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Star INTERVIEW

Widespread graft was the norm, not exception

Economist Selim Jahan talks how AL govt bypassed inclusivity in its biased policies

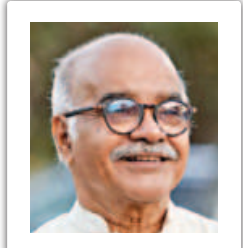
SOHEL PARVEZ and FEDA AL HOSSAIN

The Awami League regime's economic strategy was not always based on equity. Rather, its policies and measures often had serious biases towards the urban and affluent people, leading to widening inequalities, economist Selim Jahan has said.

The rich enjoyed better services while substandard services were meant for the poor and marginalised groups, the former director at UNDP's Human Development Report Office and Poverty Division said in an interview with The Daily Star.

Jahan, a former Dhaka University professor, also discussed challenges for the interim government and proposed a five-point strategy to overcome these obstacles.

He said the AL government's policies had three basic characteristics. Firstly, economic discipline, rules and regulations were frequently violated.



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Afghanistan opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz celebrates his century against Bangladesh in the third and deciding ODI at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in the UAE yesterday. Gurbaz's 101 helped his side chase down Bangladesh's 244-run total with five wickets in hand and 10 balls to spare, sealing a 2-1 series win.

PHOTO: ABC

Afghans ace the chase to seal series

SAMSUL AREFIN KHAN

Azmatullah Omarzai's brilliant all-round display and Rahmanullah Gurbaz's valiant century helped Afghanistan to a five-wicket win against Bangladesh in the third ODI at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium yesterday, sealing a 2-1 series victory for the hosts.

Chasing a target of 245 after Omarzai had claimed career best figures of 4-37, Afghanistan got off to a decent start with a 41-run opening stand between Gurbaz and Sediqullah Atal (14) before the visitors hit back to reduce the hosts to 84-3 by the 21st over.

However, Gurbaz, who was dropped on 24 by substitute Rishad Hossain at backward point, defied cramps and smashed 101 off 120 balls - his eighth century in the format - in the process sharing a 100-run partnership for the fourth wicket with Omarzai

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'Not sure if I'm accused in murder case' Says Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sk Bashir Uddin, the newly appointed adviser to the government, yesterday said he is not sure if he is accused in a murder case filed over the killing of a young man during the July uprising.

Speaking to journalists at the Secretariat, Bashir said that there were similarities and dissimilarities between his details and that of an individual accused in the case.

"I cannot say for sure if I'm indeed that person accused in that case."

The person named in the case is Sheikh Bashir Uddin Bhuiyan, son of Sheikh Akij Uddin Bhuiyan.

While the names Sheikh Bashir Uddin Bhuiyan and Sk Bashir Uddin partially match, both men share the same father's name.

Police are investigating to determine if Sk Bashir Uddin and Sheikh Bashir Uddin Bhuiyan are the same person.

THE CASE
On July 19, one Sohan Shah, 27, sustained bullet injuries to his chest in the capital's Rampura during the quota reform protest. Thirty-nine days later, he

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Efforts to retrieve laundered money ramped up

BB governor tells economic summit in the capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has intensified its efforts to sign bilateral deals with different countries with the view to recovering funds illegally taken abroad, said Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur.

"We are taking action against those who fled abroad with funds from Bangladesh, and coordinated efforts are underway," he said at the 3rd Bangladesh Economic Summit 2024 organised by Bangla daily Bonik Barta at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon in Dhaka.

Officials from the US Treasury Department and the US Justice Department will arrive separately this week for discussions.

The British government officials and representatives from the World Bank's StAR (Stolen Asset Recovery) initiative are also expected to participate in the discussions, he said.

The government aims to develop a roadmap, including potential bilateral agreements, to legally repatriate these funds, said Mansur, also a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

He also plans to meet with the Singapore high commissioner in Bangladesh to ensure the city state's alignment with the recovery process.

"If funds were siphoned abroad, we will work to establish our claim. We are making every effort to bring back the money through legal channels. This will be done through bilateral and international legal processes."

Significant progress has already been made, he said. "We have already cast a net."

More than a few lakh crores of taka has been taken



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AHSAN H MANSUR
BB governor

from the banking sector through criminal activities, he said.

"There will be no meltdown in the banking sector, and we have stabilised the situation. Yes, some banks are failing to return money to clients, but we are managing it through liquidity support. We must remember that we are trying to recover the banking sector without compromising the macroeconomy."

BB is encouraging savers who have withdrawn their funds out of anxiety to keep deposits again.

The interim government has not tried to close down any business organisation nor has the bank account of any business organisation been blocked, he said.

About the BB's decision to appoint a receiver at troubled Beximco Group, Mansur said the move is intended to keep the conglomerate's business afloat.

"In the last few months, the salaries of Beximco employees have largely been covered by the government, and it can't continue like this. By appointing a receiver, we, from the government, aim to ensure that funds aren't diverted and that export proceeds come into

Bangladesh. This way, we can cover business expenses and labour costs."

The primary goal is to preserve the company's value and the government is trying to keep the business alive, he said.

The central bank has given Tk 1,000 crore to Exim Bank just to pay the garment workers' wages.

"We are doing it so that no business organization shuts down, and workers don't resort to setting fires or vandalising factories."



ZIA ORPHANAGE CASE Khaleda's 10-year jail term stayed by SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court verdict that doubled BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail term to 10 years in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case.

The Appellate Division of the apex court also allowed Khaleda to file two appeals with it challenging the HC judgement.

A three-member Appellate Division bench, led by Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam, passed the order following two leave to appeal petitions filed by the BNP chief against the HC judgement.

The SC also asked Khaleda's lawyers to submit within two weeks the concise statements containing the points on which they will place

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COP29 SUMMIT IN BAKU Nations approve new UN rules on carbon markets

AFP, Baku

Governments at the COP29 talks yesterday approved new UN standards for international carbon markets in a key step toward allowing countries to trade credits to meet their climate targets.

On the opening day of the UN climate talks in Azerbaijan, nearly 200 nations agreed on a number of crucial ground rules for setting a market in motion after nearly a decade of complex discussions.

Other key aspects of the overall framework still need to be negotiated, experts said, but the decision brings closer a long-sought UN-backed market trading in high-quality credits.

"It's hugely significant," Erika Lennon, from the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), told AFP in Baku, saying it would "open the door" for a fully-fledged market.

Carbon credits are generated by activities that reduce or avoid planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions, like planting trees, protecting carbon sinks or replacing polluting coal with clean-energy alternatives.

One credit equals a tonne of prevented or removed heat-trapping carbon dioxide.

Since the Paris climate agreement in 2015, the UN has been crafting rules to allow countries and businesses to exchange credits in a transparent and credible market.

The benchmarks adopted in Baku will allow for the development of rules including calculating how many credits a given project can receive.

Once up and running, a carbon market would allow countries - mainly wealthy polluters - to offset emissions by purchasing credits from nations that have cut greenhouse gases above what they promised.



Trump must stop genocide in Gaza Says Iran; Israeli strikes kill 11 Palestinians as tanks roll into central Gaza camp

AGENCIES

Iran said yesterday that the US president-elect Donald Trump must end the offensive in Gaza, where the Islamic republic's arch-foe Israel has been battling Hamas for more than a year.

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said during a news conference in Tehran that the incoming American president should "stop the continued genocide" in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces sent tanks into the western side of Gaza's Nuseirat camp yesterday in a new incursion into the enclave's central area, and Palestinian medics said Israeli military strikes had killed at least 11 people since Sunday night.

Residents said Israeli tanks opened fire as they rolled into that sector of the camp, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee sites, causing panic among the population and displaced families.

One resident, Zaik Mohammad, said the tanks' advance was a complete surprise.

With the offensive in Gaza now in its 14th month, Israel is focusing its operations in the north and centre in what it says is a campaign to stop Hamas members waging attacks and to prevent them from regrouping.



A general view shows destroyed buildings in northern Gaza, amid the ongoing Israeli offensive in the Palestinian enclave, near the Israel-Gaza border yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

JnU students protest in front of Secretariat Demand the army take charge of building new campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Students of Jagannath University staged a sit-in in front of the Secretariat yesterday to press home their five-point demand, including handover of the project on its new campus to the army.

Due to the demo, all gates to the secretariat were closed for about three hours from 2:15pm, leaving officials, employees and visitors stranded inside. The protest also led to traffic congestions in and around the Secretariat area.

The students' other demands include replacing the current project director with an army official; devising of a concrete plan by the education ministry on the handover of the new campus and prompt construction of the student dormitories; and revoking the previous government's agreements with contractors.

The protesters ended their sit-in around 5:15pm after receiving assurances from the information adviser that their issues would be addressed within the next three days.

A meeting between representatives of the government and JnU students and teachers has been scheduled for noon today at the education ministry.

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