

GAMBLING, HUNDI BFIU suspends over 48,000 MFS accounts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 48,586 personal mobile financial service accounts have been suspended by Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) for suspected involvement in online gambling, betting, and hundi.

This was informed by the State Minister for Finance, Waseqa Ayesha Khan, in parliament yesterday as she read out a statement on behalf of Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali, who was absent.

A total of 5,029 mobile financial service (MFS) agents were terminated for their alleged involvement in illegal transactions.

Besides, the minister also said as per BFIU's instruction, transactions of 10,666 MFS agent accounts have been blocked for suspected involvement in illegal hundi, gaming, betting,

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Pilgrims heading towards Dhaka airport from Ashkona hajj camp. This year's hajj flight started yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

38,000 pilgrims yet to get visas

Deadline ends tomorrow, hajj flights start

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 38,000 hajj pilgrims have yet to get visas as the deadline for application ends tomorrow.

The religious affairs ministry has already cautioned private hajj agencies, emphasising that they will bear responsibility if they do not secure visas for pilgrims within the stipulated deadline.

Operation of this year's hajj flight started yesterday amid this uncertainty.

Biman's first dedicated hajj flight took off from Dhaka airport for Jeddah at 7:00am carrying 415 pilgrims.

Saudia and Flynas have also started operating hajj flights from yesterday.

A total of 1,676 hajj pilgrims went to Saudi Arabia in four flights till filing of this report at 6:00pm, according to the hajj office at city's Ashkona.

This year, 85,257 Bangladeshis are set to go to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj. Of them, Biman will carry 42,629 while the rest of the passengers will be carried by the two airlines of Saudi Arabia.

Of the total hajj pilgrims, 80,838 will perform hajj under private management and the rest 4,419 will perform hajj under government management.

Biman will operate 116 pre-hajj and 125 post-hajj flights.

This year, hajj is likely to be observed on June 16 depending on sighting of the moon.

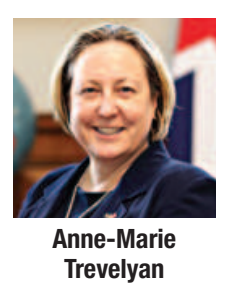
According to sources at the Ashkona Hajj office, as of yesterday, visas have been completed for 4,322 pilgrims, scheduled to perform hajj under government management.

'Bangladesh a trusted and reliable partner'

Says UK minister of state for Indo-Pacific

PORIMOL PALMA

The UK wants increased engagement with Bangladesh and other partners in the Indo-Pacific region for its future security and economic prosperity, said the country's Minister of State for Indo-Pacific Anne-Marie Trevelyan.



Anne-Marie Trevelyan

"The Indo-Pacific region is of critical importance to the UK's future security and the prime minister's priority of growing our economy. That is why increased engagement in the region is now a permanent pillar of our foreign policy," she said.

Trevelyan left Dhaka yesterday following a two-day visit where she met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ministers of foreign affairs, education, and aviation, alongside business leaders, humanitarian actors, climate experts, and civil society organisations.

She recognised the importance of democracy and human rights as foundations for long-term growth and prosperity.

In a written interview with The Daily Star, Trevelyan said she is confident that Bangladesh will remain a trusted and reliable partner with whom they can work in support of the open, rules-based international order that benefits all.

Asked how the UK will work for a prosperous Indo-Pacific while leaving Myanmar and Rohingya crisis unaddressed, she said since the military coup in 2021, the UK has consistently taken action to hold the military to account and press for a return to a peaceful, democratic government in Myanmar.

"This includes our role as penholder on Myanmar at the UN Security Council and working with regional partners like Bangladesh to ensure vital humanitarian aid," Anne-Marie Trevelyan said.

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'Corruption key obstacle to budget transparency'

Speakers call for increasing allocation for education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency in budget management in any sector, including education, is impossible in a nation plagued by corruption, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They made these remarks in a discussion titled "Education for Out of School: How to Mitigate Challenges" while discussing the need to increase the education budget to ensure all children are enrolled in school.

The Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) organised the views exchange meeting with relevant stakeholders at a hotel in the capital.

Approximately 41 percent of children and adolescents were out of the education system last year, said Md Abdur Rouf, programme manager of CAMPE.

The government has already initiated the "Out of School Children Education" project to incorporate these children within the scope of the "Second Chance" programme.

The effectiveness of this short-term project-based programme is doubtful, often falling short and lacking meaningful impact for many students, said Rouf.

Hence, these children should be incorporated into the mainstream education framework, he recommended.

Economic hardship, lack of parental awareness, difficulties in reaching remote areas and early marriage are some of the reasons

Approximately 41 percent of children and adolescents were out of the education system last year.

MD ABDUR ROUF

Programme manager, CAMPE

We all need to work together to reduce dropout rates and further develop informal education opportunities.

