



PM to launch Family Card on August 16

Says social welfare minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will officially launch the Family Card programme for the current fiscal year on August 16 at Ward 8 of Latifabad Union in Kishoreganj Sadar upazila, Social Welfare Minister Prof Dr AZM Zahid Hossain said yesterday.

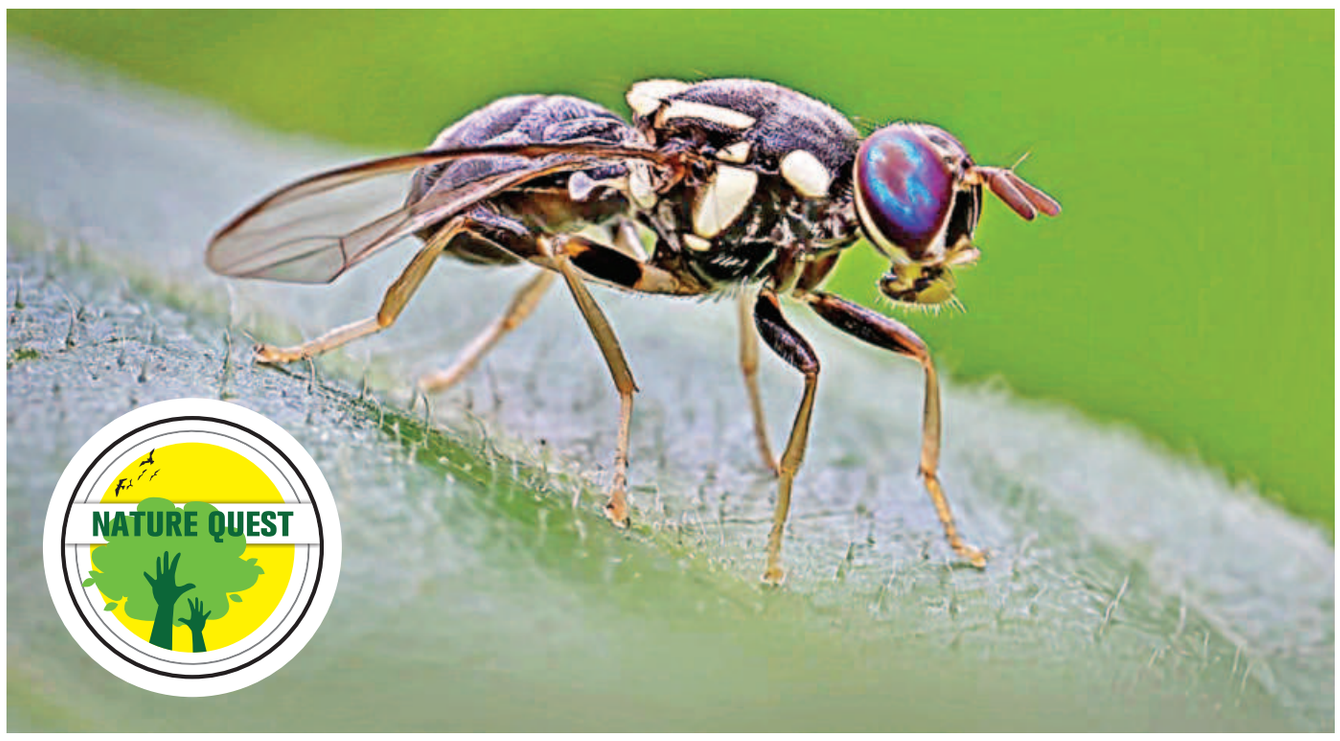
He made the announcement at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Family Cards, chaired by Finance Minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury at the Secretariat.

The government has introduced a system of regular data updates and reviews to ensure no eligible person is left out and no ineligible person is included in the programme, Zahid said.

Describing it as a dynamic social registry, he said beneficiaries' information would be updated continuously to reflect changes in their socioeconomic conditions, while verification at the union level would help eliminate flaws in the distribution process.

The budget for the current fiscal year covers 41 lakh beneficiaries. Subject to ongoing evaluations, the government plans to expand the programme to nearly 1.6 crore families over the next four years.

Senior officials from relevant ministries and divisions attended the meeting, which discussed implementation strategies, beneficiary selection, data verification, database management and field-level monitoring.



BEHIND BLUE EYES

Perched on a leaf in the Kaptai forest, this fruit fly is far more than a tiny forest resident. Most fruit flies feed on ripening or decaying fruit, while their larvae develop inside fruit or other plant tissues, and adults often shelter among dense foliage. True fruit flies (family Tephritidae) are native to tropical and temperate regions worldwide, with thousands of species known. Their colourful bodies, iridescent eyes and intricate wing patterns make many species surprisingly beautiful. While some are notorious agricultural pests, others help recycle organic matter and serve as food for birds, spiders and other insects, supporting healthy forest ecosystems. Conservation status varies by species, with many yet to be assessed by the IUCN.

PHOTO: RAIHAN BABLU

11-party goes for long marches, Dhaka rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance yesterday announced a series of divisional long marches and a grand rally in Dhaka, demanding the implementation of the July National Charter and the referendum verdict, as well as cuts in fuel, gas and electricity prices.

The programmes were announced by opposition leader and alliance chief Shafiqur Rahman, ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, during a sit-in at Muktangan in Paltan, organised over what the alliance described as a fuel and gas crisis, "ghost bills" for electricity, deteriorating law and order and spiralling prices of essential commodities.

The movement would also seek the immediate trial of those responsible for mass killings, improvements in public security and an end to what he termed narrow partisan control of state institutions, Shafiqur said.

According to the announcement, the alliance will organise road marches from Dhaka to Chattogram on September 5, to Rangpur on September 19, and to Khulna on

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GANGES-KOBADAK PROJECT

Weakened Padma obstructs irrigation

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, *back from Kushtia*

Farmer Abdul Hannan has given up IRRI-Boro cultivation due to the irrigation water crisis, even though he lives just a stone's throw from the country's largest surface-water irrigation network, the Ganges-Kobadak (GK) Project.

"But the water supply canal connected to the irrigation project remains bone-dry during the peak time for cultivation," said Hannan, of Moslempur village under Kushtia's Bheramara upazila.

"We have to depend on shallow pumps that draw groundwater to irrigate our paddy fields. It's too expensive for us to afford," he added.

So, Hannan has moved away from IRRI-Boro cultivation between January and March and switched to wheat and other crops that require less water during this period.

Hannan's predicament echoes those of hundreds of farmers in the country's southwest who are facing an irrigation water crisis, though the region hosts the country's most extensive surface-water irrigation grid.

This is the result of the gradual decline in Padma's water level, which is the main source of water for the Ganges-Kobadak (GK) project, over the past three decades, said local farmers and water resources experts.

"Around 25 to 30 years ago, we used to get sufficient water from the water supply canal to irrigate our fields that produce huge amounts of crops -- that canal has almost taken the look of a desert now," said Hasan Ali Mondol, an elderly farmer from Bahirchar village under the same upazila.





PHOTOS: STAR

A canal, *top*, connected to the main irrigation canal of the GK Project lies dry during the Boro season in Kushtia's Bheramara. A dry paddy field, *bottom*, due to lack of water in Bheramara.

It costs Tk 2,500 to Tk 3,000 to irrigate per bigha of land using shallow pumps.

"It is not viable for us," he added.

Even the shallow pumps have become useless in some areas as the level of groundwater has plummeted.

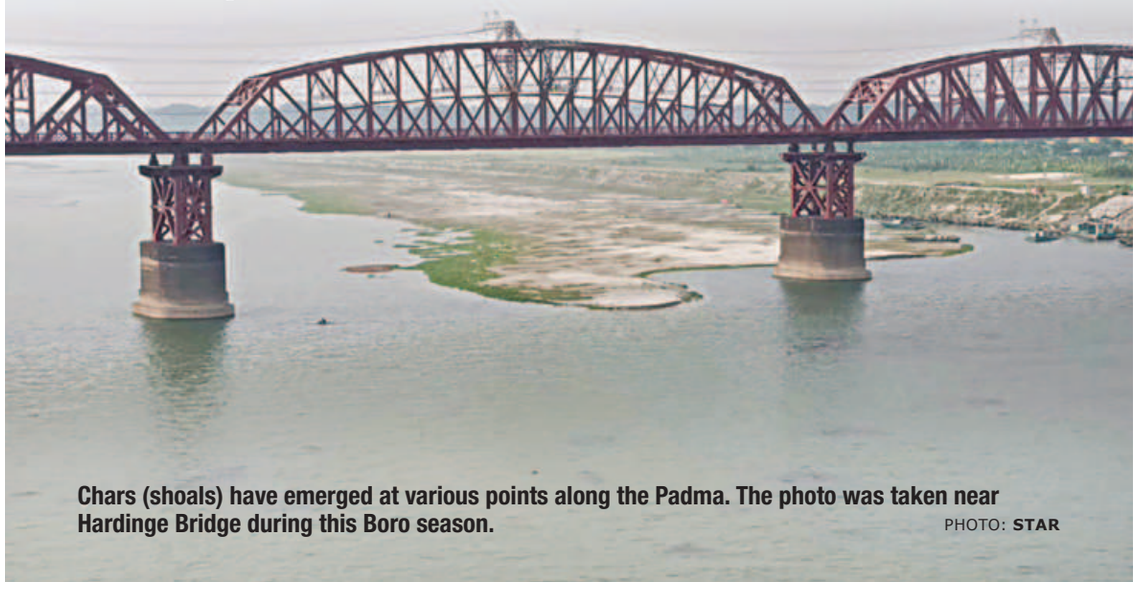
Nawa Khara village in Kushthia's Mirpur upazila is one such place where the regular shallow pumps can no longer draw groundwater.

