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5% of GDP to be allocated for health sector: PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday said five percent of GDP will be allocated to the health sector in phases to ensure the healthcare system is for everyone.

In a message on the eve of World Health Day 2026, he also said preventive healthcare activities will be expanded alongside quality medical services, including comprehensive maternal and child healthcare in both urban and rural areas.

He said one lakh

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Participants at a roundtable, titled 'Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Bangladeshi News Media', organised by The Daily Star and Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. The event was supported by the UNDP. PHOTO: STAR

Self-regulation needed amid shift in AI

Say media leaders at Star-MRDI policy dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) in journalism offers unprecedented opportunities, but it also raises urgent ethical concerns, industry experts warned at a policy dialogue in Dhaka yesterday.

The event, titled "Ethical Use of Artificial Intelligence in Bangladeshi News Media," was organised by The Daily Star and Media Resources Development Initiative (MRDI) at The Daily Star Centre and supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Speaking at the programme, Shakhawat Liton, executive editor of The Business Standard, cautioned against legal regulation of AI in media.

"Our political and social culture is such that whenever a problem arises, we want to solve it through laws. By moving towards a legal framework for AI, we are indirectly handing the government another tool to control the media," he said, adding that laws are generally designed to constrain rather than empower freedom.

Shawkat Hossain, head of online news management at Prothom Alo, argued that AI regulations should align with a media outlet's editorial policy, and outsiders have no jurisdiction to dictate such rules.

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'Two-thirds JS majority a curse for Bangladesh'

Speakers slam govt over repeal of key rights ordinances at dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-thirds majority in parliament has historically been a "curse" for Bangladesh's politics, speakers at a citizens' dialogue said yesterday, expressing concern over recent moves affecting judicial independence and protections against enforced disappearance.

The discussion, titled "Repeal of the ordinance on judicial independence and suspension of the ordinance on prevention and remedy of enforced disappearance: A threat to progress in good governance and human rights," was organised by Voice for Reform at BDBL Bhaban in Karwan Bazar.

Speakers warned that repealing the ordinance on judicial independence and suspending the one on enforced disappearance pose a direct threat to good governance and human rights.

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan) Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said the country must learn from past experiences following the 1973, 2001, and 2008 elections.

"Whenever a party secured a two-thirds majority, the consequences were negative," he said, adding that such dominance enabled controversial constitutional amendments, interference in the judiciary, and a weakened electoral system.

He questioned the hesitation over the ordinances, noting they had already received public endorsement through a referendum. With 10 out of 14 members in agreement, he said, it was unreasonable to delay decisions based on dissent from a few.

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Fuel crisis threatens water taxi shutdown

Half of trips of the Hatirjheel-based service suspended; passengers face long waits

SHAMIMA RITA

The Hatirjheel water taxi service in the capital is facing the risk of a complete shutdown as the ongoing fuel crisis begins to hit the alternative transport system, operators said.

Since Eid-ul-Fitr, trips have been reduced to conserve fuel, with nearly 50 percent of trips already suspended. Passengers are now facing long waits, increasing their hardship.

According to authorities, around 10,000 to 15,000 passengers use the service daily, many of whom rely on it to avoid road congestion. However, uncertainty is growing as fuel shortages persist.

Operators warned that if the fuel supply is not restored soon, even the reduced services may be halted.

Among 15 boats of the water taxi service, 12 to 13 usually operate on four routes—FDC, Rampura Bridge, Gudaraghat, and Police Plaza. Passenger numbers were also lower than usual.

Many passengers expressed frustration as boats did not depart even long after ticket sales. Many were seen leaving the ghats to seek alternative transport.

During a visit to FDC and Rampura ghats on Sunday afternoon, four boats were seen lying idle. Only three boats were operating between FDC and Rampura, while two were running schedules.

Ripa Chakma, a regular passenger from Middle Badda, said, "The boat does not leave unless there are at least 15 passengers. I

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TONU MURDER IO seeks court permission for DNA cross-match

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

The investigation officer of Sohagi Jahan Tonu murder case yesterday sought the court's permission to conduct a cross-match of DNA profiles of three army personnel.

PBI Inspector Tarikul Islam filed the appeal before Senior Judicial Magistrate Mominul Haque of Cumilla Sadar Cognisance Court-1.

The three individuals named in the plea are Sergeant Zahid, Warrant Officer Hafizur Rahman, and Soldier Jahangir Alam.

Earlier, Cumilla Court Inspector Mamunur Rashid said the court had directed the investigation

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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE Ex-Jubo Dal leader files complaint against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A former Jubo Dal leader yesterday lodged a complaint with the prosecution of the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT), accusing ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and several former top officials of enforced disappearance and torture.

Moshiur Rahman Mamun submitted the complaint to Chief Prosecutor Aminul Islam, naming former DGF chief Lt Gen (retd) Sheikh Mamun Khaled, former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and others.

Mamun claimed he was first picked up in 2013 and held in secret detention for six days when Mamun Khaled was DGF chief.

He alleged that he was again detained on February 23, 2015, while heading to Thailand from Dhaka airport, and kept blindfolded and handcuffed by plainclothes law

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Members of indigenous communities from the Chittagong Hill Tracts perform a traditional dance at the Biju fair, which began in Rangamati yesterday afternoon. The five-day event features competitions in Goriya dance, bamboo pole walking, Ghila, Latim and Pajon cooking, marking preparations for the upcoming Biju celebrations from April 12 to 14. PHOTO: RIKORS CHAKMA

Country targets trillion-dollar economy by 2034

Finance minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday informed the parliament that the government aims to transform Bangladesh into a trillion-dollar economy by 2034.

In response to a question from Dhaka-18 MP SM Jahangir Hossain, the minister said the government has prepared an action plan considering investment, employment, economic democratisation, creative economy, sports economy, and other sectors to achieve the milestone of a trillion-dollar economy.

The minister said according to the latest official data published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the per capita income in the fiscal year 2024-25 stands at US \$2,769.

To raise per capita income, the government is simultaneously prioritising employment, investment, production, exports, remittances, skills development, social protection, and macroeconomic stability.

In response to a question from Feni-2 MP Zainal Abidin, the finance minister said that in the context of the Middle East war, the government

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Govt orders fairs, cultural events to end by 7pm

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has directed deputy commissioners (DCs) in all 64 districts to ensure that cultural programmes, trade fairs, and billboard lighting are shut down by 7:00pm, in a stricter move to save electricity and fuel.

The Cabinet Division issued the instruction to divisional commissioners and DCs yesterday.

Earlier, the government reduced office hours by one hour and ordered shops and shopping malls to close by 7:00pm. Through these measures, it aims to save 3,100MW of electricity daily.

Following last week's cabinet meeting, authorities moved to enforce the closing time for shops, initially set at 6:00pm and later revised to 7:00pm. The latest directive extends the restrictions to cultural events and billboards.