

## Promote community clinics in developing world: PM

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called upon development partners, including multilateral financing institutions, to extend their support for community-centric health services in the developing world.

"On our part, Bangladesh stands ready to share our insights and expertise with those interested," she said.

The prime minister said this while speaking at the plenary session of the high-level side-event on "Sheikh Hasina Initiative of Community Clinics: Innovative Approach to Achieving Universal Health Coverage Inclusive of Mental Health and Disabilities" held at UN Headquarters in New York.

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## JOURNO NADIM MURDER Prime accused secures bail from HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has granted six months' ad-interim bail to suspended UP chairman Mahmudul Alam Babu, the prime accused in the murder case of journalist Golam Rabbani Nadim.



Mahmudul Alam

Nadim, who was the Jamalpur district correspondent of Banglanews24.com and also the Bakshiganj upazila correspondent of Ekattor TV, died on June 15, a day after being attacked allegedly by supporters of Mahmudul.

On June 17, Nadim's wife, Monira Begum, filed the case with Bakshiganj Police Station against 22 named and 20-25 unnamed persons.

Mahmudul, the then chairman of Sadhurpara Union Parishad in Bakshiganj upazila, who is now in jail, was named as the main accused.

The HC bench of Justices Md Jahangir Hossain and Md Showkat Ali Chowdhury granted bail to Mahmudul on Monday in response to

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# The bustling spice market of CHAWKBAZAR

RBR

The wholesale spice market of Chawkbazar is not a fancy, spice souk you see in the Middle East; it is a messy place, with extremely narrow, mucky lanes snaking through filth. Even manoeuvring a rickshaw is a challenge on these roads which are further piled up with sacks of assorted spices, herbs used in Ayurveda and Unani, and of course dry fruits from all over the world.

Yet, the sights and sounds of the Chawkbazar spice market exude an energetic spirit that draws you to it; there is a distinct look in its haphazard mess.

Nazrul Store, situated at the corner of one such lane, alone has a stock of over 600 types of spices and culinary herbs along with ayurvedic products. As you enter the store, with a makeshift storage loft, a heady smell of dried amloki, bahera, and hortoki hits you.

A bag full of mace -- the warm, burnt,

orange colour of which entices you to pick a handful. The green cardamoms -- whose light and fresh aroma make you want to get a bag full. Sacks of icy pink crystals of palm sugar, boxes of black sultanas, and green raisins in pale jade hue, dried figs, and Sakura plums; the place is stacked with a wide range of products.

Strangely, a plastic bag full of dried Maryam phul or Rose of Jericho as it is called, which is believed to ease childbirth gets your attention. This flower is not easily available in Dhaka; finding it in this market is like a big discovery you can say.

"We opened the store in 1998. It has been 25 years! We supply retailers all over the country. Herbal, homoeopathic and ayurvedic products, and regular spices -- we sell it all in raw and ready-to-use form," says Ronny, the store manager, who goes by his first name only.

The unique store boasts a rich collection. Even the rare and sought-after agarwood, a fragrant dark resinous wood used in making incense sticks, perfume, and small carvings, is found here. One hundred grams of agarwood is sold for Tk 10,000 here in

this store.

"These days, our business for raw products is slow as the market is saturated with powdered Ayurvedic medicines. People introducing themselves as 'Kobiraj' have started operating in every locality. Unfortunately, most people prefer the powdered forms over raw ingredients as they are easy to use," Ronny adds.

"In my opinion and experience, these powders are bogus. In Ayurveda, the usage of herbs in the right portions is paramount. You need to study the subject to make them. A street vendor can't do the same," Ronny further explains, emphasising that the cleanliness of herbs is another issue to be taken seriously when using the powder form.

Agreeing with him, a customer chips in that triphala or chirota powder does not have the same effect as the raw dried fruits, soaked overnight, does.

In these times of price hikes the wholesale spice market at Chawkbazar, is an option to try out. It has fine-quality culinary spices to flavour food. You just have to brave the traffic to experience the vibe there and buy bags full of spicy, tangy, and piquant goodies!



## \$250m budget support from WB in Nov

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context of graduation from the least-developed country bracket.

Accordingly, one of the conditions was to get the National Tariff Policy with reduced tariffs and a simplified tariff structure approved by the cabinet. That was done on July 16, and the commerce ministry has published the gazette on it.

The National Tariff Policy would bring down the average nominal protection rate on imports from 29.6 percent at the end of fiscal 2020-21 to 25 percent this fiscal year.

Another condition is the roll-out of the A-Challan system for at-source income tax withholding in all tax zones across the country. So far, it has been done on a limited scale.

Once fully implemented, it is expected to boost the National Board of Revenue's income tax and domestic value-added tax collections to Tk 244,200 crore in fiscal 2023-24.

The DPC supports public procurement efficiency by expanding the use of electronic government procurement (e-GP), a system which has already contributed to estimated annual government savings of \$1.1 billion, according to the project document.

"Expanding the use of e-GP in emergencies such as pandemics and natural disasters will enable time-critical delivery of services, with greater transparency," the WB said.

Subsequently, the government was asked to enact the Bangladesh Public Procurement Authority (BPPA) Act to consolidate the responsibilities and authorities of the BPPA.

The bill was passed in the parliament this month.

If this condition is implemented faithfully, then the average procurement lead time using a GP system would come down to 50 days

this fiscal year, the WB said.

Another major task from the WB for this budget support was amendments to the Bank Company Act to strengthen the supervisory framework in line with good international practice. The parliament approved the amendment on June 21.

The Department of National Savings has already adopted an automated system to link the issuance of the general provident fund and the contributory provident fund instruments to national identity cards.

If implemented properly, the net sales of savings instruments will come down to Tk 200,000 crore this fiscal year.

The WB has also asked the central bank to issue corrective action plans for undercapitalised banks and the finance ministry to issue a

circular with strengthened corporate governance for state banks in line with international good practice.

Another condition is the enactment of the Secured Transactions Act to pave the way for granting bank loans by mortgaging movable assets as collateral and establishing a notice-based security interest registry for movable assets.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the bill in the parliament on June 20.

The WB has called for the adoption of the Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, which includes retrofitting the built environment to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

It has also called for increasing renewable energy generation capacity to 1,000 megawatts by the end of this fiscal year. This has been achieved, according to finance ministry officials.

## BB asks 10 banks to explain

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"Those banks imposed higher dollar rates on their clients than their declared rates," said Md Mezbahul Haque, the central bank spokesman.

M Reazul Karim, the MD and chief executive officer of Premier Bank, acknowledged the receipt of the letter. The bank will respond within the stipulated time, he told The Daily Star.

"We were forced to open LCs [letters of credit] at a high dollar rate in an emergency case -- this was conveyed to the central bank before," said Mati Ul Hasan, additional managing director of Mercantile Bank.

Selim RF Hussain, the Brac Bank MD and also the chairman of the Association of Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB), declined to comment on the matter.

This, however, is not the first time the central bank has taken this

position against banks on allegations of dollar manipulation by banks.

Last year, it sought explanations from 12 banks: Dutch-Bangla, Prime, City, Southeast, Brac, Standard Chartered, NCC, HSBC, Mercantile, Dhaka, United Commercial and Bank Asia.

The BB then asked Dutch-Bangla, Southeast, Prime, City, Brac and Standard Chartered to transfer their treasury heads to the human resources department. The central bank later walked back on this decision.

Since last year, the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association and ABB have been fixing the dollar rate on unofficial direction from the central bank.

On August 31, the two organisations decided to enforce a uniform exchange rate from September: they decided to buy a dollar at Tk 109.5 and sell at Tk 110.

## Adieu, giant of Bangla cinema

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began experiencing breathing problems around 10:00pm. His wife Shahana Begum rushed him to the hospital. By the time they reached, he had passed away and the doctors declared him dead upon receiving him.

Born on August 26, 1946, Zaki was known as more than a filmmaker. He was also a scriptwriter, actor and author.

After completing his education in Pune Film School from 1973 to 1976, he came back and made the popular film "Ghuddi", starring Suborna Mustafa and Raisul Islam Asad with Shafiqul Islam Swapan behind the camera.

The film's song "Abar Elo Je Shondha", sung by Happy Akhand and written by Kawsar Ahmed Chowdhury, gained widespread popularity along with the film itself.

In 1980, he was given the National Film Award for Best Screenplay for "Ghuddi", and then went on to make films like "Lal Benarasi" and "Ayena Bibir Pala".

In the late 90s, he also served as the chief executive of Bangladesh Television.

In 2021, he was honoured with the prestigious Ekushey Padak.

Though Zaki could not keep up with his former self due to old

age complications, his passion for filmmaking was far beyond his ailments' reach.

Besides making some telefilms in recent years, he also finished working on two films "Aparajeyo Eka" and "Krantikal" (a Ghuddi sequel), which are yet to be released.

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud in a condolence message yesterday said the multifaceted director, storyteller, screenplay writer, actor, and writer Syed Salahuddin Zaki will forever be remembered and cherished through his works.

State Minister for Culture KM Khalid has expressed deep sorrow at Zaki's death, reiterating how this stalwart of cinema will be forever remembered through his works.

After his son and daughter return from Canada, Syed Salahuddin Zaki will be given his final respects at Central Shaheed Minar from 11:00am to 12:00pm on September 21.

After Zuh'r prayers, his namaz-e-janaza will be held at Taqwa mosque in the capital's Dhanmondi at 1:30pm.

He will then be taken to Channel i office for a final tribute, before being laid to rest in his parents' grave in Azimpur cemetery.

## EC plans longer gap between schedule and election day

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Top EC officials said widening the gap would give officials concerned more time to scrutinise nomination papers, complete the process of withdrawal of candidacies and dispose of appeals against scrapping of nomination papers.

EC sources said the commission is planning to announce the schedule for the 12th Jatiya Sangsad polls by the first week of November.

Increasing the time gap between the polls schedule and the election day would also allow the maximum number of foreign observers to monitor the elections after the Christmas vacation, said EC officials.

"The commission is holding discussion on how it can keep more time between the announcement of the polls schedule and the voting day," Election Commissioner Brig

Gen (ret'd) Ahsan Habib Khan told The Daily Star.

The EC plans to give four to five days to returning officers to scrutinise nomination papers. Usually, the

NATIONAL POLLS	SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED	POLLING DAY	GAP OF DAYS
11th (2018)	November 8	December 30	52
10th (2014)	November 25, 2013	January 5, 2014	40
9th (2008)	November 2	December 29	58
8th (2001)	August 19	October 1	44
7th (1996)	April 27	June 12	46
6th (1991)	December 15, 1990	February 27, 1991	71

officers get just one day to do the job.

During the 2018 national elections, a total of 3,056 nomination forms were submitted.

The commission is likely to give at least seven days for settling the appeals against scrapping of

nominations by returning officers. The chief election commissioner and the four other commissioners hear the appeals. The appellants are allowed to have lawyers.

"If the returning officers have more time, it will help them perform their duties more efficiently. Having more time for disposing of appeals against scrapping of nomination papers means the officials will be in no haste to make decisions," said Ahsan Habib.

He said that the EC would announce the polls schedule only after making final decisions on these issues.

Asked when the EC will declare the polls schedule, he said, "We will announce the schedule in due time. We are making sincere efforts to ensure that the elections are participatory."

Officials, however, said if the time gap between the announcement of the schedule and the voting day is increased, the EC will have to keep an eye on law and order for an extended period.