



Three BNP polls pledges now under social safety net

Family Card programme to get Tk 12,500cr

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Farmers' Card, monthly honorariums for July victims, and allowances for mosque and other religious institution workers will be part of social safety net programmes from next fiscal year, as the BNP-led government forges ahead with its election pledges despite a tight fiscal space.

About Tk 13,562 crore will be earmarked for the flagship Family Card and Farmers' Card programmes, as per the decisions of yesterday's meeting of the cabinet committee on social safety net.

The lion's share will go towards the much-publicised Family Card programme: about Tk 12,500 crore.

The social welfare ministry, the implementing agency of the programme, however, sought Tk 13,740 crore.

Some 1 crore households will be surveyed in fiscal 2026-27 and 41 lakh beneficiaries will be selected.

Those selected for Family Cards cannot be beneficiaries of other social safety net programmes, as per the decisions of yesterday's meeting of the cabinet committee on social safety net.

To prevent duplication of beneficiaries, an effective database will be developed, containing the names, addresses and contact information of beneficiaries.

About Tk 1,062 crore will go towards the distribution of

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Mousumi carries her 11-month-old daughter Anika to the ICU on a wheelchair at the DNCC Covid Dedicated Hospital yesterday. Admitted with measles on May 3, Anika was moved from the general ward after her condition worsened. Her father, Jahangir, said Mousumi had to use the wheelchair after her blood pressure suddenly dropped from stress over the child's condition, while doctors advised the wheelchair to ensure Anika's safety.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Seven-day holiday for Eid-ul-Azha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday announced a seven day holiday for the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha.

The decision was made at a cabinet meeting last night, chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, according to a press release from the Cabinet Division.

People will enjoy the holiday from May 25 to 31. However, the weekly holiday on Saturday, May 23, has been cancelled. Offices will remain open on Sunday, May 24, as usual.

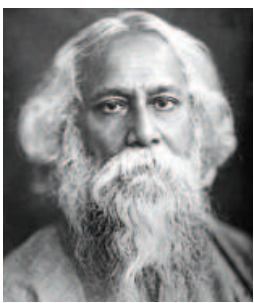
Meeting sources said the government fixed a longer holiday than usual this time to ensure that people across the country can travel to and from their expected destinations comfortably and without disruption during Eid.

According to the tentative date in the government calendar, the festival is scheduled to be celebrated on May 28, although the final date will depend on the moon sighting.

The cabinet also approved the draft of National Public Toilet Policy 2026, which proposes separate public

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Tagore's 165th birth anniv today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today marks the 165th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, the towering figure whose literary genius redefined Bangla literature, music, and the cultural identity of the Indian subcontinent through his embrace of contextual modernism.

Tagore was born on 25 Baishakh, 1268, in the Bangla calendar (May 7, 1861) at the Jorasanko mansion in Kolkata.

A poet, philosopher, playwright, and painter, Tagore remains one of the most influential cultural figures of South Asia.

In 1913, he became the first Asian to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for Gitanjali, a collection of deeply spiritual and lyrical poems that brought him

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Most entering secondary school lack basic skills

Study finds alarming weaknesses in Bangla, mathematics among Grade 5 students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Children in Bangladesh are entering secondary school without mastering basic foundational skills, with a staggering 91 percent of Grade 5 students in mathematics and 65

"novice-level students" as those unable to answer even half of the Grade 5 questions correctly.

Several working and policy papers prepared as part of the research were also presented.

Despite achieving high enrolment rates, Bangladesh's

foundational skills expected upon completion of primary education.

The paper said the data reveal alarming gaps in foundational skills that persist from primary to secondary education. The 2022 National Student Assessment

found that, by the end of primary

"We all know the problems. The real question is how we are solving them... The responsibility lies not only with teachers but also with policymakers, field officials, and the education administration."

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon



percent in Bangla remaining at the "novice" level, a new study has found.

The study, titled "From Evidence to Action: Strengthening Learning, Inclusion and Innovation in Classrooms in Bangladesh", conducted by UNICEF Bangladesh and the UNICEF Office of Research — Innocenti, was unveiled at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday. It described

secondary education system is facing significant challenges.

According to a working paper titled "Drivers of Learning in Differentiated Classrooms: Lessons from Two Years of Piloting a Differentiated Teaching Intervention in Bangladesh Secondary Schools", the problems begin with students entering secondary school without the

education, half of all students could not read at the expected level, while two-thirds could not perform basic mathematics appropriate for their grade level.

At the start of 2024, UNICEF Bangladesh, in partnership with the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, began piloting a new approach to help teachers

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Delhi seeks Dhaka's help in repatriation of 'illegals'

THE STATESMAN

Days after the Bharatiya Janata Party's victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections, New Delhi yesterday sought Dhaka's cooperation in expediting the repatriation of alleged undocumented Bangladeshis from India.

The request follows Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman's remark that Dhaka would take action if pushback incidents occur under the changed political circumstances in West Bengal following the BJP's victory in the state.

Responding to Khalilur's remarks, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the comments must be viewed in a certain context.

"We have seen comments of this nature being made in the last several days. These comments must be seen in the context of the core issue of the repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis from India. This obviously requires cooperation from Bangladesh. Over 2,860 cases of nationality verification are pending

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West Bengal assembly dissolved

BJP govt to be sworn in tomorrow as Mamata refuses to step down

- Gunmen kill BJP state leader's political aide; TMC denies involvement
- At least 5 people killed in post-polls violence; vandalism, intimidation reported
- Mamata to challenge polls results in SC alleging massive irregularities

STAR DESK

West Bengal Governor RN Ravi yesterday dissolved the Legislative Assembly, paving the way for the formation of a new BJP government in the state amid a stalemate over outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's refusal to resign.

The term of the assembly was due to expire post-midnight yesterday.

The single-line communication read: "In exercise of the power conferred on me by sub-clause (b) of Clause (2) of Article 174 of the Constitution of India, I hereby dissolve the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal with effect from 07th of May 2026."

Under Article 172 of the Indian Constitution, the assembly dissolves after its five-year term ends, and the outgoing Council of Ministers can continue in a caretaker capacity until the new government takes the oath of office.

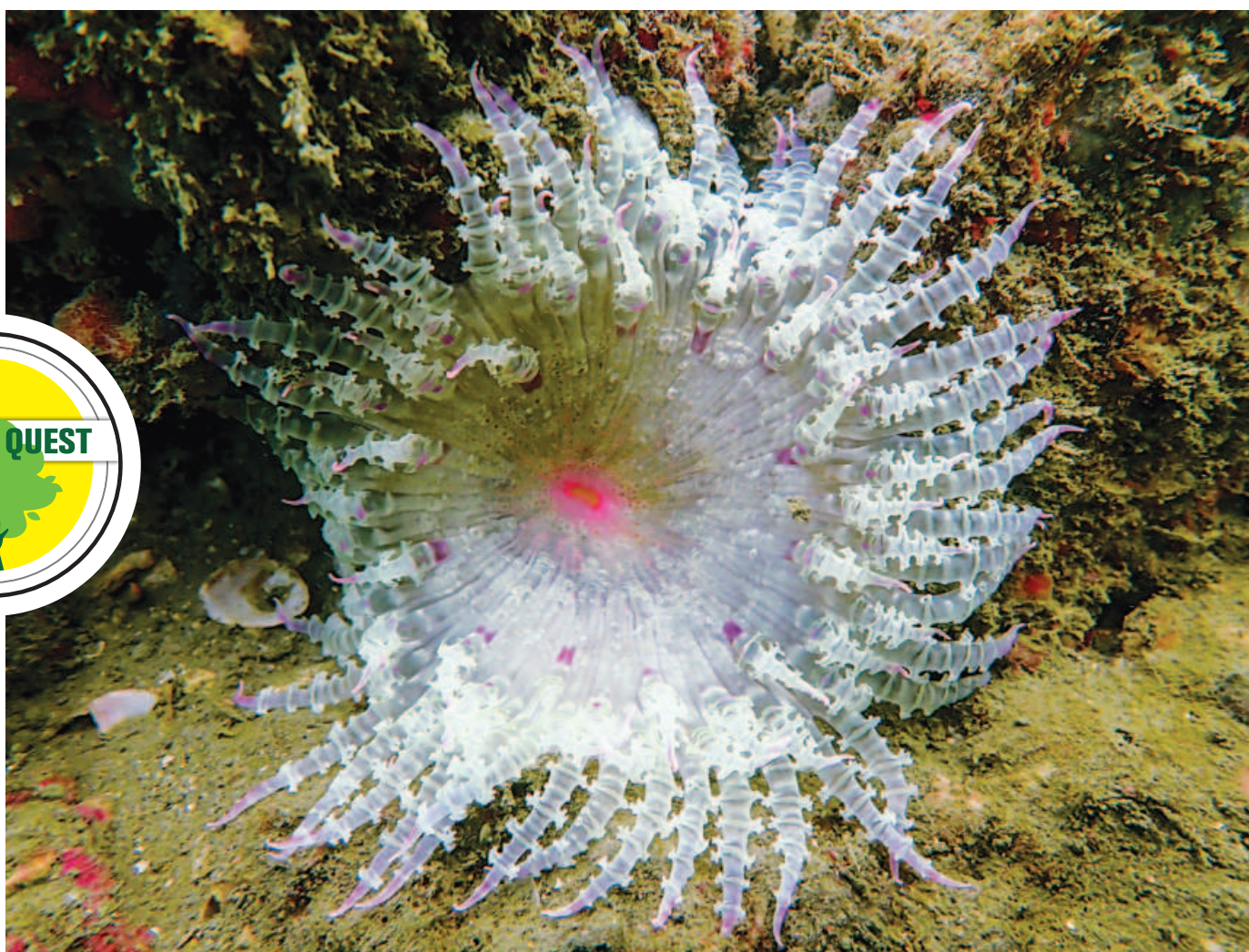
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BLOSSOMS OF THE BAY

Clinging to the reef floor, a colourful sea anemone sways its soft, translucent pink-tipped tentacles like a blooming flower in the Bay of Bengal off Saint Martin's Island. Found in tropical and temperate oceans worldwide, sea anemones inhabit coral reefs, rocky crevices, sandy seabeds, and tidal zones.

Though flower-like in appearance, they are carnivorous predators, using venom-filled stinging cells to capture plankton, crustaceans, molluscs, and small fish. Some species form symbiotic relationships with clownfish and algae, creating miniature underwater ecosystems. Sea anemones play an important ecological role by linking reef and seabed food chains while sheltering many marine creatures. Most species have not been individually assessed by the IUCN, though many face threats from ocean warming, pollution, reef destruction, and overcollection for the aquarium trade.

PHOTO: SHARIF SARWAR



Man shot dead, 11-year-old girl injured in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

A young man was shot dead, and an 11-year-old girl sustained bullet injuries after criminals opened fire in Chattogram city's Rowfabad area last night.

The deceased was identified as Hasan alias Raju, 24, a resident of Raozan upazila in Chattogram, police said.

The incident took place at Shaheed Minar alley in Rowfabad.

Reshmi Akter, 11, a bystander, suffered bullet injuries to her eyes and was admitted to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), said Sub Inspector (SI) Nur Alam Ashke, also in charge of the CMCH police outpost.

Bayezid Bostami Police Station Sub-Inspector Shahidul Islam told The Daily Star, "Raju came to Rowfabad from Raozan on May 3 to visit his sister. Around 9:15pm, armed criminals opened fire on Raju, leaving him dead on the spot."

Reshmi, a resident of the area, sustained bullet injuries during the attack, said SI Shahidul.

The attackers quickly fled the scene after the shooting incident, he said.

Later, police recovered Raju's body from the spot, the police official added.

The motive behind the killing is yet to be determined, though police primarily believe the murder may be linked to the recent spree of shootings in Raozan that has left dozens dead.