



**Kyrgyzstan:
A tale of an
eagle and
a bond**



**'Spain morale
sky-high
after Italy win'**



**A fire kindles
inside
Konal**



**1 million
children
displaced in
Sudan war: UN**

BUDGETARY ALLOCATION Education gets far less than it requires

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Due to meagre allocation for the education sector, Bangladesh will face growing challenges to graduate from the least developed country status, say economists and educationists.

The proposed allocation of 1.76 percent of the Gross Domestic Product for the education ministries in the 2023-24 fiscal is the lowest in the past 15 years. It is way less than UNESCO's recommendation of four to six percent allocation of the GDP for the sector.

Bangladesh's average education expenditure as a percentage of GDP from 2016 to 2022 was the 5th lowest among 41 least developed countries, according to data presented by the Centre for Policy Dialogue in its post-budget discussion.

Economists say that with this decreasing trend, the country will not achieve the 8th Five Year plan to elevate its allocation for education to three percent of GDP by the 2024-2025 fiscal.

"It comes as a shock that Bangladesh's education budget is one of the lowest among the LDCs," says Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD.

"More economic efficiency will be needed after graduation from the

- Allocation for education 1.76pc of GDP in FY2023-24, lowest in 15 years
- Bangladesh's average education expenditure 5th lowest among 41 LDCs between 2016 & 2022
- Between 2016 & 2022, only Somalia, Haiti, South Sudan, Central African Republic were behind Bangladesh
- In 2021, Bhutan spent on education 7pc of GDP, Pakistan 2.4pc and Bangladesh 2.01pc

LDC status. We will not get that efficiency with the current standard of education," she adds.

Since 2009-10, when the Awami League-led 14-party alliance placed its first budget, the sector's allocation has hovered around two percent of GDP. During this period, the government allocated the highest 2.49 percent of GDP in 2016-17. The allocation has since fallen gradually over the past seven years and hit rock bottom in the budget for the 2023-24 fiscal, which is the last budget of the incumbent government's current tenure.

For the next fiscal, the government has allocated Tk 80,000 crore for the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, the Secondary and Higher Education Division, and the Technical and Madrasa Education Division.

In his budget speech for the next fiscal, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal gave emphasis on enhancing the quality of education at all levels.

"Today's children will make our dream of a developed-prosperous-smart Bangladesh a reality. Therefore, we want to enable students to face all upcoming challenges mainly arising from the fourth industrial revolution and climate change, and move forward. Our aim is to provide science based, technology-based, skill enhancing, and creativity-supportive education that will instil in them the spirit of delivering services ...," he said.

Educationalists, however, say that they did not find any direction from the finance minister about how these targets will be fulfilled.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education, says that education campaigners have been calling for increasing the budget for a long time but they don't see any reflection of their demands.

"The education budget shows a dismal picture. The budget speech

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Construction work on the metro rail line stretching from Agargaon to Motijheel is going on. The government plans to open the Agargaon-Motijheel route of the metro rail by November. This is a part of Dhaka's first metro rail -- the 20km-long MRT-6 -- from Uttara to Motijheel. The photo was taken in the capital's Farmgate area on Sunday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Barishal city quietly changes hands

New faces taking control of toll collection

SUSHANTA GHOSH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, from Barishal

Incumbent Barishal Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah is losing all his grip over the city after a new mayor was elected last week.

Over the last five years, between Tk 30 crore and Tk 35 crore had been collected annually mainly from the transport sector, according to different estimates.

Followers of Abul Khair Abdullah, who won the city corporation election on Monday with 87,808 votes, started taking control of the city soon after the ruling Awami League nominated him for mayor two months ago.

Jahangir Hossain, president of Barishal city AL, however, told The Daily Star that no leader and activist of the party was ever involved in "illegal toll collection".

He refused to make comments when asked specifically about Sadiq's and Khair's men.

Sadiq did not answer the calls made by these correspondents. Talking to reporters, mayor-elect Khair recently said, "I will not tolerate irregularities... I will rather try to solve the crises that were created earlier."

Muhammad Rubel, who drives a battery-run auto-rickshaw, said until about a month ago, everyone operating such rickshaws had to pay Tk 20 every day to the mayor's men.

The city corporation in March gave each driver a token.

But several city corporation officials requesting anonymity said the money collected from the battery-run auto-rickshaws over the years was not deposited to the corporation's account.

Abdur Rahim, a traffic inspector of Barishal Metropolitan Police (BMP), said there are around 12,000 auto-rickshaws in the city.

According to an estimate, the total amount collected from auto-rickshaws may reach Tk 8.76 crore a year. The toll collection stopped after the ruling AL decided not to nominate Sadiq.

Transport sector insiders say owners of each CNG-run three-wheeler used to pay the owners' association Tk 500 a month.

The president of the association, Dulal Mia, is known as a close aide to Sadiq. People in the sector say most of the money collected in the name of the association used to be taken by Dulal. This activity also came to an end in mid-April.

Contacted, Dulal said his association collected the money for the workers' welfare.

BMP traffic officials say there are around 3,200 different types of fossil fuel-powered three-wheelers in the city.

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'I want my son back'

Says slain journo Nadim's mother; eyewitness claims UP chairman, his son were at the scene

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Grief descended on the entire Goruhati village where slain journalist Golam Rabbani Nadim lived.

Around 9:00am yesterday, his body was on his house yard in Jamalpur's Bakshiganj upazila. His family was lamenting.

"I want my son back. I cannot live without him. The chairman [of local union parishad] killed my son," said his



mother Aleya Begum.

Nadim's three children were numb.

His widow Monira Begum said, "The chairman was angry with my husband. He killed my husband. We want justice."

Journalists yesterday formed human chains in different districts and demanded punishment of Nadim's killers.

Nadim, 42, the Jamalpur district correspondent of Banglanews24.com and Bakshiganj upazila correspondent of Ekattor TV, died on Thursday, a day after he was attacked allegedly by some supporters of the local UP chairman.

The victim's family and colleagues claimed that Mahmudul Alam, chairman of Sadhurpara Union Parishad, and his supporters killed the journalist for publishing a report that went against the chairman.

Nadim's report was run by Banglanews24.com.

Mahmudul could not be found as of filing of the report around 10:30pm yesterday.

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Local journalist Muzahid Babu is an eyewitness to the attack on Nadim on Wednesday night.

"Around 10:00pm, Nadim and I were returning home on two motorbikes. When we were near Bakshiganj College, someone hit Nadim from the back with stick and he fell on the ground," said Muzahid.

Instantly, some 10 to 12 people, armed with sticks and iron rods, dragged Nadim to a nearby alley.

"The chairman's son Rifat was among them. Rifat also threatened me with life, if I tried to save Nadim," Muzahid told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I saw the chairman, Mahmudul, standing behind an under construction wall in the alley. After the attackers took Nadim to the alley, the chairman's son broke the wall, took a brick and hit Nadim's head with it," said Muzahid.

"I informed Lalon Miah [Nadim's cousin and a journalist] of the incident, who rushed to the spot. Lalon and I then entered the alley and found Nadim lying on the ground. By this time, the assailants left the scene," he added.

"We took Nadim to a hospital," he added.

WHO IS MAHMUDUL?

Locals alleged that Mahmudul, also general secretary of Sadhurpara union unit Awami League, unleashed a regime of terror in Bakshiganj as he runs criminal activities like drug trading and extortion.

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Tigers sensing victory

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It was another day of sheer domination and individual milestones with Bangladesh sensing a victory by the end of the third day's play as Afghanistan prepare to resume the fourth day on 45 for two in chase of a record 662-run target in the lone Test at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The gloomy weather over the last hour of the day reflected the environment gripping the visiting dressing room, especially after skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi was struck on the helmet by a Taskin Ahmed bouncer and forced to leave ground in their second innings.

Shoriful Islam and Taskin provided early breakthroughs, removing Afghan openers Ibrahim Zadran and Abdul Malik respectively in the first two overs of the second innings.

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It was yet another dominating display by Bangladesh on Day 3 of their one-off Test against Afghanistan in Mirpur yesterday, with Najmul Hossain Shanto and Mominul Haque's centuries being the major highlights. Shanto became only the second Bangladeshi to score two centuries in a Test after Mominul, who also reached the three-figure mark on Friday after 26 innings.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED