

President calls for AI-driven innovation

BSS, *Dhaka*

President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday called for transforming Bangladesh into an AI-driven, innovation-focused economy while inaugurating the Bangladesh AI Business Summit 2026 at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka.

Describing AI as a key driver of future development, he said the technology could reshape agriculture, education, healthcare, industry, trade, employment and the overall economy over the next decade.

The president called for equipping young people with digital skills and technological knowledge to help them become drivers of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

He also urged businesses to use AI to develop new products and services, explore markets and generate employment, calling on all stakeholders to work together to realise the vision of a trillion-dollar economy by 2034 and address the challenges of graduating from the least developed country (LDC) status.



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman shakes hands with young athletes at Khulna District Stadium before inaugurating the second season of "Notun Kuri Sports 2026-27" yesterday. PHOTO: **PMO**

Study, play and create

PM tells children at launch of Notun Kuri Sports

UNB, *Khulna*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday urged children and adolescents to excel not only in their studies but also in sports, arts and culture to help build a strong and prosperous Bangladesh.

"You will have to build this Bangladesh and make it strong on the world stage. Each of you is an ambassador of Bangladesh and an owner of this country," he said while inaugurating the second season of the nationwide "Notun Kuri Sports-2026-27" competition at Khulna District Stadium.

"Some of you will become doctors, engineers, architects or lawyers. But alongside your studies, you must also learn sports, arts and culture," he said.

Tarique said the government wanted to create an environment where children could pursue their studies alongside sports and cultural activities.

Referring to performances by students of Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan, he said they had demonstrated their talents not only in sports but also in dance, music and other cultural activities.

"You can do it. You can study, you can play sports, and you can also develop skills in arts and culture," he told the children.

The PM said over 16 lakh children and adolescents had registered for the second season, with the final round scheduled for June next year.

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Digital support helps TB patients quit tobacco

Trials by ARK Foundation, The Initiative show promise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Text messages can help tuberculosis (TB) patients quit tobacco and may reduce deaths, according to two clinical trials conducted in Bangladesh and Pakistan between September 2023 and April 2026.

The study, QUIT4TB Trial, conducted in Dhaka division and Punjab province, found that messages offering motivation, coping strategies and support in managing withdrawal symptoms helped patients quit tobacco and improved their treatment outcomes.

Prof Kamran Siddiqi of the University of York presented the findings at a programme in a Dhaka hotel. The results were also published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

According to the study, 43.2% of patients receiving text messages quit smoking, compared with 16.5% in the usual-care group.

The trials were conducted by ARK Foundation in Dhaka and The Initiative in Islamabad, with funding from the UK's National Institute for Health and Care Research.

At the programme, health experts and anti-tobacco campaigners urged the government to incorporate tobacco cessation services into the national TB control programme.

Prof Kamran said smoking was far more common among TB patients than in the general population. About 41 percent of men with TB in Bangladesh smoke, he said, adding that smoking worsens treatment outcomes while quitting improves patients' chances of recovery.

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A mounting trail of deaths on two wheels

Motorcycle crashes continue to claim lives across the country; 1,387 killed till Sept this year

DIPAN NANDY *and* **SHAMIMA RITA**

Arifur Rahman and Md Falu worked at a scrap shop in Dhaka's Postogola. At their employer's request, they set out on a motorcycle for Tongi to inspect old scrap materials yesterday morning.

Little did they know that the journey would be their last. A covered van hit their motorcycle, killing Faluon the spot. Arifur later died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

On the same day, motorcyclist Ashif Hossain was killed in a head-on collision with a bus in the Kashiar Bari area of the Joypurhat-Hili road.

Meanwhile, in Cumilla's Daudkandi, Shahadat Hossain lost control of his motorcycle in the Madla area, fell onto the road, and was hit by a private car. In Kushtia, motorcyclist Rokon died after losing control of his bike and crashing into a palm tree.

These were not isolated incidents, as motorcyclists and their pillion passengers, not just those involved in yesterday's crashes, are killed in road accidents almost every day. Meanwhile, the growing number of motorcycles is adding to road safety concerns.

According to BRTA, registered motorcycles more than doubled from 24.13 lakh in 2018 to 50.80 lakh in August 2026.

At least 1,387 people were killed in motorcycle crashes between January and September this year, according to the Road Safety Foundation (RSF).

Monthly deaths stood at 196 in January, 174 in February, 204 in March, 113 in April, 113 in May, 134 in June, 138 in July, 176 in August and 139 in September.

According to RSF, 16,027 people were killed in 16,402 motorcycle crashes between 2020 and September 2026. The highest number of crashes occurred in 2025, with 3,029 accidents claiming 2,671 lives. However, the highest annual death toll was recorded in 2022, when 3,091 people died in 2,973 crashes.

A review of media reports suggests that at least 57 people were killed in 45 motorcycle-related incidents across the country in October. No organisation has yet compiled a comprehensive tally for the month.

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The foundation recorded 1,463 deaths in 1,381 crashes in 2020, 2,214 deaths in 2,078 crashes in 2021, 2,487 deaths in 2,532 crashes in 2023, and 2,609 deaths in 2,761 crashes in 2024.

The Bangladesh Passenger Welfare Association recorded 1,972 deaths and 2,270 injuries in 1,286 motorcycle crashes in 2020.

Its figures show that 1,874 people were killed in 1,463 crashes in 2021; 3,313 killed in 2,193 crashes in 2022; 2,152 killed in 2,031 crashes in 2023; and 2,570 killed in 2,329 crashes in 2024.

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IN BRIEF

ACC team finds doctors absent, irregularities at DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman AKM Asaduzzaman yesterday expressed concern over doctors' absence from duty and irregularities at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) during an inspection.

The ACC team, which visited the hospital around 12:15pm, found several doctors absent from their designated rooms. Doctors on duty in the emergency department were also not wearing identifiable uniforms.

"It was difficult to tell whether they were doctors, nurses or brokers," Asaduzzaman said, adding that the team could not establish whether doctors were providing services.

The team also found unhygienic conditions in treatment rooms, while patients and their relatives were seen searching for medical supplies, he said.

"Patients have long complained that they do not receive proper treatment and that doctors are often unavailable. The prime minister is also concerned about the issue and has visited several hospitals, including Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital. We will visit other hospitals as well."

The ACC chairman said the hospital director had been asked to issue show-cause notices to the absentees. "We will also take legal action," he added.

Asked about allegations of brokers operating at the hospital and doctors referring patients to private clinics, Asaduzzaman said the commission would take action against those involved.

Iqbal Sobhan sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, former information adviser to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, was sent to jail yesterday in a murder case linked to the July uprising.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Sarah Farzana Haque passed the order after Sub-Inspector Mohammad Amir Hossain of Jatrabari Police Station produced him before the court, a police officer said.

Iqbal Sobhan, 77, was brought to the courtroom around 3:50pm amid tight security, wearing a helmet, handcuffs and a bulletproof vest.

Police removed his helmet and bulletproof vest and took off the handcuffs from one hand inside the dock, where he spoke with his lawyers.

During the hearing, defence lawyer Choudhury Md Galib Raghib said they could not file a bail petition but sought division facilities for his client under the jail code.

"He [Iqbal Sobhan] is a senior journalist and an elderly person. Considering his physical illness and social standing, we are seeking a division for him in prison," he said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi alleged that Iqbal Sobhan held meetings with Sheikh Hasina and controlled the media during the student protests.

He also alleged that Iqbal Sobhan secured various benefits, including the post of information adviser, through Hasina's favour and misused his position to gain undue advantages and trade television channel licences.

After hearing both sides, the magistrate said she would include details about Iqbal Sobhan in the order so jail authorities could decide on his division facilities.

According to case documents, Mohammad Arif, a 17-year-old madrasa student, was shot in Dhaka's Jatrabari area on July 19, 2024. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

On August 26, 2024, Arif's father, Mohammad Yousuf, filed a case with Jatrabari Police Station against Sheikh Hasina, Iqbal Sobhan and 231 others.



Syeda Anisa Murshed is recognised as a Stellar Woman in the Corporate category at the third edition of bti-The Daily Star Stellar Women for her professional journey and achievements. The ceremony, held recently at bti Celebration Point in Gulshan-2, Dhaka, was attended by M Mahbubur Rahman, CEO of bti; Aysha Siddiqua, executive director – Brand, bti; Mashrur Hasan Mim, executive director – Marketing, bti; and Tajdin Hassan, chief business officer of The Daily Star. PHOTO: **STAR**

Honouring a stellar woman

Syeda Anisa Murshed recognised for corporate achievements

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star and building technology and ideas (bti) jointly honoured Syeda Anisa Murshed with the coveted Stellar Women title in the Corporate category, in recognition of her remarkable professional journey and achievements.

She was named the winner at the third edition of bti-The Daily Star Stellar Women.

The prestigious recognition, which celebrates exceptional women leaders from various sectors, was presented to Anisa Murshed at an event held at bti Celebration Point in Gulshan-2, Dhaka, recently.

The initiative celebrates her determination to break the glass ceiling and inspire women to reach new heights in the corporate world.

The ceremony was attended by M Mahbubur Rahman, CEO of bti; Aysha Siddiqua, executive director – Brand, bti; Mashrur Hasan Mim, executive director – Marketing, bti; and Tajdin Hassan, chief business officer of The Daily Star.

Launched in 2023, the Stellar Women initiative aims to honour women making significant contributions across various sectors, particularly those who remain relatively under-recognised.

In its previous editions, the platform recognised 24

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