



Farmers steer a boat through flooded fields to harvest a local variety of Aman paddy that grows in water. After filling their boats with the crop, they head home to dry and sell it in local markets. The photo was taken at Chalan Beel in Singra, Natore recently.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

COX'S BAZAR AIRPORT

A vision too big for ground reality?

Experts slam govt decision to upgrade airport to int'l status then retract after 11 days

RASHIDUL HASAN

The decision to backtrack just 11 days after declaring Cox's Bazar airport as the country's fourth international airport shows a lack of planning and preparation from the civil aviation ministry and other authorities, said aviation experts.

They alleged the ministry and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) made the decision without any feasibility study or assessment of its viability.

On October 12, the civil aviation ministry issued a notification declaring that Cox's Bazar domestic airport would be upgraded to an international airport. However, on October 23, Civil

Aviation Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin instructed CAAB to suspend activities in this regard. The ministry officially announced yesterday the suspension of scheduled international flights at the airport.



government had initially decided to upgrade the airport.

"Questions have been raised about why the interim government made such a declaration without proper verification and preparation, only to retract it later. Such actions tarnish the

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No cause for concern over ties with China Says foreign adviser

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday assured that Bangladesh's engagement with China is no cause for concern, emphasising that the country maintains a balanced foreign policy in its relations with all nations.

"I don't think there is any reason for concern,

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Lead level high in some local paints

ESDO survey finds over 40% of paint samples exceed legal lead limit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite compliance by major multinational and national paint brands with legal lead limits, many local and unregistered manufacturers produce paints containing dangerously high levels of the toxic metal, posing a serious public health risk.

A recent survey by the Environmental and Social Development Organisation (ESDO) found that 42.2 percent of 161 decorative paint samples tested exceeded the permissible lead limit of 90 parts per million (ppm).

ESDO made six recommendations, including strengthening monitoring and enforcement, bringing industrial and spray paints under standards, enhancing import controls, and promoting consumer awareness.

Alarming, 26.2 percent of the samples contained more than 1,000 ppm of lead, which can severely affect the human body, ESDO said while unveiling the findings at its Lalmatia office yesterday.

The high-lead samples mostly came from small, unregistered manufacturers operating without proper testing facilities or regulatory oversight. In contrast, 57.8 percent of samples -- mostly from established multinational and national brands -- were within the safe range.

According to the Bangladesh Paints and Coatings Market-2024 report, multinational companies make up 86 percent of the paint market, while small local producers account for 10-15 percent.

Lead, often used in paints for its durability and colour vibrancy, is a toxic metal linked to serious health issues. Such paints release toxic lead dust after a period when used on walls, toys, furniture, or public structures.

Continuous exposure can damage the brain and nervous system of children,

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A man jumps over a makeshift road divider while others jaywalk in the background. Amid such risky behaviour, buses continue to pass by, putting pedestrians in danger of accidents. The photo was taken at the Noor Hossain Square in Gulistan, Dhaka recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Govt launches national family planning strategy

It aims to ensure universal access to rights-based family planning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday launched the National Family Planning Strategy 2025-2030, aiming to ensure universal access to rights-based family planning in Bangladesh.

The strategy was unveiled at an event at the CIRDAP International Conference Centre in Dhaka, jointly organised by the Directorate General of Family Planning and the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division of the health ministry.

Presenting the strategy, Dr Abu Sayed Md Hasan, sexual and reproductive health and rights specialist at the United Nations Population Fund, highlighted Bangladesh's progress in family planning and maternal health over the years.

He said the total fertility rate has declined and the maternal mortality ratio has dropped

from 574 deaths per 1,00,000 live births to 236 in 2023.

Despite this progress, he said preventable maternal deaths still occur.

The new strategy aims to address existing gaps, shift from a population control mindset to population management, and align family planning efforts with human rights and the SDGs, he said.

He also pointed out challenges such as a high unmet need for contraception, especially among adolescents.

Around half of Bangladeshi girls marry before 18, and contraceptive use among adolescents remains low. The contraceptive prevalence rate has stagnated at around 64 percent for nearly a decade, with modern methods used by about 55 percent of couples, said Dr Hasan.

High discontinuation rates, reliance on

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Caretaker system basic structure of constitution

BNP lawyer tells SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP counsel Md Bodruddoza Badal yesterday prayed to the Supreme Court to restore the nonparty caretaker government system with necessary guidelines by cancelling its 2011 verdict that scrapped the 13th Amendment of the Constitution, which had introduced the system in 1996.

"All political parties had adopted the caretaker government system for holding free and fair elections and establishing democracy in the country.

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JCD man shot dead in Jubo Dal factional clash in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activist was shot dead, and at least 15 others were injured in a clash between two factions of Jubo Dal in Chattogram city early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Sajjad, 22, confirmed Bakalia Police Station Inspector (Investigation) Mozammel Haque to The Daily Star.

Sajjad was known to be a follower of Emdadul Haque Badsha, the expelled organising secretary of the now-defunct city unit of Jubo Dal, party insiders said.

The "gunfight" erupted between Emdadul and former city unit JCD president Gazi Siraj Ullah at 1:30 am in the Bagar Bilmukh area on Bakalia Access Road following a dispute over tearing down banners, police and party sources said.

Inspector Mozammel Haque said, "During the clash, Sajjad was shot and later pronounced dead at Chattogram Medical College Hospital."

According to party sources, tension escalated after local Jubo Dal activist Md Jasim, a follower of Emdadul, was allegedly abducted and beaten up by Borhan Uddin and Nazrul Islam Sohel -- both followers of Siraj -- on Monday night.

Borhan had previously been active in Awami League politics but recently hung banners featuring Chattogram City Corporation Mayor and former city BNP president Shahadat Hossain in the area, which triggered mixed reactions, the party sources said.

Jasim told reporters that Mayor Shahadat Hossain had instructed them to remove banners hung across different parts of the city featuring photos of "self-proclaimed leaders".

Following the directive, Jasim and others took down several banners in Bakalia and other areas, including one displaying photos of Shahadat, Siraj, and Borhan.

Over the incident, Borhan and his men allegedly abducted and assaulted him, Jasim claimed.

Party insiders said after news of Jasim's abduction spread, supporters of Emdadul went to rescue him. As they reached Bakalia Access Road, they came under attack, during which Sajjad suffered bullet wounds.

Emdadul told reporters, "Borhan had hung banners featuring Siraj and others. When Mayor Shahadat ordered those to be removed, Borhan's

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