

## 9-yr-old boy dies after air pumped into his rectum

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A nine-year-old boy died after compressed air was reportedly pumped through his rectum using a tyre inflator machine at an auto-rickshaw garage in Narsingdi's Palash upazila yesterday.



The deceased, Ramim Mia, was the son of Ripon Mia of Gajaria Charkarardi village in the upazila, said Shahed Al Mamun, officer-in-charge of Palash Police Station.

The incident took place around 9:00am at a battery-run auto-rickshaw garage in Gajaria Bazar, he said, quoting family members and locals.

According to the family, Ramim had gone to the market to visit his grandfather, Amzad Hossain, who is a corrugated sheet trader there. The child's father also has a sanitary goods shop in the market, the OC said.

At one point, Ramim went to a nearby auto-rickshaw garage owned

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People stand outside a hospital morgue where a post-mortem is being performed on Chandranath Rath, an aide of BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari, who was shot dead on Wednesday, in Kolkata yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Special drives against extortionists and 'godfathers' ongoing

Says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the government has taken a policy decision to gradually withdraw the army from field-level law enforcement duties, as discipline has been restored in the police force.

He made the remark while speaking to journalists at the Secretariat after a meeting on stone quarry management.

He said discipline has been restored in the police force since the elected political government assumed office.

Responding to questions, he said a special drive against extortionists and local "godfathers" is ongoing, adding that no one is above the law. He said drug traffickers, criminals and armed offenders are being arrested and punished through courts.

On Sylhet stone and sand quarry issues, the minister said a high-level expert committee has been formed to consider the limited reopening of quarry sites in Sylhet and Sunamganj while ensuring environmental protection and compliance with existing laws and regulations.

He said ecologically critical areas such as Jaflong will remain outside the leasing scope. The committee is expected to submit its report by the end of the month, with a final decision in the first week of June. Steps will also be taken to expedite related court cases, he added.



## 'TRAFFICKING' TO RUSSIA UK slaps sanctions on Bangladeshi travel agency

UNB, Dhaka

The United Kingdom has announced a fresh round of sanctions targeting Russia's drone production network and groups, including a Bangladeshi travel agency, accused of exploiting vulnerable migrants to support Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The new measures, published on May 5, target 35 individuals and organisations, including those linked to human trafficking operations and companies supplying components for Russia's military drone industry.

Bangladesh's Dream Home Travels and Tours Ltd is among the organisations facing sanctions.

The Daily Star made several attempts to contact the agency but could not reach officials over the phone.

The British High Commission in Dhaka said the sanctions relating to Bangladesh target the travel agency for allegedly deceiving and exploiting Bangladeshis to fight in Russia's war in Ukraine.

As part of the sanctions package, the UK is intensifying efforts to disrupt Russia's military supply chains and networks accused of trafficking foreign migrants into the war effort.

The sanctions specifically target individuals involved in recruiting and transporting vulnerable migrants to fight on the frontlines in Ukraine on behalf of Russia, as well as firms supporting Russian drone factories.

British officials said the move reflects the UK's continued commitment to increasing economic pressure on the Kremlin and supporting Ukraine in pursuit of a "just and lasting peace".

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## Israeli strike kills top Hamas official's son in Gaza: hospital, Hamas

AFP, Gaza City

A Gaza hospital and Hamas yesterday said the son of the Palestinian Islamist movement's chief negotiator had died from wounds sustained in an Israeli strike a day earlier.

Azzam Khalil al-Hayya, 23, the son of top Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya, "was martyred after succumbing to wounds sustained in an Israeli airstrike targeting him yesterday," Gaza City's Al Shifa hospital said in a statement.

The city's Al-Ahli hospital and a security source said on Wednesday that a strike on the Al-Daraj neighbourhood of Gaza City in the evening killed one person and wounded 10 others, including Azzam Khalil al-Hayya.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment on the incident.

Azzam Khalil al-Hayya is the fourth of Khalil al-Hayya's seven sons to be killed in Israeli attacks, according to a Hamas source. Two of those were killed before the Gaza war erupted in October 2023.

The third, Hammam, was killed in an Israeli strike targeting Hamas leaders in Doha in September, which killed six people.

Khalil al-Hayya is the head of Hamas in Gaza despite living in exile in Qatar. He is currently vying for the leadership of the movement.

He survived the strike on Doha. In a statement, Hamas said that the killing of Azzam Khalil al-Hayya "came within the framework of attempts to exert pressure on the resistance leadership and its negotiating delegation, after the occupation's failure to impose its conditions or achieve its declared objectives."

## West Bengal assembly

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several days. These comments must be seen in the context of the core issue of the repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis from India. This obviously requires cooperation from Bangladesh. Over 2,860 cases of nationality verification are pending with Bangladesh, and several of them have been pending for over five years...

"We expect Bangladesh to expedite nationality verification so that the repatriation of illegal immigrants can take place smoothly," he said.

The MEA spokesperson added the repatriation of "illegal Bangladeshis" would require cooperation from Dhaka.

The issue of alleged infiltration by

Bangladeshis was among the BJP's key poll planks in West Bengal.

The saffron party had vowed to stop so-called infiltration by ensuring fencing along the India-Bangladesh border. It had also promised to identify "illegal Bangladeshis" in the state and deport them.

India stepped up its drive against alleged undocumented Bangladeshis last year and sent hundreds towards the Bangladesh border, especially through Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya. Delhi said these were illegal migrants being deported, while Bangladesh raised serious concerns over "push ins" without proper verification or formal repatriation procedures.

## Haor farmers sink into debt, misery

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DEBT AND DESPAIR

For this report, The Daily Star interviewed over 40 farmers in the seven haor districts. More than 25 of them revealed that the ongoing situation has trapped them in a cycle of debt.

Bidhan Sarkar of Muladair Haor in Khaliajuri upazila, Netrokona, said his five acres of ripe paddy were submerged.

"In our haor area, we get only one crop a year. We depend on selling that paddy to cover all yearly family expenses, including children's education and medical treatment," he said.

Standing waist-deep in water, he managed to harvest part of the crop and hired labourers for the rest, but was forced to sell wet paddy at Tk 600 per maund (37.3kg), far below production cost, just to pay them.

He had borrowed Tk 40,000 for cultivation. "Now the paddy is not even enough for food. The moneylender is pressuring me to sell my land. I see no option but to sell it," he said.

Fultu Mia of Madan upazila borrowed Tk 2 lakh, with repayment due at Tk 2.60 lakh. "Now I cannot repay that debt by selling the paddy. Even if I return the principal amount, the remaining Tk 60,000 will still remain as debt," he said.

Shamim Mia of Barhatta upazila leased two acres, borrowing Tk 50,000 with interest, promising to repay Tk 70,000 after harvest.

But 40 percent of his paddy field has gone underwater.

"I am struggling to harvest the

remaining crop. The paddy was very good, and I thought I would get around 100 maunds of rice as my share. Even after repaying the lender, I could have supported my family for four to five months," he said.

"Now, even if I sell the remaining paddy, I won't be able to repay the loan. I will have to borrow again," he added.

Amirul Islam, deputy director of DAE in Netrokona, said heavy rainfall affected nearly 80,000 farmers in the district.

Syed Ahmed of Dekhar Haor in Sunamganj cultivated 1.2 hectares by leasing half of the land. He expected over 100 maunds of paddy but salvaged only 50.

Half of the crops from the leased land must go to the landowner.

"I need at least 70 maunds of paddy to feed my family for a year. Moreover, I must repay Tk 36,000 for a Tk 30,000 loan."

"With one daughter's marriage due this year, the crisis has become unbearable. Selling the paddy at Tk 700 per maund, I cannot even repay the loan and interest. I will have to take another loan next season," he said.

Akkas Mia of Mithamoin upazila, Kishoreganj, cultivated six hectares with Tk 6 lakh in loans, due to repay Tk 9 lakh including interest.

"So far, I have not been able to bring even a single kilogram of paddy home. My nights are sleepless now because of the stress of debt," he said.

In Kishoreganj, 13,479 hectares of paddy fields have gone under water, affecting 52,500 farmers.

Crop losses in the district are estimated at Tk 300 crore, said Md Sadiqur Rahman, deputy director of

the Kishoreganj DAE.

Suman Namshudra of Kawadighi Haor in Rajnagar upazila, Moulvibazar, took Tk 2 lakh in loans expecting 600 maunds of rice.

After the damage, he fears he may salvage only 50 maunds.

"I have not seen such a disaster in the last 15 years," he said. "Under pressure from moneylenders, it has now become difficult for me to stay at home."

3-MONTH SUPPORT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed authorities to take urgent measures to assist the affected haor farmers.

During a meeting at the Secretariat, he instructed officials to prepare an accurate and transparent list by identifying those actually affected, the Prime Minister's Press Wing said in a statement.

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Asadul Habib Dulu had earlier announced that the aid would be provided as food assistance for three months through a special card system.

Economist Abdul Bayes, former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, cautioned that food aid alone would not resolve the crisis.

"The main concern is how farmers will repay cultivation-related loans after suffering crop losses," he said, stressing that debt relief must accompany food support.

He suggested measures such as rescheduling loans, installment-based repayment, or waiving interest to ease the burden.

[Mintu Deshwara and Tafsilul Aziz contributed to this report]

## First-ever hawker policy in the works

DIPAN NANDY

The government has, for the first time, drawn up a guideline to regulate street vendors in the capital aimed at reclaiming footpaths and roadsides to ease pedestrian and traffic movement while also bringing discipline to the trade for the welfare of hawkers.

The City Corporation-1 Branch of the Local Government Division published the "Dhaka City Hawker Management Policy-2026" in a gazette notification on Wednesday. The document has been sent to Dhaka south and north city corporations, the Traffic Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, and RAJUK.

Under the policy, a nine-member Central Hawker Management Committee and seven-member regional committees will oversee implementation.

Hawkers must obtain licences from the central committee specifying location, business type, and stall size. Licences must be renewed annually, and the committee reserves the right to cancel registration for violations.

Only one licence will be permitted per family, and traders must operate solely at their allocated site. Spaces cannot be leased or rented, and vendors must carry their smart card or allocation document at all times.

Authorities will conduct area-based surveys to select sites, ensuring at least five to six feet of pedestrian space. Access roads will be prioritised, while arterial roads will be avoided. Thirty percent of spaces in each site will be reserved for women and persons with disabilities.

Hawkers will be barred from operating within 30-40 feet of intersections, bus stops, or metro stations. If an area is declared "hawker-free" in the public interest, that decision will take precedence. Authorities may take immediate action against illegal vendors or



No stalls within 30-40 feet of intersections, bus stops, or metro stations

Holiday markets (7am-5pm) and night markets (6pm-10pm) allowed at designated sites

Authorities can declare "hawker-free" zones and act against illegal vendors

cancel registrations for violations.

The policy allows "Holiday Markets" at designated sites from 7:00am to 5:00pm on weekly and government holidays.

Additionally, the policy introduces "Night Markets" from 6:00pm to 10:00pm. Designated

lanes that are crowded by day but deserted at night may be used for these markets, with areas such as Mirpur-10 Hope Market, Mirpur-1 intersection, Gulistan, Sadarghat, New Market, and the Baitul Mukarram area cited as examples. Markets are strictly prohibited on playgrounds, school fields, public spaces, places of worship, or graveyards.

While temporary umbrella coverings are allowed for protection from the elements, they must be removed daily after business hours, and no permanent structures are permitted.

Robiul Alam, deputy secretary of the City Corporation-1 Branch, told The Daily Star: "We have sent the policy to the two city corporations. Soon, they will jointly hold meetings to determine the implementation timeline and the cost of hawker licences."

He added that city corporations have already begun discussions with RAJUK on location selection.

The hawker issue has long plagued Dhaka, with vendors occupying footpaths and forcing pedestrians onto roads, heightening accident risks and worsening traffic congestion.

From April 1 to 5, the DMP and city corporations conducted joint drives to clear areas including Gulistan, New Market, Nilkhet, and Science Lab. While footpaths were temporarily freed, hawkers soon returned.

Meanwhile, under separate initiatives, DNCC has issued digital identity cards to 202 hawkers in Mirpur-10, Mirpur-1, and Mirpur-2, while DSCC has provided such cards to around 100 hawkers.

## 12 more die

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The 11 others took the number of deaths from suspected measles cases to 279.

Among the 11, five were reported from Dhaka division, two from Rajshahi division, while one each from Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet and Mymensingh divisions.

During the same period, 286 new confirmed cases were reported, raising the total number of confirmed cases to 6,208.

Besides, the DGHS recorded 1,238 new suspected measles cases, bringing the total number of suspected cases to 45,498.

## Act fast

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farmers, according to the Prime Minister's Press Wing.

He instructed officials to prepare a transparent list of those impacted.

"An accurate and transparent list must be prepared by identifying the actual affected farmers. Based on this list, financial assistance will be provided to the farmers for the next three months," the statement quoted him as saying.

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Asadul Habib Dulu and Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock Minister Aminur Rashid Yasin were present at the meeting.

Among the MPs from the region, Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal, State Minister for Textiles and Jute Shariful Alam, Osman Faruk, Fazlur Rahman, Lutfozzaman Babar, Kamruzzaman Kamrul, Nurul Islam, Kalim Uddin Milon, and Mohammad Kayser Ahmad were present.

## US awaits Iran's response

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Arab allies.

Among oil traders and diplomats, there was optimism.

"We've had very good talks over the last 24 hours, and it's very possible that we'll make a deal," Trump said on Wednesday, adding his now habitual threat to return to bombing if Tehran refuses to back down to US demands.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Tehran would communicate its position to mediator Pakistan "after finalising its views".

But inside Iran, many were cynical about the talks.

**According to a report from US network NBC News, Trump's U-turn came after Saudi Arabia – whose Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman reportedly talked directly to Trump – refused to allow US forces to use its airspace and bases for the Hormuz operation.**

"Neither side in these negotiations is really capable of reaching an agreement," 42-year-old photographer Shervin told AFP reporters in Paris.

"This is another one of Trump's games; otherwise, why are so many warships and military forces being sent toward Iran?"

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US news outlet Axios, citing two officials, reported that both Tehran and Washington were close to an agreement on a one-page memorandum of understanding to end the war and set a framework for negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme.

Trump has claimed that Iran's leadership is divided, in the wake of the deaths of many senior figures in US and Israeli strikes.

But President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday said he had met with the country's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since his appointment in early March.

"What struck me most during this meeting was the vision and the humble and sincere approach of the supreme leader of the Islamic revolution," Pezeshkian said, in a video broadcast by state television.

Khamenei, reportedly wounded in strikes on the first day of the Middle East war that claimed the life of his father and predecessor Ali Khamenei, has released only written statements since his appointment.

Oil prices fell again, tumbling by five percent Thursday – having fallen around 10 percent over the previous two days. International benchmark, Brent North Sea crude, shed 5.1 percent to \$96.06 a barrel. The main US contract, West Texas Intermediate, lost 5.5 percent to \$89.87.

Markets have been particularly concerned about the Strait of Hormuz, which in peacetime carries a fifth of the world's oil and LNG trade as well as a good chunk of its fertiliser.