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REDUCING US TRADE GAP Dhaka turns to Boeing, wheat imports

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Bangladesh plans to buy 14 Boeing aircraft and about 3,00,000 tonnes of US wheat, as Dhaka responds to pressure from the Trump administration to narrow a trade gap of more than \$6 billion.

The government is set to sign an agreement for the wheat imports on Sunday in Dhaka, according to Commerce Secretary Mahbubur Rahman. "This is the beginning of the trade cooperation between Bangladesh and the US," Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

Negotiations with Boeing for the aircraft are at an advanced stage, he confirmed, although a timeline for delivery remains contingent on the US manufacturer's production capacity. The total value of the aircraft and wheat deals has not yet been disclosed.

The push to increase imports from the US comes as Bangladesh is engaged in negotiations with the United States Trade Representative to secure lower tariffs on its exports. President Donald Trump has imposed a 35 percent tariff on goods from Bangladesh, a rate significantly higher than that applied to competitors such as Vietnam (20 percent) and Indonesia (19 percent).

Bangladeshi officials are preparing for a third round of talks in Washington next week, aiming to conclude a reciprocal tariff agreement before new rates take effect

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GOPALGANJ VIOLENCE Govt can't skirt the responsibility for deaths: ASK

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government cannot avoid responsibility for the deaths of four people during Wednesday's clashes between law enforcers and Awami League followers in Gopalganj, rights body Ain o Salish Kendra said yesterday.

It demanded the immediate formation of an independent, neutral, and comprehensive investigation committee to thoroughly probe the incident.

On Wednesday, at least four people were killed and dozens injured during the daylong running battles between law enforcers and Awami League followers after local AL men attacked NCP leaders and activists and their rally venue.

At one stage of the attack, arson and vandalism also occurred at various places. After the clash spread, members of the law enforcement agencies used force and openly used firearms, leading to the deaths.

Four people were killed and dozens injured during clashes.

ASK also demanded the identification of those responsible for the attack on NCP leaders and supporters and an investigation to determine any possible negligence on the part of authorities responsible for ensuring the security of their rally.

The rights body believes that the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly is a fundamental right guaranteed by the constitution of Bangladesh. It is the duty of the state and its administration to protect this right and to de-escalate tensions and safeguard lives during any untoward or unexpected situation.

They must also refrain from excessive use of force. The use of force and live ammunition against civilians in Gopalganj constitutes a serious violation of both international human rights standards and the

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Another Bawm prisoner dies in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Another Bawm prisoner of Chattogram Central Jail died after reportedly falling sick inside the prison early yesterday.

The deceased is Van Lal Roal Bawm, 35, a suspected member of the KNF in Bandarban, Md Iqbal Hossain, senior superintendent of Chattogram Central Jail, told The Daily Star.

He was arrested earlier in connection with two cases filed over the bank robberies allegedly carried out by the Kuki-Chin National Front in Bandarban district on April 2 and 3, last year.

The body will be handed over to his family after autopsy, said the jail superintendent.

Iqbal said Lal Roal fell sick inside his prison cell around midnight and was taken to the prison hospital. He was then referred to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), where the doctors on duty pronounced him dead on arrival around 2:00am.

Officer-in-Charge of Panchlaish Police Station Md Solaiman told the Daily Star, "The body has been kept at the CMC morgue and the inquest was

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With rain setting the scene, three Indian white-eyes enjoy a communal bath in Chattogram's Hazarikhil -- a ritual among birds to build social bonds. These tiny, olive-yellow birds are known for hanging upside down while foraging for nectar, fruit, and insects. Native to South and Southeast Asia, they thrive in forests, gardens, and urban greenery. At night, they huddle in shrubs or trees for warmth. Easily spotted by the white ring around their eyes, they are active, social, and often seen in flocks. Though listed as "Least Concern" by the IUCN, their dependence on tree cover makes habitat loss a silent threat.

PHOTO: KOMOL DAS



Pedestrians walk on the street as vegetable hawkers occupy the entire pavement with their rickshaw-vans and crates of goods. The photo was taken in Azimpur area of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Hunt for outdated vehicles from Sunday

TUHIN SHUBHRA
ADHIKARY

The government is set to launch a crackdown on outdated vehicles from Sunday in a bid to reduce road crashes and environmental pollution.

The move comes about a month after the government fixed the economic lifespan of buses and minibuses at 20 years, and goods-laden vehicles such as trucks and covered vans at 25 years.

As of May, 299,643 commercial vehicles -- including 85,198 buses and minibuses and 214,445 trucks, covered vans and tankers -- were registered with the BRTA.

Of them, 39,169 buses and minibuses and 41,140 trucks, covered vans and tankers are past their economic lifespan, according to BRTA data updated on July 16.

A significant number of the outdated vehicles are still operating, particularly in rural areas, said a BRTA official involved with the proceedings.

Against this backdrop, the BRTA on July 13 announced a nationwide drive starting July 20, which will continue day and night.

The operation will be jointly conducted by the BRTA, district administrations, police and transport owners' and workers' organisations, reads a letter signed by Hemayet Uddin, BRTA's deputy director for enforcement.

ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF COMMERCIAL VEHICLES ARE PAST THEIR LIFESPAN

SOURCE: BRTA

REGISTERED	OUTDATED
39,169	41,140
85,198	
Buses, minibuses	214,445

Trucks, vans, tankers

Contacted, Hemayet said 17 mobile courts will carry out the drive in divisional cities, including nine in the capital.

The BRTA has already issued letters to all police commissioners, deputy inspector generals, deputy commissioners and superintendents of police requesting them to conduct similar drives in their respective areas.

The vehicles seized during the drives will be dumped temporarily as the authorities have yet to finalise a guideline for scrapping outdated vehicles.

The BRTA has selected three locations for temporarily dumping the seized vehicles: the site of the Diabari cattle market, Purbachal Sector-13 and the Jhilmil Project area, according to Hemayet.

A draft scrapping guideline was prepared during the tenure of the previous government, said another BRTA official requesting anonymity.

But it had some shortcomings and has since been amended and sent to the ministry for further action.

It will take some more time as an inter-ministerial meeting needs to be held before the draft can be finalised, the official added.

Previously, many of the outdated vehicles returned to operation after a brief suspension.

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Arrest the culprits, spare the innocent
Nahid urges govt after Gopalganj violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

National Citizen Party (NCP) Convenor Nahid Islam yesterday called on the government to refrain from harassing any ordinary resident of Gopalganj while demanding the arrest of those he called "fascist terrorists".

"We stand by the common people of Gopalganj. We urge the government to ensure that not even one ordinary person from Gopalganj is harassed. But the fascist terrorists must be arrested, each and every one of them."

Nahid made the remarks while addressing a rally at the Janata Bank intersection in Faridpur town held as part of the party's ongoing "July March to Build the Nation".

Referring to Wednesday's violence, the NCP leader said, "Our peaceful, pre-announced programme in Gopalganj was attacked. The fascists are still using Gopalganj as their safe haven. We've vowed to free the people of Gopalganj from Mujibism."

Nahid further said, "Awami

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Four arrested for rape of a 14-yr-old girl

A CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Police on Wednesday arrested four men over the rape of a 14-year-old girl in Khagrachhari's Sadar upazila on June 27.

The four -- Arman Hossain, 32; Iman Hossain, 25; Enayet Hossain, 35; and Saddam Hossain, 32 -- were arrested shortly after the girl's father filed a case against six named individuals with Sadar Police Station, said Arefin Jewel, superintendent of police in Khagrachhari.

"Four of the six accused have been arrested. We are trying to arrest the remaining two," he added.

The two still on the run are Md Munir Islam, 29, and Md Sohel Islam, 23.

Following allegations by locals that the suspects might be from BNP, MN Absar, general secretary of Khagrachhari BNP, said the accused are not involved with the party or its affiliates.

"These six individuals are not members or leaders of BNP," he said, adding, "Whoever they are, they should be brought to justice. We demand a fair and proper investigation."

Bachchu Mia, president of Bhaibanchhara Union BNP, said the six had previously been members of the party but were expelled on August 5 last year for maintaining communication with Awami League members.

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ELECTION OBSERVERS Minimum age lowered to 21

EC cancels registrations of 96
observers, unveils new policy

AHMED DEEPTO

The Election Commission yesterday revoked the registrations of all 96 local organisations that monitored the 12th national election.

The EC introduced "Election Observation Policy 2025" replacing the 2023 guidelines under which the 96 observer organisations had been registered.

Under this new policy, the minimum age requirement for local election observers has been lowered to 21 from 25 years.

However, the required educational qualification has been raised from SSC (Secondary School Certificate) to HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate).

EC's Director (Public Relations) Shariful Alam confirmed the matter to The Daily Star yesterday.

Ahead of the 12th national election, the EC had registered these 96 local election observer organisations in two phases.

The registration of an observer organisation remains valid for five years from the date of issuance; the registrations of these 96 organisations were set to expire towards the end of 2028.

Section 4 (6) of the new policy on the registration of observer organisations states that "any group that

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PHOTO: KOMOL DAS