

PM's Mongla visit raises dev hopes for southwest

UNB, *Khulna*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday inspected Mongla Port, the Sundarbans and the site of a proposed economic zone in Bagerhat, raising hopes for investment and development in the southwestern region.

He left Dhaka by helicopter around 9:00am and flew over parts of the Sundarbans, including Hiron Point, before landing at Nalian Secondary School ground in Dakop upazila of Khulna around 10:30am.

The premier then travelled by waterway to BNS Mongla, a Bangladesh Navy facility, where he met Navy, port and local administration officials.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed, Finance Minister

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Pedestrians cross the railway tracks near Kuril Bus Stand on Airport Road in Dhaka yesterday, ignoring a warning sign about a dangerous bend ahead and a ban on crossing or walking along the tracks. Despite the risks, many continue to use the tracks as a shortcut, disregarding railway safety rules.

PHOTO: **PALASH KHAN**

407 foreigners in Bangladesh jails, 172 await return

DIPAN NANDY

At least 407 foreign nationals from 15 countries are currently held in prisons across Bangladesh, including 172 who have completed their sentences or are otherwise eligible for release but remain behind bars awaiting repatriation.

Most are Indian and Myanmar nationals, according to prison authorities.

Of the 407 prisoners, 44 are convicts, 191 are undertrial prisoners, and 172 are awaiting repatriation. None of the convicts has been sentenced to death, prison sources said.

- 238 Indians, 133 Myanmar nationals in jail
- 44 convicts, 191 undertrial prisoners
- 168 Indians await repatriation, say jail authorities
- Nationality verification delays repatriation

India accounts for the largest number, with 238 prisoners, including 168 who have completed their sentences but remain detained because arrangements for their return have yet to be completed.

Myanmar has the second-highest number, with 133 prisoners, including 33 of the 44 convicts. Only one Myanmar national is awaiting repatriation.

The remaining prisoners include six Nigerians; three each from Pakistan and Malaysia; two each from Tanzania and Peru; and one each from Georgia, the Bahamas, Belarus, Guyana, Congo, Ethiopia and Thailand.

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Curbs on secretariat visitor access on cards

PM asks officials to review visiting hours, entry rules

BAHARAM KHAN

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has asked officials to consider reducing visitor numbers and shortening visiting hours at the secretariat after noticing large crowds during recent visits to ministries.

At least three sources at the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Home Affairs confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

Visitor entry is currently barred on Mondays and Thursdays. However, on Thursday, October 15, the prime minister noticed large gatherings while descending from the 14th floor of Building 6 after inspecting the environment ministry.

He then summoned the home ministry's deputy secretary (security), the deputy commissioner of police and the additional deputy commissioner responsible for secretariat security to his office in the complex.

After being briefed on visitor management, the premier instructed them to submit a proposal through the home ministry.

This correspondent spoke to at least five officials, including two who briefed the prime minister.

One official, requesting anonymity, said internal discussions were underway and the home ministry would submit a proposal after the Puja holidays.

"The prime minister asked us to consider limiting visiting hours to 2:00pm-4:00pm. We are also considering reducing visitor access to two days a week."



Visitor entry is currently barred on Mondays and Thursdays. However, on Thursday, October 15, the prime minister noticed large gatherings while descending from the 14th floor of Building 6 after inspecting the environment ministry.

Visiting hours currently run from 12:00pm to 4:00pm.

Another official said cancelling all temporary passes was also under consideration, but a decision would follow a review of the arrangements.

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Rising heat takes a toll on maternal, child health

Research links extreme heat to higher miscarriage risk, newborn illnesses



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strengthen heat-health action plans
- Improve heatwave early-warning systems
- Monitor pregnancy, newborn complications
- Prepare hospitals for heat-related emergencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extreme heat is posing growing health risks to pregnant women, newborns and children, with research linking high temperatures to premature births and increased heatwave exposure among infants, four UN agencies warned yesterday.

The World Health Organization (WHO), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), Unicef and UNFPA jointly launched the first set of priority indicators to help countries monitor these risks and strengthen their response.

According to the WHO, research has linked extreme heat to 26 percent higher odds of preterm birth.

Babies under one year experienced 389 percent more heatwave days in 2024 than during the 1986-2005 baseline period, while an estimated 1.5 billion children worldwide face increasingly frequent, prolonged or severe heatwaves.

In Bangladesh, an icddr,b study of 22,624 pregnancy outcomes in Chakaria, Cox's Bazar, between 2012 and 2020 found 25 percent higher adjusted odds of miscarriage at average temperatures of 28°C-32°C compared with 16°C-21°C.

Miscarriages accounted for 11.2 percent of outcomes in the higher-temperature group, against 9.2 percent in the lower-temperature group. The study established an association, not causation.

A 2024 Unicef report cited Bangladeshi research showing that women giving birth on hot days were 14 percent more likely to have newborns with neonatal illnesses.

Climate Central found that Bangladesh experienced an average of 34 days annually of potentially dangerous heat for pregnant women between 2020 and 2024, with climate change adding an estimated seven days a year. In Chattogram, the estimated increase was 30 days.

The analysis counted days when temperatures exceeded levels associated with increased risks of premature birth.

The new 56-page framework recommends monitoring preterm births, stillbirths, low birthweight, pregnancy-related hypertension, child deaths and health facility visits during

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IN BRIEF

SAUDI EXECUTIONS

HRSS seeks probe into ministries' roles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) has demanded an independent investigation into the roles of Bangladesh's foreign affairs and expatriates' welfare ministries and diplomatic missions following the execution of two Bangladeshi nationals in Saudi Arabia on October 14.

In a statement yesterday, signed by HRSS Executive Director Ejazul Islam, the rights organisation said the reported lack of prior notification to Bangladeshi authorities raised serious concerns about the country's consular protection system.

The two individuals, identified as Nazrul Islam Abdul Basir and Suety Akhter (Sweety Akhtar,

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Chhatra Dal leader held over 'extortion'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch (DB) arrested Nayan Hossain, convener of Adabor thana Chhatra Dal, on Wednesday for allegedly obstructing sewerage and drainage development work by the city corporation and demanding extortion money from building owners in the capital's Adabor area.

Tejgaon DB Deputy Commissioner Md Ziauddin confirmed the arrest to the media yesterday.

Adabor Police Station Officer-in-Charge Zahidur Rahman said he had heard about Nayan's arrest but that the latter had not yet been handed over to the police station.

He also said he was unaware of the specific case in connection with which Nayan was arrested.

Students who failed SSC demand retests by Dec

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students who failed this year's Secondary School Certificate examinations have demanded supplementary exams by the end of 2026, allowing those who pass to enrol in Class XI without losing an academic year.

If the exams cannot be held this year, they want the government to allow them to enrol in college immediately while preparing for supplementary exams next year.

The demands were made at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday under the banner of SSC 2026 Students' Rights Movement Bangladesh.

Students argued that one failed examination should not deny students another chance to prove themselves.

Of the 18,29,485 candidates who sat this year's SSC and equivalent examinations, 6,90,608, or 37.75 percent, failed, according to results published on August 10. Another 4,585 passed following re-scrutiny in September.

On October 10, Prime Minister's Adviser on Education Mahdi Amin said the government was considering allowing students to retake failed subjects within three months instead of waiting a year, but cautioned that implementing the system this year could be difficult.

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Women gather jute fibre laid out to dry under the sun at Lata Mor in Khulna's Aranghata area yesterday. Once dried, the fibre is processed into yarn to make sacks used for storing and transporting agricultural produce and food grains.

PHOTO: **HABIBUR RAHMAN**

7 Qawmi parties to work together under Hefazat guidance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven Qawmi madrasa-based political parties have decided to work together under the guidance of Hefazat-e-Islam, although their leaders are reluctant to describe the initiative as a political alliance at this stage.

The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Hefazat Secretary General Sajidur Rahman at Makhjanul Ulum Madrasa in Khilgaon yesterday. Three representatives from each of the seven parties and three Hefazat leaders attended the meeting.

The parties are Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, Khelafat Majlis, Islami Andolan Bangladesh, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Islami Oikya Jote (Razi), Nezame Islam Party and Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon.

Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmad told The Daily Star, "The seven like-minded Islamic parties have decided to move forward together for the welfare of the country, its people and Islam. We will work together on programmes, statements and take positions on various issues."

He said the parties had previously worked under a common platform and now wanted to resume cooperation along similar lines.

"The decision by these seven parties to work together does not mean that parties

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