmed that Immortal will now release in theatres on September. Directed by Mariyappan Chinna and produced by AK Film Factory, Immortal stars GV Prakash alongside Kayadu Lohar. The film follows a young man living in an apartment complex whose fascination with a mysterious new neighbour leads to a series of supernatural incidents. The July 23 release date had been announced only two weeks before Jana Nayagan's release was offi-

cially confirmed. Meanwhile, production house KVN Productions announced Jana Nayagan's release on X, saying the film will arrive in cinemas on July 23. The producers said the first show in Tamil Nadu will begin at 9 am, while theatres in Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana will start screenings from 5 am. Directed by H. Vinoth, Jana Nayagan is expected to be Vijay's final film as an actor before entering full-time politics. The film was initially planned for release on January 9. The movie reportedly faced delays in certification after being submitted to the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) in December 2025. Although it was expected to receive a U/A 16+ certificate, reports said objections from a member of the examining committee led to the film being referred to a revision committee, delaying the certification process. Produced by KVN Productions on a reported budget of Rs 500 crore, Jana Nayagan features Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol and Mamitha Baiju in key roles, with music composed by Anirudh Ravichander. The film has generated significant excitement among fans due to its large-scale production and Vijay's expected farewell appearance on the big screen. Film& TV Production



Argentina coach Scaloni hails 'legend' Messi before World Cup final

Sports Desk

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni urged fans to make the most of seeing Lionel Messi lead his team out in another World Cup final at the age of 39 as the holders aim to retain the trophy when they take on Spain this weekend.

"He has made history. He is a legend," Scaloni said of the former Barcelona player, who has already helped Argentina win a World Cup and back-to-back Copa America titles in the last five years.

Messi's international career has enjoyed a remarkable late renaissance -- a decade ago he briefly retired from the Argentina team at the age of 29 after a Copa America final loss to Chile, his fourth defeat in a final for his country.

Messi and Scaloni hugged on the pitch at full-time after Wednesday's

2-1 semi-final win over England, with the Argentine captain calling that victory "pure history".

"It fills me with pride because he is the best player in the history of football," Scaloni said of Messi, who has scored eight goals at this World Cup, which is his sixth, and is the tournament's all-time top scorer with 21.

"To have been able to get to a final in the way that he has in this moment, at the age of 39, I think it is incredible.

"That is why I said we should enjoy having him, because look at what happened with Diego (Maradona) and how we ended up missing him.

"We still have Leo and we should appreciate that. He is the historic figure and the legend, as are all these players who have given us these marvellous years."

Argentina had gone 28 years without winning a major international title

before lifting the Copa America in 2021 to spark this current golden era.

"They have done things that a few years ago were unthinkable. It was not easy to get here and to compete at this level over so many years," he said ahead of Sunday's final at the MetLife Stadium just outside New York City.

"We might win and I hope we do but in any case the journey to get this far has been incredible."

Scaloni said he could not answer whether the game would definitely be Messi's last at a World Cup, but it seems highly unlikely he will continue until the next one in 2030.

Argentina will have to beat the reigning European champions if they are to become the first nation in 64 years to win back-to-back World Cups.

"They are a great team. Everything worries me about them," Scaloni said.



South Asian Karate championship begins

Sports Desk

The 10th Cadet, Junior, Under-21 and Senior South Asian Karate Championship and the second South Asian Under-14 Karate Cup got underway at Shaheed Suhrawardy Indoor Stadium in the city's Mirpur yesterday (Saturday).

State Minister for Youth and Sports Md. Aminul Haque formally inaugurated the two-day meet as the chief guest, organised by the South Asian Karate Federation with the support of the Bangladesh Karate Federation (BKF).

On the opening day of the competition, Thokar Amrit of Nepal won the gold medal in the Under-21 men's kata event.

Bangladesh's Tariq Zubin claimed the silver medal while Timpun Gidon of India and Shyamal of Sri Lanka shared the bronze medals.

In the women's individual kata, Khink Alina of Nepal secured the gold medal while Allepola of Sri Lanka won the silver and Bangladesh's Tabassum Shanzida secured the bronze medal.

Sri Lanka won the gold medal in the junior girls' team Kata while Bangladesh finished with the silver medal.

In the junior boys' individual kata, Mananthar of Nepal captured the gold medal while Bangladesh's Mahin Adam earned the silver and Setethri David claimed the bronze medal.

2nd President Bangladesh Squash begins

Sports Desk

The second President Bangladesh Squash 2026 got underway yesterday (Saturday) at Bashundhara Sports City in the capital.

In the inaugural session, Bangladesh Squash Federation (BSF) General Secretary Brigadier General G.M Quamrul Islam, SPP (Retd.), executive committee member Brig. Gen. Nasimul Gani (retd.), and chief executive officer of Bashundhara Sports City Colonel Mohasinul Karim (retd.), along with officials of the federation and the Bashundhara Group were present.

Held under the supervision of the BSF, the tournament is organised by the Bangladesh Professional Squash Association (BPSA) with the approval of the Professional Squash Association (PSA) and the support of the Bangladesh government.

It is the first PSA-approved professional squash tournament organised by the BPSA in Bangladesh, making it a landmark event in the country's squash history. The tournament will conclude on Monday (July 20).

Trump questions England's World Cup tactics

Sports Desk

To the long list of critics of England's tactics in the World Cup semi-final they lost to Argentina can now be added Donald Trump.

The US president on Friday took a gentle swipe at coach Thomas Tuchel's decision to adopt defensive tactics after England took the lead against Argentina on Wednesday.

Speaking at a reception in New York alongside FIFA president Gianni Infantino, Trump mentioned England captain Harry Kane, with whom he shared a round of golf in Florida 18 months ago.

"You have a great player in England, who I played golf with, Harry," Trump said.

"They perhaps made a mistake when they made him a defensive player. What do I know about soccer?" Trump



Kane stayed on the field.

Lionel Messi exploited the space and provided the assists that led to the two Argentine goals that sent the South Americans into the final.

Tuchel repeated on Friday that he stood by his tactical decisions.

"No I don't regret my decision. I thought we had become too passive," Tuchel said.

"I was trying to help the team."

added.

"They took the lead and they took their best player and they put him on defence.

"We got to be a little offensive, right? What do I know about coaching?"

England coach Thomas Tuchel was heavily criticised for withdrawing two forwards and putting on defenders in the last half hour of the game against Argentina, meaning England had to sit back although

Messi to get 'special attention' from Spain, says de la Fuente

Sports Desk

Luis de la Fuente said Spain planned to pay "special attention" to Lionel Messi in Sunday's World Cup final but ruled out trying to man-mark the Argentina captain.

De la Fuente told reporters at a press conference on Friday that he knows from experience the challenges of using man-to-man marking against the eight-time Ballon D'Or winner.

The Spain coach recalled an experience from when he was coaching Sevilla's youth team while Messi was playing junior football for Barcelona, underlining how it was impossible to keep him quiet for the whole match.

"I first encountered him when I was coaching the Sevilla youth team," he said.

"We went to Barcelona, and I had heard great things about a kid named Messi.

"So we assigned a player to mark him man-to-man, but in the 70th minute, I substituted the marker because he was on a yellow card. The score was 0-0, and in the span of 15 minutes, Messi scored four goals against us."

"So we won't use man-to-man marking this time. We have to stay alert and pay special attention, certainly," de la Fuente added.

Messi, 39, has produced a series of vintage performances for Argentina to carry them into Sunday's final, which will almost certainly be the veteran's last appearance in the World Cup.

"Messi is one of a kind," de la Fuente said.

"An example for young athletes in terms of his attitude and behaviour, especially given the spectacular World Cup he is playing at his age."

Sunday's final will also be a personal duel between de la Fuente and has Argentina counterpart Lionel Scaloni, who formed a friendship in 2017 when de la Fuente was an instructor as Scaloni studied for his professional coaching licence.

De la Fuente strongly pushed back at suggestions that Argentina may resort to skullduggery or streetwise tactics in an attempt to disrupt Spain.

"Oh, please, no, no, no," de la Fuente said.

"I would never dare to say that. I have the utmost admiration for this national team.

"They've won the World Cup, two Copa Americas, the Finalissima... and they are led by a close friend of mine. I have nothing but admiration and more admiration for them."



"I believe that both Spain and Argentina will have a game plan where talent and good football will rule over everything else."

De la Fuente said his team was prepared to adjust for the extended half-time interval for Sunday's final. The break is expected to be nearly double the usual 15 minutes to accommodate a star-studded half-time show.

The Spain coach said he believed longer half-time breaks -- and the hydration breaks introduced at this World Cup -- could become football's "normality" in coming years.

"I think that everything that we consider to be strange or odd nowadays, you know, hydration breaks, the 30-minute half-time, maybe within 30 years will become normality," he said.

"Maybe football is developing that way. We don't know. It is what it is. We can't change that, so we'll have to enjoy it."



Wildfire smoke casts uncertainty over World Cup final

Sports Desk

Mikel Merino can smell and see the smoke from the Canadian wildfires that are making for hazy conditions across large parts of the U.S., including northern New Jersey where he and Spain are set to face Argentina in the World Cup final on Sunday.

InternationalSports Competitions Merino is trying not to focus on it.

It remains unclear how much, if at all, the smoke will affect the final.

The World Health Organization forecast calls for an improvement to "moderate" air quality in East Rutherford.

"For a game that is as important as a World Cup final, you have to be able to shut out external factors as much as possible," Merino said Friday.

"Luckily, we are being careful with every detail thanks to the federation and the organizers of the World Cup."

Spain practiced outside in hazardous conditions in East Hanover, New Jersey, on Thursday, alarming experts who thought the team should have held the session inside instead.

Messages sent to FIFA and the Spanish Football Association asking whether that was considered or possible were not returned.

Air quality improved Friday, but the uncertainty lies in what will follow what could be up to 1.25 inches (3.17 centimeters) of rain expected to fall Saturday.

"Following that, it looks like there is another smoky air mass following in behind that system, but it's not clear right now how much or how it might reach New York or New Jersey, when it comes to actually Sunday," said Mark Parrington, senior scientist at the Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service.

"If the fire intensity really picks up again through (Saturday), it's possible it puts more smoke into the atmosphere that then might quickly follow that rain event."

Smoke from wildfires — which are burning more of North America as Earth warms — attacks nearly every system in the body, killing tens of thousands of people a year, numerous medical studies show.

It attacks the body immediately, spiking asthma cases with increased ambulance runs within hours.

Smoke can trigger inflammation in different parts of the body, often attacking a person's weakest points, which can then cascade into different effects of an immune system trying to fight a nasty irritant, doctors and scientists say.

Parrington said as a general rule the advice is to try to minimize outdoor activity and exercise when the air is full of pollutants.

"There's the obvious sort of respiratory illness, cardiovascular issues, vulnerable people with asthma and things like this," Parrington said.

"Then for sure they're going to feel the effects."

President Donald Trump is set to meet with FIFA President Gianni Infantino later Friday.

Members of the administration, including Andrew Giuliani, the executive director of the White House FIFA Task Force, have been discussing the matter with soccer's governing body and monitoring the wildfire situation, according to a White House official.

The person was granted anonymity to confirm internal discussions.

Roughly 80,000 fans are expected at the final, which takes place in the large, open-air stadium in the Meadowlands that is home to the NFL's New York Giants and Jets.

Brazil calls on UN and FIFA to combat World Cup racism

Sports Desk

Brazil's top human rights body on Friday urged the UN and FIFA to act against racism, citing slurs targeting players including French star Kylian Mbappe during the 2026 World Cup.

Rampant racist messaging in the stands, online and even from politicians has occurred throughout the tournament that will wrap up with Sunday's final pitting Spain against Argentina.

A Paraguayan senator made derogatory comments about Mbappe while Spain's ex-leader Mariano Rajoy questioned the nationality of French footballers.

Black footballers on the Dutch national team meanwhile faced a barrage of online hate after missing penalties against Morocco.

Brazil's National Human Rights Council denounced "a transnational pattern of structural racism, racial discrimination and hate speech observed throughout the 2026 World Cup" in a statement sent to AFP.

It called on the United Nations and FIFA to ensure that tournament hosts United States, Mexico and Canada were adequately investigating and following up on racist incidents.

Council president Ivana Leal cited FIFA figures showing that out of over six million monitored social media posts, 89,000 contained abusive content, including thousands of a racist nature.

That figure is more than 13 times the number recorded during the 2022 edition of the tournament.

"The World Cup brings together millions of people and should represent an encounter between peoples and cultures," Leal stated.

The data shows that racism "remains a global challenge," she added.

Neer clinches Vezerkepo Summer GM Chess title

Sports Desk

International Master Manon Reja Neer of Bangladesh emerged champion in the Vezerkepo Summer 2026 Grandmaster Chess Tournament that concluded in Budapest, Hungary on Friday.

Neer secured the title with 5.5 points from nine games. However, he narrowly missed earning a Grandmaster norm, which required seven points from nine games in the tournament.

In the ninth and final round, Neer defeated FIDE Master S. Dhananjay of India to seal the championship.

Earlier, in the eighth round, he shared the points with International Master Adelar Bai of Chinese Taipei.

The round-robin tournament featured 10 players from Bangladesh, Belgium, Hungary, India, the Netherlands, Serbia and Chinese Taipei, including three Grandmasters, five International Masters and two FIDE Masters.



Farmers exceed set ginger farming target in Rangpur region

Rangpur Correspondent

After getting repeated better yields with rewarding prices in recent years, farmers have exceeded cultivation target of ginger in the Rangpur agricultural region in this Kharif-1 season. The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) had set a target of 55,753 tonnes of ginger production for farmers from 3,895 hectares of land in all five districts of the agricultural region this time. However, they have brought 4,054 hectares of land under ginger cultivation exceeding the fixed farming target by 159 hectares of land or 4.08 percent in Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Nilphamari districts of the region this season. Talking to, Additional Director of the DAE for Rangpur region Krishibid Md Shirajul Islam said that farmers have completed sowing ginger seeds and seedlings and also expanded its cultivation by using sacs across the region. "Farmers are successfully expanding ginger cultivation on crop lands, homesteads, char and fallow lands following its repeated bumper production and pleasing prices in recent years," he said. The government provided quality seeds to farmers this season like in the previous years to increase production of spice crops by ensuring proper crop diversification and using the latest technology to achieve self-sufficiency in locally produced spice crops. "The DAE and other agriculture-related departments, agencies and institutions provided farmers with essential training and banks provided them with easy-to-use agricultural loans to popularize the cultivation of ginger and other spice crops," Krishibid Islam added. Taking to, farmers Yunus Ali, Jalal Uddin, Messer Ali and

Borhan Uddin of different villages in Rangpur Sadar upazila said they have sown ginger seeds and seedlings in their crop lands, homesteads and fallow lands this season. Farmer Shahinul Islam Bakul of Moyenpur village in Mithapukur upazila of Rangpur said that he has cultivated ginger in more than 18,000 sacks on his 80 decimals of land in his Haribhanga mango orchard this time. After producing 115 maunds of ginger from 16,000 sacks and making a remarkable profit last year, Bakul is cultivating the same in 18,000 sacks as an additional companion crop in his Haribhanga mango orchard this season. "If modern storage facilities are set up and all the fallow lands and homesteads are brought under ginger cultivation, it is possible to achieve self-sufficiency in our own ginger production," Bakul said. Retail vegetable trader Fazlur Rahman at Keranipara Kitchen Marker in Rangpur yesterday said they are selling local varieties of ginger at rates between Taka 220 and Taka 240 per kg, while the imported Chinese variety at rates between Taka 120 and 140 per kg. Former Rangpur Chamber President Mostafa Sohrab Chowdhury Titu highly lauded the government for taking various pragmatic steps to increase production of the spicy crops. By expanding cultivation of high-yielding varieties of ginger in sacks, fallow lands, and char areas, its production can be further increased, so that its demand can be met and a huge amount of foreign exchange spent on ginger imports can be saved. "Adequate storage facilities should be set up so that farmers can easily store their produced ginger and get good prices by ensuring smooth supply of their stored ginger throughout the year," Titu suggested.



Human chain demands protection of Kurigram's Chilmari from Brahmaputra erosion

Kurigram Correspondent

Hundreds of people affected by river erosion formed a human chain and held a rally in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila on Saturday, demanding urgent measures to protect the area from the continued erosion caused by the Brahmaputra River and calling for the establishment of a separate ministry for the country's char regions. The programme, held at the erosion-hit Bishalpara area, drew more than a thousand participants, who also urged the government to rehabilitate affected families and take long-term steps to prevent further riverbank erosion. The rally was chaired by Prof Shafiqul Islam Bebu, president of the Kurigram District Char Development and Implementation Council. Among those who addressed the gathering were freedom fighter and Chilmari Upazila BNP Convener Abdul Bari Sarkar, Council Senior Vice-President Principal Khaza Sharif Uddin Ahmed Rintu, Chilmari unit President Assistant Professor Abu Hanifa, Member Secretary Assistant Professor Fazlul Haque, Sonali Otit Football Club Kurigram General Secretary Wazed Ali Jhinuk, Chilmari Union Parishad Chairman Aminul Islam Kazi, women's leader Shahnaz Sultana, and local erosion victims Asir Uddin and Shahjahan Ali. Speakers said vast areas of Chilmari are being swallowed by the Brahmaputra every year, leaving thousands of families homeless after losing their houses, farmland, educational institutions and other infrastructure. They urged the authorities to construct permanent embankments and implement effective erosion-control measures without delay. In his address, Prof Bebu claimed that river erosion is currently occurring at least 42 locations along the district's 16 rivers and that nearly 200,000 people have lost their homes over the past decade, forcing them to relocate. He alleged that no government agency has comprehensive data on the actual number of people affected by river erosion. "Floods and river erosion do not only destroy land and property; they also erase people's childhood memories, social ties and sense of belonging," he said, adding that many families still do not know where they will seek shelter or keep their children and livestock safe during floods. Human chain demands protection of Kurigram's Chilmari from Brahmaputra erosion Referring to practices in countries such as the Netherlands, Canada, the United Kingdom and Colombia, Prof Bebu said affected people there receive compensation and rehabilitation support promptly, while Bangladesh has yet to establish an effective system. Bangladeshtravel guide He claimed that more than 2 crore people in around 100 upazilas across 32 districts are living with the challenges of river erosion and char life. To address their problems, he proposed forming a separate Ministry of Char Affairs, similar to the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.

HSC candidate vocal against drugs allegedly killed by user in Sirajganj

Sirajganj Correspondent

An HSC examinee died at a private hospital in Dhaka on Friday morning after he was allegedly attacked with sharp weapons after raising his voice against drug consumption in Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila. Maps The deceased was identified as Abdur Rahman, 20, son of Md Firoz, a sack trader at Dhangara Bazar under Raiganj Municipality. He was a student of Raiganj Business Management and Technical College. His elder brother, Md Hasan, who was injured in the same attack, is



now receiving treatment in the intensive care unit (ICU) of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura. According to family members, Abdur Rahman and Hasan had an altercation on Tuesday night with Titon Sheikh, son of local trader Md Tara Sheikh, after they tried to stop him from consuming drugs in the area. During the dispute, Titon allegedly attacked the two brothers with a machete and a Burmese knife, leaving them critically injured. They were first taken to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura. As Abdur Rahman's condition worsened, he was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and later shifted to a private hospital in the capital. Despite doctors amputating one of his hands in an attempt to save his life, he succumbed to his injuries at around 8 am on Friday. Meanwhile, Hasan remains in the ICU at the Bogura hospital.

Seminar on 'Your Journey to Healing in China' held in Rajshahi

Rajshahi Correspondent

A seminar titled 'Your Journey to Healing in China' was held in Rajshahi with the aim of raising awareness about higher education, employment and business opportunities, and advanced medical services in China. The seminar was organized by Malisha Group and Arshi Global Care at the auditorium of the Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry yesterday. Administrator of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) Mahfuzur Rahman Riton attended it as Chief Guest. Administrator Mahfuzur Rahman said, in yesterday's world, the importance of international communication is increasing day by day in four fields: higher education, business, employment and advanced medical treatment. Therefore, accurate information, transparent processes and reliable services are extremely important in all areas, whether it is studying abroad, employment, business expansion or advanced medical treatment. "I hope this seminar will open doors to new possibilities not only in the field of medical treatment, but also in higher education, business and employment, and will provide effective information and guidance for the people of Rajshahi," he added. He further said Rajshahi is known as an education city.



"We want to build it as a health city in future. For this, specialized hospitals are needed." If an initiative is taken to build specialized hospitals in Rajshahi, all-out cooperation will be provided on behalf of Rajshahi City Corporation. Detailed information about various opportunities for higher education in China, student visas, business and import-export possibilities, modern medical services, medical visas and the visa application process was presented at the seminar. Md. Hasen Ali, President of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Md. Jahangir Alam, former Superintendent of Islami Bank Medical Hospital, and other guests were present at the seminar.

Agriculture Officer killed in Noakhali road accident

Noakhali Correspondent

An agriculture officer was killed in a head-on collision between a truck and a motorcycle on the Chowmuhani-Chamir Munsirhat road in Begumganj upazila yesterday. The deceased was identified as Md Abdur Rahman alias Suman, 38, son of Abdur Rashid of Sonaimuri upazila in the district. Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Begumganj Police Station, Mohammad Shamsuzzaman said the accident occurred when the truck collided head-on with Suman's motorcycle, killing him on the spot. Police have seized the truck and legal proceedings are underway, the OC added.

Two killed in Sherpur road accident

Sherpur Correspondent

Two persons were killed in a road accident in Sonnyashi Vita area on Sherpur-Nalitabari road under Nalitabari upazila of the district in the early hours of yesterday. The deceased were auto-rickshaw driver Kamrul Hossain, son of Ekdil Hossain of Khariapara village of Nalitabari upazila and Shahidul Islam, son of Salehabad Krishnapatti area of the same upazila. Quoting locals, police said the accident occurred when a vehicle hit a locally-made auto-rickshaw in the area, leaving the duo dead on the spot. Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Nalitabari Thana Md Ashrafuzzaman confirmed the incident, saying the bodies were handed over to their families without autopsy. Legal action will be taken in this regard, he added.



Argentina fans in Barishal celebrate World Cup final berth with joyous procession

Barishal Correspondent

Hundreds of Argentina supporters took to the streets of Barishal on Friday, celebrating the team's victory over England and qualification for the FIFA World Cup final with a colourful procession. Maps The celebration began at around 4pm from the historic Bell's Park in the city, where more than a hundred fans gathered wearing Argentina's iconic blue-and-white jerseys and carrying the country's national flags. The procession passed through several major roads, including Sadar Road, the Ashwini Kumar Hall area and Fazlul Haque Avenue, before returning to Bell's Park. Supporters chanted slogans such as "Argentina, Argentina" and "Messi, Messi" throughout the rally. Many waved large Argentine flags, while some joined the procession on motorcycles and private cars and others participated on foot. The festive atmosphere drew the attention of passers-by, many of whom stopped along the roadside to watch the celebrations and capture photos and videos on their mobile phones. Fans said Argentina's impressive victory over England in the much-anticipated semifinal had filled them with pride and strengthened their belief that the team would lift the World Cup trophy once again. Several supporters said their affection for Argentina had grown even stronger since the team's previous World Cup triumph, adding that they gather in Barishal to celebrate every major victory. The organisers said the procession was entirely spontaneous and concluded peacefully without any untoward incidents. They expressed hope of holding similar celebrations if Argentina wins the World Cup title.

Work together to establish rule of law: Dy Speaker Kayser Kamal

Bagerhat Correspondent

Deputy Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Barrister Kayser

Kamal on Saturday called on all stakeholders to work together to strengthen the rule of law, saying the legal community has always stood for justice and against injustice. He made the remarks while addressing an exchange of views with members of the Bagerhat District Bar Association at its auditorium. "We believe a democratic system of governance has now been established in the country. The next challenge is to ensure the rule of law, and everyone must work together to achieve that," he said. The Deputy Speaker said many people had been subjected to harassment in the past solely because of their political beliefs, while others were deprived of constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights. "Many political activists who struggled while facing what they claimed were false cases were subjected to harassment, and measures were taken to deny them legal remedies," he said. Paying tribute to those who lost their lives during the July uprising, Kayser Kamal urged all to work toward building the Bangladesh they had envisioned. "The people who sacrificed their lives during the 2024 mass uprising dreamed of a better Bangladesh. It is our responsibility to fulfil that aspiration," he said. The Deputy Speaker also cautioned against repeating past practices in which some individuals allegedly used bar asso-

ciations and the legal system for personal gain.

"We fought to establish the rule of law. We must not undermine legal norms ourselves," he said, adding that close cooperation between the bench and the bar is essential for ensuring justice.

"The rule of law can only be firmly established when the bench and the bar work shoulder to shoulder," he added.

The meeting, chaired by Bar Association Convener Advocate Md Mahfuzur Rahman Lahu, was also addressed by Bagerhat Zila Parishad Administrator Barrister Sheikh Mohammad Zakir Hossain, former Bar Association President Advocate Wahiduzzaman Dipu, Member Secretary Advocate Mosharruf Hossain Montu, and Public Prosecutor and Joint Convener Advocate Mahabub Morshed Lalon, among others. Earlier in the day, Kayser Kamal inaugurated the Skill Institute of Technology (Skill IT), a vocational training centre, opposite the Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner's Office. Speaking at the inauguration, he highlighted the importance of developing a skilled workforce to meet the country's future needs.

The programme was attended by former secretary and President of the Bagerhat Officers' Forum Dr Md Faridul Islam, Bagerhat District BNP Convener ATM Akram Hossain Talim, US-based CPA Rafiqul Islam and Smart Training Centre Principal Mina Oliuzzaman, among others. After the inauguration, the Deputy Speaker distributed 2,000 fruit-bearing and medicinal plant saplings among local residents and students.

