



## SALARY, ALLOWANCES OF CIVIL SERVANTS

# Allocation rising, service quality not

Tk 71,350cr to be earmarked in next budget, 11.8pc of the total outlay

## BUSINESS

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

With every passing year, the share of the budget going towards civil servants' salary and allowance gets bigger. And the proposed budget for the incoming fiscal year, due to be unveiled in the parliament on June 3, is no different.

Some Tk 71,350 crore has been earmarked for bureaucrats' payroll in fiscal 2021-22, which is an increase of 8.3 percent from this year, according to finance ministry officials.

The amount is 11.8 percent of the proposed budget. In fiscal 2020-21, it was 11.6 percent of the budget.

The substantial allocation in every budget begs the question: is the service quality from public services improving with it?

"It's an emphatic no," said Nasiruddin Ahmed, a former chairman of the National Bureau of Revenue.

In fiscal 2015-16, under the new pay structure, the basic salary of civil servants was hiked as much as 101 percent, and in the following year, their allowance was bettered. They are also allowed low-interest loans to buy flats and cars.

To implement the new pay structure, which was staggered across two fiscal years, the government had to set aside almost double the sum than it did before.

In fiscal 2014-15, the budgetary allocation for bureaucrats' payroll was Tk

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PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

Brisk trade at Baneshwar Bazar in Puthia, Rajshahi, one of the country's largest markets of mangoes. Considering the plight of the growers and sellers, the authorities have not been able to enforce the strict coronavirus restrictions recommended by health officials amid the high positivity rate of Covid-19 in the district.

## RECOMMENDATION FOR LOCKDOWN

# Mango gets in the way in 7 districts

ANWAR ALI and MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

Despite the health directorate's strong recommendations for strict lockdown, officials in seven districts of Rajshahi and Khulna divisions opposed its enforcement right now, saying it will deal a heavy blow to around Tk 3,000-crore mango trade in the regions.

The Epidemiology and Public Health Committee of the DGHS on Saturday recommended enforcing lockdown in Naogaon, Rajshahi, Natore, Kushtia, Jashore, Khulna and Satkhira due to higher Covid positivity rates in the districts over the last few days.

At a virtual meeting with DGHS

high-ups yesterday, the officials of these districts argued that if the trade of mango, a major cash crop of the regions, is hampered, thousands will lose their livelihoods.

They spoke in favour of observing the situation closely and allowing mango trade maintaining the health safety guidelines. However, the civil surgeon in Satkhira backed the recommendation for imposing lockdown in the district.

Asked, DGHS Director General Prof ABM Khurshid Alam said, "We've got experts' recommendations as well as opinions from the local officials. We will finalise a proposal tomorrow [today] and send it to the health ministry. The final

decision will come from the Cabinet Division."

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Division yesterday extended the countrywide restrictions on movement for another week till June 6 to contain the spread of Covid-19.

It asked the authorities concerned to take necessary steps in this regard. At yesterday's meeting, most of the local health officials, argued that the Covid situation in their districts is not out of control yet.

Talking to this newspaper, Abdul Jalil, deputy commissioner in Rajshahi, said, "It is difficult to decide on a strict lockdown at this moment... The mango

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## 15 gangs running LSD trade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fourteen to fifteen gangs have been dealing in the hallucinogenic drug LSD in Bangladesh, police said.

"The groups smuggled in the drug through couriers and luggage mainly from European countries," Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner of Motijheel Division Police, told a press conference last night.

He said they got the information after quizzing five private university students arrested from the capital's Khilgaon and Bhatara areas on Saturday with LSD blotting papers, a mobile phone and a laptop used for selling LSD.

The five arrestees are: Saiful Islam alias Saif, 20, SM Monwar Aqib alias Anan, 20, Nazmus Sakib, 20, Nazmul Islam, 24, and BM Sirajul Salekin alias Topu, 24.

On May 26, detectives arrested three university students in the capital's Dhanmondi and Lalmatia areas and seized 200 pieces of LSD blotting papers from their possession.

They are: Sadman Sakib Rupol, Ashaf Wadud Turjo, and Adib Ahsab.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed the trio on a five-day remand each.

Addressing a briefing at Paltan Police Station yesterday evening, DC Abdul Ahad said they arrested the five as part of law enforcers drives following the death of Dhaka University student

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## Biman to look into high airfare to Middle East

RASHIDUL HASAN

Amid pressure from the expatriates' welfare ministry, Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday agreed to look into reducing exorbitant airfares to various Middle Eastern destinations, currently a large financial burden for the country's expatriate workers.

Top officials of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment pressured Biman at an inter-ministerial meeting at the Cabinet Division with Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam in the chair, meeting sources said.

In the meeting, it was also decided Bangladesh will carry out strong diplomatic efforts so that employers in Saudi Arabia bear the cost of booking hotels on behalf of Bangladeshi workers who have to quarantine on arrival.

Apart from the exorbitant airfare for workers travelling to Middle Eastern countries, other issues discussed included priority in ensuring vaccination of outbound workers,

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Migrant workers hoping to go to Saudi Arabia look at their papers sitting on the footpath outside the Saudia office in Sonargaon Hotel in the capital. The workers, who have not been inoculated against coronavirus, are bearing the partial cost of their mandatory week-long hotel quarantine in the Gulf country.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## RMG FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY Brands off the hook from today

ZYMA ISLAM

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh expires today, but only two clothing retailers have so far agreed to renew their contract.

Accord website says over 190 brands had committed to be signatories to the agreement, which was formulated just weeks after the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013.

The agreement acts as a binding safety programme, where signatories can only source from the Accord-certified factories. Failing to do so could subject them to litigation.

Some of the signatories were the biggest retailers like Primark, Tesco, H&M, American Eagle Outfitters, Marks & Spencer, Inditex, Benetton, Adidas, and Loblax.

But only the British brand ASOS Ltd and the German brand Tchibo have agreed to renew the contract. The current contract, known as the Transition Accord, was signed in May 2018.

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Late Al-Hajj Abdul Monem

(05 January 1937 - 31 May 2020)

Founding Chairman and Managing Director

Abdul Monem Ltd.

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## FOREVER A TIMELESS ICON

### Late Al-Hajj Abdul Monem

For whose relentless effort and devotion, for whose foresight and honesty, the country was able to move forward towards a better future with unmatched infrastructural and industrial growth. He is our beloved and revered inspiration, Late Al-Hajj Abdul Monem. Today, we observe his first death anniversary. And for him, we carry immense love and respect.

With gratitude, we will remember him forever.

