



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman addressed a virtual meeting today from his office in the Bangladesh Secretariat at noon. — Photo: PMO

PM orders highest vigilance, joint response to save lives, properties in waterlogged areas

Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has directed all relevant agencies and field administration officials to work with the highest level of vigilance and coordination to protect the lives and properties of people affected by waterlogging caused by heavy rainfall, ensure the prompt delivery of relief and medical services, and effectively manage the evolving situation.

He issued the directives while addressing a virtual meeting, held via the Zoom platform, from his office in the Bangladesh Secretariat this noon, said PM's Deputy Press Secretary Md Suzauddhowla Sujon Mahmud.

Divisional Commissioners, Deputy Inspectors General (DIGs) of Police, Deputy Commissioners (DCs), Superintendents of

Police (SPs), Civil Surgeons, and other relevant field administration officials from all eight divisions of the country joined the meeting.

The officials briefed the Prime Minister on the latest situation regarding waterlogging in their respective areas, including the extent of damage, the condition of shelter centres, rescue operations, relief distribution activities, and the progress of medical services.

At the meeting, the Prime Minister said that protecting the lives and properties of the people is the administration's highest priority during this disaster.

He stressed that there is no room for negligence and instructed the authorities to ensure the rapid delivery of relief materials, dry food, safe drinking water, baby food, essential

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Half-yearly, mock exams at several schools postponed due to rain

Heavy overnight rain floods roads across the capital, pushing several schools to call off Sunday's exams

Staff Correspondent

Waterlogging on roads in various parts of the capital, caused by overnight rain, has led several educational institutions to postpone their half-yearly and mock examinations.

The Met Office says 82mm of rain fell between 6am and noon on Sunday, with the downpour continuing past midday.

Dhaka District Education Officer Shahrin Khan Rupa tells bdnews24.com, "Several educational institutions in the capital have postponed exams due to the bad weather. Some institutions asked us whether they should postpone exams, and many of them did."

"All educational institutions in Nawabganj Upazila have postponed their exams. Some institutions in the capital managed to hold their morning exams but postponed the afternoon ones. Some postponed both sessions."

A teacher says Viqarunnisa Noon School and College has postponed the half-yearly exam for Class 9, the mock exam for class 10, and the



practical exam for class eleven due to the bad weather.

Guardian Tanuja Akbar tells bdnews24.com that Dhanmondi Kamrunnessa School has postponed its half-yearly and mock exams due to the bad weather.

Millat High School in the capital has postponed exams for both its primary and secondary sections due to the bad weather and waterlogging from continuous rain, the institution said on its Facebook page.

Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College authorities

have issued a notice postponing the annual exam for Class 11.

BTCL Ideal School and College in Moghbazar has also postponed Sunday's exams, according to the institution's Facebook page.

Sher-e-Bangla Balika Mahavidyalaya in Old Dhaka has issued a notice postponing all of Sunday's exams across its primary, secondary and college sections.

Willes Little Flower School and College has issued a notice postponing all of Sunday's exams.

BCIC College in Mirpur has

issued a notice postponing Sunday's exams for Classes 4, 6, 7, and 9.

Nawabganj Government Pilot High School's acting principal, Muhammad Abdul Mannan, has issued a notice postponing Sunday's mock and half-yearly exams.

Monipur High School has published a notice on its Facebook page postponing all of Sunday's exams.

Bir Sreshtho Noor Mohammad Rifles Public School and College has issued a notice postponing all exams from Classes 6-10.

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Speaker of the Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad (JS), Hafiz Uddin Ahmad, Bir Bikram, addressed an orientation workshop as the chief guest in the oath room of the JS.

Govt striving to stand by people despite limited capacity: Habibur Rashid

Staff Correspondent

State Minister for Road Transport and Highways and the Ministry of Railways Habibur Rashid Habib today said the government is making every effort to stand by the people despite its limited capacity.

He made the remarks while addressing a function at Basabo Community Centre here as the chief guest, where cheques were given among the underprivileged and destitute people with the support of the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry.

The state minister said, "Dhaka-9 constituency is one family. Together, we are trying to stand by everyone with the limited resources available to us. This initiative has already begun."

We want to move forward together with everyone. We intend to make the best

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BB raises cash incentive for local textile exports to 5pc for FY27

Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Bank (BB) today increased the cash incentive for the export-oriented local textile sector to 5 percent from the previous 1.5 percent for the 2026-27 fiscal year to encourage the use of domestically produced raw materials and enhance export competitiveness.

The Foreign Exchange Policy Department (FEPD) of the central bank

issued the revised directive through Circular No. 19, amending the provisions of FEPD Circular No. 17 issued on July 5, 2026.

According to the circular, the revised rate applies to the alternative cash assistance of the existing export incentive policy.

The increase follows a government directive aimed at providing greater support to the country's export-oriented textile and apparel sector, particularly

exporters that source yarn and fabrics from domestic manufacturers instead of using bonded warehouse facilities or duty drawback schemes.

The enhanced incentive is intended to strengthen the competitiveness of local textile manufacturers amid evolving global economic conditions while promoting greater value addition through domestic sourcing.

To qualify for the incentive, exporters

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Role of MPs crucial to building an equitable society: Speaker

Staff Correspondent

Speaker of the Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad Hafiz Uddin Ahmad, Bir Bikram, today said Members of Parliament (MPs) have a vital role to play in establishing a sustainable, discrimination-less and human resource-based society.

He said the country's development could be further accelerated by bringing issues related to demographic transition, demographic dividend and sustainable development into parliamentary discussions and for-

mulating effective laws and policies.

The Speaker made the remarks while addressing an orientation workshop titled "The Role of Parliament in Achieving Demographic Dividend, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Implementing the ICPD Commitments" as the chief guest at the oath room of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The workshop was organised under the Strengthening Parliament's Capacity in Population and Development Issues (SPCPD) project.

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Argentina sink 10-man Swiss to set up blockbuster England World Cup semi-final

Staff Correspondent

Julian Alvarez scored a breathtaking goal as Argentina battled past 10-man Switzerland 3-1 after extra-time on Saturday, setting up a mouthwatering World Cup semi-final against bitter rivals England.

Fans of the South American team dominated the stands in Kansas City and were celebrating as early as the 10th minute when their hero Lionel Messi set up Alexis Mac Allister's opener.

Switzerland levelled midway through the second half through Dan Ndoye but minutes later disaster struck when Embolo was sent off after picking up a second yellow card for simulation.

The match went to extra-time and Switzerland snuffed out wave after wave of attacks until Alvarez curled a breathtaking strike



into the top corner in the 112th minute.

Lautaro Martinez added gloss with a late third.

The hard-fought victory for Lionel Scaloni's men at the Arrowhead Stadium means the top four teams in the FIFA rankings will contest the semi-finals of the 2026 tournament.

Argentina are now unbeaten in their past 12

World Cup matches as they attempt to become the first team since Brazil in 1962 to retain their World Cup crown.

The South Americans swept through the group phase but struggled past minnows Cape Verde and needed a spectacular comeback against Egypt.

Saturday's game was another attritional affair

against a Swiss team seeking to reach the World Cup semi-finals for the first time.

Argentina took the lead with their first effort on target when Liverpool midfielder Mac Allister rose between Djibril Sow and Embolo to glance a header into the far corner.

Messi was the provider from a corner, taking his tally of assists across six World Cups to 10.

He is also joint top of the Golden Boot standings with eight goals, level with French forward Kylian Mbappe but he did not find the net on Saturday.

The Swiss struggled to counter-punch but had a good chance on the half hour when goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez was quickly off his line to deny Embolo.

Argentina failed to muster another effort on target

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Rain leaves Naya Paltan road submerged in waist-deep water

Staff Correspondent

A visit to the area on Sunday morning showed water flowing over the footpath and pooling around the stairs leading to the BNP office. The party's senior joint secretary general, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, arrived at the office in the morning. When he left around noon, a rickshaw had to be brought inside the office premises so he could cross the floodwater.

Rizvi had come to the party office from his residence in the morning. He held a press conference to announce the BNP's mourning programme fol-

A rickshaw had to be brought inside the BNP office premises so Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi could cross the floodwater

lowing the death of National Standing Committee member Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar. Other party

leaders, including Joint Secretaries General Habib Un Nabi Khan Sohel and Abdus Salam Azad, Executive Committee member Abdus Sattar Patwari, and Professor Aminul Islam, were also seen wading through floodwater to reach the office.

Sohail Mahmud, a member of the Dhaka University unit of the Jatiotabadi Chatra Dal, said: "The water on Naya Paltan Road has risen so much that the entire road is submerged. Even motorised vehicles cannot operate because water enters their engines and causes them to stall."

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Cath labs to be installed in every Upazila hospital this year: Health Minister

Staff Correspondent

Health and Family Welfare Minister Sardar Md. Sakhawat Hossain today said that the government will install cardiac catheterization (Cath) laboratories in every upazila hospital across the country by the end of this year.

The minister was addressing a discussion marking the 'World Population Day' at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium here. President Mohammed Shahabuddin attended the event as the chief guest.

Sakhawat Hossain said the government has adopted a strict stance to eliminate public suffering caused by wrong medical testing and to prevent patients from falling victim to faulty diagnostic services.

Skilled laboratory technicians, he said, are also being trained to ensure the proper operation of the new facilities.

Emphasizing the importance of building a healthy, skilled and capable younger generation to ensure the country's future leadership and sustainable development, he said, "We are growing older, so we must prepare a qualified and competent young generation to lead the country in the future. Our goal is to eliminate all irregularities from the society



and build an ideal generation."

Highlighting the government's initiatives to expand healthcare services at the grass-roots, he said extensive programmes will begin during the current fiscal year to ensure healthcare access in every village and

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Muktadir condoles death of Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar

Staff Correspondent

Commerce Minister Khandakar Abdul Muktadir today expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of former Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, former Acting President and BNP National Standing Committee member Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar.

In a condolence message, the minister said he was deeply saddened by the demise of the veteran politician, renowned lawyer and patriotic statesman.

He prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family members.

The minister said Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar's long political career and dedicated service to the country and its people would continue to inspire future generations.

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4 new textbooks reflect PM's long-term vision for education: Mahdi Amin

Staff Correspondent

The four new textbooks being developed for the next academic year reflect Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's long-term vision, ideas, experience and efforts for reforming the country's education system, said Prime Minister's Adviser on Education and Primary and Mass Education Dr Mahdi Amin today.

He made the remarks while speaking as a special guest at the inaugural session of a workshop titled "Finalisation of the Framework of Four New Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Levels for the 2027 Academic Year" at the International Mother Language Institute auditorium here.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) Chairman Professor Mohammad Fakhru Maola chaired the event, where Education and Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon attended as the chief guest.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs Ali Newaz Mahmud Khayem, State



Minister for Primary and Mass Education Badiul Alam Bobi Hajjaj and State Minister for Youth and Sports Md Aminul Haque were present as special guests.

Dr Mahdi Amin said the Prime Minister has been working relentlessly to improve the education system and

his educational vision was also reflected in the election manifesto. The new textbooks are being developed in line with that vision, he added.

He particularly stressed making the books on "Learning with Happiness", sports and culture more innovative

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Chief Whip seeks stronger parliamentary cooperation with European Partnership for Democracy

Staff Correspondent

Chief Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Md. Nurul Islam today underscored the importance of strengthening parliamentary democracy, saying democracy is the foundation of a country's development and progress.

He made the remarks when a delegation of the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD) paid a courtesy call on him at his office in the Jatiya Sangsad here.

The EPD delegation comprised Acting Executive Director Thijs Berman and Project Director Anastasia S. Wibawa.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on Bangladesh's parliamentary democracy, strengthening democratic institutions,

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PM personally monitoring disaster situation : Iqbal Hossain

Staff Correspondent

State Minister for disaster management and relief M Iqbal Hossain has said Prime Minister Tarique Rahman is monitoring the overall disaster situation and has directed the authorities to continue providing food and relief assistance to the affected people.

