

## Bangladesh a key partner of UN: Guterres

UNB, Dhaka

UN Secretary-General António Guterres praised Bangladesh as a vital UN partner, highlighting its contributions to international peace, sustainable development, and climate change efforts.

During a meeting with Foreign Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud in New York, Guterres expressed gratitude for Bangladesh's support to the Rohingya and voiced concern over Myanmar's forced recruitment of young Rohingya. Commending Bangladesh's climate resilience, Guterres assured support for Bangladesh's transition from a low-income country, stating, "For this, Bangladesh should be rewarded, not punished."

Foreign Minister Mahmud thanked Guterres for his leadership on global issues, including the Gaza crisis, and urged continued UN focus on the Rohingya crisis, advocating for the safe repatriation of 1.3 million refugees.



A man with a broken leg rides a rickshaw-van on the way to the hospital. He broke his leg after slipping in the waterlogged streets of his area on Monday. For more than three days, the waterlogging situation in Jurain area is yet to be solved. Inset, locals in a hunger strike protesting the prolonged waterlogging and low gas pressure, demanding an immediate resolution. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



## 'Masters of corruption'

### Quader on BNP leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The names of BNP leaders would top any list of corrupt individuals, said Obaidul Quader yesterday.

He said the party leaders are "masters of corruption and looting", adding they siphoned money abroad and enriched themselves at the country's expense.

He was speaking at a press conference organised at AL president's Dhanmondi office.

Addressing former IGP Benazir Ahmed's situation, Quader said the court would decide on his arrest following an Anti-Corruption Commission investigation. On reports of Benazir fleeing abroad and withdrawing money from his bank account, he said, "I don't know, it is not clear yet. ACC says they think he [Benazir] fled the country. Let them prove it," he added.

PRAYER TIMING		JUNE 1	
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:05	12:45	5:00	6:45 8:15
JAMAAAT 4:40	1:15	5:15	6:50 8:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## AL turned country into 'bottomless basket': Abbas

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Mirza Abbas yesterday accused the Awami League (AL) government of turning Bangladesh into a "bottomless basket" through rampant corruption.

Speaking at a mass prayer event marking BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's 43rd death anniversary, Abbas claimed that Ziaur Rahman had rescued the nation from this status during his tenure. The event, organised by Dhaka South City BNP in front of the Nayapaltan central office, included prayers for Ziaur Rahman's soul and BNP chief Khaleda Zia's health. Abbas criticised the government for raising fuel prices amid skyrocketing living costs, worsening the public's hardships.

## 'DEVIL'S BREATH'

# The world's 'scariest' drug

### Now in hands of country's criminals

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Imagine walking down a quiet street, minding your own business, when a stranger approaches. They offer you a seemingly harmless business card, and you take it without thinking twice. Little did you know that the card was soaked in a drug, which would be absorbed by your skin within minutes.

Or someone might just blow the powdered drug directly in your face, and after inhaling that, within minutes you find yourself in a "Zombie-like state", unable to control your actions or resist their demands.

The drug leaves victims with no ability to control their actions. According to worldwide urban legends, the victims will do anything for their attackers, from giving up all their belongings to even going as far as killing someone for them.

The drug is scopolamine, derived from nightshade plants. Scopolamine, also known as hyoscyne, is a natural or synthetically produced tropane alkaloid and anticholinergic drug which has a few legitimate medical uses, such as treatment for motion sickness, postoperative nausea and for the tremors of Parkinson's disease.

It is said to be one of the first "truth serums" which was used during WWII to obtain information from unwilling targets. However, it's mostly known for its darker sides.

It is popularly known as "devil's breath", and is globally recognised as "the world's most dangerous drug".

Criminals, particularly in Colombia and Ecuador, have used it to render victims helpless, robbing them blind, stealing their belongings, or even committing more heinous crimes such as murder or rape.

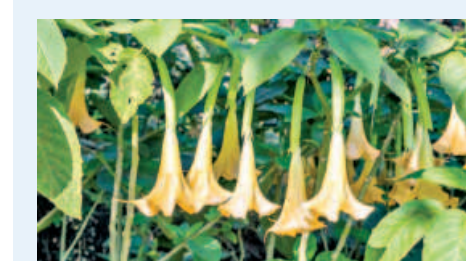
The scariest thing is that the drug has found its way to criminals in Bangladesh.

Fatema Begum, a resident of Chattogram,

fell victim to such a crime on May 22.

While returning from a local market, two men posing as charity workers approached her, and when she turned around to talk to them, one of the individuals blew some powder in her face, leaving her disoriented.

Under the drug's influence, Fatema



Brugmansia, from which scopolamine is extracted.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

**"Devil's breath" can render victims suggestible and disoriented, causing them to lose all willpower and readily give up their belongings to criminals. It takes effect within 10 minutes of inhalation, and the victim's memory and brain can't function normally.**

DR DULAL KRISHNA SAHA  
Chief chemical examiner of DNC

lost control over herself and unknowingly complied with the criminals' demands. They stole her valuables, including jewellery worth Tk 80,000, cash, her phone, and a shopping bag.

The incident was captured on CCTV. Bystanders mistook the interaction for a usual encounter.

Double Mooring Police Station Officer-in-Charge Fazlul Kader Patwari said under scopolamine's influence, Fatema did what the criminals told her to do. When Fatema regained her senses after some hours, she realised she had been robbed.

"Scopolamine is made from the Borrachero plant. Known as "devil's breath" in its powdered form, this substance can render victims suggestible and disoriented, causing them to lose all willpower and readily give up their belongings to criminals," Dr Dulal Krishna Saha, chief chemical examiner of the Department of Narcotics Control, told The Daily Star.

By putting it on a visiting card, paper, cloth, or mobile phone screen, it's brought within four to six inches of the target's nose.

"It takes effect within 10 minutes of inhalation, and the victim's memory and brain can't function normally. Some take an hour to return to normal, while many fail to fully recover within three to four hours," he said.

In recent years, robberies using scopolamine have been reported in various parts of the country, including Dhaka, Jashore, Khulna, Rajbari, and Bogura.

Narayanganj Police first recovered 10 grammes of scopolamine from a gang in September 2023 while investigating the murder of a teacher of Northern University.

The gang used to sell scopolamine, potassium cyanide, and chloroform through online groups.

Police do not have exact figures for crimes related to scopolamine, but they found some Iranian nationals' involvement in them, along with local culprits.

On January 21, 2023, Jisan, an employee at a travel agency in the capital's Pallabi, fell victim to such a crime when two Iranian men visited the agency and took Tk 4.5 lakh from Jisan's cash box.

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## RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY BCL factions reign with violence, univ admin silent

A CORRESPONDENT, RU

Bangladesh Chhatra League declared its Rajshahi University unit after seven long years on October 21 last year.

Mostafizur Rahman Babu is the president and Asadullah Hil Galib is the general secretary of RU BCL.

Since they took charge, at least 30 violent incidents involving BCL men have been reported on the campus. These incidents include factional clashes, extortion, illegal occupation of dormitory seats, and attacks on journalists, opposition, and general students.

Despite this, the university administration has largely refrained from taking disciplinary action against the accused. According to RU sources, no disciplinary committee meetings have been held this year.

The trouble began on October 22, when a group of BCL members, dissatisfied with their exclusion from the new committee, vandalised rooms in Madar Bux Hall.

On November 26, BCL leaders assaulted Rayhan Islam, the RU campus correspondent for Bangladesh Protidin. On May 7, RU BCL general secretary Galib and others confined and tortured Nafiuul Islam, a leader of the RU unit Chhatra Dal, in a room of Madar Bux Hall.

Just days later, on May 11, two BCL factions led by RU unit president Babu and Suhrawardy Hall unit president Niaz Morshed locked in a clash, resulting in at least five injuries. The factions brandished local weapons in another showdown two days later.

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## CYCLONE REMAL

# Animal death toll rises to 100 in Sundarbans

UNB, Khulna

The death toll of animals from the flooding in the Sundarbans has climbed to 100 after Cyclone Remal hit the world's largest mangrove forest on Sunday.

According to the Forest Department, the carcasses of 96 deer and four wild bears were recovered from the forest till Thursday evening.

The animals were found dead in several areas including Kotka, Kochikhali, Karamjal, Pakhi Char, Dimar Char, Shelar Char and Narikel Baria.

Moreover, 18 deer and one python were rescued in a critical condition. After giving first aid, they were released into the forest.



Besides, damages to various infrastructures in the forest were estimated at around Tk 6.27 crore.

Over 100 ponds in the forest were flooded with saline water, causing distress to both wildlife and the local residents.

An 11-kilometer area known as Gol Bagan was also damaged.

However, it will take more time to fully assess the extent of damages to the trees and animals, said Mihir Kumar Dey, forest conservator in the Khulna range.

He said this time the forest faced an unusual situation due to the cyclone as it experienced two high tides and two low tides within a 24-hour period, flooding parts of the forest.

## PRE-POLLS VIOLENCE

# Day of joy marred by tragedy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Sumon Miah and Sazia Afrin Liza from Narsingdi's Raipura endured a lengthy wait for parenthood. After 16 years, their dreams blossomed into reality with the birth of their twin daughters at a private hospital in Dhaka on Thursday.

However, this long-awaited celebration was overshadowed by sorrow, as Sumon was tragically absent.

Just eight days prior, Sumon, a candidate vying for the vice-chairman position in the Raipura Upazila Parishad election, was killed in a clash with supporters of a rival candidate.

Sumon, 40, son of Charsubuddi Union Parishad Chairman Nasir Uddin, was involved in ruling party politics. He was a former joint general secretary of Narsingdi Government College Chhatra League.

"While it was supposed to be a joyous occasion to welcome the twin babies, our happiness is marred by the brutal killing of my son," said Nasir Uddin, Sumon's father.

"These innocent babies are now fatherless," he added, tearing up.

On May 22, during an election campaign in Mirekandi area of Paratali Union, Sumon and his followers clashed with supporters of vice chairman candidate Abid Hasan Rubel. There, Sumon was beaten during the clash.

In critical condition, he was rushed to Raipura Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

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In the wake of Cyclone Remal, at least 16 tin-shed houses were completely destroyed and 10 damaged in Char Balaki village of Gazaria upazila, near the Meghna River in Munshiganj. Trees have fallen over, roads have been damaged and numerous livestock have been lost as well. Even four days later, locals are still repairing their damaged homes.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN