

India reacts to Mahfuj Alam’s deleted FB post

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India has strongly protested a status update posted on the verified Facebook profile of Adviser Mahfuj Alam.

The social media post that was taken down within hours of being posted on December 16, stated that Bangladesh would not be able to overcome its challenges in its current location and advocated for an expanded geographic existence comprising parts of several Indian provinces on India’s eastern flank.

Responding to a question from a journalist on Friday, Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India had taken this up with the Bangladesh government. “We have actually strongly registered our protest on this issue. We understand that the post...has been taken down.

“We would like to remind all concerned to be mindful of their public comments.”

He added that India has repeatedly signalled interest in fostering relations with the people and the interim government of Bangladesh, “such comments underline the need for responsibility in public articulation”.



People, mostly women, looking to buy essential commodities at subsidised rates form a queue and waited patiently in the port city’s Chandgaon area since 8:00am yesterday for a TCB truck, which is yet to arrive when the photo was taken around 11:00am. Limited-income groups have been under pressure for a long time from rising commodity prices and are dependent on TCB’s discount goods.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Devotee killed, valuables looted at Natore crematorium

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered the body of a devotee with his hands and legs tied from Kashimpur crematorium and temple at Natore Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Tarun Kumar Dash, 55, a resident of Alaipur area.

Police and locals primarily suspect that he was killed by criminals, who stormed into the temple and looted cash and valuables anytime between Friday night and early yesterday.

The crematorium and temple management committee’s General Secretary Satyanarayan Roy said the crematorium staffers and guards completed evening rituals on Friday and subsequently left the temple after locking it like other days.

The staffers returned to the crematorium yesterday morning and saw Tarun’s body lying on the corridor.

“I got a phone call from one of our temple’s staffers at around 9:00am. I rushed to the spot and found that the body’s hands and legs were tied with rope,” he said.

“The temple’s donation box was broken, and the cash was looted. Utensils made of brass that were used for puja and other rituals were looted. These utensils weighing around three to four mounds are worth around Tk 200,000,” Satyanarayan told

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Has IMF experiment delivered?

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economic challenges remain formidable. Inflation continues to bite, contrasting sharply with Sri Lanka, where IMF-backed measures have tamed spiralling prices and steadied the economy.

MISSSED OPPORTUNITIES AND DELAYED ACTION

Economists argue that Bangladesh’s crisis was never as severe as Sri Lanka’s, but poor policy choices exacerbated its vulnerabilities. For years, the Hasina-government maintained rigid controls on interest and foreign exchange rates, which stifled economic flexibility and delayed necessary reforms.

In April 2020, the central bank capped lending rates at 9 percent and deposit rates at 6 percent to spur cheap borrowing and boost GDP growth. While global interest rates surged over the past two years, Bangladesh clung to these caps, fuelling excessive credit growth and weakening monetary discipline. At the same time, the government leaned heavily on the central bank to finance its deficits, undermining its purported contractionary monetary stance.

Adding to these internal missteps, the country faced an unprecedented series of external shocks. “When the programme started, we didn’t have the effects of Russia’s war on Ukraine. We didn’t have the financial inflationary pressures, which became much larger as the programme progressed. Commodity prices soared, and as we know, Bangladesh imports a lot of its food and commodities. These are three shocks, almost one after the other,” Chris Papageorgiou, head of the IMF staff team for Bangladesh, said at a media briefing in Dhaka on Thursday.

Papageorgiou further highlighted the socio-political turmoil that disrupted progress. “As we were making progress and the shocks

were hitting, we then had the uprising in the months of July and August, which is, as you can imagine, another major socio-political shock,” he noted.

The IMF programme has forced a reckoning. By mid-2023, Bangladesh abandoned its fixed interest rate regime and began transitioning to market-driven mechanisms. Similarly, long-standing inefficiencies tied to multiple exchange rates were addressed, unifying rates under IMF directives. While necessary, these steps were long overdue, said Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank’s Dhaka office.

REFORMS FALL SHORT OF AMBITION

Despite progress in some areas, Bangladesh has struggled to meet key targets set under the IMF programme. During its first review, the government fell short of its revenue collection target. This shortfall forced greater reliance on domestic bank borrowing, exacerbating money supply growth and keeping inflation elevated.

Tax reforms – a central pillar of the IMF’s agenda – have been half-hearted at best. Adjustments to electricity tariffs and steps toward liberalising fuel prices are underway but remain incomplete. Zahid Hussain noted that while unifying the exchange rates and lifting interest rate caps were significant achievements, the absence of broader fiscal reforms continues to hinder progress.

LESSONS FROM SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka’s experience offers a sharp contrast. After its IMF bailout, the country enacted sweeping reforms, including granting independence to its central bank. These measures brought inflation under control, restored financial stability, and bolstered confidence in its banking system.

In Bangladesh, however,

meaningful reforms have been limited. Public expenditure remains inefficient, and financial sector overhauls have been more cosmetic than substantive, said Professor Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling. “The previous government failed to seize the opportunity to enact decisive reforms. What we’ve seen so far are surface-level changes, insufficient to yield meaningful outcomes,” he said.

THE ROAD AHEAD

While foreign exchange reserves have stabilised somewhat, the broader economic benefits of the IMF programme remain elusive. The current government faces a formidable dual challenge: reining in inflation and tackling structural inefficiencies. Monetary tightening has shown early signs of progress, but inflationary pressures are deeply entrenched and linked to systemic issues.

The IMF, too, has drawn criticism for its role in the programme’s uneven execution. “The IMF’s reviews often offered a rosier picture than reality, failing to hold the government accountable for unmet reforms,” said Raihan. He called for greater vigilance and transparency in future evaluations.

Bangladesh’s decision to approach the IMF early in its crisis was commendable, experts agree. But the programme’s potential remains unfulfilled without comprehensive reforms. “The country sought help at an early stage, which was wise,” said Raihan. “But without sustained reforms, the programme risks becoming a missed opportunity.”

As Bangladesh navigates its economic future, the urgency of reform looms larger than ever. Whether the country can translate IMF prescriptions into lasting stability will determine whether this chapter is remembered as a turning point – or a temporary reprieve.

Police listing extortionists

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officers, students, and residents of the Ramna area at the Institution of Diploma Engineers in the capital’s Kakrail yesterday.

“Extortion is causing the prices of daily necessities to surge, exacerbating the sufferings of lower- and middle-income groups.”

He warned that no one involved in extortion would be spared. “We are preparing an updated list of extortionists, and it will be completed within a day or two, and then we will take action against them.”

Meanwhile, Sazzat Ali expressed his desire to bring order to the city streets, as residents suffer greatly from the city’s perennial traffic problem.

“Political parties have the right to hold programmes, but if they are arranged on the streets haphazardly, daily commuters get stuck for several hours.”

Noting the increasing number of battery-run rickshaws, the DMP chief urged the authorities to enforce a licensing system for these vehicles so that they don’t appear on the road so easily, causing congestion.

Regarding street vendors, he said it is inhumane to evict them entirely and put them out of a living.

However, he urged street vendors to practice discipline and refrain from occupying the roads, also requesting them not to pay extortion.

Top officials face off

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the recent reduction of quotas in recruitment, the justification for these quotas in higher positions has diminished,” Mazumder added.

The public administration reform commission recently proposed a 50:50 quota between the admin cadre and the other 25 cadres for the deputy secretary posts. Currently, the ratio stands at 75:25.

Officials from the admin cadre argue that the deputy secretary position is exclusive to their cadre.

Although the 25 percent quota for other cadres was acceptable due to a court ruling, any further revision would necessitate reserving all positions for the administration cadre, they said.

On the other hand, officers from the other 25 cadres are demanding open competitive exams for promotions to the deputy secretary and higher posts as the posts belong to the government – and not to any specific cadre – and should therefore be accessible to all on equal terms.

Interestingly, they are not demanding similar exams for promotions within their own cadres.

Currently, the government has 26 cadres, including the admin cadre.

The remaining 25 cadres have

united in their protest, while the admin cadre has refrained from joining the movement officially.

“At this critical time, our priority is to provide the government with maximum support. The existing promotion system has been resolved at the highest court, and we trust the Reform Commission to make sound decisions on the matter,” said Anwar Ullah, president of the Bangladesh Administrative Service Association (BASA).

On the other hand, Muhammad Mofizur Rahman, coordinator of the “Inter-Cadre Disparity Removal Council” said: “Senior service pool positions, including that of deputy secretary, do not belong to any specific cadre.”

The admin cadre incorporated the positions into their structure after repealing the 1975 Service Act, which is a significant barrier to creating a welfare-oriented state, he said.

“We are appointed to solve problems, not create them. It is true that there is discontent among our junior officers, but we are urging them to remain patient,” said Mahbubur Rahman, general secretary of BASA.

The Reform Commission comprises experienced individuals who will undoubtedly make balanced decisions, he added.

City dwellers on edge as mugging runs rampant

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October, and 31 in November.

Law enforcers say the actual number of mugging is much higher as many victims do not report the crime.

They add that petty crimes started rising across the city after August 5, the day the Awami League government fell amid a mass uprising and the law enforcers deserted their stations.

At least 11 people have been killed allegedly by muggers since August 5.

On December 18, a apparel trader named Kamrul Hasan, 23, was stabbed to death by muggers right after he stepped off a bus on Mayor Hanif Floyer.

The muggers took away his mobile phone and Tk 3,000, according to a case filed later.

Yesterday, police arrested two suspects aged 16 and 17 in the Jatrabari area. Officers said they stabbed Kamrul because he tried to hold on to his phone.

On August 27, muggers stabbed and killed Zarraf Ahmed, a software engineer, in Darussalam area.

He was returning home after visiting his parents in Naogaon. From

the bus stop, he took a rickshaw which the muggers intercepted around 5:00am. As he tried to protect his belongings, they stabbed him and took away his phone, laptop and cash, police said.

The gangs typically target individuals returning from abroad or are alone at late-night hours, officials said.

The gangs sometimes use motorcycles and flee after snatching mobile, cash, handbags, ornaments and other valuables by brandishing guns or knives.

Naimur Rahman, a photographer with the Ittefaq, was mugged and assaulted in the Mohammadpur area November 13 night.

“I was on foot. Four or five men blocked my path and dragged me into an alley and hit me. One of them had a machete. The muggers took my camera, backup batteries, phone, and cash,” he told The Daily Star.

Mohammadpur police later arrested four suspects and could recover the camera only.

Law enforcers say when the interim government made a major reshuffle in DMP many officers from outside were posted in the capital.

Ctg Bar probe body members

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formed the five-member probe committee to investigate the clashes, vandalism, and murder incident centring the bail hearing of former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari, also the spokesperson for Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote.”

“As the whole incident is sensational and much-talked across the world, I have recommended a judicial probe by a judicial judge or district judge for the sake of fair investigation, avoiding controversy, and ensuring justice. Lawyers cannot properly investigate such an incident as it may involve police officers, administrative personnel, and court officials,” he said.

CDBA Secretary Ashraf Hossain Chowdhury told journalists that the head of the investigation committee and its four other members have sought to be relieved from committee and have made various recommendations.

A decision on the next steps will be taken at the association’s meeting tomorrow.

No place

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He cited the case of the “three of the young people who led the uprising” and are in his cabinet.

“They are doing an excellent job. They are capable. They are not the young people of the previous centuries – they are young people of this century. They are as capable as anybody else.”

Asked what he would do after the “election is held in 2025 elections”, Yunus said: “I was actually taken away from my job. I was forced into this work. I was doing my job. I was enjoying it – that’s why I was in Paris. I was dragged out of Paris to do something else. So I’ll be happy to go back to my work that I always did and enjoyed all my life – the young people love it. So I go back to that team and that movement that I tried to generate around the world.”

A night of unity, music, remembrance

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enriched with a graffiti exhibition on the July Revolution, stage dramas, and the Mughda Water Zone.

The gates opened at 2:30pm, and the event ran from 4:00pm to 11:00pm.

Qawwali band Silsila opened the show with a soulful performance, after which rappers Hannan and Shezan energised the crowd with songs like “Kotha Ko”, “Risk”, and “Din Bodol”.

Logistical issues slightly dampened the experience, and our photojournalists even reported restricted access to media and criticised the inadequate sound system at the venue.

However, the crowd’s enthusiasm remained undeterred.

Aftermath Bangladesh took to the stage next, delivering powerful performances, including tracks like “Odhikar”, “Utshorgo”, and “Hoongkar”.

Around 6:30pm, popular band Chirkutt captivated the audience with stirring instrumental rendition of the “Amar Sonar Bangla” – the national anthem, followed by hits like “Ahare Jibon”, “Jadur Shohor”, and “Na Buihi Duniya”. Lead vocalist Sharmin Sultana Sumi’s heartfelt performance brought an emotional depth to their performance.

Notably, the concert’s atmosphere faced challenges, with reports of

open sales of tobacco and certain terms and conditions not being enforced.

The highlight of the evening was Artcell’s performance, beginning at 8:30pm with their timeless song “Poth Chola”.

Vocalist George Lincoln D’Costa and bandmate Sumon paid tribute to the July martyrs with renditions of “Maago Tomar Bhabna Keno” and “Teer Hara Ei Dheuer Shagor”, resonating deeply with the audience. They also performed iconic songs “Oniket Prantor”, “Dhushor Shomoy”, and “Dukkho Bilash”.

After that, four advisers took to the stage along with Syed Ahmed Maroof, the Pakistani high commissioner to Dhaka, who expressed his satisfaction with the event.

“I am overwhelmed by this wonderful concert and the crowd’s energy. ‘Ami tomake onk beshi bhalobashi Bangladesh [I love you very much, Bangladesh].”

Farida Akhter, adviser to the fisheries and livestock ministry, said, “The martyrs gave their lives to give us a new Bangladesh. Justice for their sacrifices must be achieved; our war is not over.”

Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud, reflected on the significance of the event.

“In 2021, as a member of Silsila, we performed Qawwali at TSC amidst attacks by the fascist regime’s student

organisation. Today, Rahat Fateh Ali Khan’s presence on this stage symbolises how far we’ve come. Let us honour the wounded and martyrs by building the Bangladesh they dreamt of – a nation of hope and freedom.”

Rahat Fateh Ali Khan took the stage at 9:50pm.

“Bangladesh, ami tomake bhalobashi [I love you Bangladesh]. Dear brothers and sisters, I am from Pakistan, and we are here to bring love and peace to you all,” he said as he graced the floor.

The musician opened with the soulful “Tuna Jane Asma Se Khuda” from the film “Anjaana Anjaani”.

He later introduced his son, Shazmaan Khan, who performed a selection of classics by the legendary Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

Continuing with “Sanu Ek Pal Chain” followed by “Nit Khair Mangda” from the film “Raid”, “Ore Priya Re” from the film “Aaja Nachle”, and “Zaroori Tha”, “Mere Rashke Qamar”.

Rahat mesmerised the audience with a heartfelt performance of his timeless hits, evoking both nostalgia and excitement.

The “Echoes of Revolution” concert was not just a musical celebration but a powerful reminder of unity and resilience, paying tribute to the sacrifices that continue to shape Bangladesh’s journey towards a brighter future.