



BAD LOANS' IMPACT

High nonperforming loans eroded banks' earnings last year

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Are coaching centres instilling creativity in young learners or killing it altogether?

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Hike now only in basic pay

Controversial perk system to be excluded; govt to fork out Tk 14,000cr more on salaries this year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government will implement the new pay structure for public servants excluding time scale and selection grade -- two compensatory perks for those who deserve promotions but cannot be given due to a shortage of posts.

Though some government officials oppose this exclusion, the finance ministry officials said it was necessary since the systems, especially the controversial selection grade, often breed corruption and discrimination among the staff.

Even then, the government has to count several hundred crore taka every month once the new pay scale takes effect.

An additional amount of around Tk 14,000 crore will be required to pay only the increased basic salaries of the government employees, finance ministry officials estimate.

The ministry may place the new wage structure at next week's cabinet meeting, as recommended by a secretary-level review committee and the Pay and Services Commission.

The finance ministry sent a report on the proposed pay structure, including the disputes surrounding it, to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The PM later sent it back to the ministry with "some instructions" and it now awaits the finance minister's approval, according to highly placed ministry officials.

After the minister signs it, the report will

be placed for the cabinet's approval. Once approved there, it is likely to take another 30 to 45 days to issue the circular on the new pay scale, according to the officials.

This means though the new pay structure has been in place since July 1, the public servants may start drawing the increased salaries from October with arrears of the previous three months.

TIME SCALE & SELECTION GRADE

The pay commission, headed by former Bangladesh Bank governor Mohammed Farashuddin, submitted its report to Finance Minister AMA Muhith on December 21 last year, recommending the abolition of time scale and selection grade systems.

The suggestion was backed by a secretary-level review committee headed by Cabinet Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan. After reviewing the report, the committee tendered its recommendations to the finance minister on May 13.

Under the existing system, if government employees serve satisfactorily long enough to deserve a promotion but cannot get it due to unavailability of higher posts, they are given salaries in that higher grade as financial compensation. This is called the time scale.

The selection grade works the same way as the time scale, except that it is given to a selected few based on their performance.

"A lot of underhand dealings are made for the selection grade as it completely

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Negotiating downpours, people wade through knee-deep water on Bandarban-Chittagong link road while some others ride a boat on an inundated road in Bandarban Bus Stand area yesterday morning. Bottom right, the Sangu river bursting its banks in the town.

PHOTO: STAR

SALAHUDDIN IN SHILLONG

How is he doing?

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shillong

Set in a serene location, Sunrise Guest House is a lavishly built two-storey building with a neatly furnished drawing room, four large bedrooms, plush bathrooms, a well-decorated library and a spacious, lush lawn at the front. There's also a mini bar with alcoholic beverages.

This is where Salahuddin Ahmed, BNP's joint secretary general, has been staying. The BNP leader is facing trial for illegally entering the state of Meghalaya in India.

Upon a visit to the luxurious guest house on Thursday, this correspondent found that Salahuddin, who has rented two rooms on the first floor, is the lone guest at the house. He was

seen browsing through four newspapers -- one Bengali daily and three English dailies -- published from Assam.

Apart from his personal assistant, there are a manager, two caretakers and two gardeners at the house, which is located in a highly secure area as it is very close to the local offices of Indian Air Force and an intelligence agency.

Sources at the house said he has rented the rooms for 4,000 Indian rupees (Rs) per day for two months, which amounts to a total of nearly two and a half lakh rupees.

Asked about how he was paying the rent, he refused to make any comment on anything while at the guest house on the ground of being

under constant watch.

However, when this correspondent had met him on the premises of a Shillong court on Wednesday, he had agreed to talk. He had gone there to appear before the court.

"How are your days going in Shillong?" this correspondent had asked.

"Doesn't this go without saying? My health is not that good. I need to see a doctor. My back pain is worsening. I don't want to take the risk of undergoing a surgery. Let's see what the doctors do," Salahuddin answered, buying a betel leaf from a vendor on the premises.

"Don't you want to return home?"

"Of course I do. But it's a legal

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40,000 marooned

Floods engulf vast areas in Bandarban, Cox's Bazar, Feni as rivers swell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rain and onrush of water from upstream caused the flooding to worsen in the hilly district of Bandarban, and Feni and Cox's Bazar yesterday.

This is the second time floods have affected these places this year.

Around 40,000 people in Bandarban were marooned and road communications between the district and other parts of the country remained snapped for the second consecutive day yesterday, reports our correspondent there citing local public representatives.

Tourists have been stranded and there is no electricity at many places in the district since Saturday night.

Locals said low lying areas of Lama, Thanchi, Ruma, Rowangchhari, Alikadom,

Naikkhanchhari of the district have gone under six to eight feet of water.

Wapda Bridge, Bus Station, Army Para, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Islampur, Member Para, Officer's Club, and Hafezghona in Bandarban municipality area have also gone under water.

Many flood affected people have taken refuge in schools and cyclone shelters.

Soil and Water Preservation Centre in the district recorded a 192mm rainfall in 24 hours since Saturday morning.

Abul Kalam Azad, sub-divisional engineer for Bangladesh Water Development Board, said the Matamuhuri was flowing 72cm above the danger level near Lama while the Sangu 65cm in the town.

Flash floods due to excessive rain, elevation of the river bed due to earth filling, and

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'Yaba trader' killed in 'gunfight' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An alleged yaba trader was killed in a "gunfight" with Rapid Action Battalion at Patenga in Chittagong city early yesterday.

He is Zafar Ahmed, 30, son of Nur Mohammad in Anwara upazila's Badalpara village.

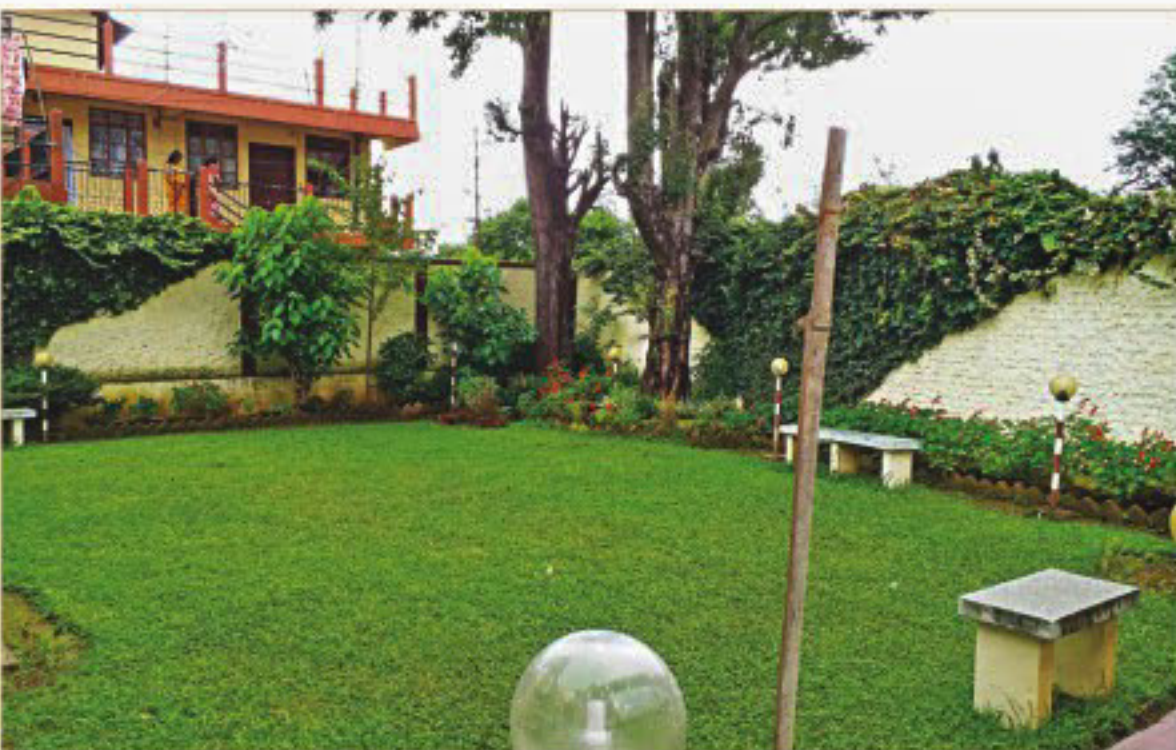
Zafar's family members alleged that Rab cooked up the "gunfight story" after picking him up on Saturday.

However, Rab refuted the allegation.

Miftah Uddin Ahmed, commanding officer of Rab-7, said Zafar was involved in yaba smuggling by sea.

Zafar was the "main accused" in a case filed in connection with the recovery of five lakh yaba pills from an engine-run fishing boat at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port on May 13. Ahmed said one of their

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BNP Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed, under trial in India for trespassing, sits in the living room of Sunrise Guest House in Shillong on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

POLLS UNDER NON-PARTY GOVT Khaleda won't budge from demand

RASHIDUL HASAN

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is still firm on the demand for a non-partisan government for holding a free and fair general election, according to some senior party leaders.

Following a statement of the BNP chief on Saturday, many were left with the impression that the party had shifted its stance on the caretaker government issue.

At a meeting with office bearers of Brahmanbaria District Bar Association at her Gulshan office, Khaleda said a caretaker government is not a must for holding national election. But it has to be held under a neutral government, no matter what its name is.

She also said no credible election was possible under the Awami League-led government.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance has been staging anti-government agitation since 2012 over the demand for national polls under a neutral government.

The alliance and several other political parties boycotted the January 5 parliamentary election last year, as the AL government didn't accept their demand for restoration of the caretaker government system.



DCs meet tomorrow to set priorities, work plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day annual conference of the deputy commissioners begins tomorrow in Dhaka where the field level officers and government policymakers will set out priorities for their work for the next one year.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to inaugurate the programme at her office at 10:00am.

Terming the conference a two-way communication between the policymakers and the field administration, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan yesterday said 253 issues of 39 ministries would be discussed at the event.

Issues relating to land and public administration are likely to dominate the meeting.

The highest 25 proposals on land and 24 proposals on public administration have been forwarded by the

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