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'Sir, please buy a pack...'

At just 9, Al Amin supports his grandparents by selling popcorn after school

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A smile on his face. Tenderness in his eyes. A quiet plea in his voice: "Sir, please buy a pack of popcorn..."

As dusk settles over Rangpur city, and crowds gather at busy points like July Chatter, Town Hall and Shapla Chatter, this 9-year-old boy weaves through the passersby, clutching packets of popcorn in his small hands.

During the day, Al Amin is a fourth grade student at Zoom Bangladesh School, a small private initiative in Rangpur's Muslimpara area.

After school, however, he becomes the only earning member of his family.

He lives with his grandparents at the abandoned railway staff quarters near Rangpur station. The dilapidated building shelters destitute and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



COLOURS OF BAISHAKH ... As Pahela Baishakh approaches, shoppers were seen browsing a vibrant array of traditional handicrafts and festive items at a roadside fair in the Dhaka University's Doel Chatter area yesterday. Local artisans and vendors have set up extensive displays of heritage products.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

MIDDLE EAST WAR IMF to lower global growth forecast

AGENCIES

The International Monetary Fund will lower global growth forecasts due to the Middle East war, its chief said yesterday, warning of the conflict's "scarring effects" despite a fragile ceasefire.

"Even in a best case, there will be no neat and clean return to the status quo ante," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said.

Georgieva said that — even in the fund's "most hopeful scenario" — spiralling energy costs, infrastructure damage, supply disruptions and a loss of market confidence meant growth would be less than expected.

The IMF also anticipates having to provide up to \$50 billion in immediate financial assistance to countries affected by the war, with food insecurity set to affect at least 45 million people.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Israeli strike kills expat in Beirut

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi expatriate worker was killed in an Israeli strike in Beirut on Wednesday, the Bangladesh Embassy in the Lebanese capital said yesterday.

The deceased, Dipali Begum, 34, was the daughter of Sheikh Mofazzal and Rozina Khatun, of Purbo Shalepur village in Faridpur's Charbhadrasan upazila. She had been working as a housekeeper in Lebanon.

In a statement, the embassy said Dipali was sustained injuries in an Israeli missile strike that hit her employer's house, where she was staying, in Beirut's Hamra area. She later died at a hospital, according to her family.

According to preliminary information, several members of her employer's family were also killed in the attack.

Local police sources said the body has been kept in the morgue of Rafik Hariri University Hospital.

The embassy expressed sorrow over the death of the remittance earner and conveyed deep sympathy to her bereaved family.

Dipali had gone to Lebanon two years ago in search of a better livelihood, her younger sister Lajiu Begum told The Daily Star. "We last spoke to her on the morning of April 8," she said. About a month ago, Dipali moved from Chur to Beirut after the conflict escalated. "She told us the situation in Chur had worsened because of the fighting, so she relocated to Beirut with her employer's family."

Charbhadrasan Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shuraiya Mamtaz said steps have been taken to bring back the body. "We will provide all necessary support to the victim's family... The process has already been initiated through diplomatic channels."

With Dipali's death, seven Bangladeshis have been killed so far in the US-Israel war on Iran.



Dipali Begum

Bangladeshi ship denied passage thru Hormuz

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Bangladesh Shipping Corporation's vessel — Banglar Joyjatra — has failed to cross the Strait of Hormuz due to the Iranian authorities' refusal to grant transit permission.

After being stranded in the Persian Gulf for nearly 40 days due to the US-Israel war on Iran, the ship left the outer anchorage of the Saudi port of Dammam on Wednesday morning following the ceasefire.

However, it was denied permission when it contacted the Iranian authorities upon reaching near the strait on Thursday night, said BSC Managing Director Commodore Mahmudul Malek.

He said the ship would now wait in a safer location.

Malek added that the government would attempt to secure safe passage through diplomatic channels and expressed hope that transit clearance could be obtained by tomorrow or the following day.

The vessel has 31 Bangladeshi crew members on board. It travelled to the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Early rains fuel fear of severe dengue outbreak

Experts suggest urgent action to eradicate Aedes breeding grounds

HELEMUL ALAM

Bangladesh is likely to face a large-scale dengue outbreak this year unless authorities act swiftly to identify mosquito hotspots, eliminate breeding grounds ahead of the monsoon, and intensify

situation could worsen even before the rainy season begins, making it harder for the government to contain infections.