Talking to the journalists after visiting a temporary shelter center at Loknath Brahmachari Ashram at Bhedbhedi area here last night, the state minister said the government would continue extending full support to the victims of landslides and floods as long as necessary.

"If assistance is needed for three months, the government will continue providing support for three



months. Once the situation returns to normal, efforts will be made to rehabilitate the affected people. The Prime Minister and the present government are fully

committed to this," he said.

Iqbal Hossain said that all officials were working in line with the Prime Minister's directives.

"The Prime Minister has

kept all of us constantly engaged. He is providing guidance on what measures should be taken and remains informed about the activities

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Anindya Islam Amit distributes relief to flood affected families in Ctg

Staff Correspondent

Anindya Islam Amit, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, distributed relief to the flood-affected residents of Chandgaon C&B, Mohra, and South Kattli areas here today.

During this initiative, dry food, rice, pulses, oil, purified water, and other essential items were distributed to the flood-affected people.

The State Minister, accompanied by Chattogram City Corporation Mayor Dr. Shahadat Hossain, MP Ershad Ullah, and MP Sayed Al Noman, visited the flood-affected areas and delivered food and necessary relief supplies to the families in need.

While visiting, the State Minister toured the homes of the affected individuals, inquiring about their well-being and discussing the hardships caused by the flooding and water-logging with local residents. He also directed the relevant administration to provide the necessary support.

"In accordance with the humanitarian policy set forth by the Prime Minister, all government agencies, local administrations, and public representatives are collaborating effectively. No affected family will be left without assistance. We will continue to provide

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PM orders highest vigilance, medicines, and medical services to those affected. Tarique Rahman also emphasised the importance of maintaining a safe environment at shelter centres, along with adequate sanitation facilities, uninterrupted electricity, and communication services.

He specifically directed the authorities to ensure necessary healthcare and security for women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women.

To maintain law and order, the Prime Minister instructed law enforcement agencies to remain on maximum alert.

He said it must be ensured that no unscrupulous groups exploit the disaster situation by engaging in theft, robbery, hoarding, misappropriation of relief materials, or any other criminal activities.

The premier also stressed on ensuring transparency, accountability, and priority for genuine victims in the distribution of relief.

Sujon said the meeting held detailed discussions on disaster preparedness, the activities of local administrations, coordination among various agencies involved in rescue operations, and the regular monitoring of river water levels and weather forecasts.

Officials joining the meeting from Chattogram informed the Prime Minister that the waterlogging situation there has gradually begun to improve.

However, the meeting was informed that conditions in the Sylhet region are deteriorating due to damage to the embankment of the Manu River, while there is also a risk of new waterlogging in the Rangpur Division, the deputy press secretary said.

After being briefed on the situation, the Prime Minister instructed all concerned authorities to take comprehensive preparedness measures to address all possible risks, keep the necessary manpower and equipment ready, and continue working in a coordinated manner while standing beside the people, Sujon added.

Half-yearly, mock exams at

Mirpur Siddhanta High School authorities have also postponed all exams.

Motijheel Colony High School headteacher Nazneen Ferdous has issued a notice postponing Sunday's exams for the primary and secondary sections.

Fazlul Huq Mohila College in Gendaria has also issued a notice postponing the Class 11 and Honours fourth-year in-course exams scheduled for Sunday.

BB raises cash incentive

must be members of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA), or other relevant trade bodies.

They are also required to submit documentary evidence proving that yarn, fabrics and other eligible raw materials were procured from local suppliers.

Bangladesh Bank said the increase in the incentive rate does not alter the existing procedures for collecting and verifying locally sourced yarn and fabrics.

Exporters must continue to comply with the provisions of FEPD Circular No. 07 dated June 3, 2003, FEPD Circular No. 09 dated March 5, 2001, and other applicable regulations.

The revised cash incentive will be applicable to eligible export shipments made between July 1, 2026, and June 30, 2027.

The circular instructed all authorised dealer banks and concerned stakeholders to implement the revised incentive with immediate effect.

Govt striving to stand by

possible use of whatever capacity we have." He expressed his gratitude to the officials of the Management and Relief Ministry and the local administration for their sincere efforts to serve the people despite the rain.

Referring to the challenges faced by the country, Habib said, "As you have seen, this government has confronted various natural disasters and a number of external challenges.

Even so, the Prime Minister has continued to work to stand by the people and ease their sufferings.

As the Dhaka-9 family, we are with you, will remain by your side and will move forward together in future."

Leaders and activists of the local Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) attended the event.

Role of MPs crucial to

Deputy Speaker Barrister Kayser Kamal chaired the event. Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat Secretary Barrister Md Golam Sarwar Bhuiyan delivered the welcome address, while Chief Whip Md Nurul Islam Moni, MP, spoke as the special guest, said a press release of the parliament secretariat.

The Speaker said Bangladesh is now at a historic juncture and that the government's various initiatives would play an important role in implementing this year's World Population Day theme: "Empowering Young People to Create the Families They Want in a Fair and Hopeful World."

He stressed the need to transform the country's large youth population into skilled human resources so that the demographic dividend could be effectively utilised to accelerate socio-economic development.

Hafiz Uddin Ahmad said the formation of the Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Forum on Population and Development (BAPPD), with the strategic support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), would further strengthen lawmakers' role in legislating and formulating policies on population and development issues.

He said incorporating issues such as preventing child marriage, strengthening enforcement of related laws, ensuring adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, and achieving the demographic dividend into the activities of parliamentary committees would help attain the desired goals more effectively.

The Speaker expressed hope that the SPCPD project would make a meaningful contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in the areas of health, gender equality, youth development and climate change.

Chief Whip Md Nurul Islam Moni said Bangladesh is currently passing through a demographic phase where a large proportion of the population is young, making it imperative for lawmakers to play an active role at both national and local levels to convert the demographic dividend into economic prosperity.

He said the demographic dividend is not an automatic achievement but the outcome of planned investment.

Ensuring quality education, technical skills and improved healthcare for young people would create enormous opportunities for the country's economy, he added, warning that failure to do so could turn this potential into social and economic challenges.

At the workshop, the Speaker and other speakers expressed deep condolences at the death of former Speaker Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar and prayed for the eternal peace of his departed soul.

Members of Parliament, the UNFPA Bangladesh Country Representative, the project director and senior officials of the

Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat were present at the programme.

Argentina sink 10-man

before the break, with Switzerland outpassing the world champions.

The game struggled to catch fire early in the second half but Murat Yakin's men warmed to their task and got their deserved reward in the 67th minute, when Ndoye swept home following a clever ball from Ricardo Rodriguez.

Five minutes later Switzerland shot themselves in the foot when Embolo, who had been booked in the first half, threw himself to the ground and was dismissed following a VAR check.

Max Allister headed wide with the goal at his mercy as the clock ticked down and Messi sent a curling shot narrowly wide but Switzerland held on to force extra-time.

They continued to repel constant attacks in the first period of extra-time.

But Argentina finally broke Switzerland's brave resistance with Alvarez's moment of magic, which was celebrated by the whole squad, who were on the pitch again minutes later following Martinez's strike.

Now the winners will turn their attention to the challenge of facing England in Atlanta on Wednesday after Thomas Tuchel's men overcame Norway 2-1 earlier on Saturday.

The history of matches between England and Argentina is peppered with flashpoints on the pitch, set against a lingering sovereignty dispute over the Falkland Islands, known in Spanish as the Malvinas, in the South Atlantic Ocean.

Britain sent a military taskforce in 1982 to reclaim the islands after Argentine troops invaded.

Four years later Argentina secured a 2-1 victory over England at the Estadio Azteca with goals from Diego Maradona -- one the infamous "Hand of God" goal and the other a dazzling solo effort considered one of the best ever.

The teams have faced each other twice in World Cups since 1986 -- Argentina won on penalties in 1998 while England gained revenge four years later.

Rain leaves Naya Paltan

Shamim, an employee at the BNP office, said: "Heavy rainfall continued through the night. Water began accumulating on Paltan Road early in the morning. Before 9am, the stretch from the Fakirapul intersection to Kakrail looked almost like Cox's Bazar beach, with waves of water splashing into the party office."

"I was at the office, and several of our colleagues had to wade through water to get inside," he added.

By 10am, roads in Bijoynagar, Kakrail, Fakirapool, Shantinagar, and Malibagh had become waterlogged. On the first working day of the week, office workers, businesspeople, students, and pedestrians faced severe hardship.

Sulaiman, a sanitation worker in Bijoynagar, said, "When I came to work in the morning, I found the streets flooded. Collecting household waste while wading through water has become extremely difficult. The rainfall was especially heavy in the morning, so garbage collection has been disrupted."

"There are still many houses where waste has not been collected. On a normal day, we finish by noon, but now it is already 2pm, and we have not completed our work."

Both sides of Naya Paltan Road are lined with car showrooms and shopping centres, and floodwater has entered many of the shops.

Anwarul Alam Khan, a resident of Bijoynagar, said, "I got completely soaked while trying to go to the office this morning. I had to return home, change my clothes, and set out again."

"There is so much water on the roads that neither rickshaws nor auto-rickshaws are operating. You can see CNG-run auto-rickshaws and small private cars stranded at different points on Naya Paltan Road because water has entered their engines. The situation is extremely inconvenient."

He added, "Whenever it rains heavily for just half a day, areas such as Malibagh, Kakrail, Shantinagar, and Naya Paltan go underwater. This is not a new problem. I think the government should address this issue urgently."

Rising global appetite

The bulk of this volume, around 76%, is absorbed by the UK market alone.

However, relying on a narrow set of destinations limits the industry's ability to hedge against market volatility.

Infrastructure gaps, particularly in cold-chain management and rapid transport, further hamper the ability to reach premium markets.

The lack of large-scale commercial packing houses means that quality control remains a difficult hurdle to clear.

Without systematic investment, the industry remains trapped in a cycle of small-scale, sporadic shipments.

A strategic pivot toward China

The most promising horizon for this industry lies in the rapidly growing demand from China.

As the world's largest importer of the fruit, China represents a massive, untapped demographic. Dhaka has recognised this opportunity and is currently engaged in high-level diplomatic discussions to facilitate trade.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman recently highlighted the potential during the 13th Jatiya Sangsad.

He drew a compelling parallel to the success Malaysia has achieved by exporting durian to the Chinese market.

His vision is for Bangladesh to earn substantial foreign exchange by following a similar path. The strategy focuses on exporting green jackfruit, which is highly valued in Chinese culinary culture as a vegetable.

Green jackfruit offers a distinct advantage due to its significantly longer shelf life during transport.

Initial shipments are planned to originate from registered, pilot-programme orchards in Gazipur.

This controlled approach is designed to meet the rigorous expectations of Chinese food safety officials.

Navigating strict phytosanitary standards

Entering the Chinese market is no simple task, as it demands strict adherence to international protocols.

Agriculture Secretary Dr Rafiqul I Mohamed confirmed that the government is finalising a draft protocol with China.

This agreement focuses heavily on quality control, phytosanitary compliance, and packaging standards.

Abu Noman Faruq Ahmmed, a Global G.A.P. registered trainer and professor at the Department of Plant Pathology at Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, views these requirements as manageable.

He points out that the natural farming practices in Bangladesh provide a significant competitive edge.

"Meeting China's phytosanitary requirements for jackfruit are comparatively easier because we do not use pesticides on jackfruit," he noted.

"Since pesticides are rarely sprayed, there is almost no possibility of pesticide residue in the fruit," the professor explained. However, meeting these standards requires a transition toward formalised, Good Agricultural Practices or GAP certification.

Abu Noman emphasises the need to promote firm-fleshed, export-oriented varieties like the local "Khaja".

Expanding commercial orchards with these specific varieties is critical for long-term export viability.

The path toward value addition

Exporting raw fruit is only the first step in unlocking the industry's true economic potential. Experts argue that building an industrial base for processed jackfruit products is

essential. There is enormous potential for creating ready-to-cook meals, dried chips, and various by-products.

