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'Past govts' measles vaccination failure unforgivable crime'

Says prime minister

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday termed the "life-threatening failure" of the previous two governments to vaccinate children against measles across the country an "unforgivable crime".

"We all have to be vigilant so that such incidents never happen again," he said.

"Due to the current government's emergency initiative to vaccinate against measles across the country, by the grace of Almighty Allah, it has been possible to prevent further deterioration of the situation," said the premier, reports BSS.

Addressing the Upazila Health and Family Planning Officers (UHFO) Conference 2026 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium in Dhaka, the prime minister urged grassroots physicians to lead efforts in building an accessible, affordable, effective, and humane healthcare system.

"You are the main drivers in turning our dream of a healthy nation into reality," he said, outlining plans to raise health sector allocation to 5 percent of GDP.

The prime minister said he believes physicians will be able to establish an accountable, sustainable and people-centric health service, reports UNB.



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Eight-month-old Raima, who was brought from Kushtia, has been receiving treatment at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in Mohakhali for three days after developing measles-related complications. The photo was taken yesterday, when four more children were reported dead from suspected measles in the previous 24 hours till 8:00am.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'Punish those responsible for measles deaths'

Doctors' platform calls for immediate measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors' Platform for People's Health (DPPH) yesterday demanded that those responsible for the recent surge in preventable deaths of children from measles be identified and punished.

The organisation said negligence in vaccine procurement by the interim government, bureaucratic delays and institutional indifference towards public health have significantly contributed to the ongoing measles outbreak, leaving many children dead.

It called for immediate corrective measures, including launching a nationwide mass vaccination campaign, declaring the measles outbreak a public health emergency, and undertaking all-out efforts with the highest priority to contain the crisis.

DPPH, formed in May 2020, made the observations and demands at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity titled "Deaths of Children in Measles: What Should Be Done in this Public Health Emergency".

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Reviving Saarc a key foreign policy goal: Khalilur

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman has said that reviving Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) is a major foreign policy objective of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

He made the comment at a ministerial panel at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Türkiye yesterday. Khalilur Rahman, Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Afghan Transport Minister Azizi participated in the panel.

Khalilur recalled the seminal contribution of former president Ziaur Rahman's initiative to establish Saarc, which has remained dormant for nearly a decade.

The panel agreed that the South Asian region

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Caught between arsenic and salinity

In Chapainawabganj Sadar, residents grapple with acute water crisis

SHOHANUR RAHMAN RAFI

Thousands of residents of Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila have been grappling with an alarming water crisis as ultra-deep wells yield saline water and deep aquifers remain contaminated with arsenic.

Several neighbourhoods under Chapainawabganj municipality are receiving water too salty for consumption, while people in other areas rely on groundwater much at risk of arsenic poisoning.

In many households, the tap water smells unpleasant and corrodes pipes, and residents say their skin itches after bathing.

As such, people are forced to collect safe drinking water from distant sources on a daily basis.

The crisis surfaced after three ultra-deep production wells - each around 1,000 feet deep - were installed in 2020 with assistance from JICA in the Rajarampur, Chandlai, and Rehaichar areas of the municipality. The wells were meant to identify arsenic-free aquifers and expand safe water access.



We cannot even rinse our mouths with this water. It's too salty and leaves my hands with blisters as I use it for domestic chores. We have to bring drinking water from far away.

PARVIN BEGUM, A housewife from Chandlai

However, the wells instead began yielding excessively saline and warm water, according to the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE).

As per DPHE data, while the Bangladesh standard prescribes 150-600 mg/L of chloride and 1,000 mg/L of total dissolved solids (TDS), tests revealed significantly higher concentrations in water pumped from the deep wells - Rajarampur (965 ft) with chloride 1,280 mg/L, TDS 2,570 mg/L; Chandlai (1,000 ft) with chloride 830 mg/L, TDS 1,710 mg/L; and Rehaichar (1,009 ft) with chloride 830 mg/L, TDS 1,780 mg/L.

Although the wells yield arsenic-free water, the high salinity makes

them unsafe for drinking.

In contrast, five similar wells installed in the district outside the municipality in 2021 showed salinity and TDS levels within normal limits - suggesting that the problem is highly location-specific.

Meanwhile, water from deep aquifers across the municipality has been found highly contaminated with arsenic.

Prof AHM Selim Reza of Rajshahi University's Geology and Mining department said arsenic concentrations of around 1.2 mg/L were found at depths of 120-150 ft, far above both the Bangladesh standard of 0.05 mg/L and WHO guideline of 0.01 mg/L.

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NCP forms 53-member women's wing committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party (NCP) has formed a 53-member central convening committee for its women's platform, Jatiya Nari Shakti.

The platform's Member Secretary Mahmuda Alam Mitu confirmed the development in a press release issued yesterday.

The committee was approved by NCP Convener Nahid Islam and Member Secretary Akhter Hossain, the release said.

NCP Joint Convener Monira Sharmin has been made convener, while Joint Member Secretary Saifun Bushra Mishma has been named senior joint convener. Mahmuda Alam Mitu will serve as member secretary.

Meanwhile, one of the listed leaders has announced her resignation from all party posts, expressing surprise at her inclusion.

Former Dhaka University student Dyuti

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Dhaka-EU ties set for new boost Comprehensive Partnership Agreement to be initialled in Brussels tomorrow

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh and the European Union (EU) will initial the Comprehensive Partnership Agreement (CPA) tomorrow, adding a new dimension to the relationship that will boost trade, investment and other areas based on equal footing.

Initialling the CPA means the agreement will have a legal basis, with the draft finalised and agreed upon by both sides in January this year following five sessions of negotiation since 2024. However, the CPA will take a few months for translation to 24 European languages before it is signed.

The CPA will be initialled in the presence of Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas in Brussels, said ministry officials. Khalilur Rahman will fly to Brussels today.

Officials said Bangladesh's relationship with the EU, the country's largest export destination, has been that of development cooperation under the Cooperation Agreement signed in 2001.

According to diplomatic sources, signing the CPA will be a significant elevation of the Bangladesh-EU relationship.

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Three woodpeckers assemble on a coconut tree, likely preparing to drill nesting holes with their long beaks. Often considered nature's quiet benefactors, they create cavities later used by other birds such as mynas and parrots. The photo was taken in the Bospara area of Rajshahi city yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

JORA SHIVMANDIR

A testament to Khulna's heritage

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Located at Ghat-5 along the eastern bank of the Bhairab river in Khulna city, the 327-year-old twin Shiva temples, locally known as "Jora Shivmandir", are a historic marvel that has withstood the test of time.

The temples, known for their Shivalingams, are a symbol of both spiritual reverence and architectural grandeur.

Despite the temples' unique archaeological significance, they have not yet been taken into the custody of the Department of Archaeology.

Established in 1104 in the Bangla calendar by Dewan Krishnaram Bose of Murshidabad, the Jora Shivmandir was once a centrepiece of local life.

The grand complex featured a large pond, a lush flower garden, and held a vibrant eight-day-long fair during Shivratri that drew visitors from near and far.

Over the years, the pond and garden were grabbed and replaced by the encroaching infrastructure of a railway station and new buildings.

The Khulna-Jashore road separates Shibbari intersection and Jora Shivmandir. Today, no one can instantly remember that this intersection has a



connection to the twin Shiva temple.

After renovation the real wall's shape and colour were covered by bright cement and sand.

Both temples are similar in shape on square bases, with thick walls and east-facing entrances. There is an arched doorway on the south side.

A trident is placed on the southern peak. On the north wall, there is a grooved identification plaque. The wall also bears plaques commemorating recent restorations and renovations. Each of the two

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