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"There is hope now that there is this balance of power, and that we will be supported more."

ZELENSKY on Democrat triumph in US midterms



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The poison is in the pot

Stanford University and icddr,b study finds lead in aluminium cookware seeping into food

TASNEEM TAYEB

Lead from widely used aluminium cooking pots made with recycled scrap metal can contaminate rice and khichuri, potentially exposing families to the toxic metal that can damage children's developing brains, a new study has found.

Researchers from US's Stanford University and icddr,b found lead levels of up to 305 micrograms per kilogram of rice and 420 micrograms per kilogram of khichuri cooked in new pots during their first use.

Lead exposure can impair children's learning, concentration and intelligence, and cause behavioural problems.

In adults, prolonged exposure increases the risk of heart disease, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

No level of lead exposure is known to be safe, the WHO says.

It recommends identifying and reducing sources of exposure when a person's blood lead level reaches five micrograms per decilitre. This is a threshold for intervention, not a safe limit.

Lead can enter the body from several sources, including contaminated food, paint, and informal battery recycling.

The new study did not establish how much of the country's lead exposure comes from cooking pots.

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LEAD: FROM COOKWARE TO EVERYDAY MEAL

- Initial lead levels reach up to 305 micrograms/kg in rice and 420 micrograms/kg in khichuri
- Scrubbing pots with rough pads cause them to release about five times as much lead in acidic test environments

HOW LEAD GETS INTO FOOD

- Handmade aluminium cookware is commonly manufactured by melting down scrap items such as discarded engine parts, radiators, computer components, and cans, which introduce toxic lead into the finished products
- New pots release the most lead. The amount can fall after repeated use, but lead continues to enter food

CHILDREN ARE WORST VICTIMS

- Estimated daily lead intake for children eating rice cooked in these pots is 13 to 19 microgram per day—roughly six to nine times the US FDA's interim reference level
- Lead can damage their developing brains, affecting learning, concentration and intelligence. It can also cause behavioural problems



PHOTO, INFO SOURCES: ICDDR,B

Mongla port to drive regional growth: PM

Tk 4,068cr project launched; infrastructure cooperation MoU signed with Chinese firm

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday expressed hope that the modernisation of Mongla port would turn it into a promising economic hub for the country's southwestern and northwestern regions, opening up new opportunities for trade, investment and industrialisation.

To this end, the government plans to improve road connectivity between Panchagarh and Mongla and upgrade the port's supply chain and cargo transportation facilities, he said while laying the foundation stone of the Tk 4,068 crore Mongla Port Expansion and Modernisation Project at a ceremony in Mongla, Bagerhat.

Once the project is completed, container trains will be able to travel directly between Kamalapur Inland Container Depot in Dhaka and Mongla Port, helping turn the facility into a major import-export hub, he said.

The premier arrived in Mongla in the morning to attend a series of programmes

PHOTO ON PAGE 2 | SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Govt aims to deliver all textbooks by Nov

96% primary, 63.18% secondary textbooks already reached upazilas

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

After years of delays that left students waiting months for textbooks, the authorities hope to deliver all textbooks for the 2027 academic year to upazilas by November 30.

Around 96 percent of primary textbooks and 63.18 percent of secondary textbooks have already reached upazilas, NCTB Member (Textbooks) Prof Mohammad Abu Naser Tuku told The Daily Star.

NCTB plans to print more than 30 crore textbooks for nearly four crore students at pre-primary, primary, secondary, and equivalent levels.

However, an estimated 6.6 crore secondary textbooks are still to be delivered, while only 19.62 percent of class-9 books have reached upazilas.

"We hope to deliver all the books by November 30. This will undoubtedly be a milestone," NCTB Chairman Prof Mohammad Fakhrul Mawla told this correspondent.

If the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) meets the deadline, it would mark the first time nationwide textbook distribution has been completed by November since free textbook delivery was extended to secondary students in 2010.

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Ronaldo bids farewell to Portugal



AFP, *Lisbon*

Portuguese football legend Cristiano Ronaldo announced yesterday he was retiring from international football at the age of 41.

Ronaldo made his debut for Portugal in 2003 and went on to play a world record 234 times for his country, scoring 146 goals.

But the forward's powers have been waning in recent years and he fell out with national coach Jorge Jesus last month after refusing to play him in a Nations League match.

Ronaldo immediately left the team camp and was handed a 30-day suspension.

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TRUMP ELECTION ROUT

World relieved but cautious

AGENCIES

World leaders who have sparred with the "America first" President Donald Trump greeted the rout of his Republican Party in the US midterm elections with a measure of relief, allowing themselves to hope for a less combative US foreign policy.

But that hope was seasoned with the expectation that American voters' rebuke would not necessarily end the US conflict with Iran or change Trump's policies on tariffs or his lukewarm-at-best support for Ukraine and America's European allies.

Progressive politicians cast the results as part of a trend of liberal comebacks around the world, following recent defeats for populists on the right in Hungary, Brazil and Serbia.

The Democrats now control 54 Senate seats and have also won 247 seats in the House. All 435 House seats were contested, while 35 of the Senate's 100 seats were up for election. Voters in 36 states also elected governors.

Progressive politicians cast the results as part of a trend of liberal comebacks around the world, following recent defeats for populists on the right in Hungary, Brazil and Serbia.

Spain's social democratic Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote on X that Americans had voted "Against hate. Against machismo. Against climate denialism and against the privileges of the elites."

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PHOTOS: **PALASH KHAN AND MEHEDI HASAN**

Workers walk to their workplaces along the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar, yesterday morning as normalcy is gradually returning at readymade garment hubs after five days of protests demanding a minimum monthly wage of Tk 30,000. *Inset*, workers at Network Clothing Ltd factory in Gazipur. Related story on page 2.

'FINANCING' RMG UNREST

225 individuals, firms under NBR scanner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue has asked banks to freeze the bank accounts of more than 100 individuals and is scrutinising the financial transactions of around 125 companies over allegations of financing unrest in the garment sector.

The Central Intelligence Cell and the Income Tax Intelligence and Investigation Unit under the NBR have asked banks and financial institutions to trace and freeze the individuals' accounts and provide the companies' transaction records, according to several top NBR officials.

The move comes as unrest in the garment industry, which began at the start of the week over the demand for a minimum wage of Tk 30,000, has hampered production and raised concerns about exports in the major export-earning sector.

NBR officials yesterday said that politically connected individuals and businesspeople are alleged to have instigated and financed the unrest.

The financial scrutiny is intended to trace possible funding channels and establish whether money was used to support activities linked to the unrest.



"We are working according to our higher authorities' directions," said a top NBR official, seeking anonymity.

He said the NBR had already sought information about the financial transactions and accounts of individuals and business groups as part of an ongoing scrutiny.

"We are not freezing company

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