



"Crimes committed in Gaza must be prosecuted at the highest level, regardless of the perpetrators."

Belgian FM Hadja Labib



DHAKA WEDNESDAY MAY 22, 2024

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXIV No. 122

JAISHTHA 8, 1431 BS

www.thedailystar.net

ZILQAD 13, 1445 HJRI

16 PAGES : Tk 15.00

US slaps sanctions on ex-army chief Aziz, family

Cites 'involvement in significant corruption'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US yesterday imposed sanctions on former Bangladesh army chief General (ret) Aziz Ahmed and his immediate family members for what it said was his involvement in significant corruption.

"This action [imposing sanctions] renders Aziz and his immediate family members generally ineligible for entry into the United States," read a press statement of the US State Department.

It said the actions of Aziz contributed to the undermining of Bangladesh's democratic institutions and the public's faith in public institutions and processes.

"Aziz Ahmed engaged in significant corruption by interfering in public processes while helping his brother evade accountability for criminal activity in Bangladesh.

"Aziz also worked closely with his brother to ensure the improper awarding of military contracts and accepted bribes in exchange for government appointments for his personal benefit."

US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller announced the public designations made under Section 7031(c) of the annual Department of State,

Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act.

A public designation refers to identification and notification regarding individuals complicit in significant corruption or gross violations of human rights.

The press statement said this designation reaffirms the US commitment to strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law in Bangladesh.

"The United States supports anti-corruption efforts in Bangladesh through assistance to make government services more transparent and affordable, improve the business and regulatory environment, and build capacity in investigating and prosecuting money laundering and other financial crimes."

The sanctions came just days after the visit of US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Donald Lu, who had spoken about supporting Bangladesh in its fight against

corruption.

Speaking to the media at his home in the capital yesterday, Aziz said, "I am surprised."

Refuting the allegations, he said the move could have been made to embarrass

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ALLEGATIONS

Undermining Bangladesh's democratic institutions

Interfering in public processes to help his brother evade accountability for crime committed

Working with his brother to ensure improper awarding of military contracts



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

WHERE'S THE CANAL? ... Believe it or not, this is a part of the DND Canal that flows from Jatrabari to Kanchpur. Over the past decade, illegal structures and bamboo and timber trades, among others, have eaten up long stretches of the waterbody. Various initiatives by the Water Development Board to stop the encroachments have fallen flat. The photo was taken in Narayanganj's Signboard area a few days ago.

Fixed expenses to eat up 40pc of next budget

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government has to spend about 40 percent of the next budget on subsidies, interest payments, and salaries and allowances of government employees, which will limit its ability to spend on social safety net, health and education.

According to a finance ministry plan, the government may allocate Tk 3,14,700 crore for the three sectors from the total budget of Tk 7,96,900 crore in fiscal 2024-2025.

Of the allocation, Tk 1,16,000 crore will be spent on interest payments, Tk 1,11,000 crore on subsidies and incentives, and Tk 87,700 crore for paying government employees.

Over the last five years, expenditures on wages, pensions, subsidies, and interest increased faster than the revenue earnings, narrowing the government's fiscal space.

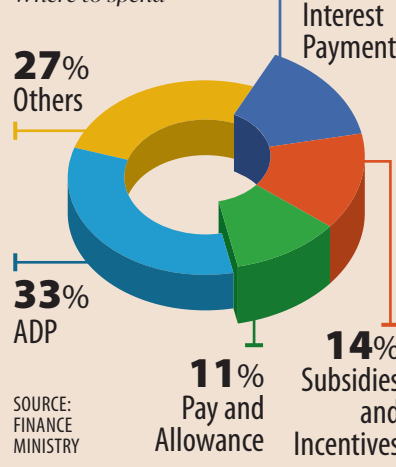
Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said, "If the non-discretionary expenditures eat up most of the budget allocation, then not much is left."

He said they had predicted a sharp rise in expenditures on wages, subsidies, and interest five to seven years ago.

2024-25 BUDGET PLAN

TK 7,96,900CR

Where to spend



SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY

KEY POINTS

- The government plans to spend 40% of budget on subsidies, interest payments, and salaries and allowances
- Over the last five years, spending in these three areas increased faster than revenue earnings
- Spending on social protection will be limited

"It took about 10 years for the government to fall into this pit, and it would take another 10 years to get out of it."

However, the country needs to address the problem and for this, a reform initiative is needed, he added.

He suggested bringing down domestic borrowings, subsidies and other unnecessary expenditures, and increasing revenue.

Finance ministry officials

said the government was unable to increase allocation for safety net programmes, healthcare, and education due to resource constraints though it intended to spend more in those sectors.

The government spending on interest payments, both foreign and domestic, has been increasing every year.

Interest payment rates have risen in recent years, and the finance

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Plot thickens over AL MP Azim going missing

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Intelligence agencies fear the worst for Awami League MP Anwarul Azim Anar who has gone missing in India, said a source in a local law enforcement agency.

"An Indian security agency has collected the details of four suspects. It also detained one for interrogation," the source told The Daily Star.

Contacted, officials at the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi and the Deputy High Commission in Kolkata yesterday said they were yet to receive any official confirmation from the Indian government about the Jhenaidah-4 lawmaker's status and whereabouts.

Speaking to this newspaper last night, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said, "We are hopeful we will be able to solve the

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They needed to sanction someone and picked me

Aziz tells Star

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Former army chief Gen (ret) Aziz Ahmed yesterday rejected the allegations the US authorities made while imposing sanctions against him and his immediate family members.

"I am surprised. Why am I being sanctioned almost three years after retirement? I'm not involved in any kind of politics and business," he told The Daily Star in an interview last night, hours after the US state department announced the sanctions.

The US state department in a release said Aziz's actions contributed to the undermining of Bangladesh's democratic institutions and the people's faith in public institutions and processes; he engaged in significant corruption by interfering in public processes to help his brother evade accountability for criminal activity; he worked closely with his brother to ensure the improper awarding of military contracts; and he accepted bribes in exchange for government appointments for his personal benefit.

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'Political equations' could be at play

Believe AL leaders

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

A section of top Awami League leaders think there might be some "political equations" behind the US sanctions on former army chief Aziz Ahmed and his immediate family members.

They also expressed concern that similar measures might be on the way for some other incumbent and former officials.

Some leaders believe the latest sanctions indicate that the US stance toward the AL government has not changed much since the

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GREETINGS

The Daily Star wishes its valued readers, patrons, well-wishers and advertisers on

BUDDHA PURNIMA

Buddha Purnima today

AGENCIES

Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated across the country today.

Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha. On this day in 563 BC, Buddha was born as Siddhartha

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1st DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Tribute to Al-Hajj Mohammad Shahjahan Khan, former President of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Bangladesh Thai Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Barishal Zila Samity; former Managing Director of S.S. Shipping & Trading Ltd., S.S. Shipping & Chartering Ltd. and Fatema Real Estate & Developers Ltd.; and former Chairman of S.S. Builders & Developers Ltd. and prominent social worker.



(19.02.1950 - 22.05.2023)

Tribute from Family Members and

All the officers and employees of his organisations

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ

সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল

ফোনঃ ০৪৩১-৬৪১৮৫, ফ্যাক্সঃ ০৪৩১-৬১৮৪৪

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স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.০৬৫১.৪০৩.৩১.০২৮.২৩-২০১০ তারিখঃ ২০/০৫/২০২৪খ্রিঃ

গণ-বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সড়ক পরিবহন ও সেতু মন্ত্রণালয়, সড়ক পরিবহন ও মহাসড়ক বিভাগ, সম্পত্তি শাখার স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.০০০০.০২৩.১৮.০০৯.২৪.১১১, তারিখঃ ১৬/০৫/২০২৪খ্রিঃ এর নির্দেশনা মোতাবেক বরিশাল সড়ক বিভাগাধীন সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের জমিতে স্থাপিত রিফুয়েলিং স্টেশনের (প্রবেশপথ সহ) ইজারা এবং ব্যক্তি মালিকানাধীন জমিতে স্থাপিত রিফুয়েলিং স্টেশনে যাতায়াতের প্রবেশপথের জমির ইজারাকৃত যে সকল ইজারাদার ২০২২-২০২৩ পর্যন্ত ইজারা নবায়ন করেননি তাদেরকে জুন, ২০২৪খ্রিঃ এর মধ্যে সকল বকেয়া ইজারা মতল পরিশোধ করে নবায়নের প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো।

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