



**BSRM**  
THE ONLY STEEL FACTORY IN BANGLADESH TO RECEIVE THE  
**GREEN FACTORY AWARD 2025**



**DHAKA METRO RAIL PROJECT**

Proud Construction Partner




**AHMAD RAFIQUE**  
(1929-2025)

## The passing of a Language Movement hero

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned cultural activist, Language Movement veteran, Tagore exponent, poet, essayist and columnist Ahmad Rafique passed away last night at Dhaka's Birdem Hospital.

He was 96. Rafique had been on life support at the hospital, where doctors pronounced him dead around 10:12pm, said Ismail Sadi, a teacher at BRAC University who was close to Rafique.

Rafique lived alone in a flat in the  
SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



People from around the country start visiting Keokradong, the highest peak in Bangladesh, in Bandarban yesterday as the authorities opened the mountain to tourists after almost three years.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

## Govt fleet to get ex-MPs' 30 duty-free cars

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

The government has decided to hand over 30 luxury vehicles imported duty-free by members of the dissolved 12th national parliament to the Directorate of Government Transport after the former lawmakers failed to clear them from Chattogram port.

The vehicles – including Toyota Land Cruisers, Harriers and other sports utility vehicles with engine capacities ranging from 3,000cc to 4,000cc – had been left at the port for months, losing value and attracting little buyer interest at auction, said customs officials.

In January, Chattogram Customs House attempted to sell the vehicles but received bids far below the reserve value (the lowest amount a seller will accept) of about Tk 9 crore.

Under auction rules, vehicles cannot be sold for less than 60 percent of their reserve value.

Bids were placed at less than Tk 2 crore, forcing customs to halt the process.

An inter-ministerial meeting later recommended that the cars be transferred to the government transport pool, a proposal endorsed by the finance division.

The directorate will cover port and freight charges from its fiscal 2025-26 budget, according to official documents.

Subsequently, on September 24, the order instructing Chattogram Customs House to take the necessary steps was issued.

"This will not only save money on government vehicle purchases but also prevent the cars from being wasted at

## Two dead in attack on UK synagogue

Suspect shot dead

REUTERS, Manchester

Two people were killed yesterday when a man drove a car into pedestrians and stabbed a security guard in an attack at a synagogue in England, where worshippers were marking Yom Kippur, the holiest day on the Jewish calendar, British police said.

Greater Manchester Police said the suspect, who was wearing a vest that appeared to be an explosive device, was shot dead after officers rushed to the scene at the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in the Crumpsall district of the city in northern England.

A video shared on social media and verified by Reuters showed police shooting a man inside the synagogue's perimeter, while another man lay on the floor in a pool of blood, appearing to wear a traditional Jewish head covering.

"He has a bomb, go away!" an armed police officer shouted to onlookers, just seconds before a gunshot rang out.

Neighbour Angela Crawshaw told Reuters she had seen three policemen aiming guns at a man in the car park of the synagogue, telling him: "Stay down, don't move or we'll shoot."

"Then they did shoot, and he fell to the floor. Then he tried getting up again and moving again, and they shot him again. And then it was just panic ... just noise and panic."

### CHILD NUTRITION IN BANGLADESH

#### FOOD POVERTY & DIET DIVERSITY

2 in every 3 children under 5 face food poverty

1 in every 5 children under extreme food poverty, consumes only 1-2 food groups against 5 prescribed by WHO-UNICEF

#### NUTRITION STATUS

Stunting (low height for age):  
24% across country  
40% in urban slums  
WHO threshold: 15%

Wasting (low weight for height): 11%, WHO emergency threshold: 5%

Underweight (low weight for age): 22%

#### NUTRITION SPENDING

Per capita allocation: \$18  
98% for broad "nutrition-sensitive" programmes, only 2% for direct interventions

2022 BANGLADESH DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY (BDHS), AND 2024 SANEM STUDY

### CHILD MALNUTRITION

## Country struggles to break free

Poverty, poor diets, and early motherhood fuelling crisis

NILIMA JAHAN

Mitu Akter had the scare of her life when her daughter Raisa began showing alarming symptoms: pale skin, and swelling in her belly, hands, and feet.

Tests revealed that the 15-month-old was severely malnourished, with dangerously low weight and height, anaemia, and nutritional oedema – a condition caused by severe protein deficiency.

