



PM to launch Farmers' Card on Pahela Baishakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will inaugurate the Farmers' Card programme in Tangail Sadar upazila on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year, on April 14.

In the first phase, financial assistance will be disbursed to 21,500 farmers in 11 upazilas through mobile financial service (MFS). The decision was made

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1



Volunteers clear the debris at the site of a drug rehabilitation hospital destroyed in what the Taliban said was a Pakistani air strike in Kabul, Afghanistan yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Fuel shortage forces buses to limit Eid trips

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SHAMIMA RITA

Fuel supply disruptions have begun to affect inter-district bus services ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, with operators struggling to maintain schedules as passenger pressure builds.

At Mohakhali bus terminal, several operators said delays in securing fuel forced them to cancel or reschedule trips.

Desh Travels and Fahmita Express, which run on North Bengal routes, reported operating fewer buses due to limited diesel.

"We are unsure if we will get the necessary fuel," said Md Ramzan of Desh Travels.

Fahmita Express managed to operate only two of its seven buses yesterday and was preparing to put only two more in operation, citing rationed supplies.

"We could not operate buses on Monday. There are passengers, but ticket sales have declined during this peak Eid season," Amit Bhowmik, of Fahmita Express, noting that while each trip requires around 120 litres of diesel, they are getting 90 litres.

"We are being asked to get fuel from the filling stations on the side of the highways. But most of them are also short on fuel," Amit added.

Operators of United Express on the Dhaka-Mymensingh route also reported delays, saying buses are struggling to maintain schedules due to the time required to secure fuel. Passengers, meanwhile, are facing delays.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

Half of youths missed out on jobs in past decade

Says WB VP on Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly half of working age youths in Bangladesh did not find jobs over the past decade, with young women facing particularly steep barriers, said Johannes Zutt, the World Bank's vice-president for South Asia.

In the past decade, 14 million youth entered Bangladesh's labor market, competing for only 8.7 million jobs, he said in a press release issued at the end of his three-day visit to Bangladesh.

During the trip, he met with senior government leaders, officials' and civil society representatives.

"In this context, we are stepping up our focus on supporting the government priority of creating jobs, notably for youth and women."

The government places a high priority on large-scale job creation, alongside skills and investment, and the World Bank Group shares this commitment, he said.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Over 400 killed in Pakistan air strike

Says Afghan Taliban; Islamabad rejects claim as false, misleading; China urges restraint



REUTERS, Kabul

More than 400 people were killed and 250 injured in an air strike by Pakistan on a drug rehabilitation hospital in the Afghanistan capital Kabul, a spokesman of the Afghan Taliban government said yesterday.

Pakistan rejected the claim as false and misleading and said it "precisely targeted military installations and terrorist support infrastructure" on Monday night.

Hamdullah Fitrat, the deputy spokesman for the Taliban, said the air strike took place at 9:00

pm (1630 GMT) on Monday and targeted the Omid 2,000-bed drug rehabilitation hospital.

"Large parts of the hospital have been destroyed, and there are fears of heavy casualties," he said in a post on X. "Sadly, the number of those killed has so far reached 400, with up to 250 others injured."

Rescue teams were at the scene working to control the fire and recover the victims, he added.

Reuters could not verify the casualty numbers and the Pakistani military could not be reached for comment outside

- Pakistan claims military strikes on terrorist support infrastructure
- Taliban reports 250 injured in the air strike
- UN urges de-escalation, protection of civilians

business hours.

Richard Bennett, the UN Special Rapporteur for human rights in Afghanistan, said he was "dismayed" by fresh reports of Pakistani air strikes and resulting civilian deaths.

"My condolences. I urge parties to de-escalate, exercise maximum restraint and respect international law, including the protection of civilians and civilian objects such as hospitals," he said in a post on X.

China hopes Afghanistan and Pakistan will stay calm and

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Condition of Kushtia rape victim critical

3 arrested, case filed

STAR REPORT

The condition of a 10-year-girl, who was allegedly raped in a madrasa in Kushtia, is critical, said a doctor at the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday.

She was initially admitted to the One-stop Crisis Centre (OCC) of RMCH on Monday morning after being rescued.

"She is now in critical condition. As her physical condition is deteriorating, we have shifted her to ICU today [Tuesday] afternoon," said the hospital's spokesperson Dr Sanker K Biswas last night.

"We have found several injury marks in her body and evidence of sexual abuse. Details will be known later after further investigation," he added.

Meanwhile, police arrested three persons in connection with the incident after the victim's mother filed a case on Monday, said Delwar Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Kushtia.

The arrestees are: Md Saidul Rahman, 50, head-teacher of Jamilatunnssa Asarsha Mohila Halijya

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Govt to import 2 lakh tonnes of urea



Disruption in Hormuz fuels supply fears ahead of Aman season

SUKANTA HALDER

The government is seeking to import 200,000 tonnes of granular urea through private suppliers to secure supply and build stocks, amid uncertainty over shipments from the Gulf region due to the Middle East war, according to two notifications issued yesterday.

The development comes two weeks after authorities shut five of Bangladesh's six urea fertiliser factories amid concerns over gas supply disruptions linked to the US-Israel war on Iran. Tehran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil and about one-third of fertiliser trade passes.

Bangladesh requires over 26 lakh tonnes of urea annually and depends on Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar for more than two-thirds of its supply. These countries ship fertiliser, gas, and oil through the Strait of Hormuz.

At the time the factories were shut, the government had a stock of over 468,000 tonnes of urea.

Last week, state agency Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) finalised a plan to import 500,000 tonnes of urea fertiliser amid uncertainty, so that it can build stocks and ensure availability of the crop nutrient ahead of the upcoming season of the

SEE PAGE 8 COL 4

Molten alien planet with sulfur atmosphere reveals hellscape



REUTERS, Washington

Astronomers have spotted a planet orbiting a star in our neighbourhood of the Milky Way galaxy that presents a unique hellscape - covered with a perpetual ocean of magma and enveloped by a noxious and fiercely hot sulfur-rich atmosphere.

The molten planet's diameter is more than 60 percent greater than Earth, though its density is only about 40 percent that of our planet. It orbits a star smaller and dimmer than the sun located about 34 light-years from Earth in the constellation Volans. A light-year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6



Homebound passengers crowd Sadarghat Launch Terminal in Dhaka yesterday as they rush to board launches for their destinations ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. With Eid less than a week away, thousands are leaving the capital each day to celebrate the festival with their loved ones back home. PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Surge in measles overwhelms hospital

P3

HASANAH ISLAMIC BANKING
البنكية الاسلامي
Prime Bank

PRAYER TIMING
MARCH 18

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:52	12:45	4:30	6:10	7:45
JAMAAT 5:02	1:15	4:45	6:20	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	MAR	SEHRI	IFTAR
28	18		6:10
29	19	4:48	6:11
30	20	4:47	6:11