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# Primary schools barely looked after

Major project to improve conditions limps along; 6 years on, two-thirds of components not implemented

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A major project to build more classrooms, sanitation facilities and make other improvements in primary schools has not made much progress in six years while the poor environment continues to harm learning and teaching.

According to a Planning Commission report, two-thirds of the components of the Fourth Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-4) had not materialised as of May.

The Tk 38,291 crore project was launched in July 2018. The government in 2022 extended the duration of the project by two years, setting June 2025 as the deadline.

But as of September, physical work made only 62 percent progress, said Farid Ahmed, secretary to the primary education ministry.

Several project officials said implementation of the project had been almost suspended for the last few months amidst political turmoil.

"It will be next to impossible to complete the project by next June," said an official.

Meanwhile, classrooms remain overcrowded in hundreds of schools across the country and children spend hours at schools with poor sanitation facilities.

**Implementation of the project had been almost suspended for the last few months due to the political unrest and fall of the Awami League government.**

Prof Manzoor Ahmed, who is the chief of a government committee to recommend how primary education can be improved, said the delay in the implementation of the project would affect children's learning.

The authorities should investigate why the much-needed programme was not implemented, said the professor emeritus and founding director of BRAC University's Institute of Educational Development.

Secretary Farid said project implementation had been slow in recent weeks because "we need some opinions from the Planning Commission and the Economic Relations Division regarding

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People stand in queues to buy tickets for medical consultations at the capital's Mugda Medical College Hospital yesterday. Hospital staffers say the number of patients suffering from dengue, cold, cough and breathing problems has shot up recently. As of yesterday, dengue has claimed at least 199 lives nationwide this year.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## 'It didn't imply erasing country's proud history'

CA's office about Yunus' reset button remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus spoke about pressing the reset button, it did not imply erasing Bangladesh's proud history, according to a statement issued by his press wing yesterday.

The chief adviser was instead advocating for a fresh start from the corrupt politics that have undermined Bangladesh's key institutions, pushed the economy to the brink of collapse, and stripped tens of millions of citizens of their voting rights and civil liberties, the statement said.

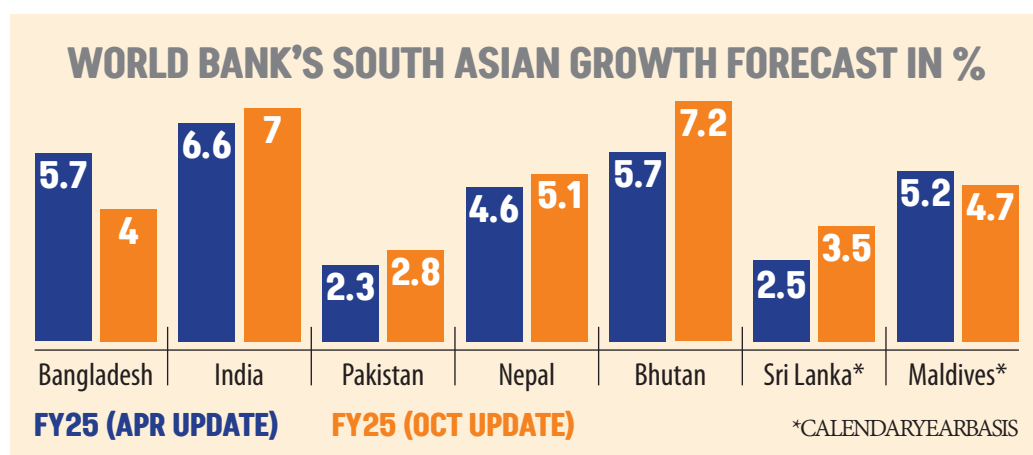
"When you press the reset button, you reset the software to start all over again. It doesn't change the hardware. The 1971 Liberation War created the hardware of Bangladesh."

However, some have misinterpreted Yunus' recent interview with the Voice of America, misunderstanding his call for reforms as a dismissal of the country's historical significance.

Upon his arrival in Dhaka on August 8 to assume the role of the chief adviser to the interim government, Yunus described

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## WB cuts FY25 growth forecast to 4 percent



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The World Bank has slashed its forecast for Bangladesh's economic growth by 1.7 percentage points to 4 percent for FY25 due to "significant uncertainties following recent political turmoil" and "data unavailability".

The global lender released a report, "South Asia Development Update: Women, Jobs, and Growth", simultaneously for South Asian countries during a virtual press conference yesterday.

"The wide range of the growth projection reflects the lack of available or reliable data in recent months, and significant uncertainties

around the political and economic outlook following the recent political turmoil," it said about Bangladesh in the report.

The revised projections would mark the lowest growth rates since FY20 when Bangladesh's economy expanded by only 3.45 percent due to the severe impact of the pandemic.

The WB's forecast is considerably lower than the 6.75 percent growth target set by the previous Awami League government.

Among five South Asian countries, only the forecasts for Bangladesh and the Maldives have been cut from what the World Bank had projected in April.

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## Tragedy wipes out 2 families

8 including 4 children killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Around 11:00pm on Wednesday, Jakia Begum called her son-in-law Shawon to speak to her daughter and grandchildren.

Shawon, 32, his wife Amina, 25, and two children - Shahadat, seven, and Abdullah, three - along with his friend Motalab Sheikh, 45, his wife Sabina, 30, and two children - Mukta, 12 and Sowayib, two - were on their way back to Dhaka after a trip to Patuakhali's Kuakata beach.

The two families were in Shawon's car, which he would drive as a rental in Dhaka.

When Jakia had called him, he picked up and said he was not able to talk since they were about to board a ferry in Barguna's Amtoli and that he would call her back.

Before hanging up, Jakia had told Shawon to drive carefully.

She, however, had no idea that she had just missed the chance to speak to her daughter and grandchildren for the last time.

Just three hours later, the car carrying the two families fell into a canal next to the Pirojpur-Nazirpur-Gopalganj road in Pirojpur Sadar upazila, leaving all eight passengers dead on the spot.

Md Mukit Hasan Khan, additional superintendent of police in Pirojpur, said the accident occurred

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## South Korean author wins Nobel Prize in literature



Han Kang

REUTERS, Stockholm

South Korean author Han Kang won the 2024 Nobel Prize in Literature for "her intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life", the award giving body said yesterday.

The prize is awarded by the Swedish Academy and is worth 11 million Swedish crowns (\$1.1 million).

"She has a unique awareness of the connections between body and soul, the living and the dead, and in her poetic

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## Nadal to hang up racket

REUTERS, Paris

Spain's Rafa Nadal, who won 22 Grand Slam singles titles, said on Thursday he was putting an end to his career, a decision effective after the Davis Cup final after a professional journey that made him one of the greatest players in tennis.

"It has been some difficult years, these last two especially," the 38-year-old, who won a record 14 French Open titles, said in a video.

"I am very excited that my last tournament will be the Davis Cup representing my country. It's closing the circle because one of my first joys was the final in Sevilla in 2004."

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Two bikers fall into a large pothole obscured by logged rainwater in the capital's Dakshin Jatrabari yesterday. Commuters in different parts of the city suffer due to poor drainage and a lack of road maintenance.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## CONFLICTS IN LEBANON Years of hard work gone in blink of an eye

Bangladeshis narrate how they lost everything in Israeli attacks

PORIMOL PALMA

On September 23, in the blink of an eye, Shahadat Hossain's years of savings, blood, sweat and toil became rubble.

In 2015, Shahadat, 30, of Noakhali went to Lebanon. After working at a petrol pump for three years, he, with the support of his Lebanese friends, set up a grocery shop to cater to the Bangladeshis in Nabatieh, some 10 kilometres from the Israeli border.

That shop was crushed in a flash by Israeli force's bombs.

"Having lost my shop, I am now penniless," Shahadat told The Daily Star yesterday from a shelter in Saida, about 30 kilometres from Nabatieh.

The Bangladeshi community and the Bangladesh embassy in Lebanon arranged shelter for him and about 250 Bangladeshis displaced by the Israeli attacks on Hezbollah.

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