"The doctor told me that my daughter was suffering from acute nutritional deficiency," said 23-year-old Mitu, a homemaker in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila.

Herself frail and undernourished, Mitu, a mother of two, didn't exclusively breastfeed Raisa. When Raisa turned six months, she began feeding her a mixture of rice powder and water – a poor substitute for breast milk – as the family could not afford nutritious food. Her seven-year-old elder daughter is also underweight.

Anaemic and weighing just 42kg during her second childbirth, Mitu never regained strength after marrying young and becoming a mother at an

early age.

"I had little breast milk and no means to improve that," said Mitu, whose husband sells jhalmuri (spicy puffed rice).

The family's meals consist largely of rice and vegetables – meat is rare, fish occasional, and milk almost absent.

Mitu's story is far from unique. Her experience mirrors a broader crisis affecting millions of children suffering from malnutrition, primarily due to inadequate dietary intake, across Bangladesh.

This reality is reflected in statistics – a 2024 UNICEF report shows that two in three children under five experience food poverty, and one in five consumes only one to two food groups daily, far below a minimum of five recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Child feeding practices remain inadequate, with exclusive breastfeeding dropping to 53 percent in 2022 from 65 percent in 2017-18. Only 30 percent of children aged between six months and 23 months receive a minimum acceptable diet,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

- Vehicles include Toyota Land Cruisers, Harriers and SUVs of 3,000cc to 4,000cc
- Imported duty-free by MPs elected in Jan 7, 2024 polls
- Only one MP took delivery of their vehicle
- Bids received far below the reserve price of Tk 9cr
- 60% of reserve value needed as per auction rules
- Directorate of govt transport to cover port, freight charges



the port," HM Kabir, deputy commissioner of Chattogram Customs House, told The Daily Star.

Introduced during HM Ershad's regime in 1987, the duty-free car facility has long faced criticism for depriving the state of revenue.

Over the past 15 years, tax exemptions on lawmakers' car imports have cost the government more than Tk 5,147 crore, according to data from the National Board of Revenue.

## Musk halfway to becoming world's first trillionaire

AFP, Washington



Billionaire Elon Musk, the world's richest person, is nearly halfway to becoming the planet's first trillionaire, Forbes magazine reported Wednesday.

The Tesla and SpaceX CEO became the first person to achieve a net worth of \$500 billion, briefly, as the shares in his electric vehicle company rebounded from his clumsy stint in politics, amid other gains.

The 54-year-old's net worth hit \$500.1 billion Wednesday before dipping back to \$499.1 billion, the publication's "Real-Time Billionaires" tracker reported.

Ranked after him are Oracle CEO Larry Ellison with a net worth of \$350.7 billion, followed by Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg with a net worth of \$245.8 billion on the Forbes list.

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania and dropping out of Stanford University, Musk banked his first millions when he sold an online publishing software company to US computer maker Compaq for more than \$300 million in 1999.



**THE FLOWER HOPPER ...** A Common Mormon drinks nectar from a peacock flower, locally known as Radhachura, in Rajshahi city. This swallowtail butterfly ranges widely across South and Southeast Asia, from Bangladesh and India to the Philippines and Japan. It flourishes in both forests and gardens, feeding mainly on flower nectar. Notably, females display polymorphism, mimicking toxic species like the Common Rose to evade predators. The butterfly shelters in bushes and shaded spots, most active under the sun. Listed as Least Concern by the IUCN, it remains vital for pollination and ecological balance. With its mimicry, elegance, and adaptability, the Common Mormon endures as one of nature's most resilient and captivating creatures.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

## G7 to target those buying Russia oil

AFP, Washington

G7 finance ministers pledged Wednesday to take aim at those who are continuing to step up purchases of Russian oil, since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago.

In a statement after a virtual meeting, officials from the Group of Seven advanced economies – Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States – agreed that it is time to "maximize pressure on Russia's oil exports."

This would hit at revenue Moscow needs for the war.

"We will target those who are continuing to increase their purchase of Russian oil since the invasion of Ukraine and those that are facilitating circumvention," the ministers said in a joint statement.

They added that they agreed on "the importance of trade measures, including tariffs" and import or export bans in efforts to cut off Russian revenues.

The statement came after the United States indicated last month that it was ready to broaden tariffs targeting buyers of Russian oil if the European Union takes similar moves.