"When it rains, water accumulates in containers scattered across different places, creating ideal breeding grounds

prone to rainwater accumulation, he said.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, Bangladesh recorded more than one lakh dengue cases annually over the past three years, overwhelming hospitals and



Cuban leader defies US calls to step down

AGENCIES

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said Thursday that he would not resign under US pressure and called for open dialogue in his first television interview with an American broadcaster.

"We have a free sovereign state, a free state. We have self-determination and independence, and we are not subjected to the designs of the United States," Diaz-Canel told NBC News, according to their translation of his remarks.

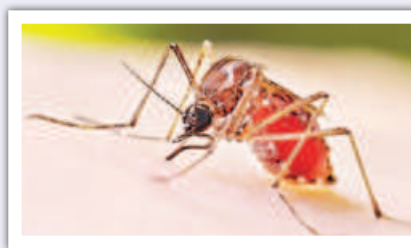
"The US government that has implemented that hostile policy against Cuba has no moral to demand anything from Cuba," the 65-year-old leader added.

"The concept of revolutionaries giving up and stepping down — it's not part of our vocabulary."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

ISSUES

- Poor waste management allowing water to accumulate in containers
- Lack of comprehensive, year-round dengue surveillance and patient tracking
- Over-reliance on fogging, failing to eliminate hidden breeding sites



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Identify, eliminate breeding hotspots through nationwide drives
- Strengthen waste management to prevent stagnant water accumulation
- Establish dedicated vector control cell under LGSD ministry

public awareness campaigns, experts have warned.

Early spells of rain in Dhaka and several other districts have heightened concerns over the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes, the vector of dengue and chikungunya, they say.

If breeding hotspots are not eradicated immediately, the

for Aedes. We need to strengthen waste management to ensure that water does not collect in these containers," said entomologist Kabirul Bashar, a professor at Jahangirnagar University.

The current period is vital for preventive action, particularly through better management of solid waste and containers in areas

pushing healthcare workers to their limits.

Last year, the country reported 413 deaths and 102,861 dengue cases. In 2024, the number of fatalities was 575 with 101,214 cases, while 2023 marked the deadliest year on record, with 1,705 deaths and 321,197 cases.

Bangladeshi shot dead by Indian Khasis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead by members of the Indian Khasi community in a border area of Sylhet's Companiganj upazila, said BGB.

The incident took place on Thursday night, approximately one kilometre inside the Indian territory.

The victim, Saleh Ahmed Joydhar, 30, was a resident of Karbalartuk village of the upazila.

The information was confirmed yesterday in a press release sent by Lt Col Nazmul Haque, commanding officer of the 48 BGB Battalion in Sylhet.

According to the statement, victim Saleh Ahmed, along with his two associates, crossed the border into India around 8:30pm on Thursday with the intention of bringing in a consignment of drugs.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Perlite powder collected from LNG gas-carrying ships lies exposed at a coastal shipbreaking yard in Sitakunda's Kattali area. An extremely fine dust, it spreads with the wind and settles into surrounding water bodies. Environmentalists warn that, left uncovered without proper soil management, it poses serious health risks to local residents. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Astronauts gird for re-entry, splashdown

AFP, Houston

The Artemis II astronauts conducted a historic lunar flyby, gathered invaluable data and took in unprecedented Moon views, but one of the most crucial moments of their 10-day mission is still to come: splashdown.

Earlier this week, Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen voyaged further from Earth than any human before, in a mission considered a key stepping stone towards eventual crewed lunar landings, and more.

They are scheduled to splash down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Diego at 5:07 pm local time (0007 GMT today), after which Nasa and the military will help them get out of the capsule and fly them to a recovery ship.

Their journey has been rich in milestones and already resulted in stunning photographs that have captivated the imaginations of people on Earth.

But until the astronauts are home safe, it's too early to talk about success, Nasa's Associate Administrator Amit Kshatriya told a briefing Thursday.

"When we can start celebrating is when we have a crew safely in the medbay of the ship," the high-ranking official said. "That's really when we can allow the emotions to take over, and, you know, start talking about success."

"We need to have the crew home before we do that." The stakes are particularly high given concerns that arose during Artemis I, a 2022 uncrewed test flight to the Moon and back that saw the Orion heat shield erode in unexpected ways.