



Tarique to exchange greetings on Eid day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will exchange Eid greetings with people from all walks of life, including diplomats and academics, on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr.

The programme will be held at the state guest house Jamuna at 10:00am, said Prime Minister's Additional Press Secretary Atikur Rahman Rumon.

According to him, the prime minister will begin the day by offering Eid prayers at the National Eidgah before proceeding to Jamuna, where he will first exchange greetings with diplomats.

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A group of teenagers sets up a makeshift roadside stall in the capital's Mirpur-13 area, drawing and selling Eid cards to younger children. Considered a nostalgic tradition in the digital age, exchanging Eid greeting cards with heartfelt or playful messages appears to be making a pleasant comeback this year. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Dhaka all set for Eid congregations

DNCC, DSCC make arrangements to handle large gatherings amid weather concerns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka South and North city corporations have completed preparations for the main Eid-ul-Fitr congregations, with a focus on ensuring safety, crowd management, and a comfortable environment for worshippers.

The main congregation under DSCC will be held at the National Eidgah ground adjacent to the Supreme Court premises at 8:30am.

DSCC Administrator Md Abdus Salam, after inspecting the venue, said all arrangements have been taken to ensure a smooth and peaceful congregation.

The prime minister, chief justice, cabinet members, diplomats, and other senior officials are expected to attend the congregation at the Eidgah, he added.

The Eidgah, spread over about 25,400 square metres, can accommodate around 35,000 devotees at a time. A large covered structure has been set up with adequate fans, lighting, and air-cooling facilities. Separate prayer spaces and entry routes have been arranged for women.

Authorities have also taken contingency measures in view of possible rain, including waterproof coverings and rapid drainage systems. In case of adverse weather, the main congregation will be shifted to Baitul Mukarram National Mosque at 9:00am.

Facilities have been arranged for around 140 people to perform ablution simultaneously. Safe drinking water, SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bangladesh committed to gender equality

Says foreign minister at CSW70

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman has reaffirmed Bangladesh's strong commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women.



He was delivering the national statement at the 70th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70) held at the UN headquarters in New York on March 17.

Reiterating Bangladesh's full commitment to advancing the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the foreign minister emphasised that access to justice for women and girls remains a central priority for Bangladesh.

He also highlighted the vital contributions of Bangladeshi women in UN peacekeeping.

Khalilur further noted that climate change, economic uncertainty, conflicts, and the digital divide continue to create SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Eid exodus, rain raise dengue concerns

HELEMUL ALAM

With millions of residents leaving Dhaka ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, prompted by a seven-day holiday, experts have warned of a possible spike in dengue cases if preventive measures are not taken in time.

Meanwhile, the city has already seen rainfall, with more expected during the holiday.

Entomologists fear empty homes and unattended water sources could become breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes.

According to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, rain and thundershowers with gusty winds and lightning are likely in parts of Rangpur, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions, with isolated hail in some areas. The weather pattern may continue until March 22.

Experts say Aedes mosquito eggs can survive for long periods, and with the dengue virus still present, rainfall can create new breeding sites. If necessary preventive measures are not taken — especially during the Eid vacation — the risk of Aedes mosquito proliferation increases, they warned.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, urged residents to take preventive steps before leaving home. "Any place where water can accumulate must be emptied. No container should be left where rainwater can collect, as it can become a breeding site for Aedes mosquitoes," he said. He emphasised that drains,

toilets, and other water-holding areas in and around homes should be properly covered. Containers like plant pots or flower tubs that can retain water must also be managed carefully.

Products such as insect growth regulators (IGR) like Novaluron, and



SUGGESTIONS

- ▶▶ Empty all containers that can hold water before leaving
- ▶▶ Clear rooftops and yards of discarded containers
- ▶▶ Use bleaching powder or salt in water-prone areas
- ▶▶ Check basements for standing water from leaks
- ▶▶ Open doors and windows after returning
- ▶▶ Inspect home again for breeding spots after Eid

microbial insecticides such as BTI (Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis) or Pyriproxyfen, can be used to prevent mosquito breeding, he added.

Residents should open doors and windows after returning home to let trapped mosquitoes out and flush toilet commodes, which may contain larvae.

"Turn buckets and containers upside down to prevent water accumulation. Basements with stagnant water from pipe leaks or car washing are particularly vulnerable. Applying bleaching powder or salt in such areas can curb mosquito breeding," he added.

Prof Bashar also advised checking rooftops and yards for discarded containers before leaving and inspecting homes for potential breeding grounds again after returning. "If mosquitoes breed during the holiday, they will mature by the time residents return, increasing dengue risk, especially if it rains during Eid," he warned.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman stressed the need for proactive measures. "Authorities should use environmentally safe BTI insecticides to control Aedes mosquitoes, but their application is often neglected. Even light rainfall can trigger a rise in dengue cases, as the first generation of mosquitoes helps the population grow. Early BTI application can prevent their spread," he said.

Contacted, Md Emdadul Hoque, deputy chief health officer of Dhaka North City Corporation, said necessary steps are already in place to control both Aedes and Culex mosquitoes.

"Apart from regular drives, mosquito control drives will continue during the Eid holidays, except on the day of Eid," he told The Daily Star on March 17.

An official of Dhaka South City Corporation said regular waste management and anti-mosquito activities will also continue during the holiday.

One dead, one injured in launch accident at Sadarghat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least one person was killed and another critically injured after a launch rammed into a group of passengers who were waiting to board their launch at the Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday evening.

The accident occurred around 5:30pm, according to Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Abdullah Al Mamun, duty officer of Sadarghat River Police. The deceased was identified as Md Sohel Fakir, 22.

Meanwhile the injured, Rupa Akter, 20, was rushed to a hospital in critical condition.

However, at least two others currently remain missing, Shah Md Faisal Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, told The Daily Star.

At present, search efforts are underway to locate the missing individuals. Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge Faisal added.

OC Faisal said the body of the deceased, Md Sohel Fakir, was taken by onlookers to Sir Salimullah Medical College and Mitford Hospital.

The incident occurred during the heavy holiday rush, as thousands were heading to their village homes ahead of Eid to celebrate the festivities.

CANAL RESTORATION 'It has potential to transform farming, ecology'

Researcher Sheikh Rokon says the programme must be part of broader water management system

Less than a month after the BNP government assumed power, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman inaugurated a canal and river excavation programme — first introduced by his father, late President Ziaur Rahman, in 1976 — to improve irrigation, support agriculture, and preserve water bodies. How relevant is the programme after five decades? **Sheikh Rokon**, a river researcher and secretary general of Riverine People, shared his views with **Porimol Palma** of The Daily Star.



Sheikh Rokon

The Daily Star: What is your initial reaction to the canal excavation programme?

Sheikh Rokon: It is a good initiative that can improve water conservation, irrigation, fisheries, and agriculture. However, definitions, lists, and basic groundwork must be finalised first. Certain issues also need to be clarified. There are around 31 laws related to rivers, but none clearly define what

a "river" is. As a result, different agencies provide different figures regarding the number of rivers in Bangladesh. The same problem exists with canals. In English, a canal is man-made, but in Bangla, "khal" can also refer to natural water bodies. The programme seems to focus more on canals, which may reduce the importance of rivers.

DS: What is the number of canals and rivers in Bangladesh now?

Rokon: The number of rivers has increased from 230 in the Water Development Board's list to 1,415 now. There is similar uncertainty about SEE PAGE 9 COL 7

Mirza Fakhru alternate in-charge of PMO in parliament

BSS, Dhaka

The government has given alternative responsibility to LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir to carry out parliamentary affairs tasks in the House in the absence of the prime minister.

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will perform his responsibilities of the Prime Minister's Office in the 13th national parliament, according to a gazette notification issued on Tuesday by the Cabinet Division.

But, in the absence of the prime minister, his responsibilities will be performed by LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, said the notification signed by Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Gani.

The order will come into effect immediately, the notification read.

Act now to protect children from sexual violence

Demands MJF

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) has expressed deep outrage over the continuing incidents of sexual violence against children across the country.

In a press statement issued yesterday, the organisation said the recent rape of a 10-year-old child at a madrasa in Kushtia underscores a serious lack of monitoring and oversight in educational institutions.

MJF said the incident highlights the urgent need for stronger surveillance and accountability measures to ensure children's safety.

In January and February 2026 alone, Ain o Salish Kendra documented 71 incidents of violence against children, including the rape of 38 girls and two boys, as well as 14 reported attempts to rape. In 2025, ASK recorded 1,024 incidents of violence against children.

Most of these incidents have taken place in private domains, public places, and educational institutions, the MJF statement added.

MJF urged the authorities to look into this matter with utmost urgency. All educational institutions must be brought under the High Court ruling requiring the formation of sexual harassment committees until a law on sexual harassment is passed in the parliament, it said.

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

With Eid knocking on the door, shoppers crowd clothing stalls at Mohammadpur Krishi Market in Dhaka for last-minute purchases yesterday.