DHAKA FRIDAY OCTOBER 16, 2026

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THE DAILY Star ON FRIDAY

SECOND EDITION



"Starshield systems are owned and controlled by the US government. Any limits on speed ...decided by the US military."

ELON MUSK on slowdown of Ukrainian drone speeds



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Triumph of early rice varieties in the north

Fast-growing crops eradicated seasonal food crisis, unlocked year-round income for farmers

SUKANTA HALDER

Short-duration rice varieties have transformed livelihoods in northern Bangladesh, allowing farmers to grow an additional crop each year and boost both production and income in a region previously prone to periodic food shortages.

The cultivation of these rice varieties, developed by agricultural scientists at Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), has helped eliminate "monga" -- the seasonal cycle of food crisis from September to November, which had long plagued the northwestern region, particularly Rangpur division.

The success reflects how agricultural innovation can help increase food production and improve livelihoods. The achievement resonates with the spirit of World Food Day, which is being observed today under the theme, "Innovate today. Nourish tomorrow."

Many farmers in the north said that during the rainy season, they grow short-duration Aman rice, which takes three to four months to mature. They now harvest up to three crops a year.

Agriculture officials said a traditional rice variety requires 136 to 155 days to mature. It yields less -- 4.4 to 5.5 tonnes per hectare -- compared with 5.5 to 6.6 tonnes for short-duration varieties.

"Farmers who previously harvested

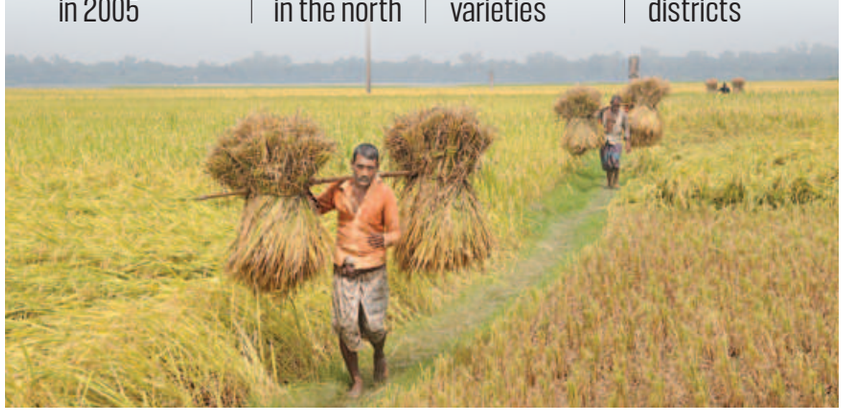
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BRRI launched field trials of short-duration rice varieties in 2005

They account for about 25% of Aman cultivation in the north

They mature in 100-120 days against 136-155 days for traditional varieties

These varieties widely cultivated in 5 northern districts





Police disperse garment workers blocking the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Azampur in Uttara yesterday. The workers demonstrated for the third consecutive day, demanding a minimum basic salary of Tk 30,000. Stories on Page 12. PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**

Journalist shot dead in Netrokona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrokona*



Lutfozzaman Fakir Alif

A journalist was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Netrokona's Durgapur upazila last night.

The victim, Lutfozzaman Fakir Alif, from Sunai village in Pogla union of Kalmakanda upazila, was the Netrokona correspondent of private IPTV channel Ruposhi Bangla. He also ran a Facebook page called "Detective Article", where he regularly posted about alleged corruption, irregularities and criminal activities.

The attack took place around 8:00pm at Uttarail Bazar on the Shyamganj-Birishiri Road.

According to police and local sources, Alif was chatting with others at a shop when two young men arrived on a motorcycle and opened fire at him.

Hearing the gunshots, locals rushed to the scene, but the attackers fled on their motorcycle.

Alif was taken to Durgapur Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him dead.

Khondokar Shaker Ahmed, officer-in-

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CONSULAR DIALOGUE

Dhaka to press Delhi for Hasina's extradition

TASNIM MOHSIN

Bangladesh is set to seek the extradition of ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and the alleged killers of Sharif Osman Bin Hadi at the upcoming fifth consular dialogue with India.

It would be the first time Dhaka has raised the issue at a formal meeting of this kind since the July uprising, diplomatic sources in Dhaka and New Delhi told The Daily Star.

Upcoming dialogue to cover cross-border movement, push-ins from India, visa services, repatriation of detained nationals, release of fishermen, the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty, extradition cases, and renewal of the Revised Travel Arrangement.

In December 2024, Dhaka sought their extradition through a diplomatic note verbale and and renewed the request after their convictions.

The meeting will be held at the director-general level in Dhaka ahead of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's possible visit to India.

Bangladesh proposed holding the dialogue in late October, while India wanted it in early November because of the Durga Puja festivities, officials said.

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DURGA PUJA GREETINGS!

We wish our readers a joyous celebration of Durga Puja, one of the biggest festivals of the Hindu community. Let the festivities begin on a note of communal harmony and prosperity.

Bangladesh's progress stalls in reducing hunger

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Bangladesh's progress in reducing hunger has slowed, with rising child wasting undermining gains in other indicators.

The 2026 Global Hunger Index (GHI) ranks Bangladesh 84th among 122 countries, with a score of 19.2 -- down from 20 in 2018. The country remains in the moderate hunger category.

Bangladesh's GHI score has improved by just 4 percent since 2018, compared with a reduction of more than 42 percent between 2000 and 2018.

Meanwhile, child wasting -- a life-threatening form of acute malnutrition -- rose from 8.4 percent in 2018 to 12.9 percent in the latest assessment, its highest level since 2000, according to the report. Wasting, measured by low weight relative to height, is associated with a higher risk of illness and death among young children.

Other indicators showed improvement.

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PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

Family members carrying luggage walk along a platform at Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital yesterday as people leave Dhaka for their hometowns to celebrate Durga Puja with loved ones. The five-day festival begins across the country today with Maha Shasthi.

IN FOCUS

Old worries stay as KL reopens labour market

Costs, departure procedures remain unclear; 25 agencies retain control

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Malaysia's labour market has reopened to Bangladeshi workers after more than two years, but the control of key recruitment procedures by 25 selected agencies has revived fears of a return to the system that saddled migrants with exorbitant costs.

The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment yesterday announced the resumption of recruitment, allowing approved agencies to process applications and prospective workers to undergo medical examinations.

However, the ministry provided no details on recruitment costs, departure dates or the formalities workers must complete.

The government also said Malaysia had agreed in principle to recruit 10,000 workers at zero cost, without specifying the eligibility criteria or selection process.

Experts and agency owners say the arrangement fails to address longstanding concerns over transparency, excessive costs and the dominance of a few agencies.

Migration specialist Asif Munier warned that unclear eligibility criteria for the zero-cost jobs could raise false hopes among prospective workers, while continued reliance on selected processing agencies raised concerns about a recurrence of past irregularities.

An agency owner registered with Malaysia's Foreign Workers Centralised Management System told The Daily Star, on condition of anonymity, that workers will have to pay at least Tk 5 lakh. "Though the government is expected to set the migration cost at around Tk 86,000 this year, but considering the

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