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Nadal into 14th French Open final
Zverev retires hurt in the duo's semifinal



REUTERS, Paris

Rafael Nadal advanced to the French Open final for a 14th time on Friday after third seed Alexander Zverev was forced to retire hurt with an ankle injury while trailing the Spaniard 7-6(8) 6-6.

In an absorbing contest that lasted more than three hours before the abrupt ending, Zverev missed four set points during the first set tiebreak.

The German had been giving the 13-time Roland Garros champion a run for his money until he screamed out in agony



A settlement has been built very close to the steep slopes of a hill in Sylhet city's Akhalia. This exposes the residents of the buildings below to landslides in case of an earthquake or heavy rain. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Steps taken to protect pilgrims from harassment

PM says while inaugurating hajj programme; hajj flight begins tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government enacted the Hajj and Umrah Management Act-2021 for ensuring smooth hajj pilgrimage by Bangladeshi devotees.



"We have taken proper measures so that the hajj pilgrims can travel and perform hajj without facing any harassment," she said.

The PM was addressing an event marking the inauguration of the Hajj Programme-2022. The event was held at the Hajj camp in the capital's Ashkona, with the PM joining virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said the measures were taken following her experiences as she found many irregularities in hajj management (for Bangladeshi pilgrims) since she first performed Umrah in 1984, and the hajj in 1985 at the invitation of the Saudi Arabian king.

"We made efforts to improve the hajj management after coming to power in 1996 and we have been able to improve the management in phases."

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Global food prices fall slightly: FAO

Wheat prices on rise

AFP, Paris

World food prices fell slightly for the second consecutive month in May but wheat prices rose again as Russia's war in Ukraine rages on and India banned exports of the commodity, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said yesterday.



Russia's invasion of Ukraine sent food prices to a record high in March as both countries are major exporters of agricultural goods, sparking fears of a global hunger crisis.

The FAO's food price index fell 0.6 percent in May from April as the prices of dairy products and vegetable oils dropped. Prices, however, were still 56.2 percent higher than a year ago.

Wheat prices, meanwhile, rose by 5.6 percent in May compared to the previous month.

They "rose in response to an export ban announced by India and concerns over crop conditions in several leading exporting countries as well as reduced production prospects in Ukraine due to the war," the FAO said.

Citing inflation and its own food security needs, India banned last month any new wheat exports without government approval after the hottest March on record - blamed on climate change - hit harvests.

Carry out reforms in labour sector

US tells Bangladesh on securing foreign investment

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US yesterday urged Bangladesh to adopt a transparent regulatory environment and implement reforms in the labour sector to secure foreign investments.

During the second high-level economic consultation (HLEC) in Washington DC, the global superpower also said Bangladesh has the potential to be a regional leader in digital trade and highlighted the country's role as a global climate leader, according to a joint statement released after the consultation.

Bangladesh sought US companies' investment in clean energy to help it advance on its nationally determined contribution to reduce carbon emissions.

Salman F Rahman, adviser to the prime minister for private industry and investment, and Jose W Fernandez, US State Department under-secretary for economic growth, energy, and

the environment, co-chaired the second HLEC.

Salman F Rahman said business-to-business and people-to-people contacts are key elements for enhanced cooperation and urged preferential market access for Bangladeshi products in the US, which buys \$8 billion worth of products from Bangladesh annually.

Following the Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, the US suspended Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) facility, through which Bangladesh enjoyed trade benefits.

Jose W Fernandez acknowledged Bangladesh's progress in areas of safety reforms in the garment export sector, simplifying trade union registration, developing publicly accessible trade union database, establishment of helplines to receive complaints, digitalising labour inspection and strengthening labour courts.

The US urged Bangladesh to

take further steps to adhere to internationally recognised labour rights standards, including those developed by Bangladesh for its ILO road map. Bangladesh expressed its commitment to swiftly pass necessary reforms and fully implement the four priority areas of the ILO road map.

Bangladesh also committed to address other areas of labour reform, including improving workers' rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining in export processing zones (EPZs), and gradually in other sectors across Bangladesh's economy.

Bangladesh warmly welcomed a US concept of a US-Bangladesh Women's Council to enhance women's employment, entrepreneurship, and access to educational opportunities in support of a more equitable future.

At the consultation, the US side briefed Bangladesh

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CLIMATE CHANGE
Snow-capped Alps going green

AFP, Washington

The famous snow-capped peaks of the Alps are fading fast and being replaced by vegetation cover - a process called "greening" that is expected to accelerate climate change, a study said Thursday.



The research, published in Science, was based on 38 years of satellite imagery across the entirety of the iconic European mountain range.

"We were very surprised, honestly, to find such a huge trend in greening," first author Sabine Rumpf, an ecologist at the University of Basel, told AFP.

Greening is a well-recognised phenomenon in the Arctic, but until now hadn't been well established over a large scale in mountainous areas. However, since both the poles and mountains are warming faster than the rest of the planet, researchers suspected comparable effects.

For their analysis, the team examined regions at 1,700 meters above sea level, to exclude areas used for agriculture. They also excluded forested areas and glaciers.

RELIGIOUS, ETHNIC MINORITIES
Govt ineffective in stopping their forced evictions

US report cites allegations from minorities in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A US report has said members of religious minority communities alleged that the government was ineffective in preventing forced evictions and land seizures stemming from land disputes.

The 2021 International Religious Freedom Report of the US State Department also highlighted implementation of construction projects on land traditionally owned by indigenous communities in the Moulvibazar and Modhupur forest areas by the government.

According to the report, some human rights activists said it was often difficult to determine whether these disputes and evictions were a result of deliberate government discrimination against religious minorities or of government inefficiency.

US embassies prepare the initial drafts of the report based on information from government officials, religious groups, nongovernmental organisations, journalists, human rights monitors, academics, media,

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A metro rail station being built in front of the Jatiya Press Club on the capital's Tophkana Road. Work is also underway to lay tracks on this section of the Mass Rapid Transit Line-6. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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Reject 'Cold War mentality, bloc politics'
China calls upon Bangladesh, other countries in region

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China has called upon the regional countries, including Bangladesh, to reject the "Cold War mentality and bloc politics", uphold independence and safeguard true multilateralism.

Liu Jinsong, director-general at the Chinese foreign ministry's Department of Asian Affairs, made the call on Wednesday when he met Bangladesh Ambassador to China Mahbub Uz Zaman, according to a statement posted on Thursday by the Chinese foreign ministry on its website.

"China believes that countries in the region,