DHAKA THURSDAY OCTOBER 29, 2026



"Venezuela will become a prosperous country, and who knows? Maybe some day soon it'll become a prosperous 51st state."

TRUMP floats Venezuela as 51st US state

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

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NO COUNTRY FOR GENTLE GIANTS

A herd of wild elephants, including calves, gathers beside a waterbody in Mymensingh's Haluaghat, near the Bangladesh-India border. Wild elephants began crossing from India's Meghalaya state into neighbouring Sherpur around the year 2000, initially numbering 15 to 20. Their population gradually grew, with herds regularly moving between forests on both sides of the border. However, barbed-wire fencing erected along the border in 2007, followed by the closure of passage gates on the Indian side, has reportedly prevented the elephants from returning to their original habitats in Meghalaya, said BSS. Although 44 gates and 11 underpasses were reportedly built to facilitate their movement, the gates remain closed. According to Forest Department officials, around 120 elephants, including 25 to 30 calves, now roam the border forests. With their traditional migration routes blocked and food sources dwindling, the elephants increasingly venture into farmland and settlements, triggering conflicts with humans. PHOTO: **AYMAN NAKIB**

Out-of-pocket medical bills push 1.08cr into poverty

The number found in 2022 govt study is nearly double the 2005 figure, with 42% people facing financial hardship

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Out-of-pocket (OOP) healthcare expenditure pushed more than 1.08 crore Bangladeshis, or 6.4 percent of the population, below the poverty line in 2022, a new government study has found.

The figure is almost double the 56 lakh people, or 3.9 percent of the population, pushed below the poverty line by OOP expenditure in 2005, according to the study.

The rise came even though the national poverty rate more than halved, from 40 percent in 2005 to 18.7 percent in 2022.

The share of the population facing financial hardship due to healthcare spending also rose, from 28.2 percent in 2005 to 41.7 percent in 2022, well above the global estimate of 26 percent in 2022.

"The poorest households were the worst sufferers," said Subrata Paul, focal point for Universal Health Coverage and National Health Accounts at the Health Economics Unit (HEU).

The HEU conducted the study with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Swedish Embassy. The findings of the study, "Financial Risk Associated with Out-of-Pocket Healthcare Payments and Benefit Incidence in Bangladesh", were presented at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

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Tarique vows to address Japanese firms' concerns

Invites investment in key sectors; seeks stronger trade ties



DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday assured Japanese companies that his government would address their concerns over Bangladesh's business environment, including energy supplies, infrastructure, customs clearance and taxation, while inviting them to invest in key sectors.

Addressing the Bangladesh-Japan Economic Forum Dialogue at the Japan

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Mob killings persist despite pledges of action

Rights activists blame culture of impunity, failure to punish perpetrators

DIPAN NANDY

Around 4:00am on Tuesday, 32-year-old pickup driver Jony received a phone call from his friend Arafat for a meeting in the capital's Kajla area.

Soon after he reached there, he was taken to a local club near Gate No 4 of Bibirbagichha in Jatrabari, where a group of men allegedly beat him up on suspicion of being a mugger.

Around 6:00am, Arafat called another pickup driver Md Nishat to the area.

He was also assaulted by the group on the same allegation. Jony died on the spot, while 27-year-old Nishat, who suffered critical injuries, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 9:00am yesterday.

Nishat's sister Sharmin Akter alleged that seven to eight people, including a local influential named Harun, were involved in the incident.

She said her father, Md Mohsin, was also beaten up when family members went to the spot.

Sharmin said Arafat called her brother and Jony.

She said they killed her brother over a previous enmity. "We want justice. We want those who beat him up to be held accountable."

Hasan Kabir, sub-inspector of Jatrabari Police Station, said,

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- At least 15 killed in mob beatings this month
- 3 beaten to death in Dhaka within a week
- Govt records 40 deaths in Jan-Sept; ASK 171, HRSS 187
- Many high-profile cases remain unresolved

IEDCR director assaulted by pro-BNP doctors

DAB expels its leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Kazi Ahmed Zaki, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control, and Research (IEDCR), was assaulted in his office allegedly by members of the Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB) yesterday.

The pro-BNP physicians' body expelled its assistant legal affairs secretary Jahid Hasan in a revised notice last night, saying that investigation found his involvement in the incident.

Hours earlier, the organisation suspended him and served him a show-cause notice over the incident, which took place around 11:30am.

Video footage shows Prof Zaki holding a meeting with several people in his office when eight to nine individuals entered the room, pulled him out of his chair, and assaulted him.

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Relatives help a patient into a CNG-run auto-rickshaw outside Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday morning as a strike by private ambulance owners demanding parking facilities on the hospital premises left patients struggling to arrange transport for medical tests, hospital transfers and trips home for the second consecutive day. The strike was suspended for seven days following an evening meeting with the hospital administration and police. PHOTO: **MEHEDI HASAN**

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As classrooms thin out, govt sleeps on

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Bangladesh's secondary school enrolment figures should serve as a strong warning. While the number of schools has been going up, the number of students has been going down. The mainstream schools lost 18 lakh since 2018.

Successive governments have been putting in considerable effort for over two decades to expand access to education. Despite concerns over quality, enrolment had been increasing. But the latest figures since 2018 are sobering. Even the government schools, which are virtually free, have been losing students too.

NEWS ANALYSIS

At the same time, enrolment is increasing at registered Alia madrasas as well as the unregistered Qawmi madrasas. English-medium schools have also witnessed student growth.

This suggests that the choice of school is not determined by fees only. But the contrasting trend suggests that families are making different choices based on their financial circumstances, religious beliefs and expectations from school.

While religious preference is one reason to choose Alia madrasas, affordability is another important factor. Mainstream schools not only charge higher fees, families also have to pay for coaching, guidebooks, uniforms and transport, besides other incidentals like exam fees. For lower-middle-income households already struggling with high living costs, these expenses can

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