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**Do not get involved in politics during sports life**  
**PM urges athletes**

**BSS, Dhaka**

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday called on athletes not to affiliate themselves with any political party or group during their professional sporting careers, saying they should instead represent the country through sporting excellence.

The prime minister was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the sports card and allowance distribution programme at his office.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



A flock of birds glides home, travelling past a luminous sunset, radiating fiery-red gradients over the bank of the Karkhana River at Faridpur village in Bakerganj upazila, Barishal. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## SURGE IN MEASLES

# Children's hospital lie idle, patients struggle at RMCH



SHOHANUR RAHMAN RAFI, Rajshahi

While children battling measles and other life-threatening illnesses struggle for intensive care at the overcrowded Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), a newly built children's hospital nearby has stood idle for three years — paralysed by administrative indecision and delays in approving its staffing plan.

The four-storey, 200-bed hospital, equipped with modern infrastructure including a 56-bed intensive care unit, operating theatres, and diagnostic services



such as X-ray, CT scan, and MRI units, was built at a cost of Tk 35 crore on 2.44 acres of land in the city's Lakshimpur area.

According to PWD 2 Rajshahi Executive Engineer Md Mizanur Rahman, the facility has remained unused since construction was completed in June 2023.

He said neither the Rajshahi civil surgeon's office nor RMCH has taken charge of the hospital.

"We have sent a letter to the health ministry seeking approval of the organogram, which will determine administrative responsibility and staffing," he said.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## FARMERS' CARD SCHEME

# 21,000 farmers to come under pre-pilot phase

**REJAUL KARIM BYRON**

Around 21,000 farmers in 11 upazilas across the country will receive "Farmers' Cards" through Sonali Bank in the pre-pilot phase of the new government scheme, according to finance ministry sources.

The decision was taken at a meeting earlier this month involving the agriculture ministry, the Financial Institutions Division, and Sonali Bank, the sources said.

Selected farmers will receive Tk 2,500 through the card to purchase fertiliser, seeds, pesticides, and other agricultural inputs.

Under the pre-pilot phase, Sonali Bank will open accounts for farmers in 11 blocks across 11 upazilas, issue Farmers' Cards in the form of Visa debit cards, and disburse government subsidies through them.

The bank will bear the cost of card preparation, while no fees will be charged for opening accounts. POS machines will also be provided free of cost at selected dealers' shops.

A finance ministry official said multiple state-owned banks would

be brought under the programme when the programme is expanded nationwide.

In this phase, the cards will be distributed through Sonali Bank branches in 11 upazilas — Adarsha Sadar in Cumilla, Teknaf in Cox's Bazar, Tangail Sadar in Tangail, Shibganj in Bogura, Islampur in



Selected farmers will receive Tk 2,500 through the card to purchase fertiliser, seeds, pesticides, and other agricultural inputs.

Gaibandha, Boda and Panchagarh Sadar in Panchagarh, Juri in Moulvibazar, Goalanda in Rajbari, Shaikupa in Jhenaidah, and Swarupkathi in Pirojpur.

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) will implement the pre-pilot phase by preparing

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Govt moves to lift ban on e-cigarettes

### Tobacco display restrictions also set to be removed in amendment of anti-tobacco ordinance

**TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY**

The government is set to amend the anti-tobacco ordinance, withdrawing the ban on the production and sale of e-cigarettes.

Besides, the provision prohibiting the display of tobacco products at points of sale will also be removed from the ordinance.

The moves are likely to deal a major blow to the anti-tobacco campaign.

The ordinance was approved by the interim government last year, introducing stricter provisions to the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act.

The changes to the ordinance are being made following recommendations by a parliamentary special committee formed to review 133 ordinances issued during the interim government, sources said.

Following the JS body's

recommendations, the health ministry is preparing a draft, omitting the provisions from the ordinance, and will send it to the Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division soon, they added.

**Surveys show the number of e-cigarette users is increasing sharply, especially among youths. Around 30 countries have banned e-cigarettes to protect their youths. So, the ban on e-cigarettes should remain in place.**

**ATAUR RAHMAN**  
Advocacy manager, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

An e-cigarette (electronic cigarette) is a battery-operated device that heats a liquid — usually containing nicotine and other chemicals — to produce a vapour that can be inhaled by a user in an act known as "vaping".

E-cigarettes are the most common type of electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS), and their emissions typically contain nicotine and other toxic substances that are harmful to both users and non-users who are exposed to the aerosols, according to WHO.

In order to protect public health, particularly that of youths and teenagers, anti-tobacco campaigners urged the government to reconsider its decision, terming it "very unfortunate".

Ataur Rahman, advocacy manager (Bangladesh) for Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said some recent surveys show that the number of e-cigarette users is increasing sharply, especially among youths.

Around 30 countries have banned e-cigarettes to protect their youths, he said, adding, "So, the ban on e-cigarettes should remain in place."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## Data on 8.29 lakh Rohingyas shared with Myanmar

### Foreign minister tells JS

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Bangladesh has shared information on 8,29,036 Rohingya refugees to the Myanmar government for repatriation in six phases, said Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman yesterday.



"As of January 2026, Myanmar authorities have completed verification of about 3,54,751 people. Of them, 2,53,964 have been identified as 'persons previously residing in Myanmar,'" he said in a scripted reply to a question from Chattogram-15 MP Shahjahan Chowdhury in the parliament.

"However, due to the ongoing conflict in Myanmar, the repatriation process cannot be started right now," he added.

He reiterated that Bangladesh sees safe, voluntary and dignified repatriation as the only sustainable solution and will continue diplomatic, legal and humanitarian efforts with international support.

He added that on September 30, 2025, a high-level event on the Rohingya crisis was held during the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, where repatriation was presented as the permanent solution. It was the first such high-level conference on the issue at the General Assembly.

Foreign minister urges stronger global action

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Transport, livelihoods take a hit in fuel crisis

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The ongoing fuel crisis has deepened across at least five districts, exposing weaknesses in distribution and leaving commuters and businesses struggling.

District administrations have launched drives against hoarders, recovering large volumes of fuel and penalising violators, as the shortage disrupts daily life and fuels public frustration.

Authorities are responding with raids, rationing, fines and security deployments, but uncertainty continues to affect transport and livelihoods.

In Chattogram, the district administration yesterday seized around 25,000 litres of illegally stockpiled diesel during a drive in Sitakunda's Faujdarhat area. The raid, conducted near Jalil Gate, placed the fuel under police custody, with cases to be filed under the Special Powers Act, 1974.

At least two individuals have been identified in connection with the hoarding, said Additional District Magistrate Syed Mahbul Haque.

A total of 18 drives were conducted in Chattogram, resulting in three cases and fines amounting to Tk 1.1 lakh. So far this month, 98 drives have been carried out, with Tk 4.3 lakh in fines collected and

nearly 31,000 litres of diesel recovered.

In Rangamati, launch services on Kaptai Lake face possible suspension as the fuel shortage worsens.

Owners said operations may halt from Wednesday if supplies do not resume, affecting thousands in six upazilas. About 30-35 launches require 1,000-1,200 litres daily, but supplies have remained scarce since Eid.



"We will run out of fuel in a day or two. If launches stop, passengers will suffer greatly," said Biswajit Dey, a lineman at Reserve Bazar pier.

Residents warned of higher fares and safety risks if forced to rely on small boats. Launch owners have appealed to the administration.

Deputy Commissioner Nazma Ashrafi said the issue is under review.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

## Decision pending on Iqbal's adjournment motion

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Independent MP Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Iqbal yesterday placed an adjournment motion in parliament to discuss the process of implementing the July Charter, but no decision was taken on its acceptance.

Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal said he would announce his decision after the Maghrib break. However, no ruling was given, and the sitting was adjourned after 8:15pm.

Earlier, on Sunday, Opposition Leader Shafiqul Rahman had submitted a similar motion on convening a meeting of the Constitutional Reform Council under the July National Charter (Constitutional Reform) Implementation Order.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



Dhaka University Pro-Vice Chancellor (Admin) Prof Sayema Haque Bidisha inaugurates preparations for the Pehela Baishakh Mangal Shobhajatra and cultural programmes at the Faculty of Fine Arts of DU yesterday. Dean Prof Md Azharul Islam Sheikh presided over the event, while Ekushey Padak-winning artist Prof Abdus Sattar attended as special guest.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN