



**A new era in elderly care**

**WR1**



**‘When a govt refuses to go, people accept it until they don’t’**

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**What should we expect from Nat’l Constitutional Council?**

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**33m school children affected by climate change last year**

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**11 WB FUNDED PROJECTS**

## Govt set to repurpose \$670m loans

\$500m to be used as budget support

PROJECT NAME (TOP 5)	WB LOANS in million \$	AMOUNT TO BE REPURPOSED in million \$
Accelerating and strengthening skills for economic transformation	300	100.37
Resilient infrastructure for adaptation and vulnerability reduction	500	100
Enhancing digital government and economy	234	100
Livestock and dairy development	500	100
Bangladesh road safety	358	75

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

As much as \$670 million (around Tk 8,200 crore) from slow-moving World Bank-funded projects will be repurposed, with most of the funds going towards budget support as the government looks to navigate the narrow fiscal space amid a slowing economy.

Of the amount, approximately \$500 million will go towards budget support and the remaining amount may be used for new projects, The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

The Economic Relations Division submitted the new plan to the WB last week for the go-ahead; the matter will be discussed during the visit of a WB vice-president to Bangladesh next month.

The move to re-direct funds from slow-moving projects comes at the WB's suggestion after the interim government sought fresh funding from development partners in August last year for budget support, and banking and energy sector reforms.

Subsequently, the ERD sat down with the WB and project officials on October 14 last year and decided to repurpose \$723.64 million from 11 ongoing projects.

After several meetings, it was decided that \$670 million could be redirected from the projects, the finance ministry officials said.

Over the years, the WB has approved about \$3.2 billion for 11 projects. However, as of June last year, only \$661.8 million could be disbursed due to delays in project implementation, according to ERD and project officials.

One of the slow-moving projects is a road safety project, conceived in the light of the alarming rise in road crashes and deaths over a decade.

The government took the Tk 4,988.14 crore project in April 2023, more than a year after the WB approved a \$358 million loan to help Bangladesh improve road safety and reduce fatalities and injuries from road accidents on selected high-risk highways and district roads.

The project will have several components and will be implemented by the Roads and Highways Department, Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, the Directorate General of Health Services and Bangladesh Police.

It will pilot comprehensive road safety measures, including improved engineering designs, road signs and markings, pedestrian facilities, speed enforcement, and emergency care from Gazipur to Elenga and Natore-Nawabganj highways.

The measures will help reduce road traffic deaths by more than 30 percent on the two highways, as per the WB's estimates.

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## Businessman shot dead in Chattogram

**BNP activist on FB live says he was the actual target**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Armed criminals shot and killed a businessman at Noapara village under Raozan upazila in Chattogram yesterday afternoon.



The deceased was Md Jahangir identified as Md Jahangir, from Niramishpara of Noapara village in Raozan upazila, said police.

Two other men who were with him at the time were also injured.

After the incident, local BNP activist Kamal Uddin, on a live stream from his Facebook page, claimed that his opponent Fazal Haque's followers had intended to kill him but mistakenly killed businessman Jahangir because they had a slight resemblance in appearance.

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**A truck driver lost control due to poor visibility caused by dense fog, resulting in the goods-laden vehicle hitting the central reservation near Savar bus stand on Dhaka-Aricha highway around 5:30am yesterday. The driver and his assistant were injured in the incident. Accidents, caused by low visibility, are frequent in the winter.**

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



**Part of a hillock has been cut in the Lakhaura area of Sylhet to build houses due to lack of action by authorities. The houses adjacent to the hill may get damaged in case of a mudslide in monsoon. The photo was taken last week.**

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Yunus for a mechanism to ensure free polls

**Addresses WEF event; WTO to support Bangladesh's LDC graduation**

UNB, Davos

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has emphasised the need for a mechanism to ensure that every citizen in Bangladesh can vote freely, fairly, and without fear or interference.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum's (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on Thursday, Prof Yunus highlighted the plight of young voters, many of whom, he said, have been unable to exercise their voting rights over the last 16 years.

"This is deeply unfortunate," he remarked during his one-on-one discussion with WEF founder Klaus Schwab.

The chief adviser stated that they cannot proceed with the election unless they know what kind of polls the country's people want.

He added that they are waiting to hold an election, and now people must decide the process – whether they will

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## 16 BEXIMCO FACTORIES Laid-off workers slide deep into uncertainty

**With no hope of getting jobs, many going back to their village homes**

MD ABBAS and MONJURUL HAQUE

Fifty-year-old Arati Rani stood with others in despair at the entrance to Tetultala Colony, which was home to 24 families of laid-off workers of Beximco Group factories in Gazipur.

They resided in the establishment in Bhabanipur in precarious harmony until the company shut its 16 textile and garment units at Beximco Industrial Park in Sarabo, citing a lack of export orders.

Unable to manage rent and daily expenses, five families have already left. Fourteen more families are preparing to leave for their villages next month, while the remaining few, like Arati, have nowhere else to go.

Arati has not slept in peace for weeks. Her fears weigh heavily on her heart as she contemplates an uncertain future.

"Most of those who lost their jobs due to the factory closures are planning to return to their villages. But I don't have a house in my village. Where would I go with my son?" she asked.

For her, the loss of her job was more than a financial setback—it shattered the fragile stability she had painstakingly built.

Her struggles began in 2021 when her husband passed away after a prolonged illness. During his treatment, Arati had to sell the only piece of land they owned in Jaldhaka, Nilphamari.

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## ‘Will leave govt if we decide to contest polls’

**Nahid tells BBC Bangla; says BNP, AL speaking in similar tones**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adviser Nahid Islam has said if anyone from the interim government, be it a student leader or any other adviser, wants to run for office, they will relinquish their government position.

"No one will contest the polls while being in the government. If they want to join the race, they will definitely leave their post a certain time before the polls," he said in an interview with BBC Bangla broadcast last night.

Regarding BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir questioning the neutrality of the interim government, the adviser said he believed the interim government was neutral.

"Now the BNP should make it clear why it is not considering the government to be neutral," added Nahid, the telecom and ICT adviser.



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## RIFT WITH UPRISING LEADERS BNP to continue pushing for govt neutrality

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

While the BNP has been pressing for national elections for months, it has avoided conflicts with student leaders and the interim government.

However, after the BNP raised questions about the government's impartiality last week, and Adviser Nahid Islam issued a rebuttal that caught the party somewhat off guard, there have been many speculations about what comes next.

Party leaders say they won't stop commenting on issues regarding the government's neutrality and elections.

At the same time, BNP policymakers are trying to find out why Nahid made such a response.

Many leaders suspect that some advisers might have convinced Nahid to make the statement, and they are trying to identify the individuals.

Sources in the party say they wonder why Nahid reacted to the comment of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul when he is not the spokesperson of the government.

"Why would he feel provoked by the [secretary general's] statement?" wondered a standing committee member while talking to this correspondent.

Following Nahid's lead, Adviser Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan and student leaders Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam also wrote on Facebook about the matter. "This indicates there is an attempt to make an issue out of it in a planned manner."

Another senior BNP leader said the current government

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