

PROPOSED BUDGET
Entire justice system to be digitalised

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday proposed the implementation of an e-Judiciary project in his National Budget Speech 2021-2022, to facilitate holding of case trials through videoconferencing.

The information on the status of pending cases in lower courts, the date of hearing of the cases, and the full verdict of cases will be published on the website regularly through the project.

There will be no need for the notorious culprits to appear in courts, as trials will be conducted through videoconferencing, he added.

The country's overall justice system will be digitalised under the e-judiciary project to bring greater dynamism in the judicial process, he said.

The minister said, "Every court in the country will be turned into an e-court; all the activities of the Supreme Court and the lower courts will be brought under automation and network."

"Initiatives have been taken to digitalise the overall justice system in the country through the

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Students of the seven Dhaka University-affiliated colleges demonstrated yesterday at the capital's Nilkhet intersection, demanding reopening the educational institutions to normalise academic activities.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Chief justice for in-camera trials at family courts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday said trial proceedings of cases related to familial issues involving women and children should be conducted in camera to avoid any embarrassing situation for them.

Women involved in such cases get insulted and harassed when they are cross examined by lawyers during trial proceedings before family courts, he said.

The chief justice made the remark while presiding over a full bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court while hearing some related cases.

In-camera trial is a proceeding carried out in private, in absence of public and the press.

Asked about the chief justice's comment, Deputy Attorney General Bishwajit Debnath told The Daily Star that the remark was made about all relevant cases involving women and children and not about any specific case.

There are some decisions in the High Court verdicts on this issue, he said.

Section 11 (1) of the Family Courts Ordinance, 1985 says, "A Family Court may, if it so deems fit, hold the whole or any part of the proceedings under this Ordinance in camera".

Section 11 (2) of the same ordinance sates, "Where both the parties to the suit request the Court to hold the proceedings in camera, the Court shall do so".

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PROPOSED BUDGET
Tax rebate proposed for employing transgender people

NILIMA JAHAN

To ensure employment, standard living, and social and economic integration of members of the transgender community in Bangladesh, the government has proposed to enact special tax incentives in the proposed budget for those who will employ transgender workers.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal proposed a tax rebate for employers who will recruit 10 percent of their total workforce -- or more than 100 workers -- from the community.

"The rebate will amount to 75 percent of the total salary paid to workers from the transgender community, or five percent of the payable tax, whichever is lower," he said while presenting the budget yesterday.

"The present government is relentlessly working to integrate the marginal and underprivileged population of the country into mainstream society and economy," he said.

Ivan Ahmed Katha, president of Shachetan Shamjashba Hijra Shanga, an organisation that works to protect rights

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7 months to fix key medical equipment?

Mammography machine at CMCH finally repaired

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Cg

Tuli Chowdhury (not her real name) recently went to a gynaecologist, who advised her to undergo breast screening. Tuli had heard that Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) charges much lower for the test than private diagnostic centres.

"I'd heard that screening fee for single breast is Tk 400, and for both it's Tk 800 at CMCH, but the cost is Tk 1,500 and Tk 3,000, respectively, at private diagnostic centres," Tuli told this correspondent.

And so, she went there on Sunday, but to her utter frustration, she found that the service was not available, as the mammography machine was out of order.

Just like Tuli, many others have been deprived of the service at CMCH for the last seven months, because the machine was non-functional for that long. Patients admitted at the hospital also had to avail the test from outside.

This expensive machine, used for screening breasts for tumours and cancer, went out of order in October last year, and was just repaired on Wednesday. Hospital sources said, the service resumed yesterday.

But the big question is, why would such an essential machine remain out of order for seven whole months?

It is worth noting that this is not the first time the machine became non-functional, putting a stop to services.

According to hospital sources, the machine has hardly ever been operational for six months at a stretch since installation at the department on August 6, 2018.

Earlier, the brand-new unit sat idle for around one and a half years, due to complications centring installation, said sources, adding that the Tk 1.16 crore

machine was bought from Italy in 2016, but was installed two years later.

Contacted, Prof Subas Majumder, head of CMCH's radiology and imaging department, said they want the machine to be always operational, but it could not be possible due to technical glitches.

"The non-cooperative attitude of the distribution company is mainly liable for it," he said. "Whenever any technical glitch occurs, we inform them but cannot get prompt response."

"According to warranty conditions, only engineers from the company can check and address technical glitches," he added.

The company, however, does not agree with the hospital's claims.

Contacted, MK Mohanta, consultant of NewTech GT Limited, the distribution company, denied the allegations of not responding promptly.

"Whenever we received letters from CMCH, we responded immediately, and sent engineers to resolve the problem."

About the delay in this time, he said a component of the machine went out of order. "The component is not available in the country, and so, we had to import it. As the pandemic is ongoing worldwide, we got it later than usual. Moreover, our engineers could not rush to Chattogram immediately after getting the part due to the lockdown."

Echoing Mohanta, Kamal Krishna Majumdar, an engineer of the company, said he worked on the machine for three days and fixed it.

Asked why the machine breaks down frequently, he said there are some problems, including fluctuating voltage, and a technically-sound individual must operate the unit.

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Unrealistic or time-befitting?

Political parties react to budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP, Jatiya Party and other political parties yesterday said the proposed budget for 2021-22 fiscal is unrealistic and not implementable while ruling Awami League hailed the budget terming it participatory and time-befitting.

In an instant reaction, BNP standing committee member Moyeen Khan said in the 50 years of independence, the AL government has given the country a budget which can be termed "borrowing budget" or debt budget.

He said the overall budget deficit will be Tk 214,681 crore, which is 35.5 percent of total budget -- more than one-third. This has to be met through loans from foreign or domestic sources, he said.

In the past, BNP has repeatedly tried to get the country out of dependence on foreign debt. On the other hand, AL has made the country's economy dependent on foreign debt due to their chaotic mega projects and mega corruption, which is putting a burden of thousands of taka on the head of every child in the country even before they are born, he said.

"This year's budget is its ultimate manifestation," he added.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party chairman and deputy leader of the opposition GM Quader said the proposed budget for 2021-2022 is imaginary, fictional and unrealistic.

"This budget is not implementable. There is a huge deficit in the budget and the system that has been promised to fill that is not realistic. This budget needs to be extensively amended," he added.

GM Quader said the health sector saw nominal increase in allocation.

The JP chairman further said people had huge expectations that significant allocation will be given to the health sector. But the proposed budget has given very little allocation to this sector.

The allocation in the social safety net and disaster management sectors are also very less, he added.

The JP chairman said this while talking to reporters after the finance minister placed the budget at Jatiya Sangsad yesterday afternoon.

He said the budget did not provide clear guidelines for job creation or financial assistance for those who have been unemployed and living below the poverty line due to Covid-19 pandemic.

In an instant reaction, Gonosanghati Andolon said the proposed budget has showed that the government has no intention to save people from the pandemic.

It also said there is nothing new in the tax proposal. Middle-income people will be affected badly due to the proposed budget.

Meanwhile, AL general secretary Obaidul Quader said the proposed budget is realistic and time-befitting, which will ensure participation of all.

Quader, also road bridges and transport minister, said this while talking to reporters outside the JS Bhaban.

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From the outside, little can be seen of this overpass at Kalyanpur Bus Stand area, as political posters have taken up almost all of it. It's worse from the inside, as pedestrians using it can see almost nothing going on outside. This photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

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