



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman today addressed the inaugural ceremony of the National Semiconductor Symposium and BEAR (Bangladesh Electronics, AI and Robotics) Summit-2026 at the Novo Theatre. Photo : PMO

PM sees semiconductor industry as next growth engine after RMG

Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman today said the government has initiated a comprehensive plan to harness the potentials of semiconductor industry, describing it as the country's next major economic growth engine after the RMG sector.

"The semiconductor industry could emerge as Bangladesh's next promising economic sector after the RMG industry. The government has already started implementing comprehensive plans, including creating a business-friendly environment, to

transform this next major driver of economic prosperity into reality," he said.

The prime minister was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the National Semiconductor Symposium and BEAR (Bangladesh Electronics, AI and Robotics) Summit-2026 at the Novo Theatre in the capital this morning.

Describing the conference as more than just an ordinary event, the premier said it was a gathering of those who would help build a technology-driven Bangladesh in the future.

"Bangladeshi expatriates have been demonstrating their excellence in different countries around the world. Many of them have taken the initiative to participate in this important summit," the premier said, adding that the present government wants to build a self-reliant, prosperous and technology-driven Bangladesh.

Calling semiconductors the foundation of modern civilisation in the era of the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions, Tarique Rahman said, "From artificial intelligence, robotics, data centres, renewable energy

and medical equipment to mobile phones and satellites in space, chips or semiconductors are indispensable in every field."

Highlighting the enormous potential of the global semiconductor market, the prime minister said, "The global semiconductor market is expected to reach nearly one trillion US dollars by 2026. Bangladesh has immense opportunities in this vast market, and I believe the country will be able to achieve its targeted export earnings from this sector by 2030."

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BGMEA-ASSET programme trains over 4,600 workers to boost RMG sector skills

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), in collaboration with the World Bank-funded Accelerating and Strengthening Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) project, today held a workshop to review the progress of its Enterprise-Based Training (EBT) programme and distributed certificates to successful trainees.

The event, held at the BGMEA Complex in Uttara, focused on strengthening the country's ready-made garment (RMG) sector through industry-led skills development, sustainable growth and employment generation, said a press release. Technical and Madrasah Education Division Secretary Md Daud Mia, NDC, attended the programme as the chief guest, while BGMEA President Mahmud Hasan Khan presided over the function.

Implemented by the Directorate of Technical Education under the Technical and Madrasah Education Division of the Ministry of Education, the ASSET project is supporting BGMEA in conducting Enterprise-Based Training (EBT) to develop demand-driven skilled manpower and improve productivity in the garment industry.

Under the joint BGMEA-ASSET initiative, a total of 4,632 trainees have been enrolled through 193 batches across three training cycles. Certificates were awarded to 2,328 trainees from 97 batches under the second and third cycles, while the fourth cycle, comprising 96 batches, is currently underway.

Speaking at the programme, Secretary Md Daud Mia said skilled human resources are essential to achieving Bangladesh's national economic goals, adding that the BGMEA-ASSET collaboration has made a significant contribution to enhancing productivity and

workforce capacity in the garment sector.

Although the current ASSET project will conclude in December 2026, he said, the government would continue launching new initiatives for skills development.

He also urged BGMEA to provide recommendations for future programmes aimed at strengthening industry-academia collaboration and producing demand-based skilled manpower. The secretary stressed that workers' competency should be upgraded to National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) Levels 3 and 4 to enable the country's largest employment-generating sector to remain competitive in the global market.

BGMEA President Mahmud Hasan Khan said the garment industry must become more skilled and technologically advanced to keep pace with global competition and rapid technological changes. He described the Enterprise-Based Training model as a proven approach to improving workplace skills and thanked the government for supporting human resource development through the ASSET and other projects.

Mahmud Hasan Khan said the current BGMEA leadership is committed not only to increasing exports but also creating greater value addition by developing a skilled workforce. He expressed hope that appropriate policy support would further accelerate employment generation and the sector's overall growth. Director General of the Directorate of Technical Education Abul Khayer Md Akkas Ali, Additional Secretary of the Technical and Madrasah Education Division Shamsur Rahman Khan, ASSET Project Director Mir Jahid Hasan, BUET Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Engr Ayub Nabi Khan, BGMEA Director Nafis-ud-Doula, BGMEA Skill Development Standing Committee Chairman Javed Hossain Bhuiyan and other officials attended the programme.



LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir today addressed the inaugural ceremony of the "36th Annual Planning Conference-2026" as the chief guest at the RDA in Bogura. — Photo : PID

Research, innovation should be prioritised over political debate: Mirza Fakhru

Staff Correspondent

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir today said research, innovation and productive activities should be given priority instead of political debate.

The outcomes of research must reach the field level to increase farmers' income and further strengthen the rural economy, he

said.

The minister made the remarks while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the "36th Annual Planning Conference-2026" as the chief guest at the Rural Development Academy (RDA) in Bogura, said a PID release.

Earlier, he visited the green technology exhibition

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Extrajudicial killings have almost come down to zero: Asaduzzaman

Staff Correspondent

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Md Asaduzzaman today said extrajudicial killings have almost come down to zero in the country.

"We can say that over the past few months under the present government, extrajudicial killings have almost come down to zero. As for enforced disappearances, whenever a reported case has come to our notice, we have taken it very seriously. I have internally instructed officials to maintain zero tolerance towards such incidents,"

he said. The minister made the remarks while addressing as chief guest a consultation meeting on "Human Rights Violations and Victims' Access to Justice" at the CIRDAP auditorium in the capital this morning.

The law minister stressed the need for a transparent process in appointing judges, saying that an independent and credible judiciary can only be ensured if competent judges are appointed through a transparent process.

"The judiciary becomes weakened when judges are unable to stand firm and uphold their independence. Only when judges of integrity and

competence are appointed can we have the independent and transparent judiciary that people expect," he added.

Referring to politically motivated cases, the law minister said the government has been working relentlessly to withdraw such cases and that the process has now reached its final stage.

He said the government is trying to break away from the cycle of political vindictiveness.

"Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, we believe we will gradually move forward with all necessary reforms. But we need a little more time," the minister said.

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Water tanks to reach coastal households in phases: Faridul

Staff Correspondent

State Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Shaikh Faridul Islam today said water tanks will be distributed among coastal households in phases to help conserve rainwater and ensure safe drinking water in the region.

He also said government ponds will be excavated, renovated and developed as freshwater reservoirs so that coastal communities can

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US fires on merchant ship amid growing military standoff with Iran

Staff Correspondent

The U.S. military said Friday that it fired on another merchant vessel accused of attempting to violate its blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran launched attacks targeting U.S. positions around the Persian Gulf.

The conflict showed no signs of easing after 13 consecutive nights of strikes. Both countries appeared prepared for further escalation, with U.S. embassies in the Middle East warning Americans that evacuation options could become more limited, while Iran's



Revolutionary Guard urged residents of neighboring countries to avoid areas near U.S. military bases.

The Saudi-led coalition

tankers in the Red Sea. The Houthis vowed to intensify their operations after weeks of rising tensions.

U.S. Central Command spokesman Capt. Tim Hawkins said American forces disabled the merchant ship M/T Lavine in the Gulf of Oman after it allegedly tried four times to breach the blockade despite repeated warnings. According to Hawkins, U.S. forces fired into the vessel's engine room after the crew ignored commands. The incident marked the second commercial vessel disabled since the

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FPMC refuses proposal to replace paddy procurement with rice purchases from millers

Staff Correspondent

The Food Planning and Monitoring Committee (FPMC) had refused a proposal from the Ministry of Food to replace a portion of government paddy procurement from farmers with rice purchases from millers, reaffirming its commitment to supporting growers through direct procurement.

The decision was taken at an FPMC meeting held on June 10, chaired by Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, also chair of the committee.

Agriculture, Food, Disaster Management ministers along with other committee members, attended the meeting.

According to meeting sources, the Ministry of Food, through the Directorate General of Food, proposed purchasing an equivalent volume of rice from millers instead of the targeted paddy procurement, citing the slow pace of paddy collection from farmers during the ongoing Boro procurement drive.

The ministry informed the committee that only around 0.17 million tonnes of paddy had been procured by June against the seasonal target of 0.5 million tonnes.

In contrast, rice procurement was progressing well---0.45 million tonnes against the target of 1.25 million tonnes, while wheat procurement remained negligible at around 4.0 tonnes.

Officials argued that converting the uncollected paddy quota into rice purchases from millers would help bolster public food stocks more efficiently.

Pilot project from Aman season to popularise paddy purchase



ciently.

However, the proposal was strongly opposed by both FPMC Chairman Salahuddin Ahmed and the Agriculture Adviser.

The chairman said the government had introduced paddy procurement primarily to make sure farmers receive fair prices during the harvest season.

"The government has given priority to farmers. Under that policy, we have decided to procure a significant volume of paddy directly from them.

The quantity will be increased gradually as procurement capacity expands," he told the meeting.

The Agriculture Minister also opposed the proposal, saying direct paddy procurement has a positive impact on the market by supporting farmgate prices during the peak harvesting period.

He noted that the country's public food stock was currently at a record level, reducing any immediate pressure to alter the procurement strategy. Following the discussion, the

committee decided to continue paddy procurement until August 31, extending the existing procurement period.

After the deadline, if the paddy procurement target remains unmet, the Ministry of Food will be allowed to compensate for the shortfall by purchasing an equivalent quantity of rice from millers.

The committee also approved a pilot project during the upcoming Aman season to procure paddy directly from farmers in a major rice-producing upazila.

Based on the outcome, the government plans to gradually expand direct procurement from farmers across the country.

Asked, farm economist Prof Golam Hafeez Kennedy said the decision came at a time when paddy prices declined during the peak Boro harvest, affecting growers' incomes despite a generally satisfactory harvest.

He said the country's food stock capacity should be 3.5 million tonnes for the growing population.

Direct paddy purchase would be the best option to ensure rational prices for the growers as well as for the consumers, he said.