Razia Sultana, owner of Global Trade Link and a prominent fruit exporter, confirms this shift is already underway.

"We are currently diversifying beyond fresh produce to include frozen ripe jackfruit," she noted.

"More importantly, we are actively developing jackfruit chips and meat-alternative patties, which could turn this seasonal crop into a year-round export powerhouse."

She added that several local firms are now collaborating to scale these value-added products for both traditional markets and emerging opportunities in China.

Processing the fruit while it is still green could drastically reduce post-harvest waste.

Developing an industry around these products would create significant value addition and local employment.

"If we can attract foreign investment into this sector, it will generate employment, create value-added products and introduce new ready-to-cook items," Prof Abu Noman said, adding, "In fact, processed jackfruit products are even more important than exporting fresh jackfruit."

Attracting foreign investment into this sector could turn a seasonal crop into a year-round economic engine.

It would also allow Bangladesh to command higher prices in global retail and foodservice chains. Beyond the fruit itself, even the seeds possess untapped potential for manufacturing and food science applications.

The goal is to move from a raw-material supplier to a sophisticated producer of consumer-ready goods.

Building for the future

The success of this initiative will ultimately depend on the government's ability to coordinate with the private sector.

Establishing a network of registered packing houses is the next logical step in this journey. These facilities must be equipped to handle the strict sorting, washing, and packaging requirements of international importers.

The current pilot programme in Gazipur will serve as a critical learning experience for the entire industry.

Success here would provide a blueprint for scaling up production in other major hubs like Tangail and Mymensingh. It would also demonstrate to the global market that Bangladesh is ready to meet modern standards of reliability.

Farmers who have begun cultivating jackfruit on a commercial scale must be supported with proper training. Certification processes must be streamlined to ensure that smallholders can easily integrate into the export supply chain.

With the global demand for plant-based nutrition only set to increase, the timing is indeed perfect. Bangladesh has the production capacity, the climate, and the diplomatic momentum to succeed. If all pieces align, the nation can finally transform its vast, underutilised jackfruit harvest into a pillar of its national economy.

The humble jackfruit is ready to shed its image as a seasonal curiosity and become a global economic player. Cath labs to be installed in remote areas of the country.

All Family Welfare Centres, health assistant centres and community clinics will be renovated, while advanced screening facilities will be installed at every centre. The minister also said the recruitment process is underway to appoint 100,000 new health workers in line with the Prime Minister's directives.

Of them, 80,000 will be women health workers who will provide door-to-door counseling for mothers during the pregnancy and after childbirth. The initiative, he said, aimed to increase awareness among the expectant mothers, encourage normal deliveries, promote breastfeeding among the newborns and ensure proper nutrition for the children.

Sakhawat Hossain further said that 50-bed dialysis centres are being established at every district medical college hospital. Besides, 10-bed dialysis centres are being set up at every upazila hospital so that low-income patients do not have to travel to Dhaka or divisional cities for treatment.

Among others, State Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dr M A Muhiht, Health Secretary Md. Kamruzzaman Chowdhury, Director General of the Directorate General of Health Services Prof. Dr. Prabhat Chandra Biswas, Director General of the Directorate of Medical Education Prof. Dr. Nazmul Hossain and Director General of the Directorate General of Family Planning Dr. Jinnat Rehana also addressed the event.

Muktadir condoles death

He described the late leader as a symbol of wisdom, honesty and responsibility, adding that the nation would remember him with profound respect for his outstanding contributions to the state.

Muktadir also highlighted Sircar's significant role in the democratic movement, the development of parliamentary democracy and his valuable contributions to the country's constitutional and legislative processes.

Barrister Jamiruddin Sircar passed away at Bangladesh Specialized Hospital in the capital in the early hours of today at the age of 95.

4 new textbooks reflect

and distinctive than conventional textbooks.

Highlighting the need to make textbooks more attractive to students, the adviser said existing books are often heavily text-based.

He suggested incorporating more visual elements, including photographs, tables, diagrams and illustrations, into the "Learning with Happiness" textbook so that students can learn in an enjoyable manner.

He also recommended adding a detailed introductory chapter and practical applications of the philosophical foundations of the book.

About overcoming social reluctance towards technical education, Dr Mahdi Amin said many talented students are still unwilling to pursue technical education, although every student should acquire at least basic technical skills.

He said laboratory facilities would be ensured in educational institutions and motivational background chapters would be included in textbooks to encourage students towards technical education.

Referring to errors and distortions of history in textbooks during the previous government's tenure, Dr Amin said the government's objective is to ensure an objective presentation of history.

"We do not need to rewrite history according to our own preferences. What emerges from impartial analysis and factual truth will be reflected in textbooks," he said, adding that the revision process would continue.

The adviser said the government is working to ensure that textbooks reach all students by January 1 next.

As distribution requires nearly a month, around 31 crore textbooks must be printed, published and kept ready by mid-November, he added.

Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Abdul Khaleque, secretaries of different ministries, NCTB officials and education experts attended the programme.

Anindya Islam Amit

essential food, clean water, medicines, and other forms of support," Amit stated.

City Mayor Dr. Shahadat Hossain said that every relevant department of the corporation is tirelessly working on the ground. This effort will persist until the situation returns to normal. Senior officials from the administration, political leaders, and members of various social and voluntary organizations were present during this effort.

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PM personally monitoring

of all ministries," he added.

The state minister said the Prime Minister had assigned State Minister for Power Anindya Islam Amit to oversee the flood situation in the Chattogram Division, where he is expected to remain for the next six to seven days to monitor the situation.

He added that he had been tasked with assessing the situation in the three hill districts and two other affected districts and submitting a report.

"After visiting the area, I found that continuous rainfall and flash floods from the hills have caused significant damage. However, the local administration has managed the situation reasonably well. The government stands ready to provide additional relief assistance if necessary. Once floodwaters recede and the situation stabilizes, we will work with the local administration and other stakeholders to determine the next steps for those affected," he said.

Lawmaker from Rangamati Dipen Dewan, government officials and local BNP leaders were present.

Iqbal Hossain also said the cause of the current disaster and flood situation has been created over many years rather than overnight. The navigability of the lake did not decline in a single day. We failed to give this issue sufficient attention in the past and now we must rethink our approach," he said.

He stressed that environmental degradation caused by human activities had intensified the crisis, making disaster management a major challenge.

"We must become more aware and work together to address this challenge," he added.

During the visit, the state minister spoke with the people took shelter, offering them assurance and distributing food among them.

Earlier, he visited Khagrachhari district before travelling to Rangamati on Saturday night to monitor flood situation and relief activities.

Chief Whip seeks stronger

advancing the democratic process and making the Jatiya Sangsad more effective, said a press release of parliament secretariat.

The Chief Whip said the stronger the democratic process becomes, the more firmly the people's rights are established, enabling all constitutional and democratic institutions to perform their responsibilities more effectively.

Describing parliament as the heart of democracy, he said the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Speaker and most members of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad have been elected for the first time.

"In order to make parliament more effective and vibrant, there is no alternative to ensuring that members of parliament acquire comprehensive knowledge of the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure and parliamentary practices and conventions," he said.

Thijs Berman said Bangladesh is currently enjoying a positive democratic environment and expressed the EPD's willingness to extend necessary support to enhance the capacity of lawmakers and further strengthen the effectiveness of the Jatiya Sangsad.

He highly appreciated the Chief Whip's visible role in making the current parliament more effective and dynamic.

Senior officials of the Jatiya Sangsad Secretariat were present at the meeting.

CAAB completes 80pc

security equipment have been completed successfully. The equipment is expected to arrive in August and will be installed in phases by September 1.

CAAB will also conduct an internal pre-audit in the first week of October to identify and rectify any remaining shortcomings before the ICAO assessment.

According to CAAB, Bangladesh scored 68.55 percent in ICAO's 2018 security audit, surpassing the then international benchmark of 65 percent. The authority is targeting a score of more than 75 percent in this year's audit.

In the latest DFT assessment, Bangladesh achieved 100 percent compliance in cargo security and 93-94 percent compliance in passenger security.

CAAB officials expressed confidence that the ongoing preparations, combined with the installation of modern security equipment and close high-level monitoring, would help Bangladesh achieve improved results in both audits, further enhancing the international reputation of the country's airports and strengthening its position in the global aviation security framework.

Flood death toll hits 51;

in Rangamati and 2,883 people in 150 shelters in Khagrachhari.

Meanwhile, 2,172 people are sheltering in 20 centres in Moulvibazar, and 1,580 people have taken refuge in 27 shelters in Cox's Bazar. Although two shelters have been opened in Habiganj, the report did not specify the number of evacuees staying there.

Tk 1.75 crore allocated to seven flood-hit districts

According to the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, a total of Tk Tk 1.75 crore in cash assistance and 3,250 metric tonnes of rice were allocated to seven flood-affected districts between July 7 and July 12.

The highest allocation went to Chattogram, which received Tk 65 lakh and 1,200 metric tonnes of rice. Cox's Bazar was allocated Tk 30 lakh and 450 metric tonnes of rice, while Rangamati received Tk 25 lakh and 500 metric tonnes of rice. Khagrachhari was allotted Tk 20 lakh and 400 metric tonnes of rice.

Bandarban also received Tk 20 lakh and 400 metric tonnes of rice, followed by Moulvibazar with Tk 10 lakh and 200 metric tonnes of rice, and Habiganj with Tk 500,000 and 100 metric tonnes of rice.

During the same period, the ministry allocated a total of Tk 4.6 crore and 8,950 metric tonnes of rice for general and disaster-related assistance across all 64 districts. The 57 districts outside the seven flood-affected areas each received a standard allocation of Tk 5 lakh and 100 metric tonnes of rice.

Relief distribution underway to the ministry's report, 710 tons of rice, Tk 60 lakh, 39,250 packets of dry food and 15,100 packets of cooked food have already been distributed in Chittagong.

In Bandarban, 68 tons of rice, Tk 2 lakh 40 thousand, 235 packets of baby food and 2,953 packets of cooked and dry food have been distributed. Various private organizations have also distributed another 1,845 packets of dry food.

In Moulvibazar, 110 tons of rice, Tk 5 lakh and 1,750 packets of dry food have been distributed.

The ministry said 10 tons of rice, Tk 1 lakh 20 thousand and 1,417 packets of dry food and other relief items have been distributed in Habiganj.



Bellingham double as 'lucky' England beat Norway to reach World Cup semi-finals

Sports Desk

Jude Bellingham scored twice as England staged an extra-time escape act to defeat Norway 2-1 on Saturday and book their place in the World Cup semi-finals.

Bellingham's 93rd-minute winner settled a nerve-jangling quarter-final played in sweltering conditions at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium.

But England, who will face either Argentina or Switzerland in the semi-finals on Wednesday, rode their luck to keep their World Cup dream alive.

"We made life very, very difficult for ourselves today," England manager Thomas Tuchel said afterwards.

"The result is fantastic. The last four is amazing, but not happy with the performance... we were very lucky today."

Bellingham's equaliser in first-half stoppage time came after a goal kick from Norway goalkeeper Orjan Nyland struck an overhead television camera cable -- an incident that should have led to a re-taken goal kick.

England also received another huge break when Torbjorn Heggem's 55th-minute goal that put Norway 2-1 up was ruled out after a VAR review for a shove by Erling Haaland on Elliot Anderson.

England, looking increasingly weary in punishing temperatures that had reached 108 Fahrenheit (42 degrees Celsius) on the heat index, retook the lead in the 93rd minute, when Nyland spilled substitute Morgan Rogers' long-range shot and Bellingham drove in the rebound.

match had been billed as a duel between England striker Harry Kane and Norway

counterpart Erling Haaland, but the expected confrontation never materialised.

Haaland was substituted in extra-time as Norway -- who had taken the lead on 36 minutes through Andreas Schjelderup's rasping shot -- chased an equaliser in vain.

England benefited from a let-off in the 44th minute, when Norway broke swiftly with Alexander Sorloth and Haaland bearing down on an isolated John Stones.

Sorloth though inexplicably chose to go it alone rather than pass to in-form Haaland in acres of space and the chance was gone.

Norway were made to pay in the first minute of first half stoppage time when Bellingham surged into the area and rifled home a low shot to crown the attack launched after Nyland's goal-kick struck the overhead camera.

The win raises the prospect of a titanic World Cup showdown between England and arch-rivals Argentina.

Defending champions Argentina face Switzerland in Kansas City later Saturday as they aim to edge closer to completing their dream of back-to-back World Cups.

The South Americans cruised through the group stage but since entering the knockout rounds, frailties have crept in as they were pushed to breaking point by first World Cup debutants Cape Verde and then Egypt.

Lionel Messi, who turned 39 during the group phase, has again been the talisman for the South Americans, his genius repeatedly getting his team out of tight spots.

But there is just a suggestion the Swiss, a well-organised unit marshalled by midfield general Granit Xhaka, could exploit any weariness and cause them problems at Arrowhead Stadium.

Australia coach expects stern test from Bangladesh pacers in Test series

Sports Desk

Australia head coach Andrew McDonald believes that Bangladesh's rapidly improving pace attack would be a major threat for them in the upcoming two-Test series at home next month.

He admitted that the visitors possess the bowling resources to trouble his side even in their own conditions.

McDonald singled out fast bowlers Nahid Rana, Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam, describing Bangladesh's pace unit as one of the quickest in Test cricket and warning that Australia's batters would need thorough preparation to counter their challenge."They've got a pace attack that, in Australia, could be pretty potent," McDonald told cricket.com.au after Australia's recent tour of Bangladesh, where the hosts secured a historic maiden ODI series victory over the visitors.

"We're going to have to do our homework. I know it's a different format but it's probably a great connector in terms of just seeing how their bowlers go about it and getting a look at



their actions."

McDonald recalled Nahid Rana's impressive spell in the opening ODI in Dhaka last month, when the tearaway pacer claimed 4-41 to help Bangladesh lay the foundation for the landmark series triumph.

"Rana got us in the first game, didn't he? Sometimes that can be sight unseen as well-we hadn't had a look at him and he comes in with a different action," he

said.

The Australia coach also defended his team's ODI series defeat, pointing to Bangladesh's outstanding record at home in recent months.

"I think they are a good team, and I think that's the thing that's probably lost in it all after we do lose a series to Bangladesh for the first time. In their conditions they've won five ODI series in a row, so they're a good team there,"

he added.

According to CricViz data cited by cricket.com.au, Rana has been Test cricket's fastest bowler since making his debut in March 2024, while Bangladesh and Australia have fielded the two fastest pace attacks in the longest format over the same period.

The article also noted that Bangladesh rested Rana, Taskin and Shoriful for the recent one-off Test against Zimbabwe in Harare, a match they lost by an innings and 85-run after fielding a depleted pace attack.

Despite praising Bangladesh's seam bowlers, McDonald believes Australia's batting depth and spin department could prove decisive in the two-match series, particularly if veteran off-spinner Nathan Lyon recovers from a hamstring injury.

"I think for any touring team, runs are always a challenge. We've seen in Australia in recent times that even our team's been compromised in the runs column with the surfaces that we've played on," McDonald said.

Norwegian team planning to galvanise Tour de France

Sports Desk

Tobias Johannessen of the Norwegian Uno-X Mobility team said they were looking to "make some dynamics" at the Tour de France after losing the yellow jersey.

Uno-X have impressed with their distinctive red and yellow jerseys and determination to make things happen at the Tour.

Torstein Traeen held the yellow jersey for two days after finding his way into the right breakaway on Tuesday's fourth stage from Carcassonne to Foix but things unravelled for the Norwegians in Thursday's sixth stage in the Pyrenees.

Traeen crashed on a speedy descent off the imposing Tourmalet climb and finished half an hour behind stage winner Tadej Pogacar, thus giving up the leader's jersey.

He also suffered a concussion and four broken ribs, forcing him to quit the Tour that evening.

Johannessen also struggled that day, losing more than eight minutes. He now sits 13th at 9min 42sec, with his hopes of beating last year's sixth-placed finish looking slim.

"We lost, of course, a lot of time, but I think that still (we) can create some opportunities -- we're still here to race," Johannessen told AFP and another cycling reporter.



"There's a couple of breakaway stages that can suit our team really well.

"There's also some stages where you can take some time back, so we're not out of it."

Spirits remain high in the Uno-X camp in their first season as a World Tour team.

They turned up to Saturday's pre-stage team presentation with Norwegian football jerseys ahead of the national team's World Cup quarter-final against England in Miami.

They performed the famous Viking row which the country's World Cup fans and team have popularised.

Uno-X are determined to make their own mark on the Tour with their performances.

"We're a team that likes to be active, and we showed that we have a really good sprinter in Soren Waerenskjoeld, but I feel like we get a bit bored if it's just the sprints," said Johannessen.

"We just need to make some dynamics to the bike race, and that's where our team thrives the most."

The team will be sniffing out breakaway opportunities, as they did last year when invited to the Tour as a wildcard team.

Jonas Abrahamson outsprinted Mauro Schmid to win the 11th stage around Toulouse with former world champion Mathieu van der Poel seven seconds back in third.

That was both Abrahamson and Uno-X's first ever Grand Tour stage victory.

"I think we have to look out for opportunities now for a breakaway," Abrahamson told AFP.

"Last year it was with a stage win so we will see -- hopefully it is possible."

If the Norwegian football team has shown one thing, Abrahamson said, it is that: "Everything is possible."

Entertainment

Prabha vents her 16-year-old anger

Entertainment Desk

Although not a regular actor, popular TV drama actress Sadia Jahan Prabha is quite active on social media. Recently, there is a lot of discussion surrounding a Facebook post of hers. Where the heroine gave a post hinting at falling in love! Amidst this discussion and criticism, Prabha gave a video message. She vented her long-standing anger and spoke some 'burning truths' against cyber criminals and bullies.

At the beginning of the video message, Prabha said that although she has not spoken about the various issues that have happened recently for a long time, it is no longer possible to close her eyes due to her sense of responsibility. Therefore, she has brought the truths inside her to light.

Prabha questions the mentality of those who troll and bully others online, citing research by human psychology and psychiatrists. She said, "You mock people because you are insecure about your own abilities, your own place, your own beauty, your own qualifications. Those who judge people so aggressively, bully them, and verbally abuse them on social media are



actually not satisfied with themselves and are unhappy. But those who are insecure are the ones who bully celebrities or artists on social platforms at maximum time."

Expressing the pain of her personal experience, the actress said, "I have been bullied for almost 16 years. I totally understand that you find fun in bullying me, that it is a demonic pleasure for you. But if you had spent 50 percent of the bullying on

me (the victim) and the remaining 50 percent on finding the criminal and mocking him, writing about him, repeatedly exposing his face to the public that he is a criminal, then the situation would not have been like this."

He strongly criticized the culture of victim blaming in society, saying, "Just as we now give pictures of rapists or once punished acid throwers, huge penalties are being

given. Similarly, disclosing the personal secrets or privacy of those who harm another person without their consent is a serious crime. But instead of bullying those people, you are bullying the victim day after day."

The actress, strongly criticizing the online trolls, said, "I have no problem with your insecurity, beauty, qualifications or income source. But if you had bullied criminals half as much as you have bullied me, then Tanmays would not have been born in the world. A 35-year-old boy is not even in the middle of a midlife crisis, young enough. He could have dated anyone if he wanted. But this perversion (perverted mentality) has been born in him because we are not able to identify the right criminal and talk about his crime."

In the last part of the video message, Prabha said, "Our society and the next generation need awareness about eliminating childhood trauma and proper parenting. But when a perpetrator is constantly mentally tortured by hiding a victim, then society suffers even more. Therefore, instead of blaming the victim, this popular actress called for bringing the real perpetrators to justice."



'I am alone, I want to be more alone'

Entertainment Desk

Director Asif Islam has portrayed the brutal reality of Bangladesh's traditional Jatra art in the film. The name is 'King in the Land of the Princess'. Its official trailer was recently released. And popular actress and dancer Ashna Habib Bhabna has shown a real surprise by playing the role of 'Princess Rosie' in this film. The actress, known for her role in 'Khiri Sundar', shared an emotional post on Facebook on Sunday about the inner struggle and dilemma she faced while portraying the character on screen. In it, she told the story of becoming 'Princess Rosie'. Bhavana wrote, 'From the look test to the final look of "Princess Rosie". When Asif (my producer) brought the character of Princess Rosie to me, the first thing I thought was how will I do it? I am a classical dancer. The way we create our body language since childhood, for us, such dancing is tantamount to sin. Having a background in classical dance, capturing the dance and gestures of this character was a big challenge for Bhavana. Along with that, there was the fear of social views. Expressing her dilemma, she wrote, "Then I thought what will people say? Because when an actor has a character here, the audience really thinks of him as that person; on top of that, I am a female actor. Then I asked myself, what do I want? I got the answer that I want to do the character. Then Asif and I entered the battle to find that character."

Referring to the long preparation between the producer and the actress to portray the character perfectly on screen, Bhavana wrote, "Day after day, Asif and I just talked about the story and the character. There are many more stories, if I write them, the writing will be big. When I saw myself on the big screen in Moscow, I didn't recognize myself! At times, I was lowering my head in shame, wondering, "Is this me?"

Finally, the actress wrote, 'I want to spend my life as an actor. I know this life is difficult, but I have accepted it.



New album after 31 years!

Entertainment Desk

Popular Nazrul Sangeet artiste Ferdous Ara is set to release a new modern song album after almost 31 years, rekindling a musical journey she had largely set aside decades ago. Reflecting on her early career, Ferdous Ara said that she had auditioned for Bangladesh Television (BTV) in 1972 and was enlisted in both the Nazrul and Modern song categories. However, her father did not encourage her to pursue modern songs professionally, prompting her to devote herself primarily to Nazrul Sangeet.

"Even so, I have sung modern songs at different times on request-for films, television dramas and various BTV programmes," she said.

Her last modern song album, titled "Moner Pakhi Kotha Koy", was released in 1995 by Indian music label HMV. Since then, she had not worked on another modern album.

According to the artiste, the inspiration for her latest project came unexpectedly while recording a modern song titled "Aha Ki Sundar Ghuri" about a month ago.

"I suddenly felt that I could create a new album of modern songs. From that thought, I started working on the project," she said.

The tentative title of the upcoming album is "Prem", although Ferdous Ara noted that the name may change before its release. The album is expected to feature 10 songs, with five already completed and work underway to finish the remaining tracks.

She added that the lyrics and compositions are being crafted with the tastes and preferences of younger listeners in mind. In addition to the audio release, separate music videos are also planned for each song.

What Sohini Sarkar said about the rumors of becoming a mother

Entertainment Desk

Popular Tollywood actress Sohini Sarkar and musician Shobhan Ganguly tied the knot in a private ceremony in July 2024. In a few days, their marriage will be two years old. Meanwhile, Sohini Sarkar has been keeping a distance from the limelight of the entertainment world for some time now.

The actress was not even seen at the premiere of her new movie 'Phera'. This sudden absence and silence has actually increased the speculation that she is a mother several times over.

In such an atmosphere, a section of netizens have once again provoked Sohini Sarkar's comment, "I don't want



to be a mother in this country," in the context of the Ajikar scandal! But whatever the detractors say, for now, the

industry's friends are waiting for Shobhan-Sohini's announcement.

According to Tollywood sources, the star couple is about to embark on a new chapter in their lives as parents. However, neither of them has given any reaction since the good news came out. However, this time, Sohini Sarkar opened up to the media for the first time about the speculation of becoming a mother while attending an award ceremony in Talipara. She said, "It's an award function. I think we only talk about awards and the artist's work there. There will definitely come a time for us too, when we will tell everything. That is our right. Every person has the right to share these moments of joy."

Editorial

Avoidable landslide deaths must stop

Although fatalities caused by natural disasters such as floods, cyclones and lightning are fairly common in Bangladesh, deaths from landslides have emerged as a recurring tragedy. The latest disaster in Cox's Bazar, where at least 10 people, including eight Rohingya refugees, lost their lives after heavy rain triggered a series of landslides, is a grim reminder that the country has failed to prevent these catastrophes.

Once again, the Cox's Bazar incident has shown that these deaths were not merely the consequence of nature's fury; they also reflected persistent failures in public awareness, risk management, land use planning and disaster preparedness.

The victims, many of them children, were buried in their sleep as unstable hillsides collapsed onto makeshift shelters in the Rohingya camps. Additionally, thousands of families remain under constant threat as heavy rainfall continues. The district administration has ordered evacuations and opened temporary shelters, but such emergency responses are often seen inadequate.

The problem extends well beyond the refugee camps. Chattogram has witnessed repeated landslide disasters over the past two decades. The devastating hill collapse in June 2007 alone claimed 128 lives, while hundreds more have died in subsequent years across Chattogram and the Hill Tracts. Despite these painful experiences, illegal hill cutting, unplanned settlements and weak enforcement of environmental regulations continue almost unabated. Every year, authorities issue warnings before the monsoon, yet many vulnerable families remain on unstable slopes because they simply have nowhere else to go.

The Rohingya camps present an even more complex challenge. Several hundred thousand refugees live in shelters built on or beneath fragile hillsides, making them exceptionally vulnerable during prolonged rainfall. Although humanitarian agencies have undertaken slope stabilisation, drainage improvement and reforestation programmes over the years, the sheer density of the camps and the limited availability of safe land have made the risks difficult to deal with.

Authorities say they repeatedly warned residents to relocate to safer shelters before the heavy rains. Such warnings are essential, but they are not enough. Many people are understandably reluctant to leave their homes and belongings unless they are confident of receiving adequate accommodation, security and basic services at evacuation centres.

Disaster preparedness therefore requires much more than loudspeaker announcements. It demands sustained community engagement, reliable early warning systems, well-equipped shelters and continuous public awareness campaigns. Long-term solutions are equally important. Illegal occupation of vulnerable hills must stop. Existing environmental laws should be enforced without political interference. At the same time, affordable housing should be developed for low-income families living on dangerous slopes.

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in reducing cyclone-related deaths through effective early warning systems and community preparedness. The same determination must now be applied to landslide risk reduction. Every life lost beneath collapsing hills represents not only the devastating force of nature but also a preventable failure of governance and preparedness. So, unless lessons are translated into action, the next spell of heavy rain will bring yet another avoidable tragedy.

Overcoming delay in justice delivery

The staggering backlog of cases pending with courts across Bangladesh is more than a statistical concern -- it is a reflection of a justice system struggling to keep pace with public demand. According to information placed before Parliament by the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, a total of 4,639,476 civil and criminal cases remained pending across the country's courts as of March this year. Of these, 561,044 cases were awaiting disposal in the Supreme Court alone. The Appellate Division had 38,713 pending cases, while the High Court Division was burdened with 522,331 cases. The remaining 4,078,432 cases were pending with subordinate courts, where criminal cases outnumbered civil disputes by a considerable margin.

The judiciary, however, has not remained entirely inactive. During 2025, the Appellate Division disposed of 7,553 cases and the High Court Division resolved another 55,756, bringing the total number of cases settled by the apex court to 63,309. Subordinate courts disposed of 275,084 cases during the same period. These figures underscore a harsh reality-- the inflow of new cases outstripping the pace of disposal, leaving the backlog to swell. The government's response has mainly been to expand the judicial capacity. More than 500 judicial posts have been created, recruitment of 150 civil judges is underway and the Judicial Service Commission continues to appoint supporting staff. In addition, hundreds of new courts -- including Civil Judge, Senior Civil Judge, Joint District and Sessions Judge and Additional District and Sessions Judge courts -- have been established to strengthen the judicial infrastructure. These initiatives deserve recognition. However, they also invite a more fundamental question: is the shortage of judges the principal cause of the growing backlog? The answer is unlikely to be an unqualified yes.

The Cost of a Flower Bouquet: Why Bangladesh Must Rethink Administrative Rituals

Md. Mukhlesur Rahman

Not every government reform requires new legislation, large budgets, or sweeping institutional restructuring. Sometimes, meaningful change begins with questioning everyday practices that have become so routine they escape scrutiny.

One such practice in Bangladesh is the elaborate culture of welcoming and bidding farewell to senior officials with flower bouquets, lengthy ceremonies, speeches, photo sessions, banners, and social media publicity. Although these rituals are widely accepted as gestures of courtesy and respect, they also consume something far more valuable than flowers or refreshments: time.

In modern governance, time is not merely a scheduling issue; it is a public resource. Every hour spent on unnecessary formalities is an hour not spent delivering public services, processing applications, implementing development projects, resolving citizens' problems, or making decisions that affect economic activity. For a country striving to become a high-income economy, the efficient use of every working hour should be regarded as a national priority.

No one disputes the importance of professional courtesy. Every institution should foster respect among colleagues and acknowledge leadership with dignity. But respect should never come at the expense of productivity. When an entire office suspends its normal work to participate in ceremonial events, the hidden costs extend well beyond the conference room. Files remain unattended, meetings are postponed, public services slow down, and citizens—whose taxes finance the public administration—ultimately pay the price.

The issue is not the flower bouquet itself. It is what the bouquet has come to represent. Over time, ceremonial receptions have evolved into highly visible institutional rituals. In many offices, newly appointed officials are welcomed through carefully choreographed events involving multiple bouquets, speeches, photographs, and extensive online promotion. Similar arrangements accompany transfers, promotions, retirements, birthdays, inspections, and official visits. These occasions often occupy substantial portions of the working day, engaging employees whose expertise would be better directed toward serving the public.

There is another, less visible consequence. Such ceremonies may unintentionally reinforce a culture where symbolism receives greater attention than performance. Recognition risks becoming associated with hierarchy rather than achievement, visibility rather than effectiveness, and personal loyalty rather than institutional excellence. Healthy public institu-

tions should reward competence, integrity, innovation, and measurable results—not ceremonial displays.

The financial implications, although individually modest, are also worth considering. Expenses associated with receptions are frequently covered through departmental operating funds, employee welfare funds, or informal staff contributions. Across thousands of offices throughout the country, these small expenditures accumulate into a broader culture of avoidable public spending. At a time when fiscal dis-



cipline is increasingly important, even seemingly minor inefficiencies deserve attention.

Around the world, many of the most effective public administrations have deliberately simplified workplace ceremonies. Newly appointed officials are introduced through brief orientation sessions, concise meetings, or simple handshakes before immediately turning their attention to institutional priorities. Leadership is measured not by ceremonial reception but by the ability to improve services, strengthen accountability, and deliver results.

Dealing with dropouts at higher secondary level

Nilratan Halder

The news that 36 per cent of regular students enrolled for completion of higher secondary education have not even registered for this year's ongoing Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations is alarming. Two years back about 1.5 million students had completed admission to class 11 and now 0.55 million are missing from the exam. Last year, the dropout rate was 29 per cent, up from 21.51 per cent in 2024. But strangely, in 2023 academic year too, the dropout rate of students at the HSC level was 29 per cent. In 2021 and 2022, the years following the Covid-19 pandemic, the absenteeism was recorded at 21.14 and 22.72 per cent respectively. Why the dropouts in the academic year 2023 rose so sharply and fell equally abruptly in 2024 defy a logical explanation.

But this year's steep rise in dropout is a cause for serious concern. Apart from the 550,000 students who dropped out straightway, the numbers of examinees not appearing at the first few days' exams are mounting. The numbers of absentees range between more than 20,000 and well above 30,000. There is a need for a comprehensive study on this rising trend of absenteeism among students at the higher secondary level. Presumptions like early marriage of girl students and entry of boys into job market, economic hardship of students' families not allowing continuation of education and unemployment for university graduates may make some points but still fall short of hitting the bull's eye.

Last year the Dhaka Education Board took an initiative to find out what caused registered students of the secondary level not to appear for examination. Although it was not a comprehensive study, still it indicated that 41 per cent of the girl students were married off. Early marriage of girls should have reflection on the number of such candidates with abrupt drop in their appearance for HSC exam. This is hardly the case. In pass rate and

higher score, girls are outperforming boys in the first two public examinations.

In fact, the rural-urban divide and disparities in education is often overlooked. Educational institutions with zero per cent pass are not found in cities but in rural areas. Yet another important issue escapes notice: the overwhelming majority of teachers

them with a comprehensive knowledge of the subjects. In this respect, the pernicious impact of Covid-19 on the current batches of SSC and HSC students should be taken into account. They had suffered foundational lapses in earlier classes. No government programme was taken to make up for the educational losses suffered by them. Prolonged closure of educational



have their origin in villages. They migrate to towns and cities--only more so to the capital city--in order to overcome their miserable financial condition in village schools. Only teachers of low calibre or a few reputed ones in exceptional cases stay in villages to pursue their low-paid profession.

In cities, proliferation of coaching centres presents an ugly truth. The truth is that teaching in classrooms is far too inadequate to prepare students for examinations, let alone arming

institutions pushed them out of learning track. These batches of students are paying for the disruptions caused by the pandemic. Yet not all students fall victim to the unlearning process. Parents who can afford house tutors and coaching centre costs ensured that their children made up for the learning gap. But students from poor families were not lucky enough to find themselves on the right track of recovery. Their knowledge gap widened because of absence of any government or school-initiated recov-

The private sector has moved even further in this direction. Lean management, results-based management, and performance-driven organizational cultures all recognize a simple truth: productivity improves when unnecessary processes are reduced. Governments should be no exception.

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress over the past decades in expanding infrastructure, digitizing public services, strengthening macroeconomic management, and improving administrative capacity. The next phase of reform should focus equally on organizational culture. Modern governance depends as much on institutional habits as it does on legislation. The solution is neither complicated nor controversial. Government institutions could adopt clear administrative guidelines limiting ceremonial events to brief and simple occasions. Welcome and farewell programs need not exceed ten or fifteen minutes. Instead of costly flower bouquets, institutions could present books, tree saplings, or modest organizational mementos that better reflect public values, environmental responsibility, and knowledge.

More importantly, institutions should redefine how they celebrate success. Rather than sharing photographs of ceremonial receptions, they should highlight improvements in service delivery, innovations in governance, reductions in processing times, successful policy implementation, and achievements that directly improve citizens' lives. These are the accomplishments that deserve public recognition.

Ultimately, the purpose of public administration is not to celebrate officials but to serve citizens. Public office is a responsibility, not a ceremony. The respect earned by a public servant should be measured by honesty, competence, professionalism, and dedication—not by the number of bouquets presented at the office entrance.

Bangladesh's aspiration to build a modern, accountable, and citizen-centred state will not be achieved through grand reforms alone. It will also depend on the willingness to reconsider everyday practices that no longer serve the public interest.

Reducing unnecessary ceremonial culture will not diminish dignity or respect. On the contrary, it will send a powerful message that professionalism matters more than appearances, that service is valued above symbolism, and that every working hour belongs to the people. In a modern democracy, the finest tribute to a public official is not a bouquet of flowers. It is a public institution that serves its citizens efficiently, transparently, and with unwavering commitment.

(The writer is an Economist, Public policy thinker and human rights activist)

ery measures. With weaknesses in foundational knowledge, these students continue to lag behind their peers in reputed educational institutions in cities and towns. Indeed, a lack of money and opportunities has ill-prepared students for appearing in examinations at the secondary and higher secondary levels.

The number of missing students from examinations should not soar after the generations that were in primary school during the Covid-19 phase pass out. But it is unlikely to happen because of the harsh reality of global politics and economy. While the privileged segments of society can weather the setback of international commerce and trade--- some even prospering in defiance of disruptions triggered by Donald Trump's reciprocal tariff, the lower classes of people are losing their jobs and livelihood options. Against the background of increasing industrial automation, workers find themselves terminated from employment. This is causing a social rift with uncertainty staring in the face of workers and employees down the rank.

Students of lower class families have increasingly been discriminated against, forcing them to discontinue education. Desperation of such families compels them either to migrate abroad or go for livelihood options of small trade, vending and driving auto rickshaws in cities and towns in order to keep their body and soul together. Thus the social divide is yawning.

In such a grim situation, there is a need for collecting data from educational institutions about the missing students. What exactly has driven them to drop out of education should be the basis of individual and collective interventions aimed at bringing them into the learning process. Demographic dividends will remain elusive if the millions of youths remain neither in education, nor in employment and training. This is a serious issue and should be treated so for an urgent action plan.

Golden days of golden fiber returning

Rajshahi Bureau

Due to the growing demand, the price of jute, once called the golden fibre of Bangladesh, in Rajshahi has increased nearly threefold in the last 10 years. As a result, cultivation has also increased almost twofold. This season, jute cultivation in the district has increased by about 7,000 bighas. Following that, those involved in jute cultivation say- the golden days of the golden fiber of Bangladesh starts returning. According to relevant sources, jute production in Rajshahi has increased by 22,946 metric tons over the past 10 years. During this period, an additional 7,000 hectares of land have been brought under jute cultivation, according to a report (2016-2026) revealed by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), Rajshahi. In addition to the rise in jute prices, cultivation and production in Rajshahi have increased with the cooperation and advice of the agriculture office. In 2016, the yield from 11,260 hectares of land was 22,836 metric tons. Ten years later, in 2025, production from 17,305 hectares reached 45,782 metric tons. Farmers' interest in jute farming has grown because they have been getting good prices for the last four years. Kalam, a farmer from the Duary area of Paba Upazila, said, "Including land lease, seeds, fertilizer, labor, irrigation and all other costs, the expense is about Taka 20,000 per bigha. The yield per bigha is nine to 10 maunds. After deducting costs, last year I made a profit of Taka 16,000 to 18,000 per bigha." Other farmers in his area have also profited from jute cultivation, which is why they have planted jute on more land this year. According to DAE, Rajshahi, this year jute has been cultivated on 18,305 hectares of land in the district, which is about 7,000 bighas more than the set target. Due to favorable weather condition, the jute crop is in good condition so far. The Department of Agricultural Marketing stated, "We are regularly monitoring the market to ensure farmers' jute is sold at a fair price. Market committees have been instructed to ensure farmers' rightful dues. Since jute is Bangladesh's traditional export crop, so market system must be made stronger to keep farmers profitable while middlemen must be controlled. The government is working to implement the Mandatory Jute Packaging Act of 2010 to increase domestic use. In addition, farmers are getting fair prices due to the raw jute export policy, said sources. Sources report there are a total of seven jute mills in the district, including Rajshahi Jute Mills. These mills buy jute directly from farmers at fair prices. The largest is Rahman Jute Spinners in Puthia Upazila, with a production capacity of 100 metric tons. In addition, Rahman Jute Mill has a capacity of 20 metric tons, Hasen Jute Mill 18 metric tons, and Nowhata Jute Mill and Aman Jute Fibers each have a capacity of 15 metric tons. Overall, last year farmers not only got a good yield but also received their desired price. Those involved believe that if jute prices remain at this level, cultivation will increase further in the future.



Water level in Jamuna continues to rise

Sirajganj Correspondent

The water level in the Jamuna River in Sirajganj continues to rise due to heavy rainfall and the downpour of hill torrents from upstream. Although the river is still flowing below the danger level, the onset of the monsoon season has brought strong current that has already triggered erosion along the Jamuna. Riverbank erosion has been reported in various areas of Sirajganj Sadar and Chouhali Upazila, both situated along the Jamuna. Everyday, homesteads, crop lands, and trees are being swallowed by the river, leaving many people displaced. The most severe erosion has occurred in Sadar Upazila and Chouhali. Over the past month, around 120 metres of land at the Char Salimabad point in Chauhali Upazila have already been lost to the river, while in Ratankandi Union under Sirajganj Sadar, 30 metres of riverbank protection embankment have collapsed into the water. In the erosion-affected areas, many homes, markets, schools, madrasas, and other educational institutions are now at risk. To control the situation, the Water Development Board (WDB) is making emergency efforts to prevent further erosion by dumping geobags (special sand-filled bags) in the vulnerable zones. According to the Sirajganj WDB, although the Jamuna's water rose rapidly from mid-May this year, it is still below the danger mark. However, the water level continues to fluctuate, rising and falling intermittently, and erosion has already begun under these conditions. On Tuesday, the Jamuna's water at the Hardpoint of the Sirajganj town protection embank-

ment has risen by 20 centimetres and is flowing 208 centimetres below the danger level. Meanwhile, at the Meghai Ghat point in Kazipur Upazila, the water increased by 23 centimetres over the same period and is now flowing 258 centimetres below the danger mark. In Chouhali Upazila, areas such as Rehai Pukhuria Binanui in Baghutia Union, Dewanganj Bazar, Char Salimabad, and Bhuter Morr in Khaskaulia Union have seen significant erosion, with several hundred feet of land disappearing into the river in some places. Within just one month, many families from at least six to seven villages in Chouhali have lost their homes. Abdus Salam, a Union Parishad member from Char Salimabad, reported that over 30 houses in his area were washed away by river erosion a month ago. In addition, the recent collapse of about 300 metres of land near Sombhudia Multilateral High School in Baghutia Union has placed around 50 families, educational institutions, markets, and agricultural land in Khaspukhuria and Baghutia unions under severe threat. Abdul Manik, a resident of Charkanalina Village, said, "I have built houses repeatedly, but the river has taken them away each time. I once owned 50 bighas of land from my forefathers; now I have only a few decimals left. We do not ask for much?" just a permanent embankment." He added, "We can work and earn our food, but we cannot stop the river erosion. A lasting embankment would save us from this destruction, and at least we could sleep peacefully with our children."

Protecting environment, addressing climate change impacts stressed

Our Correspondents

As part of the current BNP government's one of the electoral pledges, a programme to plant 25 crore trees countrywide over the next five years has been rolled out in districts through planting different types of trees on Saturday. KHULNA: Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Administrator Nazrul Islam Manju inaugurated the programme at Shaheed Hadis Park in the Khulna city, where the administrator planted a sapling and distributed tree saplings among participants. Addressing the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest, Manju said the government is implementing various commitments made to the people, including the introduction of Family Cards, Farmers' Cards and Health Cards, alongside reforms in the education and healthcare sectors. He said the tree plantation initiative was undertaken by KCC following the nationwide launch of the programme by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at Dulahazara in Cox's Bazar. Under the initiative, KCC has set a target of planting 60,000 trees across the metropolitan area within 180 days. Seeking cooperation from all sections of society, the administrator said KCC is committed to expanding urban greenery and creating a more environmentally sustainable city. KCC Chief Revenue Officer Rahima Sultana Bushra chaired the programme. Former KCC Mayor Mohammad Moniruzzaman and former MP Syeda Nargis Ali, among others, attended the event. Earlier in the day, Manju inaugurated a photo exhibition titled "Voice of the Coast: Journey of Climate Resilience" at Shaheed Hadis Park. The exhibition was organised by the Department of Women Affairs, Khulna, highlighting activities implemented under a project financed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and UNDP Bangladesh are jointly implementing the project in five upazilas of Khulna and Sathkira districts. MUNSHIGANJ: Organised by the district administration and the Department of Forest, the inauguration ceremony of the tree plantation programme at the District Collectorate ground was attended by Munshiganj-3 Constituency MP Md Kamruzzaman, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Syeda Nurmahal Ashrafi, Superintendent of Police (SP) Md Menhazul Alam PPM, Zilla Parishad Administrator AKM Iradat Manu and others. At that time, the guests said, "Through the tree plantation programme, there is no alternative to tree plantation to combat the effects of climate change and maintain the environmental balance. Every person is urged to plant trees and take care of the planted trees at least as much as possible."



Outrage grows over Green University student's killing

Syed Atik, Gazipur

Residents of Pagar area in Tongi on Friday held a protest rally and demonstration after Jumu'ah prayers, demanding justice for Green University student Manjurul Islam Hasib, who died after being critically injured in a violent attack earlier this week. The demonstrators called for the maximum punishment, including the death penalty, for the prime accused, Jubaer Hossain, whom they described as a notorious criminal. Speakers at the protest condemned the killing and urged the authorities to ensure a swift and fair trial. Hasib, 25, a final-year student of the Computer Science Department at Green University of Bangladesh, succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment in the early hours of Thursday. According to police and local sources, the incident took place around 8:30 pm on Tuesday in front of the residence of Advocate Ali Akbar in the Pagar area under Tongi East Police Station. An altercation reportedly broke out between two groups over a previous dispute, which escalated into violence.

During the clash, the accused allegedly attacked Hasib and his friends indiscriminately with a machete, leaving Hasib, Akash, 25, and Imran (also reported as Anik in some local accounts), 24, seriously injured. Local residents rushed the victims to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. As Hasib's condition deteriorated, he was transferred to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases before being shifted, at his family's request, to Green Life Hospital in Dhanmondi. Despite intensive medical treatment, doctors declared him dead at around 1:30 am on Thursday. Following the attack, Tongi East Police launched an operation and arrested the prime suspect, Jubaer Hossain, 45. Police said legal proceedings are underway. Friday's protest drew a large number of local residents who demanded exemplary punishment for the accused and called on the authorities to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice without delay. They also expressed concern over recurring incidents of violence in the area and urged stronger measures to improve public safety.

Schoolboy killed in Jashore road crash

Jashore Correspondent

A school boy was killed in a motorcycle accident in Monirampur upazila of the district on Saturday morning. The deceased was identified as Mahim Hossain, 15, son of Sirajul Islam of Bhojgati village of the upazila. He was a class X student at Kuada School and College. The accident occurred around 10 am at Atmail area on the Monirampur-Rajarkot road. Police said

Mahim was riding a motorcycle from Monirampur towards Kuada Bazar when he lost control of the bike near Atmail area. The motorcycle then crashed into a roadside electricity pole, leaving Mahim dead on the spot. Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Monirampur Police Station Abu Sayeed confirmed the incident and said highway police are taking legal steps regarding the case.

13,200 farmers receive zinc-rich paddy seeds in Pabna

Pabna Correspondent

An initiative has been launched in Pabna to expand the cultivation of zinc-rich rice as part of efforts to improve public health and address nutritional deficiencies, particularly among children and women. As part of the programme, 13,200 farmers in the district are receiving free zinc-enriched rice seeds for cultivation this season. To support the initiative, a day-long training workshop was held on Monday at the office of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Pabna. The workshop aimed to enhance the skills of field-level agricultural officers in promoting and expanding zinc-rich rice cultivation across the district.

The programme was jointly organized by HarvestPlus Solutions Bangladesh and Nutrition Agriculture Bangladesh in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE). A total of 42 Deputy Assistant Agricultural Officers from four upazilas of Pabna participated in the training. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Hirendra Nath Barman, Chief Scientific Officer of the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute's (BRRI) Sirajganj Regional Station, and HarvestPlus Project Manager and Master Trainer Md. Zakiul Hasan. Among those who addressed different sessions of the workshop were Pabna DAE Deputy Director Md. Jahangir Alam Pramanik, HarvestPlus Solutions Bangladesh Country Manager Md. Wahidul Amin, Programme Manager Md. Mujibur Rahman, District Training Officer Saiful Islam and Additional Deputy Director of Pabna DAE Md. Rafiul Islam. Speaking at the workshop, Md. Rafiul Islam highlighted the importance of zinc in human health, noting that zinc deficiency can lead to various diseases and hinder the normal growth of children. "Currently, zinc tablets and medicines are widely used to address this deficiency. However, the nutritional requirement can be met more naturally through zinc-rich rice. The Agriculture Department is therefore working to expand the cultivation of these varieties," he said. He added that while zinc-rich rice has been cultivated on a limited scale in recent years, efforts are now underway to significantly increase production in Pabna through direct support and motivation for farmers. During the technical session, Dr. Hirendra Nath Barman said that Bangladesh currently has 127 registered rice varieties, of which only 10 are hybrid varieties. Among these, only a handful are rich in zinc. He identified BRRI dhan74, BRRI dhan84, BRRI dhan100, BRRI dhan102, and BINA dhan20 as notable zinc-enriched rice varieties. According to scientific studies, these varieties contain more than 25 milligrams of zinc per kilogram of rice.



Volunteer organizations in Phulpur receive Tk 280,000 in government grants

Mijanur Rahman Akanda, Phulpur

The Mymensingh District Social Welfare Council has distributed grant cheques among registered voluntary organizations in Phulpur Upazila to support their social welfare activities. The cheque distribution ceremony was held at the Upazila Parishad Hall Room on Thursday, with Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Yusuf presiding over the event. A total of Tk 280,000 was distributed among 10 general voluntary organizations registered under the Department of Social Services. The organizations received grants of varying amounts to strengthen their community-based ini-

tiatives and social development programmes. Among those present were Alhaj Siddiqur Rahman, Convener of Phulpur Upazila BNP; Helal Uddin, Member Secretary of the Upazila BNP; Golam Kibria, Ameer of Phulpur Upazila Jamaat-e-Islami; Azim Uddin Jamali, President of the Upazila unit of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish; and local journalists. The programme was conducted by Shihab Uddin Khan, Upazila Social Services Officer. The financial assistance is expected to enhance the capacity of local voluntary organizations in implementing social welfare programmes and contributing to community development.

'Earning public trust, confidence is policeman's highest achievement'

Rangpur Correspondent

Rangpur Metropolitan Police (RpMP) Commissioner Mohammad Abdul Mabud yesterday said earning the trust and confidence of the public is the highest achievement of a policeman. "To achieve this goal, every policeman must further enhance skills, discipline and service quality," he said. He made the remarks while addressing officers and members after inspecting the weekly master parade at Rangpur Metropolitan Police Lines Ground. The parade was held to

improve professional standards, discipline, physical fitness and operational readiness of the force. RpMP members from different units participated in an orderly manner, while Assistant Police Commissioner Shakil commanded the parade and presented the salute to the commissioner. The commissioner inspected the parade, dress code, discipline and turnout of personnel. He also awarded police members in recognition of cleanliness and good turnout, and later instructed them to maintain honesty, dedication and professionalism in maintaining law and order and delivering citizen services.



Govt brings 21,300 Zimbabweans home from South Africa

International Desk

Zimbabwe's government said Tuesday it had helped nearly 21,300 of its citizens to return from South Africa in just over five weeks as pressure mounted on undocumented migrants to leave. More than 56,800 others had made their own way back across the porous border in that time, information minister Soda Zhemu said at a post-cabinet briefing.

Foreign nationals from a host of African countries, including Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe, have for weeks been leaving South Africa through government-assisted programmes.

The exodus began weeks ago as fringe South African groups stepped up demands for undocumented migrants to leave by June 30 in a campaign that saw violent protests and clashes in which at least four foreign nationals were killed.

'To date, approximately 21,291 Zimbabwean nationals have

been repatriated through government-assisted arrangements since the commencement of the exercise on May 26,' Zhemu said.

More than 56,830 returned 'independently through self-repatriation mechanisms during the same period', Zhemu said, without giving details of how they came home.

Zimbabwe and South Africa share a busy border that sees large numbers of crossings both ways daily, many of them reportedly clandestine and unregistered.

More than 45,000 migrants had exited South Africa via the Beitbridge post on the Zimbabwe border since June 7, border authority commissioner Mike Masiapato told the SABC news channel Tuesday. Another 1,500 had crossed the land border into Mozambique, he said.

Hundreds more foreign nationals are reportedly still awaiting help to leave as anti-illegal migration groups maintain the pressure against them.

Malawi said at the weekend it

brought back more than 22,000 of its nationals home between June 7 and July 2. Ghana says it has returned more than 900 nationals while Nigeria says nearly 860 of its citizens left with government help. Uganda says it has repatriated around 560 nationals.

For decades, citizens of other African nations have moved to South Africa - one of the continent's richest and most industrialised countries - in search of jobs and better economic opportunities.

Some groups in South Africa - where the unemployment rate is nearly 33 per cent - accuse undocumented migrants of taking jobs, straining public services and contributing to crime.

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Amnesty urges investigating Israeli attacks on Lebanon as 'war crimes'

International Desk

Amnesty International on Thursday accused Israel of wiping out families in its strikes on Lebanon during its war with Hezbollah, calling for these attacks to be investigated as war crimes.

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 by launching rockets at Israel in support of its backer Iran.

Israel responded with major airstrikes and a ground invasion, killing more than 4,300 people according to Lebanese authorities, including more than 250 children.

Amnesty analysed three strikes on civilian homes between March 6 and 13, in which 24 civilians were killed, 12 of them children.

The London-based rights group accused Israel of "wiping out families" in those strikes and called for them to be treated as "war crimes".

The group said it reached out to Israeli authorities, who said that some of the attacks "were carried out against Hezbollah military

objectives", while others were "referred for examination".

The authorities told Amnesty they were "committed to mitigating harm to civilians during operational activity".

"Despite follow up, the Israeli military did not provide specific information regarding the three attacks... including what the targets may have been," Amnesty added.

Its findings in the investigation were based on interviews with 15 people, including survivors, relatives, paramedics, journalists who visited attack sites and local officials.

"Based on the evidence gathered, in each of these air strikes, Amnesty International has reasonable basis to conclude that Israeli forces violated international humanitarian law, including by failing to distinguish between civilians and military objectives, by carrying out attacks directed against civilians or civilian objects, or by failing to take all feasible precautions to min-

imise harm to civilians," the report read.

Kristine Beckerle, Amnesty's deputy regional director for the Middle East and North Africa, said that "within the space of just a week -- the Israeli military obliterated entire families, including a dozen children, in Lebanon, demonstrating a callous disregard for civilian lives".

"States must impose an immediate comprehensive arms embargo on Israel and use universal and extra-territorial jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute those responsible," she added.

Last month, Lebanon and Israel concluded a US-backed framework agreement aiming to pave the way for a permanent end to hostilities.

It was preceded by a memorandum of understanding between Iran and the United States to end the broader Middle East conflict, which included a ceasefire in Lebanon.

Despite this, Israel still carries out intermittent strikes on southern Lebanon, some of them deadly.

Trump agrees to more Iran talks

International Desk

US president Donald Trump said on Friday he had agreed to further negotiations with Iran, even as he repeated his assertion that the ceasefire between the decades-old foes was over.

While there have been no direct talks between Iran and the United States since last month, Iranian media reported that a delegation from mediator Qatar was in Tehran on Friday after the warring sides exchanged strikes again this week.

Egyptian and Qatari foreign ministers on Friday called on the United States and Iran to resume negotiations, Cairo's foreign ministry said, as Trump repeated that the ceasefire between the two countries was over.

During a phone call, Egypt's Badr Abdelatty and Qatari prime minister and foreign minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani 'urged all parties to give priority to the language of diplomacy and dialogue and to return to the negotiating table', the ministry said in a statement.

They also called for 'implementing the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the US and Iranian sides, as a prelude to reaching a final agreement between the two sides, in a manner that contributes to de-escalation and to enhancing regional security and stability', the statement added.

In a separate statement, Qatar's foreign ministry said Sheikh Mohammed stressed 'the need for all parties to commit to dialogue and diplomacy' and to implement what had been agreed under the US-Iran memorandum of understanding, including 'ensuring freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz' to preserve regional security and stability.

On his Truth Social platform on Friday, Trump said Iran had asked the United States to continue talks.

'We have agreed to do so, but the United States has stated to them, in no uncertain terms, that the Cease Fire is OVER!' he added.

The two sides have exchanged fire on several occasions this week, with Tehran targeting commercial ships,



Washington carrying out strikes in response and Iran attacking US assets in Middle Eastern countries with drones and missiles. A delegation from mediator Qatar arrived in Iran on Friday for talks, local media reported, following the latest escalation between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Iran will respond to any attack against its infrastructure, including by striking Israel, the head of the country's top security body said on Friday, as Tehran and Washington have resumed fighting this week.

'Any attack on infrastructure will be retaliated against, and the criminal Zionist regime responsible for these atrocities will not be safe from the response of our fighters,' Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr said in a statement carried by state TV.

Earlier this week, at a NATO summit, Trump also declared the ceasefire over, but said of Tehran: 'It's just a waste of time dealing with them.'

He also called Iranian officials 'scum' and 'sick people'.

US and Iranian delegations have held one round of direct talks subsequent to signing their memorandum of understanding in Switzerland, as well as indirect negotiations in Qatar, but there has been no sign of diplomatic progress since.

Despite Iran saying it had launched attacks on US assets in Qatar and the Gulf state accusing Tehran of attacking one of its tankers in the Strait of Hormuz, Doha appeared on Friday to back continued diplomacy.

Iran's Tasnim agency meanwhile said the Qatari delegation was in Tehran to 'try to reinforce Qatar's role as a mediator following events on Tuesday', when Doha condemned Tehran for what it called an 'unacceptable assault' on one of its LNG tankers. Iran denied the accusation.

And in a call with his Qatari counterpart on Friday, Egypt's foreign minister Badr Abdelatty called for a 'return to the negotiating table'.

The war was started by the United States and Israel, who launched a massive wave of surprise attacks on Iran on February 28, despite ongoing diplomacy, which killed much of Tehran's senior leadership including supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

Iran retaliated by effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz, a conduit for a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, and launching strikes on Israel and US interests across the Gulf. The war also spilled over into Lebanon, after Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel, prompting it to invade.

The wider war was subsequently halted by a ceasefire agreement on April 8, but there have been sporadic outbursts of violence ever since. Most have been sparked by disagreements over the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran insists it must have control over and has expressed a desire to charge fees for transiting it.

Democrat accused of rape exits key US Senate race

International Desk

Graham Platner, a scandal-plagued Democratic Senate nominee whose insurgent rise had drawn comparisons to Donald Trump, ended his campaign Wednesday after a rape allegation threatened to derail one of his party's best chances of flipping a Republican-held seat.

Platner, a Marine veteran, oysterman and political newcomer, won last month's Democratic primary in the northeastern state of Maine to face Republican Senator Susan Collins in November's midterm elections.

His withdrawal gives Maine Democrats only days to regroup in a race central to the party's hopes of regaining control of the US Senate.

"We are suspending campaign operations," Platner said in a video posted on X. "This is incredibly difficult, because I know that some will think it's an admission of guilt, and it most certainly is not."

"I intend to file my paperwork to withdraw," he added.

Under Maine law, Democrats can replace Platner on the ballot because he quit before a July 13 deadline. The state party has until July 27 to choose a new nominee.

The scramble comes after Politico reported Monday that Jenny Racicot, a 41-year-old Maine resident who previously dated Platner, accused him of forcing her to have sex in late 2021 despite her repeated objections.

Platner, also 41, strongly denied the allegation, calling it "troubling, serious and false" and saying any accusation of non-consensual behavior was "categorically untrue."

But his campaign rapidly lost support across the Democratic Party, from the Washington establishment to progressive lawmakers and activists who had previously defended him. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer and Democratic Senatorial Campaign



Committee chair Kirsten Gillibrand urged him to withdraw, warning that the party's campaign arm would not invest in the Maine race if he remained on the ballot.

"We're not doing it because of the allegations, we're doing it because of the structures that are being taken away from us by those in power," Platner said in the video on X.

Several other former Platner supporters in the Senate called for him to step aside, while the Maine Democratic Party said, "principle does not bend based on party affiliation" and urged Platner to quit.

The collapse of his campaign is a dramatic reversal for a candidate who only weeks ago was celebrated by supporters as proof that a blunt anti-establishment message could break through with voters tired of cautious Democratic politics.