As the government has its largest surface-water irrigation network in this region, there is no state-sponsored groundwater irrigation system here.

"Now some wealthy people have set up deep tubewells in this area with their own money, and we have to buy irrigation water from them -- it is very costly," said Sagor Biswas of Nawa Khara.

The GK Project began in the 1960s with the aim to irrigate around 197,000 hectares of arable land in Kushtia, Jhenaidah, Magura,

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Chars (shoals) have emerged at various points along the Padma. The photo was taken near Hardinge Bridge during this Boro season.

PHOTO: STAR

TONU MURDER

SC stays bail of Hafizur, orders him to surrender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday stayed a High Court order that granted bail to former army warrant officer Hafizur Rahman in the murder case of Sohagi Jahan Tonu in Cumilla.

Justice Md Rezaul Haque also ordered Hafizur to surrender before the trial court within 24 hours.

If he fails to do so, the lower court must direct law enforcers to arrest him, Attorney General Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal said.

The chamber judge passed the order on a state petition seeking a stay on the HC bail.

The judge also fixed next Sunday for further hearing and passing an order on the state's petition, the attorney general said.

Hafizur had been arrested by the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), which is probing

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Time to deliver on 'rainbow nation' pledge

Speakers urge govt to protect indigenous land and culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's pledge to build a "rainbow nation" has raised hopes among indigenous communities, but those commitments must now be translated into action, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

The present government speaks of building a 'rainbow nation' -- an inclusive and humane society that offers indigenous peoples new hope and inspiration... Discrimination cannot be eliminated if they are left behind.

SANJEEB DRONG
General secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum

Speaking at the seminar titled "Indigenous Peoples: Respect for Life, Land Rights and Culture" at the CIRDAP auditorium in Dhaka, they said indigenous peoples should receive constitutional recognition, and their land, culture and fundamental rights should be protected through effective legal and institutional measures.

They also called for the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission to be made fully functional, the formation of a separate land commission for indigenous communities in the plains, and greater participation of indigenous peoples in development projects affecting their areas.

The seminar was jointly organised by the Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum and 15 other national rights-based organisations.

Presenting the keynote paper, rights activist Ilira Dewan made several recommendations, including replacing the terms "tribes" and "minor races" in Article 23A of the constitution with an appropriate Bangla term for "Indigenous Peoples" that is acceptable to the communities.

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MIT unveils robot that flies and swims



CNN ONLINE

A lab at MIT has engineered a $300 flapping robot that can fly and swim underwater. Its creator believes the lightweight robot could one day be used to monitor and ultimately help protect the ocean.

The team of aero-aquatic roboticists looked at petrels, puffins and other diving birds, that use their wings to propel them through air and water. It also examined the complex dynamics that allow them to transition between the two.

Raphael Zufferey, lead author of the study and an assistant professor of mechanical engineering at MIT, said that while previous research existed on diving birds' wings and how they both swim and fly, "no one had ever figured out how to transform that into a fully moving robot."

The team studied "the entire literature on (diving) birds," he said, mapping the flap frequency of different birds' wings in air and water, and how they varied by wingspan (the larger the bird, the lower the flap frequency).

US has 'massive amounts' of arms

Trump denies munitions shortage; Israel strikes south Lebanon

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump said yesterday the United States has a vast supply of munitions and threatened those who suggested otherwise with jail terms as his frustration with the Iran war boiled over.

The Republican leader lashed out on his Truth Social platform at media reports about the dwindling weapons stockpile, saying that the United States has "massive amounts of 'munitions' especially of certain types," without giving further detail.

"Additionally, large amounts are being manufactured and shipped to the US as needed. Defense companies are building the largest number of plants and factories in our country's history," he said.

Pakistan sees Hormuz deal as path to Iran-US talks | Gulf shipping traffic down after Houthis attack Saudi tanker | US to navigate Iran's divided views on war: VP Vance

The Washington Post reported that Trump demanded answers about the munitions shortages from Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth last Friday, when they attended a cabinet meeting at the Camp David presidential retreat.

Trump told Hegseth that he thought the munitions issue "had been fixed," the Post reported, citing two unidentified sources familiar with the exchange. Trump railed against the media reports, threatening yesterday that "the 'leakers' of these treasonous statements are being hunted down" and "Long term jail sentences will be sought!"

The US president's comments came as Israel said two of its soldiers were killed in southern Lebanon on Wednesday.