Although flash floods damaged crops in parts of the haor region, Bangladesh is still expected to produce around 22 million tonnes of Boro rice this season, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Directorate General of Food said the public food stock is now at 2.3 million tonnes, of which rice comprises 2.1 million tonnes.



Price Surge fails to lift Lalmonirhat jute farmers as yields plunge

Staff Correspondent

Farmers in northern Bangladesh's Lalmonirhat district are grappling with financial uncertainty as excessive rainfall and flooding have sharply reduced jute yields, offsetting the benefit of higher market prices for the newly harvested crop.

Like other flood-affected districts in the northern region, Lalmonirhat has begun receiving newly harvested jute at local markets. Although prices are higher than last year, farmers say heavy rains disrupted the normal growth of jute plants, resulting in reduced production.

According to farmers, most jute plants this season are between two and five feet shorter than usual, leading to a decline of around 40 to 60 kilograms of fiber per bigha. While jute plants typically grow between seven and 13 feet, many fields have failed to reach the expected height this year.

Trading of new jute has already started in union-level markets across Sadar, Aditmari,

Kaliganj, Hatibandha and Patgram upazilas. Field visits revealed that waterlogging has severely affected crop growth in some areas, where plants reached only three to five feet in height, while in relatively unaffected fields they grew between six and eight feet. Farmers are currently busy retting, stripping, washing, drying and transporting the fiber to markets.

Jute trader Akkas Ali of Lalmonirhat Sadar told BSS that the opening market price this season ranges between Taka 4,000 and Taka 4,400 per maund, compared with Taka 3,400 to Taka 3,800 during the same period last year.

Farmer Amir Ali from Aditmari upazila said he sold his jute at Taka 4,000 per maund. Another farmer, Santosh Roy of Kaliganj upazila, said the current price is satisfactory but expressed concern over how long it would remain stable, as much of the crop has yet to be harvested and processed.

Habibur Rahman, a farmer and pesticide dealer from

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Bangladesh, Chile discuss opening resident diplomatic missions

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh and Chile have discussed opening resident diplomatic missions in each other's capitals as part of efforts to deepen bilateral relations and expand economic and trade cooperation.

The issue was discussed during a bilateral meeting between Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman and his Chilean counterpart Francisco Pérez Mackenna in Manila today on the sidelines

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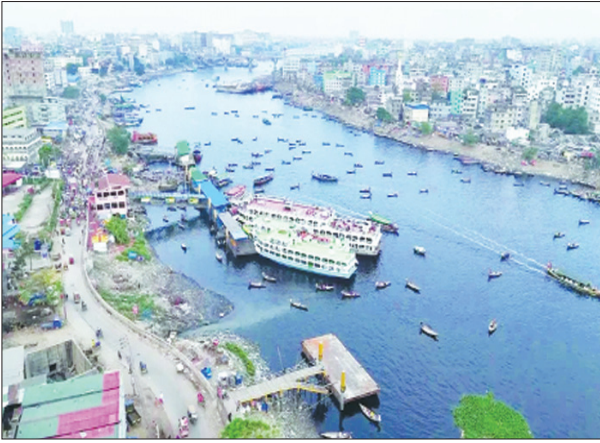
ETP systems to be brought under online monitoring to make Buriganga River pollution-free

Staff Correspondent

To make the Buriganga River pollution-free, the government has taken the initiative to bring the Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) systems of industries that discharge liquid waste under online monitoring system, alongside conducting regular enforcement activities to ensure that these treatment plants remain operational at all times.

The Director General of the Department of Environment, Dr. Md. Lutfor Rahman, told the state-run news agency BSS that efforts are being made to restore the river's natural flow by increasing the water flow in the Buriganga.

Besides, the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) is carrying out regular dredging operations to increase the river's navigability by removing polluted sediment.



rying out regular dredging operations to increase the river's navigability by removing polluted sediment.

To prevent water pollution, the government plans to monitor ETP systems online, he added.

As part of this initiative, IP cameras will be installed

in pollution-prone areas, he said.

In addition, dedicated control rooms will be established at shipbuilding and ship repair yards to monitor and control the discharge of hazardous waste, he added.

An ETP is a wastewater treatment system that treats

contaminated liquid waste generated by industries before it is released into the environment.

In other words, the primary purpose of an ETP is to reduce industrial wastewater to safe levels through chemical, biological, and mechanical treatment processes before it is discharged into rivers, canals, or other water bodies.

He said wastewater discharged from factories contains various toxic chemicals, dyes, oil, heavy metals and other hazardous substances.

If untreated wastewater is released directly into drains or rivers, it can pose serious threats to the environment, aquatic life and public health, he said.

ETPs are primarily used

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UN adopts Bd-sponsored culture of peace resolution unanimously

Staff Correspondent

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) today adopted Bangladesh-sponsored "Culture of Peace" resolution, reaffirming the global commitment to dialogue, tolerance, solidarity and peaceful coexistence.

The resolution, titled "Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace," was adopted by the General Assembly, renewing international support for promoting peace through dialogue, mutual understanding and multilateral cooperation, in New York on Friday, according to a message revived here this morning, .

Introducing the resolution, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Salahuddin Noman Chowdhury said building peaceful, inclusive and resilient societies requires sustained dialogue, mutual understanding, respect for diversity and steadfast adherence to the principles of the UN Charter.

He thanked member states for their constructive engagement and broad support

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DAE targets Aman seedbeds on 16,464 hectares in Khulna region

Staff Correspondent

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) has set a target to prepare Aman rice seedbeds on 16,464 hectares of land across the Khulna agricultural region during the current season to ensure an adequate supply of seedlings for transplantation.

According to the DAE, the target includes 12,340 hectares for high-yielding Aman varieties, 1,510 hectares for hybrid varieties and 2,614 hectares for local varieties.

Meanwhile, farmers in all four districts under the Khulna agricultural region have already started preparing Aman seedbeds, with the activities expected to gather momentum by the first week of August under favourable weather conditions.

The government has set a target of producing 871,971 tonnes of clean Aman rice from 289,859 hectares of land in the region this season.

The production goal includes 670,064

tonnes of high-yielding Aman from 220,442 hectares, 115,661 tonnes of hybrid Aman from 30,216 hectares, and 86,246 tonnes of local Aman from 39,201 hectares.

During the previous season, farmers produced 871,940 tonnes of clean Aman rice by cultivating the crop on 298,635 hectares across the region.

As of July 22, Aman seedbeds had been prepared on 5,852 hectares of land, said Md. Rafiqul Islam, Additional Director of the DAE for the Khulna region.

The government has undertaken a series of initiatives to boost Aman production despite the gradual decline in cultivable land. These include promoting balanced fertilizer application, expanding the use of improved farming technologies and providing quality seeds and fertilizers to small and marginal farmers as incentives.

To avert any shortage of seedlings during floods, the DAE is also preparing seedbeds for late Aman varieties on higher land and floating

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Khulna region earns Tk 4,886 crore from exports in FY2025-26: EPB

Staff Correspondent

The Khulna region earned Tk 4,886.18 crore from the export of jute, jute goods, shrimp, vegetables, garments and other products during the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Exports of jute, jute goods and shrimp from the region declined slightly during the fiscal due to the US-Iran war and various trade barriers imposed by different countries, sources at the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) in Khulna told BSS today.

They said the region had earned Tk 5,971.40 crore from exports in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

"The situation has improved in recent days as the recovery of the global economy has played a vital role in increasing the flow of export orders," the sources said.

The data showed that 10,019.80 tonnes of frozen shrimp were exported during



ing FY2025-26, earning Tk 84.04 crore.

It also showed that the region earned Tk 458.19 crore from fresh white fish, Tk 2,493.84 crore from jute goods, Tk 217.93 crore from raw jute, Tk 9.24 crore from crab, Tk 60.59 crore from garment items and Tk

1,562.35 crore from areca nut exports.

Besides, exports of other fish, including kuchia (eel fish), as well as vegetables and fruits, also increased.

Talking to BSS, EPB Khulna Director Zeenat Ara said the improvement in the global economy, the relative

stability of foreign exchange, and the restoration of Bangladesh's positive image abroad had contributed to export growth.

"Exports from Khulna declined this fiscal year due to several reasons, including the closure of state-owned jute mills and shrimp processing

factories during the previous regime," she said.

Referring to the recent visit of Textiles and Jute Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin, she expressed hope that the Khulna region would regain its past glory in the export of jute, shrimp and other products.

Highlighting the increased issuance of certificates to importers and exporters in recent months, she said stronger coordination among fish and shrimp producers, factory owners and exporters is essential to boost exports while ensuring quality.

Md Abdul Baki, former vice-president of the Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association (BFFEA), told BSS that exports of shrimp, jute, jute goods and other products were expected to increase further as an environment-friendly business climate now prevails in the country.

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Spain coach blasts 'unacceptable' behaviour of Argentina after World Cup final

Argentina team's reactions have not yet resulted in any sanctions

MADRID, July 24 (AFP): Spain head coach Luis De la Fuente has blasted the "unacceptable" behaviour of several Argentina players and their coaching staff after losing the World Cup final.

Some Argentina players and staff confronted their Spanish rivals after the final whistle of last Monday's (BST) game in New York which Spain won 1-0 after extra time.

Argentina players including Atletico Madrid defender Nahuel Molina and former Paris Saint-Germain player Leandro Paredes were involved in the incidents.

"At the time, I didn't realise it. I was celebrating, hugging teammates," De La Fuente told Spanish television. "But in any case, it is intolerable, unacceptable, it cannot be allowed. Players of that stature,



Spain coach Luis de la Fuente. — Reuters file photo

whom I praised in the days leading up to the match and continue to praise, who are great players with a tremendous coach, surely they must have felt just as bad as we did seeing those reactions."

De La Fuente praised the exem-

play behaviour of his own players faced with these "acts of aggression" and "provocations" which he believes could have escalated into more serious incidents.

Although the scenes were filmed and widely shared on social media,

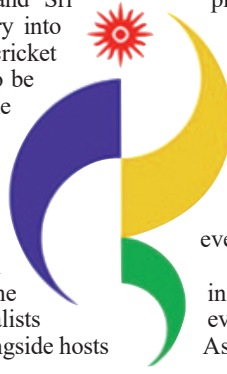
they have not yet resulted in any sanctions against the Argentina players. FIFA has opened an investigation into the incidents to determine whether there may have been violations of the world football governing body's disciplinary code.

Asian Games 2026

India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh handed direct entry to Games' knockout stage

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have secured a direct entry into the knockout stage of the men's cricket event at the 2026 Asian Games to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan. The four seeded teams will be joined in the quarterfinal stage by four other teams, with the draw announced on Thursday, reports Cricbuzz.

Afghanistan headline the six teams split into two groups in the Qualifying round. The silver medalists of the 2023 edition are slotted alongside hosts Japan and Nepal in Group A, while Group B comprises Malaysia, Oman and Hong Kong, China. Each team plays the other once in their respective groups, with the top two from either group



20th Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026

proceeding to the quarterfinals. The women's draw will commence directly from the quarterfinal stage, with India taking on Japan and Pakistan facing Thailand. While Sri Lanka will face Malaysia, Bangladesh will square off against the People's Republic of China in the women's event.

India are the reigning gold medalists in both the men's and women's cricket events from the previous edition of the Asian Games held in 2023 in Hangzhou, China. While the women's cricket event at the 2026 Asian Games will run from September 17 to 22, the men's event will take place from September 24 to October 1.

Hasan returns home as Ripon replaces him to play LPL

SPORTS DESK

Pacer Hasan Mahmud has returned home before the conclusion of the Lanka Premier League (LPL) to join Bangladesh's preparation camp ahead of the upcoming tour of Australia.

Fellow Bangladeshi fast bowler Ripon Mondal has been named as his replacement in the Colombo Kaps squad for his first stint in the LPL. Before leaving Sri Lanka, Hasan spoke with Ripon and wished him well in his new role.

"Give your best, and respect my place as a replacement," Hasan said about the conversation between him and Ripon while talking to the reporters.

Hasan delivered consistent performances in four LPL matches, earning praise for his bowling. Although his departure is a setback for Colombo Kaps, he believes that Ripon is capable of filling the void.

Beyond his performances on the field, Hasan said he was

deeply impressed by Sri Lanka's cricket culture. He praised the country's rich cricketing tradition, professional environment, and the dedication of its players, saying the experience had inspired him.

During his stint with Colombo Kaps, Hasan also worked with former Sri Lankan fast bowler Nuwan Kulasekara.

Hasan revealed that Kulasekara was pleased with his bowling action and overall skills.

"The discussions mainly

revolved around tactical aspects of fast bowling and ball grip techniques," he said.

Hasan also explained the LPL's payment structure. According to tournament regulations, players receive 25 percent of their contracted remuneration at the start of the tournament, while the remaining amount is paid based on the number of matches they play.

As Hasan's replacement, Ripon Mondal will receive his remuneration under the same system.

Entertainment

Song Our Dream Girl about Babita

Entertainment Desk

July 30 is the birthday of renowned actress Babita of the subcontinent. A song titled 'Our Dream Girl' has been created to mark her birthday. The song was written by Omar Faruk, and the music was composed by Shan Sayek. Shan Sayek, Rashed, Shapla Pal, Joy, Raisa and Tanjin Mithila have given voice to this song at 'Shan's Lab' studio. The music video of the song was produced by Md. Shamsul Huda. The shooting of the music video of the song was completed on the afternoon of July 22 at Babita's residence in Gulshan, the capital.

In the music video, Babita's presence is used to wish her a happy birthday and also to tell her story of her illustrious life. Babita said, "A lot has happened to me in my life. But a birthday song is truly an exceptional work."

I really liked the song 'Our Dream Girl', written by Omar Farooq and sung by Shan in the voices of artists. The song will be released on the night of July 29 on the 'The Best



Twenty-Four' YouTube channel.

The 'Ananda Mela Award and Cultural Program' will be held on August 2 at the Church of Scientology in North Hollywood, USA. Legendary actress Babita will be given a lifetime achieve-

ment award at this event. We spoke to Babita about this yesterday. She said that she is going to Canada this month. Her only son Anik lives there. After resting for a few days in Canada, she will leave for the United States on the last day of July. Then, she will partici-

pate in the Ananda Mela program on August 2. Babita said, 'This is the first time that I am going to be awarded a lifetime achievement award from a big organization in the United States. I have participated in various programs before, but this is the first time that I am receiving a lifetime achievement award at a big program. Although the program was supposed to be held on July 26, it has been finalized on August 2 considering the football game and the ongoing problems in the world. I am also eagerly waiting to participate in this program. Because there will be meetings, talks, stories and chats with expatriate Bangladeshis there. We are also in regular contact with the organizer Ali Bhai about this program. I am getting updates on everything and also getting to know about their grand arrangements around me. I feel very happy. I would like to thank Anand Mela Chairman Moazzem Bhai for taking the initiative to honor me in this arrangement.'



Rumana Malik Moonmoon returns to hosting

Entertainment Desk

Rumana Malik Munmun started her career in showbiz with the 'Lux-Channel I Superstar 2006' competition. She made her acting debut with the movie 'Daruchini Dweep' directed by Taurik Ahmed. She has also acted in dramas since then. However, she became popular as a presenter, surpassing her identity as an actress.

Moonmoon was away from showbiz for a long time as he settled in Canada a few years ago. He recently returned to the country. He participated in a podcast and said that if Researchbase gets an offer for a show, he would like to sit in the host's seat again. However, he wants to do quality work, which will touch people's hearts, not just to be on the screen.

Moonmoon's expectations have been fulfilled. She has recently joined a show called 'Legend and Legacy'. In this, people from the fields of acting, music, art and literature will be seen as Moonmoon's guests. The promotion of the show has already started. In the first episode, dancer Shamim Ara Nipa has been Moonmoon's guest. In the upcoming episodes, Moonmoon will talk to playwright Mamunur Rashid, Abul Hayat, Tariq Anam Khan, musicians Ferdousi Rahman, Aditi Mohsin, Naqib Khan, magician Jewel Aich, writer Nasreen Jahan, architect Rafiq Azam, and others.

Legend and Legacy is hosted by Sajjad Hussain. He hosted the talk show 'Amar Ami' for more than a decade. Moonmoon became popular as a host through 'Amar Ami'.

About this new program, Sajjad Hussain said, "The program has been arranged with talented people from different fields. Considering the history of Bangladesh, we have tried to have those who have played a role in different fields as guests.

Bangladeshi film to be screened for the first time at Venice Film Festival

Entertainment Desk

Bangladeshi cinema has been captivating international film festivals for several years. In line with this, Rubaiyat Hossain's 'The Difficult Bride' has now been selected for the prestigious Venice International Film Festival.

This marks the first time Bangladeshi cinema has entered the Venice Film Festival. The film will compete in the 'Horizons' section, one of the festival's competitions. The list of films selected for the section was released on Thursday.

Producer Rubaiyat said, "The Difficult Bride" is a supernatural film. The story revolves around Dhaka's traditional Mayfair beauty parlor. The inspiration for the film came from an urban myth that has been around for many years - it is said



that once upon a time, a bride died mysteriously there. In our film, another bride comes to the parlor to get dressed and encounters a series of strange and supernatural events. The story gradually unfolds through mystery, psychology, and

supernatural elements.

He added, "A few days after submitting the film to Venice, I found out that the Venice organizers had chosen it. It was great news for me, for my career. But they didn't say anything about which section the film would premiere in. I was worried about that. Finally, I found out that the film had been nominated in the official Horizon section of the festival."

Ajmeri Haque Badhan has played a guest role in the film. She is excited about getting a place at the Venice Festival. She wrote on social media, "What a wonderful moment for Bangladeshi cinema! My sincere congratulations to the entire team. It is a huge achievement for any filmmaker to get a place in the competition section of an event like the Venice Festival, and it is also a big milestone for Bangladesh."



Take care of Kaya Payal

Entertainment Desk

Actress Keya Payel is currently working opposite actor Arifin Shuvo in the web film 'Happily Married' directed by Zahid Pritam. In the meantime, her new drama 'Jatne Theko' has been released on YouTube. In it, she is opposite Yash Rohan.

The play is written by Ishtiaq Ahmed and directed by Mohan Ahmed. Yash Rohan's parents Naresh Bhuiyan and artist Sarkar Apu, along with many others, also play various roles in the play.

Keya Payel said, "Earlier, I have acted in several dramas with Yash, including 'Monde Rekho Aamaya', 'Tomai Tal Hai', 'Mayabi', 'Ata Samatra', 'Chirsathi' and others. The response to all the dramas was very good. The story of the drama 'Kurse Theko' is beautiful. I liked the story of Ishtiaq Bhai very much. And the director has also made 'Kurse Theko' with great care. I hope the audience will like it."

The play is written by Ishtiaq Ahmed and directed by Mohan Ahmed. Yash Rohan's parents Naresh Bhuiyan and artist Sarkar Apu, along with many others, also play various roles in the play.

Editorial

Can BIMSTEC deliver on its promise?

For nearly three decades since its inception, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has struggled to transform its promise into tangible outcomes. The regional bloc, comprising Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, has often appeared to be limping from one meeting to another, with progress slowing almost to the point of an impasse. The diversity and asymmetry among its member states -- in terms of economic size, political priorities and strategic interests -- are believed to have posed challenges to meaningful regional cooperation. The BIMSTEC has identified fourteen priority sectors, ranging from trade and investment to energy, transport, climate change and technological cooperation. Dedicated centres and institutional mechanisms have also been established to advance these objectives. Yet, despite these elaborate arrangements, the bloc has made only modest progress beyond setting up working groups, adopting action plans and holding periodic consultations. The gap between ambition and implementation remains uncomfortably wide. Against this backdrop, the latest efforts to inject fresh momentum into BIMSTEC deserve attention. The renewed emphasis on boosting trade and investment through alternative mechanisms, including reviving negotiations on the long-delayed free trade agreement (FTA), reflects a welcome sense of urgency. Nevertheless, optimism must be tempered by the bloc's own history of missed deadlines and unfulfilled commitments. Speaking to members of the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (DCAB) at the BIMSTEC Secretariat in Dhaka this week, the Secretary-General acknowledged that negotiations on the FTA remain a complex undertaking involving countries with differing priorities and concerns. Signed in 2004, the framework agreement gave rise to a Trade Negotiation Committee and six working groups tasked with drafting the constituent agreements of the proposed trade pact. More than two decades later, however, the agreement remains unfinished -- a telling reminder of the slow pace of regional integration. The Secretary-General was right to point out that multilateral trade negotiations are inherently more demanding than bilateral ones, as every member seeks to protect its own national interests while pursuing collective gains. He also rightly observed that FTA is only one instrument for expanding regional commerce. Equally important are initiatives such as establishing a BIMSTEC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, creating a platform for investment-promotion agencies and harmonising standards to reduce non-tariff barriers. Bangladesh's assumption of the BIMSTEC chairmanship offers a timely opportunity to reinvigorate the process. The government's commitment to convene meetings of the Trade Negotiation Committee and its working groups more frequently could provide the impetus that has long been missing. Whether this renewed activism translates into concrete outcomes, however, will depend on the collective political will of all member states. The Bay of Bengal region is home to nearly one-quarter of the world's population and possesses enormous economic potential. Its people deserve a regional organisation that delivers more than declarations and deferred promises. One can only hope that the optimism expressed by the Secretary-General is matched by sustained action, enabling the BIMSTEC to finally evolve from a forum of aspirations into an engine of regional cooperation and prosperity.

Preparing a failsafe list of family-card holders

Successful execution of a government social-protection programme depends primarily on identification of deserving recipients. Over the past 18 years, billions of taka was distributed among people but only 50 per cent of the intended target poor received the benefits. The richest 20 per cent households grabbed 22 per cent of the benefits. This gross anomaly in distribution of allowance could happen, according to a report carried in the FE on Tuesday, in the absence of a comprehensive database of the country's poor households. Mooted in 2009 and initiated in 2013, a national household database (NHD) of households could be completed by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2022 at almost double the original cost jumping from Tk 3.29 to Tk7.27 billion. But the database is yet to be accessible because a management information system (MIS) could not be developed so far. In the absence of an MIS and application-programming interface (API), the database remains inoperable. Now that the incumbent government has allocated Tk145 billion for distribution among 4.1 million households through family cards for the current fiscal year, the problem of finding the deserving candidates arises once more. A proposal has been advanced for carrying out a three-month nationwide census. A total of 60,000 enumerators will be recruited to complete the job. Economists and government officials have rightly questioned rationality of this move. First, the Department of Social Services is not the right agency to carry out such a census. It runs short of the manpower and the required expertise. The timeframe of three months to accomplish the job is far too short for the purpose. Here the prime minister's emphasis on transparency and reliability of the database comes to the fore. A casual approach to this highly important and sensitive issue will not do. Also, overlapping of programmes should be avoided. What about the NHD prepared by the BBS in 2022? A random cross check of some of the data can give an idea about the authenticity or not of the database. If it is found that data were not manufactured but there is a genuine reflection of the things as they are, the NHD can be used for making a list of family card-holders. In that case development of an MIS and API will be necessary to make the database usable. It will save time and cost. If the NHD proves fallacious, a fresh census will have to be carried out for preparation of a failsafe database.

“Independent Balochistan”: a Facebook fantasy made in India

Indian media cheers Balochistan's fictitious breakaway, echoing Operation Sindoor's fictional maps of captured Pakistani cities Mediaanalysis service

Maskwaith Ahsan

Unverified posts circulating on Facebook and Instagram are claiming that the Balochistan province of Pakistan has declared itself an independent country. According to these posts, the so-called Balochistan Army has taken control of 85 per cent of the region. They further claim that the new state has adopted its own flag, national anthem, currency and administrative system. The posts also claim that the new administration has assumed control over Balochistan's mineral resources, particularly more than 200 coal mines. The Pakistani authorities have not issued any official response to these social media posts regarding the alleged declaration of independence. International observers largely view them as part of a long-running campaign advocating Balochistan's independence. Indian media outlets have greeted the alleged declaration of Balochistan's independence with considerable enthusiasm. This recalls the recent period during India's Operation Sindoor against Pakistan, when sections of the Indian media confidently broadcast animated graphics depicting Indian forces capturing Karachi Port, Lahore and Islamabad, and raising the Indian flag over them. The current reporting on Balochistan's purported declaration of independence seems to draw from the same well of imagination. Ever since the arrest of Indian intelligence operative Kulbhushan Jadhav in Balochistan, Islamabad has consistently accused Indian intelligence agencies of involvement in terrorist activities in the province. More recently, during the hijacking of a train in Balochistan, the weapons and communication equipment reportedly used by the attackers suggested, according to Pakistani authorities, the involvement of a professionally trained military force. In recent months, Islamabad has also portrayed the growing rapprochement between the Taliban government in Afghanistan and New Delhi, together with the pattern of militants crossing into Pakistan's

Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces from Afghanistan to carry out attacks before retreating across the border, as part of an Indian proxy war conducted through the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which is based in Afghanistan. For a long time, the idea of creating an

Israel openly expressed deep dissatisfaction with both Iran and Pakistan. Given that India is widely regarded as Israel's closest partner in the region, there are now reports that Israel may also be taking an interest in the Balochistan issue. It should be remembered that Iran's Sistan



independent Balochistan was generally viewed as little more than an Indian aspiration. However, following Pakistan's mediation efforts aimed at halting the recent US and Israeli military campaign against Iran,

and Baluchestan Province is home to another part of the Baloch population. Recent events indicate that Israel and India are working in tandem toward the goal of establishing an independent Greater

Balochistan comprising Pakistan's Balochistan and Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan. The underlying assumption is that such a state would significantly weaken both Pakistan and Iran. The declaration of an independent Balochistan currently exists only as a social media narrative. On the ground, Pakistan continues to exercise control over Balochistan, while Iran remains firmly in control of Sistan and Baluchestan. Since Balochistan hosts major Chinese economic investments, particularly under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Indian media narratives also suggest an ambition to establish influence there as a means of simultaneously countering both China and Pakistan. China's efforts to safeguard its economic investments in Balochistan are therefore entirely understandable. Likewise, the recent Iran-US-Israel conflict demonstrates the extent of Iran's military capabilities. Pakistan also responded forcefully to India's Operation Sindoor. Consequently, the visions inspired by religious and mythological narratives, whether Israel's concept of a "Greater Israel" or India's idea of an "Akhand Bharat" (Undivided India), appear extremely difficult to translate into geopolitical reality. Moreover, both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons. For that reason, the world's major powers are unlikely to allow any conflict between them to escalate to the point of nuclear confrontation. As such, implementing a plan in Balochistan that resembles the plot of a grand Bollywood action film is far from straightforward. For now, the notion that Balochistan can be made independent through militant groups operating from Afghanistan remains little more than a social media fantasy. If, at some point, these Facebook and Instagram narratives begin to acquire a tangible basis in reality, there will certainly be reason to write about them then. About the author: Maskwaith Ahsan is the Editor-in-Chief of E-SouthAsia

Technical education deserves more than promises

Wasi Ahmed

More than five decades after independence, Bangladesh continues to grapple with a paradox that has become increasingly difficult to ignore. While the country frequently speaks of becoming a knowledge-based and industrial economy, its technical and vocational education system-the very foundation for producing skilled manpower-remains trapped in chronic neglect. Every government has pledged to elevate technical education to a position of national importance, yet the sector continues to suffer from institutional decay, policy inconsistency and a striking absence of long-term vision. The latest picture emerging from the sector is deeply unsettling. Thousands of technical and vocational institutions are reportedly unable to attract students. Hundreds of thousands of seats remain vacant every year despite the country's growing need for skilled workers. Teacher shortages have reached alarming proportions, infrastructure remains grossly inadequate in many institutions, curricula often fail to keep pace with technological change and links with industries are disappointingly weak. The decision by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board to consider cancelling the permits of nearly 2,000 institutions that have failed to admit a single student for three to seven years reflects the depth of the crisis. While such regulatory measures may be necessary to weed out inactive institutions, they cannot by themselves revive a sector, the problems of which are structural rather than administrative. Closing institutions that have become dysfunctional addresses only the symptoms; it does little to cure the underlying disease. Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the crisis is the disconnect between capacity and demand. Bangladesh today boasts nearly 1.9 million seats in technical institutions under the board, yet only a fraction of those seats are filled. In 2024, around 81 per cent of seats reportedly remained vacant. This is not because the country lacks young people seeking education. Every year, well over 1.6 million students complete their Secondary School Certificate examina-

tions. Yet only a small percentage chooses technical education, preferring general education even when employment prospects may be uncertain. This raises an uncomfortable but unavoidable question: why do students and their families continue to turn away from technical education? Part of the answer lies in a deeply entrenched social mindset. For generations, technical and vocational education has been perceived as a secondary option, often reserved for those unable to pursue con-

tively delivered without competent instructors. The condition in many private institutions appears even more troubling. Numerous institutions reportedly operate without adequate buildings, laboratories, workshops or modern equipment. Some employ a single teacher to handle multiple unrelated subjects, making meaningful technical instruction virtually impossible. In some cases, institutions were allegedly established less to educate students than to obtain



ventional academic studies. Parents continue to associate success with university degrees rather than practical skills. Changing such attitudes requires more than promotional campaigns. It requires demonstrating that technical education offers genuine opportunities for career advancement, respectable incomes and social mobility. That confidence can only emerge when the quality of education itself improves substantially. Unfortunately, quality remains one of the sector's weakest links. The shortage of qualified teachers is staggering. In government technical schools and colleges, roughly three-fourths of sanctioned teaching posts remain vacant. Such shortages inevitably affect classroom teaching, laboratory work and practical training. Even the best-designed curriculum cannot be effec-

government financial benefits or create employment for associates. Equally significant is the absence of meaningful coordination between education planners and industry. Technical education should never exist in isolation from the labour market. Its primary purpose is to equip learners with skills that employers actually need. Yet educators have repeatedly pointed out that curricula often remain outdated, practical training inadequate and industry participation minimal. Consequently, students frequently discover that the knowledge they acquired bears little resemblance to workplace realities. The rapid transformation of global industries makes this disconnect even more costly. Automation, artificial intelligence, robotics, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and digital services are reshaping labour markets

across the world. Countries that continuously modernise their technical education systems are positioning themselves to benefit from these emerging opportunities. Bangladesh cannot hope to compete internationally if its vocational institutions continue teaching obsolete technologies with outdated equipment. Planning itself appears to have suffered from serious shortcomings. As education experts have observed, little attention has been paid to mapping regional demands before establishing institutions. Different districts possess different economic characteristics and labour market needs. Coastal districts may require expertise in marine industries and fisheries, industrial belts may need advanced manufacturing skills, while agricultural regions may benefit from agro-processing technologies. A uniform approach inevitably leads to institutions offering programmes that neither reflect local realities nor attract students. Bangladesh's overseas labour market offers another compelling reason for reform. Every year, hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis migrate abroad for employment. Yet many continue to occupy low-skilled positions with comparatively modest wages. Expanding high-quality technical education could significantly increase the proportion of skilled migrants, enabling them to earn better salaries and improving the country's remittance earnings. In an increasingly competitive global labour market, skills have become the most valuable passport. The repeated commitments made by successive governments therefore deserve careful reflection. The latest pledge to introduce technical and vocational education as a compulsory subject from secondary school and gradually integrate practical learning into mainstream education is undoubtedly encouraging. Similar promises, however, were made before by previous administrations with little tangible progress. Experience suggests that ambitious declarations alone are insufficient unless backed by sustained political commitment, adequate financing and rigorous implementation.

Sugarcane farmers frustrated as virus attack ruins crop in Tangail

Tangail Correspondent

Farmers in Tangail are facing severe losses and uncertainty as an unknown virus has attacked sugarcane fields just before harvest, causing the crop to rot away in the fields.

This season's favourable weather had promised a bumper sugarcane yield across Tangail District. However, the situation has taken a drastic turn with a sudden viral infection striking the crop just before maturity. An unidentified virus is causing sugarcane stalks to rot field after field, leaving farmers in deep distress and financial loss.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), about 465 hectares of land were cultivated with sugarcane in various areas of the district this season. The unknown virus has caused the stalks to rot, and even the surviving ones have not fattened as expected. In the market, each sugarcane is selling for a maximum of Tk 20, compared with Tk 30 to Tk 50 last year. Farmers are incurring losses of about Tk 30 per piece as production costs are not being covered.

Field visits reveal that lush green sugarcane fields in Tangail Sadar Upazila are now being destroyed by the virus. Having lost their only source of income for the year, farmers are spending their days in utter despair. In this situation, affected local farmers have urgently sought government support to recover their losses. They have demanded effective measures from the agriculture department along with government grants or compensation through farmer cards.

Local affected farmers said the sugarcane growth had been good from the start, and they had expected a good harvest. But over the past few weeks, the unknown virus attack has caused one cane after another to rot. The Ishwardi variety, in particular, has been the most affected, with many fields having not a single healthy cane left.

Affected farmer Sultan Kabir claimed that the situation worsened due to a lack of timely effective measures and necessary pesticides to combat the disease. Although the agriculture department was informed, they received little assistance at the field level.

Another affected farmer, Ramjan Ali, said he had hoped for a very good yield this time, but the unknown virus has ruined everything. Many have lost their entire fields to rot. He had dreamed of selling the sugarcane to run his household, and he also took loans from many to cultivate this crop. Now he is worried about how he will repay the debt.

Shafiq Ahmed said the Ishwardi variety has suffered the most damage. They had informed the DAE, but no effective action was taken. If the government does not stand by the affected farmers, they will face a major crisis.



Dengue disease escalates at Fakirhat

Bagerhat Correspondent

Amid persistent rainfall, the dengue outbreak has been escalating in Fakirhat Upazila of Bagerhat. Over the past month (June 22-July 22), 46 dengue cases have been detected at the Upazila Health Complex laboratory. Of these, 16 were identified in the last three days alone. However, testing was suspended for approximately 15 days during this period due to a shortage of test kits.

According to sources at the Upazila Health Complex, by 1:30 pm on Wednesday, over a hundred outpatients had sought treatment for symptoms including fever, body aches, and skin rashes. In July so far, 15 patients have been hospitalised due to dengue-related complications. As of Wednesday, three patients were receiving treatment at the hospital.

Sudeb Halder, Medical Technologist (Lab) at the hospital, reported that 46 dengue cases were detected between June 22 and July 22. Testing was halted for about 15 days due to a lack of kits. After kits were restocked three days ago, testing resumed, and 16 cases were confirmed in just these three days. Additionally, dengue patients have been identified at 14 private clinics and diagnostic centres in the upazila, but those figures are not included in the Upazila Health Complex's statistics. A visit to the hospital revealed that due to ongoing renovation work in a section of the facility, there is a shortage of wards. As a result, dengue patients are being treated alongside

other patients in the general ward.

Dr. Tanvir Mahmud Anik, Resident Medical Officer (RMO) of the Fakirhat Upazila Health Complex, stated that the number of dengue patients has suddenly increased.

Infection rates are notably higher in the Bahirdia and Fakirhat Sadar areas. On an average, over a hundred outpatients are coming in daily with fever, body aches, and rashes.

Many are reluctant to undergo dengue testing. Between 20 and 22 patients per day exhibit strong dengue symptoms. If their physical condition deteriorates, they are being admitted to the hospital.

Rina Begum, a patient undergoing treatment at the hospital, said she had been suffering from a fever for several days.

Initially assuming it was a regular fever, she took medication, but her condition did not improve. Later, she came to the hospital, got tested, and was diagnosed with dengue. She is now receiving treatment under medical supervision.

Md. Roknuzzaman, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), said that NS-1 dengue tests are being provided free of charge at the government hospital. Necessary medicines are also available.

He emphasised that personal and social awareness is crucial for dengue prevention. Stagnant water must not be allowed to accumulate anywhere—"in yards, rooftops, balconies, or surrounding areas?" for more than three days.

Tree fair, plantation drive begin in Rajbari, Rangamati

Our Correspondents

Week-long tree plantation drive and tree fair organised by the authorities concerned have been inaugurated in Rajbari and Rangamati districts on Thursday.

RAJBARI: On this occasion, a discussion meeting was held in the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner (DC)'s office on Thursday morning where DC Afroza Parveen spoke as the chief guest and Additional DC (General) Tarif ul Hasan was in the chair. Later, a colourful rally started from Amro Kanan and ended on the tree fair premises at Azadi Maidan after parading through the main roads.

The chief guest said that there is no alternative to large-scale tree planting to combat the adverse effects of climate change, protect the environmental balance and build a green Bangladesh. He urged the general public to come forward to plant trees from their respective positions in addition to government initiatives. Rajbari DC Afroza Parveen formally inaugurated the week-long tree plantation drive as the chief guest. Senior officials of the district administration, representatives of various government departments, leaders of political, social and cultural organisations, students and representatives of civil society were present at the event. A tree fair, sapling distribution and various public awareness activities were held as part of this week-long programme jointly organised by the district administration and the Department of Forest.

RANGAMATI: The fair has been inaugurated here by former minister of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs and MP for Rangamati-299 Constituency Dipen Dewan on the Kumar Samit Roy Gymnasium ground in the district town.

Chakma Circle Chief Barrister Raja Debashish Roy, former deputy minister of the Ministry of CHT Affairs Moni Swapon Dewan, Rangamati Sadar Zone Commander Lieutenant Colonel Md Ekramul Rahat (PSC), District Conservator of Forests Abdur Awal Sarkar, Additional Superintendent of Police Md Iqbal Hossain, District BNP General Secretary Advocate Mamunur Rashid Mamun and Divisional Forest Officer of CHT South Forest Division and Member Secretary of the Tree Planting Celebration Committee SM Sajjad Hossain spoke at the inaugural ceremony chaired by Rangamati DC Najma Ashrafi. In his speech as the chief guest, MP Dipen Dewan said that everyone will have to work together to implement the programme of planting 25 crore trees in five years under the direction of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman. "It is not enough to just plant trees, but to ensure their proper care and conservation."

At the beginning of the programme, a documentary on forest and nature conservation was shown. Later, saplings of different species of trees were distributed among the students of various educational institutions and the guests planted symbolic trees.

Divisional seminar on 'Shipping Census 2026' held in Rangpur

Rangpur Correspondent

A divisional level orientation seminar on 'Shipping Census 2026' was held at the conference room of the Divisional Commissioner's office in the city on Thursday afternoon.

The Department of Shipping and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) jointly organised the seminar for the divisional level stakeholders to successfully implement the countrywide 'Shipping Census, 2026'. The main data collection activity of the 'Shipping Census 2026' will be conducted nationwide from August 20 to 29, 2026.

Prior to this, a pilot census activity will be conducted in two districts from August 3 to August 4 next. Rangpur Divisional Commissioner Md Shahidul Islam attended the seminar as the chief guest. Divisional Director of Local Government Division Md Abu Jafar was present as the special guest at the seminar which was presided over Additional Divisional Commissioner (General) Md Abdul Motaleb Sarkar.

Joint Director of Rangpur Divisional Statistics Office Md Shafiqul Islam delivered the welcome speech and highlighted the objectives, methodology and implementation plan of the census.

16 pirates held at Ctg port outer anchorage

Chattogram Correspondent

Bangladesh Coast Guard has arrested 16 suspected pirates and recovered goods allegedly stolen from commercial vessels during a raid at the outer anchorage of Chattogram Port.

The operation was carried out on Wednesday night by the Coast Guard ship Shyamol Bangla based on confidential information. Lieutenant Commander Suman Al Mukit, Media Officer of the Coast Guard Eastern Zone said yesterday.

According to the Coast Guard, personnel intercepted and searched a suspicious lifeboat in the outer anchorage, recovering 1,020 kilograms of scrap metal, wire mesh and two gas cylinders believed to have been stolen from a commercial vessel. Sixteen people were detained during the operation.



Gazipur Jamaat holds meeting with families of July Martyrs

Md. Ashrafur Alam Mondol, Gazipur

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami's Gazipur City unit on Thursday organized a discussion meeting and luncheon with the family members of those who were killed during the July movement.

The programme was held at the Friend Thai Chinese Restaurant in Gazipur at around 12:00pm, aiming to express solidarity with the bereaved families and hear their experiences.

The event was presided over by Prof. Muhammad Jamal Uddin, Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Gazipur Metropolitan, while Abu Sayeed Muhammad Faruk conducted the session.

Assistant Secretary General of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Advocate Ehsanul Mahub Jubayer attended the programme as the chief guest. Central Executive Council Member Muhammad Abdur Rob was present as the special guest. Family members of several victims of the July movement participated in the gathering, including Belayet Hossain, father of Shakil;

Amanullah, father of Samiun Aman Noor; and the elder brother of Farid.

According to the organisers, the atmosphere turned emotional as the family members shared their memories and experiences. The audience observed complete silence during their speeches, while many attendees were visibly moved.

Salahuddin Ayoubi, Member of Parliament from Gazipur-4 (Kapasia), a member of Jamaat-e-Islami's Central Majlis-e-Shura and former central president of Bangladesh Islami Chhatra Shibir; Khairul Hasan and Hossain Ali, Nayeab-e-Ameer of Jamaat's Gazipur Metropolitan unit and Central Majlis-e-Shura members; Assistant Secretaries Afzal Hossain and Azharul Islam Molla; along with members of the City working committee were also present among others.

The organisers said the event was arranged to honour the memories of those who lost their lives during the July movement and to stand beside their families.

Allegations of corruption, irregularities surface against acting family planning officer in Phulpur

Md Mijanur Rahman Akanda

Mymensingh, Bangladesh: Serious allegations of corruption, administrative irregularities and abuse of authority have been raised against the acting Upazila Family Planning Officer of Phulpur in Mymensingh, Md. Abdus Salam.

According to local residents and officials familiar with the matter, Abdus Salam joined the Phulpur Family Planning Office in 2021 as an Assistant Family Planning Officer and was assigned additional responsibilities as the acting Upazila Family Planning Officer in 2022.

Residents allege that he has remained posted at the same station for nearly six years by misusing his influence, depriving the upazila of the services of a regular Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) cadre officer. They also claim that although he commutes from Netrokona district, he attends the office only two to three days a week and is often unavailable even during official working hours. Locals further allege that despite serving only in an acting capacity, the word "Acting" has not been displayed on the nameplate outside his office, which they view as an indication of administrative overreach. A Family Planning Department employee, who requested anonymity, alleged that annual government allocations for purchasing and repairing office furniture have been withdrawn regularly, despite no visible procurement or maintenance work



being carried out. The employee also claimed that travel allowance (TA) and daily allowance (DA) bills had been drawn on multiple occasions without actual inspections of Union Health and Family Welfare Centres.

The same source alleged that Abdus Salam had previously faced financial misconduct allegations while serving as an Upazila Family Planning Assistant in Kendua, Netrokona, where demonstrations, including a broom procession and a human chain, were reportedly held against him. The source further claimed that complaints signed by 76 employees resulted in his punitive transfer to Haluaghat in Mymensingh before he was later transferred to Purbadhala in Netrokona and eventually posted to Phulpur. Local sources also alleged that more than ten Family Welfare

Assistants have taken voluntary retirement due to his alleged harsh behaviour, affecting the delivery of family planning services across several unions. They further claimed that institutional delivery services at Union Health and Family Welfare Centres have suffered because of administrative inefficiency.

Questions have also been raised over the selection of the "Best Employee" during the observance of World Population Day 2026. According to the allegations, an individual who was not regularly present in the assigned work area was selected for the award. When contacted, Acting Upazila Family Planning Officer Md. Abdus Salam denied all allegations.

"A conspiracy is being hatched against me. I have not been involved in any corruption or irregularities. Allah will judge those spreading these false allegations," he told this correspondent.

The allegations have not been independently verified, and no official investigation or disciplinary action by the Directorate General of Family Planning or any other government authority has been confirmed at the time of filing this report.

If substantiated through a formal inquiry, the allegations could raise serious concerns over governance, accountability and public service delivery within the family planning sector in Phulpur. Authorities concerned are yet to announce whether an investigation will be launched.

Nilphamari Correspondent

Twin sisters Nityapriya Othoi Roy and Nityashree Tathoi Roy of Nilphamari have set a remarkable example by securing talent pool Scholarships in the Primary Scholarship Examination after studying together in the same school.

The sisters, who were born and raised together, attended Shahipara Government Primary School in the district town. They enrolled in the school

in 2024 as fourth-grade students and achieved the prestigious talent pool Scholarship, bringing pride to their school, family, and the local community.

Nityapriya and Nityashree are the daughters of Probananda Roy Rakkhal, a businessman, and Chandana Rani Roy, an assistant teacher at Haroa Government Primary School. The family resides in the Collegepara area near Koborstan Mor in the town.

Thousands flee wildfires in Europe

Spain declares emergency

World Desk

French authorities have ordered the evacuation of the entirety of the Cap Ferret peninsula on the south-west coast, with hundreds of people escaping the area by boat.

Tens of thousands of people are being evacuated from the tourism destination west of Bordeaux, as firefighters continue to battle what the local prefect has described as an "XXL fire" in the Gironde region.

The fires, which began on Tuesday, have burned for days, with officials saying 10,000 hectares (almost 25,000 acres) had been consumed by the flames.

Meanwhile, the government in Spain has declared a national emergency as wildfires burn out of control in several areas close to the capital Madrid.

Responding to the spread of fires, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, the president of the community of Madrid, said it was: "The worst fire in the history of the region."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez spoke of a "dramatic situation" and urged people to take great care. Three fires were burning west of Madrid, at Villa del Prado and San Martín de Valdeiglesias.

French Interior Minister Laurent Nuñez said 40,000 people had either been or were in the process of being evacuated from the Cap Ferret peninsula, which has the Atlantic on one side and the Bay of Arcachon on the other.

Local prefect Sophie Brocas said 53 homes had been lost as



PARIS: A volunteer gives indication to holidaymakers from Lege-Cap-Ferret upon their arrival in Arcachon by boat during an evacuation operation of the entire Cap-Ferret peninsula, in southwestern France, on Friday whilst a wildfire is spreading across the area. AFP

well as a campsite, but that 2,000 houses had been saved.

A local councillor said 2,000 evacuees from the peninsula had already arrived by boat in the port of Arcachon on the south side of the bay.

Meanwhile, luggage-clad residents and tourists fled a French peninsula by boat and the smell of

smoke drifted into parts of Madrid on Friday as wildfires swept through parts of western Europe, triggering states of emergencies and calls for EU help.

In France, fires raging near the country's prized wine country of Bordeaux forced hundreds of people to flee the Cap Ferret

peninsula in the middle of the summer vacation season as the blaze devoured an area nearly twice the size of Manhattan.

In Spain, two separate blazes were raging out of control within 100 kilometres (62 miles) of Madrid, with some residents of the Spanish capital waking up to the smell of smoke, according to

residents.

"The gendarmes came and knocked on every door, the fire was about 500 metres away-we grabbed some things and left," Patrick Martineau, a 69-year-old resident of Le Porge, south of Bordeaux, said.

Three firefighters have been killed as southern Europe endures

more severe heat, with temperatures topping 40C in some areas.

The total area of land burnt so far this year in EU countries is the second largest on record, according to satellite data from the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).

French authorities have ordered thousands of tourists on the southwestern Atlantic coast out of campsites and holiday homes, as firefighters backed by water-bombing planes raced to control the blazes.

More than 23,000 people have been evacuated in the region so far. France has invoked the European Union's civil protection mechanism to ask for help, President Emmanuel Macron said on Friday, warning that the crisis remained "very intense".

The EU said it would provide three water-bombing planes to France.

In Spain, the government declared a state of emergency in the Madrid region, where more than 10,000 people have been evacuated in recent days, with Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez calling the situation "dramatic".

"Meteorological conditions, fundamentally the wind, will complicate firefighting operations this Friday," the Madrid regional government said in a post on X.

France's southeast was also being hard hit, with dozens of fires flaring up and being fanned by the mistral wind around the historic village of Cotignac -- officials saying around 25 houses had been destroyed since Tuesday.



Xi Jinping

Trump says Xi will visit US on Sept 24

World Desk

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday that he will discuss artificial intelligence with Chinese President Xi Jinping when he visits the United States on Sept 24.

Xi's visit comes after the pair met during Trump's trip to China earlier this year. While in Beijing, Trump invited the Chinese leader to the White House.

"President Xi is coming over on September 24th, and we talked about it (artificial intelligence) when I was over in Beijing, and we'll be talking about it again," Trump said.

On Wednesday, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi discussed the need to identify areas of cooperation to lay the groundwork for a "very positive visit".

Trump stuns Saudis by pinning nuclear deal to

World Desk

US President Donald Trump said Thursday that a nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia depends on the kingdom recognizing Israel-throwing the agreement into turmoil just the day after it was signed. Riyadh has long resisted joining the so-called Abraham Accords with Israel, insisting especially after the Gaza conflict on a pathway to a Palestinian state. The civilian nuclear deal announced on Wednesday had appeared to be a major win for the Saudis, especially coming as Trump wages war on Iran in large part over concerns about Tehran's own atomic program.

But Trump threw a gigantic spanner into the works with his post on his Truth Social network saying the Saudi deal "will be approved, but is totally subject to Saudi Arabia joining the very respected and successful Abraham Accords."

The White House insisted that the Saudis knew the deal was contingent on recognizing Israel, despite the fact that it was not mentioned when the deal was announced.

"The president is always the final dealmaker, as you know," Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters, adding that the Abraham Accords were "something that he feels very strongly about and has spoken about it in the past and will continue to uphold."Leavitt said Washington would "continue to have those conversations with our Saudi counterparts" to finalize a deal including recognition of Israel.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said recognition by Saudi Arabia, a regional power and home to Islam's holiest sites, would mark a "historic leap" forward for peace in the Middle East. Leavitt said she did not know of any calls between Trump and Netanyahu following the announcement of the Saudi agreement. Should it go through, the deal to establish a civilian nuclear program in Saudi Arabia would generate billions of dollars for American companies, but with Trump's latest announcement, it was unclear whether it would ever see the light of day.If Washington "tries to force normalization on Riyadh, it's not likely to work out very well", said H.A. Hellyer, senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies.

Israel launches military operation after deadly clash near Palestinian village

More than 4,200 Israelis enter Al-Aqsa Mosque compound

UNESCO lists world heritage sites in Lebanon, West Bank as in danger

World Desk

More than two-thirds of Gazans could face acute hunger by the year-end as humanitarian agencies cut aid flows due to funding shortages, a global hunger monitor said on Wednesday.

The latest assessment by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification found that acute malnutrition levels, particularly among children, had declined significantly after food supplies and nutrition services were stepped up following the October 2025 ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

However, it said those gains risk



being reversed.

Food consumption remains inadequate for most families, and some households resort to begging and scavenging for food, the report said.

Between mid-April and the end of June, more than 1.2 million people, or about 59 per cent of Gaza's population, faced acute hunger - defined as crisis-level or worse - including around 212,000 people in emergency conditions, the IPC said.

That level is expected to rise to more than 1.4 million people, or 67 per cent by December.

A majority of Gazans are dependent on aid supplies, following two years of war, repeated displacement and severe restrictions imposed by Israel on aid deliveries.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian health ministry said on Friday that four Palestinians were shot dead in the north of the occupied West Bank, while Israel's rescue services reported one Israeli killed in the clashes. "Four people were killed and four others wounded, including three in critical condition, in Tel," the Palestinian ministry said. Earlier, more than 4,200 Israeli

settlers and members of far-right groups have entered the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in occupied East Jerusalem.

Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir also visited the compound under heavy police protection on Thursday during the Jewish holiday of Tisha B'Av, Al Jazeera reported.

Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of the ancient Jewish temples, believed by Jews to have stood at the site known as the Temple Mount.

Muslims regard the same site as the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound,

Islam's third holiest place.

The Jerusalem governorate of the Palestinian Authority said 4,288 Israelis had entered the compound by Thursday afternoon, adding that the number was expected to continue rising until sunset and could reach 5,000, surpassing previous records for the holiday.

The UN's cultural agency on Friday placed locations including a Lebanese castle recently conquered by Israeli forces and an archaeological site in the occupied West Bank on its list of World Heritage in Danger.

Beaufort Castle, a Crusader fortress also known as Qalaat al-Shakif, was captured by Israeli forces invading Lebanon in May as part of their war with militant group Hezbollah.

It is one of five castles in the Jabal Amel area of southern Lebanon listed together by UNESCO. The mountainous area has come under repeated Israeli bombardment during the war.

UNESCO said the fortresses had sustained damage and faced ongoing threats from the conflict "serious enough to justify resorting to an emergency procedure".

Lebanese Culture Minister Ghassan Salame told AFP the endangered listing was "a remarkable achievement in the effort to protect these important Lebanese historical landmarks".



UN rights chief Volker Turk faces opposition to new term

World Desk

United Nations Human Rights chief Volker Turk, an outspoken critic of Russia's war in Ukraine and Israel's conduct in Gaza, faces opposition from both countries to a second four-year term ahead of a vote on Friday, diplomats told Reuters. Turk, a lawyer who has worked for the United Nations for decades in major offices such as Geneva and field locations including Kosovo, finishes his first four-year term in October.

17 killed in Russian, Ukrainian long-range strikes

World Desk

At least 17 people were killed Friday in Russian and Ukrainian long-range strikes-including just outside Kyiv and hundreds of miles east of Moscow-as both sides intensify strikes with diplomacy in a deadlock.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said a Russian missile strike outside the Ukrainian capital killed six people, with a rescue operation ongoing and "dozens of people reported to be injured".

Zelensky also said that Russian aerial bombing killed five people in the frontline city of Sloviansk.

On the same day, Kyiv launched a wave of long-range drone and missile attacks on Russia.

Moscow said an attack on a factory more than 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) from the front in the city of Kirov killed six people.

Ukraine also attacked warehouses belonging to Russian online retail giant Wildberries outside Saint Petersburg-targeting Russia's equivalent of Amazon for the third time this week.

The strikes come as the four-and-a-half-year war has seen more civilians dying this summer than in any period since the first months of Russia's invasion, according to the United Nations.

Zelensky said Kyiv struck a "key military enterprise" in Russia's Kirov, saying it "supplies components for the occupier's aircraft and missile systems, which are used in the massive attacks against our cities."

Kirov Governor Alexander Sokolov confirmed Kyiv targeted a "factory" and that the six victims were killed on the spot. Another 26 were wounded.

World Desk

Militants rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a security check post in north-western Pakistan overnight, killing 15 people including soldiers, police and government personnel, the military said on Friday.

"Fifteen brave sons of soil including twelve military, two policemen and a government official ex forest department rendered the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat (martyrdom)," the military's media wing said in a statement on the latest attack in the border province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Meanwhile, Naqash Zardad was simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The education department employee was at his buffalo farm in Rawalakot in



Pakistan-administered Kashmir, when violent clashes broke out between police and protesters nearby.

With roads blocked around his farm, Zardad was unable to get home.

Then gunshots were fired.

A stray bullet hit the 30-year-old, killing him instantly, his uncle, Altaf Hussain, told the BBC.

Zardad is one of at least 40 people who have been killed in the run-up to legislative elections in Pakistan-admin-

istered Kashmir. Of those, 34 were protesters. Six were police and paramilitary personnel. Rawalakot has seen some of the worst violence.

Critics have accused security forces of using excessive violence against protesters participating in long marches and demonstrations called by an alliance of activist groups - the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC).

JAAC has called on people to protest against the reservation of 12 legislative seats in the local assembly for refugees who migrated to Pakistan from Indian-administered Kashmir decades ago.

The government responded by banning JAAC under anti-terrorism laws and launching a crackdown against protesters.

JAAC itself says it has no interest in contesting the election.

24 killed in bandit attack in Nigeria

World Desk

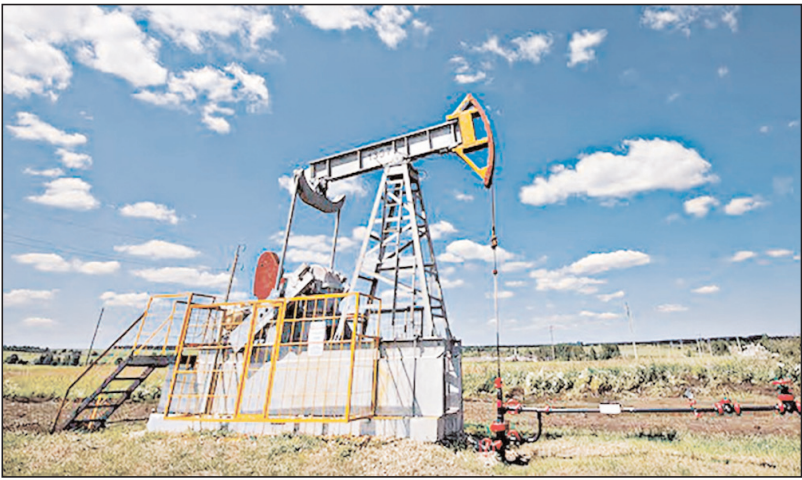
Armed bandits riding motorcycles killed at least 24 farmers and wounded several others in an attack on remote farming villages in northwest Nigeria's Zamfara state, residents told Reuters on Thursday.

The attackers stormed communities in the Sauna district of the Talata Mafara local government area at about 1300 GMT on Tuesday and opened fire on people working on their farms, residents told Reuters.

"They killed at least 24 innocent farmers. We are still counting the losses," resident Auwal Sani said by phone.

Zamfara is at the centre of a security crisis in Nigeria's northwest, where armed gangs locally known as bandits frequently raid villages, kidnap residents for ransom and steal livestock.

Residents said the gunmen travelled nearly 50km (31 miles) along the Mayanchi-Anka highway.



Oil prices hover at six-week high as Middle East shipping risks escalate

Business Desk

Oil prices rose more than 1.5 percent in Asian trade on Thursday to stand at their highest in more than six weeks, as Yemen's Houthis targeted oil tankers in the Red Sea and the United States launched a new round of strikes on Iran.

Brent crude futures rose \$2.2 or 2.3 percent, to \$96.27 by 0327 GMT, the highest since June 8, having settled up more than \$3 at \$94.07 in the previous session, just shy of a six-week high. US West Texas Intermediate crude climbed \$1.65, or 1.9 percent, to \$88.48, after Wednesday's rise of 3 percent.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said an oil tanker caught fire after an explosion while attempting to follow a route they described as mined, south of the Strait of Hormuz, while two others had turned back.

In a statement the Guards said the strait was under their control and "completely closed" while US actions continued in the region, warning that no tanker would be allowed to enter or leave without coordination with Iran. Besides the renewed conflict over control of the key waterway, the Iran-aligned Houthis have opened a new front by threatening to target vessels carrying Saudi oil in the Bab el-Mandeb strait and unveiling a naval blockade of Saudi Arabia. Oil prices are facing a rare risk from simultaneous disruptions at both the Bab el-Mandeb and the Strait of Hormuz, said Priyanka Sachdeva, senior market analyst at Phillip Nova. "Geopolitical premiums have returned, but a sustained (price) rally will require evidence of prolonged shipping disruptions or meaningful supply outages."

The Houthis said they had carried out a military operation targeting two Saudi oil tankers, and maritime security reports said one of the vessels identified by the group, the Saudi-flagged tanker Encelia, had been hit in the Red Sea. The Houthis said they had forced about 10 ships to retreat and return after warning vessels against sailing to Saudi ports. Reuters could not immediately verify this account.

The Houthis' naval blockade of Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea threatens to disrupt global energy supplies beyond the Gulf, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards' spokesperson also warned shipping companies that the Strait of Hormuz southern route is mined in a post on X. The new threat to Red Sea passage could interrupt up to 5 million barrels per day of oil supply, and the main route for Gulf oil that bypasses the Strait of Hormuz, said Saul Kavonic, the head of energy research at MST Marquee.

Sunscreen claims under the Microscope



Business Desk

Australia is one of the world's skin cancer hotspots, where around 2,000 people die from skin cancer and melanoma every year and nearly two out of every three Australians are expected to have at least one skin cancer removed during their lifetime. In a country where sunscreen is an everyday necessity, a controversy that began in mid-2025 drew global attention after the consumer advocacy group Choice found that 16 out of 20 popular sunscreens failed to deliver the SPF protection claimed on their labels. The most widely discussed case involved a product marketed as SPF 50+ that reportedly performed at around SPF 4 in testing. The brand disputed the finding, but withdrew the product from sale, and Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration has since been reviewing why test results for the same products differ so widely between laboratories.

The controversy also challenged a common belief among many Bangladeshi consumers, that imported skincare products are automatically more reliable than locally made ones. It showed that a well-known brand name alone is no longer enough. Whether a sunscreen comes from a global brand or a local company, what matters most is whether it actually delivers the protection promised on its label. This is becoming increasingly important as rising tem-

peratures and growing awareness of the harmful effects of ultraviolet (UV) rays encourage more people to use sunscreen every day. Bangladesh's hot and humid climate brings its own challenges. Many people avoid sunscreen because it feels greasy or sticky, or leaves a white cast, and a formula developed for another country's climate may not always be comfortable for daily use here. A sunscreen that performs well in a laboratory but sits unused on a shelf protects nobody.

So how can consumers know whether a sunscreen really works? The first step is understanding what the label means. SPF, or Sun Protection Factor, measures protection against UVB rays, which mainly cause sunburn. Applied correctly, an SPF 50 sunscreen blocks around 98 percent of these rays. But SPF is only part of the story. The PA rating indicates protection against UVA rays, which penetrate deeper into the skin and are linked to tanning, pigmentation and premature ageing. Together, the two ratings show how well a sunscreen defends against both immediate and long-term sun damage.

The second step is asking how those numbers were arrived at. Not all SPF testing is the same. In-vivo testing applies the product to human volunteers and measures the point at which skin begins to redden under controlled UV exposure; it is the method regulators in most markets treat as definitive, and the method

behind the Australian findings. In-vitro testing measures how much UV radiation passes through a thin film of the product using a spectrophotometer. It is faster, more affordable and widely used across the industry, though it is a laboratory proxy rather than a human study. Neither method is a formality, and results can vary between laboratories even for the same product, which is precisely what regulators in Australia are now examining. For consumers, the practical takeaway is that a brand willing to name its laboratory, its method and its result is offering something more useful than one that simply prints a number on a bottle.

In response to the global scrutiny, some local skincare brands have begun placing greater emphasis on external verification. Skin Cafe is one such example. The Bangladeshi brand submitted its Skin Cafe Sunscreen SPF 50 PA+++ with Vitamin C for third-party testing at WAF-FEN Research Laboratory Limited, a Dhaka-based laboratory accredited under the internationally recognised ISO/IEC 17025:2017 standard. The test, carried out in July 2024 under report reference ANA-240724002/1, used UV spectrophotometry, an in-vitro method. According to the laboratory report shared by the company, the sunscreen returned an SPF value of 52.51, a result consistent with the SPF 50 stated on its packaging. The company notes that a reading marginally above 50 should be read as confirmation of the claim rather than as evidence of superior performance, since values in that range fall within the normal variability of SPF measurement.

The decision to test locally also speaks to the second half of the problem. A sunscreen's real-world effectiveness depends on consistent daily use, and that depends on how it feels in the climate where it is worn. Formulating and testing for Bangladeshi conditions, rather than adapting a product built for a cooler, drier market, is one-way brands here are attempting to close the gap between laboratory performance and everyday habit.

None of this makes any single test the final word. Independent verification is a floor, not a ceiling, and consumers are entitled to ask which method was used, when, and by whom. But the Australian controversy showed that attractive packaging and a high SPF claim are no longer enough on their own. Whether choosing an imported or a local sunscreen, consumers now have every reason to look for testing and transparency, and brands have every reason to provide it.

Experts tell Asharq Al-Awsat: nuclear agreement strengthens Saudi Arabia's reliability in global markets

Business Desk

Economic experts and specialists told Asharq Al-Awsat that the peaceful nuclear agreement between Saudi Arabia and the US marks a new and unprecedented phase of strategic, high-value cooperation between the two countries. They said the agreement extends beyond its technical and developmental impact on the energy sector, strengthening the Kingdom's credibility in international markets as an attractive hub for cross-border investment. It also provides the Saudi economy with greater resilience and stronger protection against unexpected global shocks, drives a qualitative leap in local manufacturing, and advances the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. Analyzing the agreement's benefits, Shura Council member Fadl bin Saad Al-Buainain told Asharq Al-Awsat that the deal carries major strategic and economic significance. From a strategic perspective, it deepens the longstanding partnership between Riyadh and Washington and provides a framework for long-term cooperation that supports key aspects of comprehensive national security.

Al-Buainain stressed that the agreement should be viewed through a broad strategic lens rather than being assessed solely based on direct costs and returns. He said its benefits extend across the economy, including water security, energy security, and regional stability, with Saudi Arabia serving as the region's central pillar.

Benefits for the national energy sector: Discussing the agreement's direct impact on energy and natural resources, Al-Buainain said the introduction of peaceful nuclear energy would improve production efficiency in sectors vital to the economy, particularly electricity generation and water desalination, which remain strategic priorities for the Kingdom's water security.

He added that using nuclear power to generate electricity would free up substantial volumes of oil and natural gas currently consumed by domestic power plants. Those resources could then be redirected toward exports to increase government revenues while also helping meet growing domestic demand, particularly from the industrial, mining, and advanced technology sectors. He also noted the Kingdom's ambi-



tion to make optimal use of its uranium reserves and develop uranium enrichment capabilities to achieve self-sufficiency in nuclear fuel and strengthen the sovereignty of its energy sector.

Localizing advanced technologies: Addressing the agreement's long-term horizon, Al-Buainain said the approximately 30-year accord establishes a lasting partnership that will help ensure continued investment flows, technology transfer, and stronger ties with leading US companies.

He said the partnership is expected to serve as a gateway for advanced technologies and high-value industries linked to the nuclear sector while developing the skills of young Saudi professionals. This would support economic diversification and create a new growth sector underpinning a wide range of productive industries. He also pointed to the possibility of exporting electricity to neighboring countries through regional power interconnection networks.

Attracting foreign investment: For his part, Dr. Abdulrahman Baashen, head of the Al-Shorouq Center for Economic Studies in Jazan, told Asharq Al-Awsat that the agreement lays the most important strategic founda-

tion for a first-of-its-kind bilateral partnership, raising the level of industrial and technological cooperation between the two countries. He said the agreement would accelerate the Kingdom's efforts to improve energy efficiency, expand clean energy, protect the environment, and achieve its net-zero emissions targets under the commitments of Saudi Vision 2030.

Baashen added that the partnership opens broad opportunities to introduce and localize advanced industries that complement strategic sectors, including artificial intelligence, semiconductor manufacturing, and advanced chip production. He said this would enhance the competitiveness of Saudi products in global markets and strengthen the stability of the Kingdom's industrial base.

Baashen concluded that the agreement's most significant immediate impact lies in enhancing the Saudi economy's overall reliability in the eyes of global investors and international companies. He said this would stimulate foreign direct investment and pave the way for international and regional partnership projects that would provide the national economy with stronger protection against economic shocks and global volatility.



US tariffs on Brazil take effect as Trump readies fresh flurry

Business Desk

A new US tariff targeting Brazil took effect Wednesday, while Washington's other trading partners brace for a fresh volley of duties as President Donald Trump's temporary global levies expire this week. The 25-percent Brazil tariff followed a year-long US investigation, with Washington accusing the Latin American giant of unfair trade practices.

This has drawn sharp pushback, although Brazil's Vice President Geraldo Alckmin told a press conference Tuesday that Brazil will seek to resolve the issue through negotiations instead of retaliating. Various products like beef, coffee and aircraft parts will be exempted from the levy, and roughly half of Brazil's exports to the United States would remain excluded from the duty, estimates Valentina Sader of the Atlantic Council think tank.

Nonetheless, the move comes as Trump makes a renewed push to use tariffs as leverage, sparking fears of retaliation and heightened tensions. Officials could be "using Brazil as an example to send a broader message about its priorities and negotiating approach," Sader told AFP.

While the US Supreme Court struck down many of Trump's tariffs in February, dealing a blow to his ability to impose new duties at will, Washington has moved to rebuild his trade agenda using other powers. The United States saying the Brazil tariffs were imposed as President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva failed to negotiate in good faith also "reinforces the perception that the action is directed not only at Brazil's trade practices, but also politically at Lula himself," Sader said.

The duty is becoming a major campaign flashpoint ahead of Brazil's October presidential elections. The American Chamber of Commerce for Brazil recently warned that Washington's measure affects more than \$11 billion in exports. Trump on Tuesday also announced a 100-percent tariff on generic drugs from August 2028, a day after ordering a 50-percent duty on many Canadian goods to take effect in 30 days.

A broader sweep is yet to come, with officials in June proposing tariffs of between 10 percent and 12.5 percent targeting 60 trading partners over alleged failures to act against forced labor.

Analysts widely expect the duties over forced labor to replace the temporary 10-percent global tariff -- expiring Friday -- that Trump imposed after his Supreme Court setback. "We expect to see some action soon," US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer told CNBC. Greer added Tuesday that new action over labor concerns will cover a majority of US trade, though it could reignite trade tensions. The lower 10-percent tariff rate would hit US imports from partners including Canada, the European Union, Mexico, Taiwan and the United Kingdom. They were found to have taken some steps against forced labor.