Platner built a fervent following in Maine with attacks on corporate power, the political donor class, and Collins, whom he accused of serving billionaires rather than ordinary people.

His appeal drew comparisons to Trump's own disruptive rise: personal magnetism, contempt for establishment politics and a promise to break a system many voters see as corrupt or exhausted.

But the qualities that thrilled his

supporters also unsettled Democrats who feared his personal baggage could cost them a winnable race.

Even before the latest allegation, Platner's campaign had been dogged by old incendiary online posts, sexually explicit messages sent to women early in his marriage, a tattoo resembling a Nazi symbol that he later covered up and allegations that he had mistreated women.

Platner has acknowledged past struggles with undiagnosed PTSD and alcohol abuse, but has denied physically harming former partners. His exit leaves Democrats facing a compressed and politically fraught replacement process.

Progressives have already begun pushing for a nominee who can inherit Platner's movement and policy agenda, while party leaders are under pressure to choose someone able to reassure moderates, independents and women voters in a state where Collins has repeatedly survived difficult races.

Collins, a five-term Republican and one of her party's few remaining moderates in Congress, is among Democrats' top targets this year. But the turmoil around Platner has given her campaign a reprieve and exposed Democratic divisions over candidate vetting, populism and electability.

Gold, silver hit records and stocks fall as Trump fans trade fears



Business Desk

Gold and silver hit record highs Monday while most equity markets fell after Donald Trump revived trade war fears by threatening several European nations with tariffs over their opposition to the United States buying Greenland. The US president has fanned already-rising geopolitical tensions this month by insisting that Washington would take control of the North Atlantic island, citing national security needs. And on Saturday, after talks failed to resolve "fundamental disagreement" over the Danish autonomous territory, he announced he would hit eight countries with fresh levies over their refusal to submit to his demands. He said he would impose 10 percent tariffs on Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland from February 1 -- rising to 25 percent from June 1 -- if they did not agree to the takeover. The announcement drew an immediate response, with a joint statement from the coun-

tries saying: "Tariff threats undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral." The move also threatened a trade deal signed between the United States and European Union last year, with German Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl telling ARD television: "I don't believe that this agreement is possible in the current situation." Meanwhile, aides to French President Emmanuel Macron said he would ask the EU to activate a never-before-used "anti-coercion instrument" against Washington if Trump makes good on his threat. This measure allows for curbing imports of goods and services into the EU, a market of 27 countries with a combined population of 450 million. Bloomberg reported member states were discussing the possibility of retaliatory levies on EUR93 billion (\$108 billion) of US goods. The prospect of a trade war between the global economic heavyweights shook markets, with safe haven assets extending gains that had come on the back of Trump's threats against

Iran last week and the US ouster of Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro. Gold, a key go-to in times of turmoil, hit a peak of \$4,690.59, while silver struck \$94.12. On equity markets, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Sydney, Singapore and Wellington retreated, though there were gains in Seoul and Taipei. European and US futures sank. The dollar also retreated against its peers, with the euro, sterling and yen all higher. "The next signpost is whether this moves from rhetoric to policy, and that is why the concrete dates matter," wrote Charu Chanana, chief investment strategist at Saxo Markets. "On the European side, the decision path matters as much as the headline, because there is a difference between merely mentioning the anti-coercion instrument as a signal and formally pursuing it as action. "Even if the immediate tariff threat gets negotiated down, the structural risk is that fragmentation keeps rising, with more politicised trade, more conditional supply chains, and higher policy risk for companies and investors." There was little major reaction to data showing China's economy expanded five percent last year, in line with its target. However, growth in the final three months slowed sharply from the previous quarter. Investors in Seoul and Taipei brushed off a warning from US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick that South Korean chipmakers and Taiwan firms not investing in the United States could be hit with 100 percent tariffs unless they boost output in the country. - Key figures at around 0230 GMT - Tokyo - Nikkei 225: DOWN 1.0 percent at 53,412.88 (break) Hong Kong - Hang Seng Index: DOWN 0.7 percent at 26,670.01 Shanghai - Composite: DOWN 0.1 percent at 4,099.23 Euro/dollar: UP at \$1.1628 from \$1.1604 on Friday Pound/dollar: UP at \$1.3397 from \$1.3382 Dollar/yen: DOWN at 157.54 yen from 158.07 yen Euro/pound: UP at 86.79 pence from 86.69 pence West Texas Intermediate: UP 0.1 percent at \$59.52 per barrel Brent North Sea Crude: FLAT at \$64.15 per barrel New York - Dow: DOWN 0.2 percent at 49,359.33 (close)



Oman’s real estate price index rises 15.9pc in Q1

Business Desk

Oman's real estate market continued its upward trajectory in the first quarter of 2026, with the country's real estate price index climbing 15.9 percent year on year, official data showed. Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that commercial property prices grew by 10.5 percent, driven by a 16.5 percent increase in industrial land prices and an 11 percent gain in commercial land prices, while retail shop prices declined by 1.8 percent, the Oman News Agency reported. The latest figures come as Oman continues to advance its Vision 2040 agenda, which identifies the real estate sector as a key driver of economic diversification through urban development, private-sector investment, and sustainable cities. The strategy also seeks to improve the investment environment and expand housing and commercial developments to support long-term economic growth. Oman's residential real estate market is projected to grow from \$5.29 billion in 2026 to \$7.34 billion by 2031, driven by Vision 2040 infrastructure projects, population growth and reforms expanding foreign ownership opportunities, according to Mordor Intelligence. "The residential property price index also saw growth of 17.6 percent in the first quarter of this year compared to the same quarter of 2025," the ONA report said. It added: "This increase is attributed to a 21 percent rise in residential land prices, a 4.4 percent increase in apartment prices, and a 9 percent increase in villa prices, while other types of housing prices decreased by 1.1 percent." The data further showed that at the governorate level, Muscat led residential land price growth in the first three months of 2026, with a 43.6 percent increase compared with the same quarter of the previous year. It was followed by Al Buraimi at 25.9 percent, Musandam at 17.6 percent, and Dhofar at 10.8 percent. Residential land prices also increased in Ad Dakhiliyah by 5 percent, followed by South Al Sharqiyah at 4.7 percent, and South Al Batinah at 4 percent, as well as Ad Dhahirah at 2.5 percent, Al Wusta at 2 percent, and North Al Batinah at 0.2 percent. In contrast, North Al Sharqiyah was the only governorate to record a decline, with residential land prices falling 14.9 percent year on year.



Middle East aviation sector 'champion of net profit' - IATA

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passenger profit in the Middle East's aviation sector is the highest globally, providing "a great model for other areas of the world," according to the International Air Transport Association's director general. Speaking at IATA's global media day in Geneva, Switzerland, Willie Walsh praised the region's focus on long-haul travel as well as its increasing efficiency in the industry. In its latest financial outlook for the global airline industry, IATA announced that 2026 is set to be a record-breaking year in terms of net profit, with a forecast total of \$41 billion. Airlines are expected to achieve a record-breaking combined total net profit of \$41 billion in 2026, up from \$39.5 billion in 2025. The Middle East is set to be the strongest region in terms of net profit margin and profit per passenger in 2026, as it was over the previous 12-month period. In 2025, net profit was \$28.90 per passenger, totaling \$6.6 billion and leading to a net profit margin of 9.3 percent. For 2026, the IATA forecast the Middle East's net profit margin will remain the same, but net profit per passenger will be \$28.60, equating to \$6.8 billion. In contrast, Europe's aviation sector saw net profit of \$13.2 billion in 2025 but the margin was considerably smaller - 4.8 percent, working out at \$10.60 per passenger. North America posted a net profit of \$10.8 billion, working out to \$9.50 per passenger with a net profit margin of 3.3 percent. When asked to clarify which factors contributed to the region's ranking as the highest for net profit, Walsh told Arab News: "The Middle East has clearly a much stronger focus on long-haul travel, strong premium demand, very good infrastructure availability, clear coordination between airports, suppliers, and regulators - all working together to ensure the effective operation of the industry," He added: "I think it is a great model for other areas of the world to look at." Reflecting on the role played by the Gulf in contributing to these figures, Walsh said he was "pleased to see the GCC look at a common safety regulator." He added: "Working together can enhance the overall benefit and security of operation. So, I think it's a great example of where everybody is working in the same direction." The director general continued: "You've got alignment between all of the key players, and that helps to ensure that the operation of the industry there is as efficient as possible."

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Jomana R. Alrashid, CEO of Saudi Research and Media Group, highlighted how AI cannot replace human creativity during a session at The Family Office's "Investing Is a Sea" summit at Shura Island on Friday. "You can never replace human creativity. Journalism at the end of the day, and content creation, is all about storytelling, and that's a creative role that AI does not have the power to do just yet," Alrashid told the investment summit. "We will never eliminate that human role which comes in to actually tell that story, do the actual investigative reporting around it, make sure to be able to also tell you what's news or what's factual from what's wrong ... what's a misinformation from bias, and that's the bigger role that the editorial player does in the newsroom." Speaking on the topic of AI, moderated by Maya Hojeij, senior business anchor at Asharq with Bloomberg, the CEO expressed her pride in SRMG platforms that had absorbed and adopted AI in a way that was "transformative." "We are now translating all of our content leveraging AI. We are also now being able to create documentaries leveraging AI. We now have AI-facilitated fact-checking, AI facilities clipping, transcribing. This is what we believe is the future." Alrashid was asked what the journalist of the future would look like. "He's a journalist and an engineer. He's someone who needs to understand data. And I think this is another topic that is extremely important, understanding the data that you're working with," she said. "This is something that AI has facilitated as well. I must say that over the past 20 years in the region, especially when it comes to media companies, we did not understand the importance of data." The CEO highlighted that previously, media would rely on polling, surveys or viewership numbers, but now more detailed information about what viewers wanted was available. During the fireside session, Alrashid was asked how the international community viewed the Middle Eastern media. Alrashid said that over the past decades it had played a critical role in informing wider audiences about issues that



were extremely complex - politically, culturally and economically - and continued to play that role. "Right now it has a bigger role to play, given the role again of social media, citizen journalists, content creators. But I also do believe that it has been facilitated by the power that AI has. Now immediately, you can ensure that that kind of content that is being created by credible, tier-A journalists, world-class journalists, can travel beyond its borders, can travel instantly to target different geographies, different people, different countries, in different languages, in different formats." She said that there was a big opportunity for Arab media not to be limited to simply Arab consumption, but to finally transcend borders and be available in different languages and to cater to their audiences. The CEO expressed optimism about the future, emphasizing the importance of having a clear vision, a strong strategy, and full team alignment. Traditional advertising models, once centered on television and print, were rapidly changing, with social media platforms now dominating advertising revenue. "It's drastically changing. Ultimately in the past, we used to compete with one another over viewership. But now we're also competing with the likes of social media platforms; 80 percent of the advertising revenue in the Middle East goes to the social media platforms, but that means that there's 80 percent interest

opportunities." She said that the challenge was to create the right content on these platforms that engaged the target audiences and enabled commercial partnerships. "I don't think this is a secret, but brands do not like to advertise with news channels. Ultimately, it's always related with either conflict or war, which is a deterrent to advertisers. "And that's why we've entered new verticals such as sports. And that's why we also double down on our lifestyle vertical. Ultimately, we have the largest market share when it comes to lifestyle ... And we've launched new platforms such as Billboard Arabia that gives us an entry into music." Alrashid said this was why the group was in a strong position to counter the decline in advertising revenues across different platforms, and by introducing new products. "Another very important IP that we've created is events attached to the brands that have been operating in the region for 30-plus years. Any IP or any title right now that doesn't have an event attached to it is missing out on a very big commercial opportunity that allows us to sit in a room, exchange ideas, talk to one another, get to know one another behind the screen." The CEO said that disruption was now constant and often self-driving, adding that the future of the industry was often in storytelling and the ability to innovate by creating persuasive content that connected directly with the audience.