

## PM returns home from Thailand

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home from Bangkok yesterday after wrapping up her six-day official visit to Thailand.

A flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines carrying the premier and her entourage landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital at 11:25am.

The flight departed from Don Mueang International Airport in Bangkok at 10:10am (local time).

The premier reached Bangkok on April 24 on a bilateral and multilateral visit at the invitation of her Thai counterpart, Srettha Thavisin, to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries.

She was accorded a warm reception with 19 round gunfire at Don Mueang International Airport to herald her arrival in Bangkok.

Sheikh Hasina had a bilateral talk with Thai Prime Minister Thavisin at the Government House (the Thai Premier's Office) on April 26 as five bilateral documents were signed on visa exemption, cooperation on energy, tourism and customs matters, and negotiation of a free trade agreement (FTA) between Bangladesh and Thailand in the presence of the two leaders.

During the official luncheon hosted by the Thai premier there, the Bangladesh prime minister called her visit a milestone in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

"This official visit will remain a milestone in our bilateral relations. It has ushered in a new era of fruitful partnership between our two countries," she said.

She also paid a courtesy call on King and the Queen of the Kingdom of Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaohaoyuhua and Suthida Bajrasudhabimalalakshan at Amphorn Satharn Throne Hall in Dusit Palace on April 25.

As part of her multilateral engagement, Sheikh Hasina addressed the 80th Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) on the same day at the ESCAP Hall (2nd floor), United Nations Conference Center (UNCC) in Bangkok.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina being received by Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on her return home from Bangkok yesterday. Hasina had been to Thailand on a six-day official visit. PHOTO: PTD

### GAZA WAR PROTESTS AT US CAMPUSES

## More than 900 students arrested

Scuffles reported at UCLA; talks break down between protesters and authorities at Columbia University

AGENCIES

Hundreds of students have been arrested across universities in the United States, with scuffles reported between pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian demonstrators at the University of California, Los Angeles, as rallies for a ceasefire in Gaza and divestment from companies linked to Israel spread across US campuses.

Across the United States, police arrested around 275 people on four separate campuses over the weekend, with the White House calling on the growing protests in recent weeks to remain peaceful. So far, approximately 900 protesters have been arrested nationwide.

Tensions yesterday rose at Columbia University, the epicentre of pro-Palestinian protests across US campuses, with college authorities and student demonstrators in open conflict after negotiations broke down.

Columbia University, which said many Jewish students have left its campus, yesterday demanded that the protestors' encampment must be cleared, and added that Columbia would not divest financial holdings linked to Israel -- a key demand of demonstrators.

Students pushed back, vowing to defend their camp on the New York institution's main lawn, despite the threat of suspensions and disciplinary action

from the college.

Protests against the Gaza war, with its high civilian death toll among Palestinian civilians, have posed a challenge to university administrators trying to balance free speech rights with complaints that the rallies have veered into anti-Semitism and threats of violence.

The pro-Palestinian encampment at the UCLA has expanded in recent days, but counter-protesters have also become increasingly vocal and visible.

On Sunday, the mood turned ugly when some demonstrators broke through a barrier that had been set up to separate the two factions, according to Mary Osako, SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## Three killed in human haulier crashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least three people died in road crashes yesterday in Chattogram and Madaripur.

A college student died as a human haulier ran her over on the Bailey bridge in the Karnaphuli ferry terminal area in Chattogram in the morning. Fatema Tuz Zohra Nupur, 18, was a student at Hazera Taju College in the city.

The accident took place around 10:00am on the eastern side of Karnaphuli ghat in Boalkhali upazila.

Locals and eyewitnesses said a human haulier while ascending the Bailey Bridge towards Boalkhali suddenly lost control and began to descend backwards rapidly. At that time, Nupur was standing near the railing of bridge and was run over and injured critically.

She was rescued by the locals and taken to Boalkhali Upazila Health Complex where the doctor declared her dead.

Meanwhile, two people were killed and two others injured as a human haulier overturned and fell into a ditch in Madaripur Sadar upazila in the morning.

The deceased are human haulier driver Enamul Hossen, 25, of Lohagara upazila in Narail, and his helper Arif Sikder, 17, from Maddyachak of Madaripur Sadar.

## Two brothers drown in pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Two brothers died after drowning in a pond in Noakhali's Kabirhat yesterday noon.

Md Hamdan, 7, and his younger brother Md Hasan, 5, were the sons of Harun Huzur of Hashan Ali Zamdar village of Ghazirbagh village of Ward No. 1 of the upazila's Batia union, said local UP member Iqbal Hossain Daul.

Hasan studied in nursery and Hamdan in first grade at a local Noorani Madrasa. They were buried in their family graveyard in the evening.

They both drowned around noon when they went to bathe in the mosque pond in front of their house and one of them fell into the water while the other jumped in to save him.

Family members realised the children were missing for some time and started looking for them. Later, their bodies were spotted floating in the pond.

The children were taken to the upazila health complex, and the doctor on duty pronounced them both dead.

Kabirhat Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Humayon Kabir also confirmed the incident to The Daily Star.

## G7 eyes possible end date for coal-fired power plants

AFP, Turin

G7 energy ministers yesterday discussed a possible time frame for phasing out coal-fired power plants, as the UN warned "excuses" for failing to take bold actions on climate change were "not acceptable".

The Group of Seven meeting in Turin is the first big political session since the world pledged at the UN's COP28 climate summit in December to transition away from coal, oil and gas.

Energy and ecological transition ministers from the G7 were yesterday, the first of two-day talks, close to committing to a common target of shutting down coal-fired power plants, several sources told AFP.

They looked likely to commit to close them "in the first half of the 2030s", a European source told AFP.

The latest G7 draft commits to "phase out existing unabated coal power generation in our energy

systems during the first half of 2030s or in a timeline consistent with keeping a limit of 1.5°C temperature rise within reach, in line with countries' net zero pathways", the source said.

A fixed time frame would be hailed as an important step.

UN climate chief Simon Stiell earlier yesterday urged the highly industrialised countries to use their political clout, wealth and technologies to end fossil fuel use.

## The children grow but the scars remain

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children aged 2-14 regularly suffer physical punishment by their parents or other caregivers, including teachers.

According to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, corporal punishment comprises any form of punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light; as well as other non-physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading.

The "Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019", conducted jointly by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF, said that in Bangladesh, 89 percent of children between the ages of one and 14 have been subjected to corporal punishment.

The data were collected by 33 teams; each with four interviewers, one measurer and a supervisor. The survey was conducted between January 19 and June 1, 2019.

It also showed that 35 percent of the parents of the respondents thought physical punishment to children was needed.

Despite the education ministry's 2011 ban on punishment in educational institutions, children continue to endure beatings and humiliation from teachers.

Ain o Salish Kendra data shows, just between January and March this year, 14 students were victims of corporal punishment by their teachers, while 16 faced sexual violence.

According to WHO, corporal punishment is linked to a range of negative outcomes for children across countries and cultures, including physical and mental ill-health; impaired cognitive and socio-emotional development; poor educational outcomes; increased aggression and perpetration of violence.

It is also a violation of children's rights to respect for physical integrity and human dignity, health,

development, education and freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Dr Sunjida Shahriah, a physician and psychotherapy practitioner, said children subjected to corporal punishment often experience a range of mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-harming tendencies, and even suicidal thoughts.

**Ain o Salish Kendra data shows, just between January and March this year, 14 students were victims of corporal punishment by their teachers, while 16 faced sexual violence.**

"This can lead to drug abuse, impulsive behavior, emotional instability, and various behavioral issues, which persist into adulthood. Furthermore, such punishment hampers intellectual development and psychosocial growth, particularly in problem-solving skills, adversely impacting professional and romantic relationships later in life.

"Alarmingly, these children are more likely to engage in violent and antisocial activities as they grow up, venting their anger towards society, as reflected in the 'Kishor Gang' culture."

Dr Sunjida's worries are justified by a mother whose son has been struggling with severe mental health issues due to the parents' past act of corporal punishment.

Requesting anonymity, the mother said, "We used to think our son was just stubborn, so we often resorted to hitting him when he wouldn't follow our instructions as a child. But that didn't help. Now that he's a teenager, he became even more disobedient, sometimes resorting to violence

## Bar pharma from raising

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the order and rule following a writ petition seeking necessary directives.

Barrister Jyotimoy Barua appeared for the writ petitioner while Deputy Attorney General Tushar Kanti Roy and assistant attorney generals Md Salim Azad and Anich ul Mawa represented the state during the hearing of the petition.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) filed the petition as a public interest litigation with the HC attaching a newspaper report that said drug prices increased by seven to 140 percent in two months.

According to the report, different companies increased the prices of their drugs at their will in two months. Prices of at least 50 types of medicines have been hiked from 20 to 140 percent. Prices of several medicines were increased in the first week of March.

Prices of antibiotic tablets, insulin

and injections, used for treating diabetic patients, have been increased the most. The prices of many other medicines and vitamins, including those used for treatment of heart disease, high blood pressure, and asthma, have also gone up. Tablets and capsules used for treating fever and cold and syrups for various diseases have also become costlier.

A review of the increase in production costs and sales revenues of different companies shows that the prices of medicines have been hiked abnormally. Companies have blamed the devaluation of taka against US dollar and the rise in the prices of raw materials in the international market as the reason for the unusual price hike. At the same time, the prices of gas and electricity have also increased, leading to the increase in production cost, said top officials of pharmaceutical companies.

## After fiery April

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(BOM) said on April 16.

"International climate models suggest ENSO [El Niño-Southern Oscillation] is likely to continue to remain neutral until at least July 2024."

It said the cooler phase, known as La Niña, is expected to return between September and November.

El Niño began in June 2023 and has been causing insufficient rainfall and prolonged heatwaves across Bangladesh.

El Niño, Spanish for "little boy," is a climatic pattern marked by elevated sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. This phenomenon typically occurs every 2-7 years and can last for 9-12 months, influencing global weather patterns.

La Niña, meaning "little girl", is characterised by the cooling of sea surface temperatures in the same regions. It occurs every 3-5 years and can occasionally happen in consecutive years, leading to increased rainfall and distinct weather patterns.

Mostofa Kamal, a weather and climate researcher at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada, said the current heatwave is likely to start to diminish in the eastern parts of Bangladesh after May 3.

"Between May 3 and May 13, severe thunderstorms, intense lightning, and hailstorms will sweep across

## Govt may miss

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in tax revenue collection is required. However, in the first seven months of the current fiscal year, tax revenue collection growth was 12 percent.

As per the finance ministry estimate, highest Tk 3,80,000 crore could be collected by the end of June.

For the \$4.7 billion loan, the IMF has set two types of conditions -- six performance conditions and several structural conditions.

For the next tranches, the government has been discussing structural conditions with IMF.

A finance ministry official said IMF may set a condition for the government to reduce its spending on subsidy.

The government has already introduced an automated pricing formula for fuel as it no longer subsidises the sector.

However, as the government still provides subsidy for electricity and gas, the IMF may set conditions to follow a timeline for gradually reducing subsidy for these two items.

Already, IMF has collected data on government spending in subsidy for electricity and gas.

The global lender has also put several conditions for NBR to increase revenue collection.

Under one condition, NBR has to finalise its medium- and long-term revenue strategies covering indirect and direct taxes and accompanying implementation framework by September this year.

Another condition is requirement of e-return filing and online payment for tax years starting after June 30, 2024, for all large corporations and any corporation that claims any tax performance (such as an exemption, lower tax rate, or tax holiday) by the end of June 2025.

Also, IMF may put a condition to reduce default loan including setting a ceiling on the percentage of classified loan.

## Don't allow

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to ensure that no one can destroy communal harmony by spreading rumours. He stressed the need for increasing surveillance activities to prevent rumours.

Atiqul also asked to investigate robbery cases seriously and ensure punishment of the offenders. Instructions were also given to the officials concerned for the speedy completion of investigations of cases filed over the killings of police personnel.

DIG (crime management) Jaydev Kumar Bhadra and other officials were present at the meeting, added the press release.