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Left, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader addresses an event in front of the party headquarters in Gulistan yesterday afternoon, marking its 75th founding anniversary. Right, demanding immediate, unconditional release of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir speaks at a rally in front of its central office in the city's Nayapaltn area around the same time.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, AMRAN HOSSAIN

Corruption main threat to economy

Says GM Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Leader and Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader lambasted the government's handling of the economic crisis during a parliamentary session yesterday on the proposed budget for 2024-25 fiscal year.

He said it won't be possible to resolve the economic downturn due to widespread corruption and criminalisation.

The Jatiyo Party chairman accused the government of facilitating corruption and encouraging tax evasion and money laundering.

He said a wealthy circle has emerged comprising corrupt individuals, bank defaulters, and money launderers.

GM Quader argued that the lack of accountability and governance failures, rather than external factors like the Covid-19 pandemic or the Ukraine conflict, pose greatest threat to Bangladesh's economic stability.

He criticised the mismanagement in the banking sector, pointing at the mounting bad debts.

GM Quader opposed the budget proposals to whiten

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Colonial legacy lives on among the wealthy

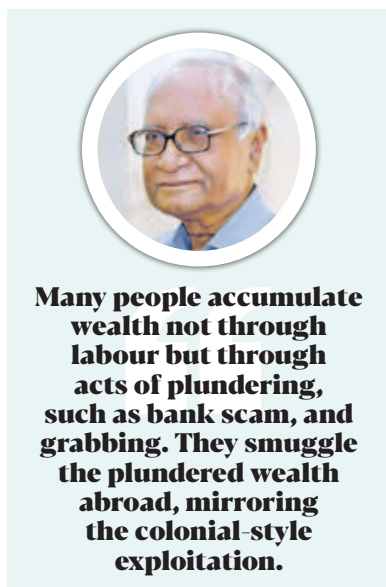
Says Serajul Islam Choudhury at autobiographical lecture marking his 89th birthday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Much like during the colonial era, a segment of wealthy individuals in independent and sovereign Bangladesh continues to exhibit the same exploitative characteristics while ruling the country, said Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury yesterday.

He said many people accumulate wealth not through labour but through acts of plundering, such as bank scam, and grabbing. They smuggle the plundered wealth abroad, mirroring the colonial-style exploitation.

Prof Serajul Islam made these remarks while addressing an autobiographical lecture titled "Looking Back", held at Bangladesh Shishu Academy on the occasion of his 89th birthday.



Many people accumulate wealth not through labour but through acts of plundering, such as bank scam, and grabbing. They smuggle the plundered wealth abroad, mirroring the colonial-style exploitation.

In the presence of several hundred attendees, the emeritus professor said, "During the British era, we were a colony. Even within Pakistan, a form of colonialism was emerging. Later, we established an independent and sovereign Bangladesh, but colonialism still persisted."

"The wealthy in Bangladesh are influenced by capitalist ideologies," he added.

Prof Serajul Islam said, "We thought that becoming part of Pakistan would bring about a renaissance, but it didn't happen. When Bangladesh was established, we hoped for social change, but that didn't happen either."

"But still, I remain hopeful. The reason for my hope is that people

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Legal recourse for cybercrimes still a far cry

59pc victims women, 87.5pc dissatisfied with existing justice system, says survey

NILIMA JAHAN

Imagine one day, you wake up and realise fraudsters have gotten information about your NID numbers, purchased SIM cards in your name, and have committed crimes by impersonating you.

Scary, isn't it?

Such cybercrimes have become increasingly common these days, with personal information of many citizens being openly sold at different online platforms. The Daily Star has published multiple reports in the recent past on this topic.

Tania, a 27-year-old doctor, is one such victim.

In November 2023, she discovered 15 SIM cards had been registered using her National Identity Card and fingerprint.



These SIMs were linked to three different mobile operators and were used to take small loans.

After she contacted BTRC, the SIMs were deregistered later, but a subsequent investigation by the regulatory body failed to track the culprit (or culprits) as of May 25, 2024.

Falguni, another victim, fell prey to a similar scam. The fraudster called her brother Javed before his university admission test and claimed he had won a prize.

Javed, convinced by the caller who knew his exact personal details, directed him to Falguni.

Falguni, trusting the caller, revealed her bank card number and OTPs, leading to a loss of Tk 60,000. Despite filing a complaint, Falguni received no resolution and gave up due to concerns about legal complexities.

These are just two cases highlighted in a recent

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PADMA BRIDGE PROJECT

Corrupt yet let off the hook too easily

Forced into retirement for graft, land surveyor gets his job back with lower salary

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

A government employee has been reinstated to his job after being dismissed for being involved in a fraudulent compensation scheme in the Padma Bridge project.

Mainul Hasan, a former land surveyor of Madaripur, was sent into forced retirement in November last year after the district administration and land ministry's investigation found him guilty of facilitating a scam, for which the government lost Tk 1.64 crore.

However, land ministry Secretary Khalilur Rahman reinstated him on June 9 this year, reducing his punishment from forced retirement by lowering his salary grade for five years.

Earlier in September 2022, a divisional case was filed against him over misconduct and corruption.

During Mainul's posting in Madaripur deputy commissioner's office in 2020, he was responsible for overseeing land acquisition for the Padma Bridge in Shibchar upazila.

He granted Tk 1.64 crore to two individuals for supposedly using 3.37 acres of their land for the project in Sujanagar mouza.

However, the land never belonged to the two in the first place, in fact, those were government land.

The compensation was provided based on forged documents.

Following allegations against Mainul, a three-member investigation committee was formed, led by the deputy director of local government.

The committee confirmed that Mainul issued compensation cheques on September 9 and September 20 of 2020. The land ministry also formed a separate probe committee.

"Allegations of negligence in the misconduct of

duties are found true," the probe body concluded.

On November 8, 2022, the ministry issued a notification stating that Mainul would be forced into retirement for his involvement in corruption.

"This type of dishonest activity harms the interests of the government and tarnishes the image of the office. It shows a lack of honesty, impartiality, responsibility, and efficiency in his work," said the notification. It also stated that Mainul "personally benefited from the scheme".

Mainul's response to a show-cause letter was deemed unsatisfactory, according to the notification. However, on March 11, 2023, Mainul appealed to the land ministry.

After the appeal hearing, led by the secretary, the ministry backtracked from its original decision. Although the committee, which heard the appeal, was convinced that Mainul failed to provide satisfactory response in his defense, the forced retirement was suddenly deemed as "excessive punishment".

On June 9, 2024, a new notification was issued, reducing Mainul's punishment to a lower salary grade for five years.

Many senior government officials at the land ministry were baffled by the decision.

Requesting anonymity, an officer of the ministry, said the reduction in punishment does not set a good precedent for junior officers.

Mainul could not be reached for comments.

Contacted, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iltekharruzzaman said, "Specific allegations against the accused employee [Mainul] were proven and undeniable. The ministry officials, including the secretary who protected this employee, are guilty of supporting corruption."

Despite repeated attempts through texts and phone, the land secretary could not be contacted for comments.



Mainul Hasan

Corruption, capital flight key concerns

Speakers tell event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Corruption and capital flight are the two main concerns of the country, said speakers at a press conference yesterday.

Capital flight, in economics, occurs when assets or money rapidly flow out of a country.

EquityBD and other civil society organisations arranged the event at the Economic Reporters' Forum auditorium.

They demanded the formation of a public expenditure review commission to stop graft.

They also said yearly income tax evasion is nearly \$25 billion, which is four times the per capita health allocation.

Md Ahsanul Karim, director of COAST Foundation, called for a review commission to combat corruption, an inter-country bank transparency agreement to halt capital flight and black money, mandatory annual asset and bank statement submissions for dual nationals, and cessation of unnecessary public

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PRAYER TIMING

JUNE 30

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-17

JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-57 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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