NOORJAHAN KHATUN

Addl secy, primary and mass edu ministry

Consequently, crores of taka are wasted on mere project oversight. If we can save some of these funds, we could invest them in critical areas like education for dropouts."

Highlighting the past practice of finance ministers consulting business interests before budget announcements, he said these stakeholders prioritise profit over social welfare or education.

Professor Emeritus Manzoor Ahmed acknowledged the shortcomings of the current "Second Chance" programme. He urged the government to explore alternative solutions before closing the programme altogether.

"Without innovative thinking, simply relying on traditional methods will not produce effective results," he added.

Noorjahan Khatun, additional secretary (development) to the primary and mass education ministry, said, "We need to understand why children drop out of school before finding solutions."

"We all need to work together to reduce dropout rates and further develop informal education opportunities," she added.

Raja Devasish Roy, chief of the Chakma Circle, spoke about the importance of stakeholders' involvement from all sectors when formulating and amending education policies.

The programme was moderated by CAMPE Executive Director Rasheda K Chowdhury, and Deputy Director Tapan Kumar Dash delivered a welcome speech.

behind school dropout. To address these challenges, he presented some recommendations, including increasing the amount of stipends and implementing non-formal education as needed.

He also called for a gradual increase in investment in education to at least 4-6 percent of GDP.

Author Syed Manzoorul Islam said, "We see the government constantly approving new projects, but there's a lack of coordination.

3 killed, 45 hurt in Habiganj clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Three people were killed and at least 45 others injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over a trifling matter in Agua village of Habiganj's Baniachong yesterday.

The deceased are Zilu Mia, 50, Kader Mia, 32, and Siraj Mia, 25.

OC Delwar Hossain of Baniachong Police Station said an altercation broke out between Kader, an auto-rickshaw driver, and Badrul, a staffer at the auto-rickshaw stand, centring taking passengers around 11:00am.

Around 2:00pm, supporters of both groups, equipped with lethal weapons, attacked each other, leaving two people dead on the spot and around 46 injured. The injured were taken to a local hospital where Zilu died.

A number of houses were also vandalised during the clash.

On information, police went to the spot and brought the situation under control, added the police official.

CHITTAGONG COLLEGE 6 BCL men hurt in factional clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

At least six activists of Chhatra League were injured in a clash between two of its factions at Chittagong College yesterday, over establishing supremacy on the campus.

According to eyewitnesses, the group backed by Mahmudul Karim, president of the college unit of BCL, and another faction loyal to Subhash Mallick Sabuj, general secretary of the unit, attacked each other with sticks and rods.

Subhash claimed that Mahmudul's group attacked them, injuring three of his followers.

Monirul Islam Monir, vice president of the college unit of BCL, who belongs to the other faction, said Subhash's supporters attacked them first, injuring three.

Raghu Rai coming to Dhaka

STAR REPORT

A g n u m photographer Raghu Rai is coming to Dhaka to unveil the cover of a book -- "Rise of a Nation, a journey through the Liberation War of Bangladesh".

Back in 2023, the Raghu Rai Foundation co-published this book with the Durjoy Bangladesh Foundation. It contains unpublished and rare photographs from Raghu Rai's 1971 series on the Liberation War.

The book will be launched today.

Raghu began his photography journey at the age of 23 in 1965. He worked for The Statesman newspaper as their chief photographer from 1966 to 1976. He served as picture editor with Sunday, a weekly news magazine published from Kolkata,

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Encourage women to utilise RTI act

Chief information commissioner tells event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women in Bangladesh have made significant progress, reaching many respectable positions, and are moving forward gradually, said Chief Information Commissioner Abdul Malek yesterday.

He made the remarks at a training workshop on "Gender Inclusion in Right to Information Training," organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) at Parjatan Corporation at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

Addressing as chief guest, Abdul Malek said, "We aim to encourage more women to utilise the Right to Information Act. Women should step forward to seek, request, and provide information. Advancement of women correlates with the country's progress," he said.

He emphasised the collective effort required to enable women to demand and receive the information they need from relevant offices.

Information Commissioner Shahidul Alam Jhinuk stressed the need to raise awareness among women about accessing information. He called for input from all stakeholders on making the act more user-friendly to ensure quick access to information.

Another Information Commissioner Masuda Bhatti emphasised the necessity of gender inclusion in the Right to Information training module to enhance women's participation, stressing the importance of raising awareness about the law.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam delivered the welcome speech, while former Additional Secretary Md Abdul Karim presented research recommendations on gender inclusion in the RTI training Module.



Singers and dancers perform at the 35th National Rabindra Sangeet Festival at the International Mother Language Institute yesterday. A tribute to the timeless melodies of Tagore, the festival also paid tribute to late Rabindra Sangeet exponents Kalim Sharafi and Sadi Mohammad. The festival will end on May 11.

PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED