

‘Neither my family nor I bought any land, flat when I was in office’

Says former adviser Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nahid Islam, who recently resigned from his role as the information adviser to the interim government, yesterday revealed that a little over Tk 10 lakh was deposited into his Sonali Bank account during his time in office.



In a Facebook post, Nahid explained that before assuming his advisory role, he did not have a bank account. To receive his government salary, he opened a savings account with Sonali Bank’s Ramna Corporate Branch on August 21, 2024.

Nahid made the post following speculations and rumours on social media about his fortune.

In his post, Nahid attached two photos containing the account statement with a breakdown of transactions from August 21, 2024,

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5



Operators have been collecting tolls manually at Dhaka Elevated Expressway’s Mohakhali ramp since the electronic toll plaza was destroyed during the 2024 mass uprising. With the debris still lying on one side, it may look like the ramp is closed. So, the toll collectors use a loudspeaker to announce that the ramp is open. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Digital law reforms hasty, lack transparency

Say six int’l rights orgs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six international human rights organisations have expressed concern over the lack of transparency and inclusive consultation with stakeholders in the Bangladesh interim government’s efforts to reform digital governance policies and regulatory frameworks.

In a joint statement released on February 25, Access Now, ARTICLE 19, Human Rights Watch, PEN International, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, and the Tech Global Institute said the government’s “fast-tracked” approach mirrors the legislative tactics of the previous administrations.

The organisations warned that the Cyber Protection Ordinance, 2025 (CPO) and the Personal Data Protection Ordinance, 2025 (PDPO) fail to address deeper structural issues in cyberspace governance.

Instead of aligning with Bangladesh’s constitutional and international human rights obligations, the proposed laws contain vague and overly broad provisions. These could be misinterpreted, misused, and abused, particularly to suppress human rights defenders, journalists, and civil society groups.

The organisations also raised concerns about the absence of inclusive stakeholder engagement or an evidence-based legislative process by the Interim Government of Bangladesh when considering certain reforms.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 5

Scuffle mars launch of new student org

FROM PAGE 1

In a latenight development, private university students, who have long been alleging their exclusion from all post-August 5 platforms and committees, blocked Bangla Motor for an hour till 10:45pm to protest “attacks” on them earlier in the day by supporters of the newly formed organisation.

Demanding immediate dissolution of the committee, they said they would hold demonstrations across private universities today. If their demand is not met, they would go for a “Dhaka Blockade” programme on February 28, the day a new political party is to be launched by members of SAD and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee.

For now, the Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad will be led by a six-member central committee. There will also be a six-member DU unit.

The launch of the committee was slated for 3:00pm, but private university students showed up at the venue an hour later to protest their exclusion, stating they had been sidelined despite their significant role in the July uprising.

Around 5:15pm, when former SAD coordinator Abu Baker Majumder, now convener of the Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad, was announcing the new student body’s name and leadership, the private university students surrounded him before he could finish, and a scuffle broke out.

The demonstrators demanded the inclusion of Rifat Rashid, a DU student who was a July Movement coordinator, in the committee. He,

however, was already included in the leadership but not in the position he desired.

It is not yet known why private university students fought for a DU student’s position while protesting for their own recognition.



A student being beaten up near Mall Chattar on Dhaka University campus before the launch of the new student body Bangladesh Gonotantrik Chhatra Sangsad yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Members of the new student body then brought out a procession from Madhur Canteen, but a clash ensued as they reached the Lecture Theatre building. Several private university students were injured.

Some were severely beaten up by members of the new group at Hakim

Chattar at around 6:00pm. At least two students had to be taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Tariqul Islam, a student of the University of Information Technology and Sciences, said, “We also played an important role in the uprising

the committee’s announcement seemed driven by other agendas, but discussions will be held to address legitimate concerns.”

Chhatra Sangsad “Education, Unity, Liberation” is the motto of the new student organisation.

The central committee will be as follows: Abu Baker Majumder, convener; Tawhid Mohammad Siam, senior joint convener; Zahid Ahsan, member secretary; Rifat Rashid, senior joint member secretary; Tahmid Al Muddassir Chowdhury, chief organiser; and Ashrefa Khatun spokesperson.

The DU unit will have Abdul Kader as convener; Limon Mahmud Hasan as senior joint convener; Mohir Alam as member secretary; Al Amin Sarker as senior joint member secretary; Hasib Al Islam as chief organiser; and Rafia Rehnuma Hridi as spokesperson.

Abu Baker was also a member secretary of DU’s now dissolved Gonotantrik Chhatra Shakti, led by Akhter Hossen and Nahid Islam.

Notably, Hasib, a key coordinator of SAD, was served a show-cause notice for publicly stating that the July uprising would not have been possible without arson and police killings.

On the other hand, Al Amin Sarker, who also played an active role in the uprising, was a former leader of the now banned Chhatra League.

In 2022, it was reported that he was the deputy secretary for scholarships at DU’s Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haque Hall Chhatra League. However, he resigned from the post during the uprising.

Polls likely by the end

FROM PAGE 1

who called on him at the State Guest House Jamuna in Dhaka.

Yunus also sought Germany’s help in implementing the reform initiatives taken by his government.

“We need all your support for the New Bangladesh. We are working hard to make the general election a success,” he said.

Praising the German people and its economy, Prof Yunus expressed Dhaka’s desire for a special

“We have close relations with Germany, but we want a different relationship – a special relationship – with Germany,” Yunus added.

relationship with Berlin to deepen trade and investment ties with Europe’s largest economy.

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Zarah Bruhn, who is visiting Bangladesh to learn more about social businesses and microcredit, praised Prof Yunus’ leadership, stating that Bangladesh would prosper during his tenure.

“I am a big enthusiast of your work,” she said, adding that she is eager to launch social businesses in Germany.

The two also discussed the Three Zero Movement launched by Prof Yunus, social businesses, poverty reduction initiatives, and the future of welfare states.

Lamiya Morshed, senior secretary and head of SDG Affairs at the Bangladesh government, also attended the meeting.

True extent of bad loans emerges

FROM PAGE 1

Bad loans have increased sharply in some Shariah-based banks controlled by the controversial business conglomerate S Alam Group and in some other banks where Awami League-affiliated businesses had influence, said central bank officials.

Janata had the highest volume of bad loans in the banking sector at the end of last year: as much as 66.8 percent of the bank’s total outstanding loans have turned bad.

Of the Tk 67,300 crore of Janata’s defaulted loans, about Tk 23,000 crore is of Beximco’s, which were classified in the last quarter of 2024.

S Alam Group is another major defaulter, with its defaulted loans at Janata Bank reaching Tk 10,200 crore. It was followed by AnonTex Group (Tk 7,800 crore) and Crescent Group (Tk 3,800 crore).

Not only have bad loans increased, but loan disbursements also rose

sharply during the previous regime.

The focus should now be on recovering the money by selling collateral, said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank.

“We have to learn from previous mistakes and avoid repeating them. There must be a willingness to fix the banking sector as intention is the key factor. For that to happen, long-term reforms are needed,” he added.

Ensuring proper loan sanctioning, enforcing single borrower exposure limits, halting loan rescheduling and appointing administrators at troubled banks are necessary for the ailing sector, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, at a recent event.

She also emphasised protecting central bank independence, ending bank bailouts through recapitalisation and a licence freeze for new banks.

Protests, chaos at BERC hearing

FROM PAGE 1

and severely impact the national economy.

After the hearing, BERC Chairman Jalal Ahmed assured attendees that all concerns would be taken into account before making a final decision.

BERC proposed increasing gas prices for new industries to Tk 75.72 per cubic meter, up from the current Tk 30. Existing industries would also be charged a higher rate if they exceeded their sanctioned gas load.

Earlier in the day, Petrobangla and six gas distribution companies presented separate but similar proposals, stating that industries with new gas connections would pay 50% of their bills at the existing rate and the remaining 50% at the proposed higher rate.

At the hearing, Prof M Shamsul Alam, CAB’s energy adviser, strongly criticised the proposal, calling it “against the public interest,” “illogical,” and “unacceptable.” He urged the authorities to reject it by Sunday to prevent mass protests.

“It is possible to lower gas prices by identifying the sectors from where the ousted government looted money and by reducing corruption in the sector,” he said. “A public hearing should be held on how to reduce gas prices instead.”

Business leaders and politicians also condemned the proposal.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, pointed out that the technical committee failed to assess the potential economic impact of the price hike. He demanded a separate hearing focused on price reduction strategies.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, blamed wrong policies and corruption for the crisis, arguing that a price hike was unjustified. “Businesses and industries are already struggling and there is no need to hike the gas price to add fuel to the fire,” he said.

Former Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and

Industry (FBCCI) president Mir Nasir Hossain called for an energy audit to determine the actual costs. “Even if we accept the price hike, who will guarantee uninterrupted gas supply?” he questioned.

Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury Parvez, president of the Bangladesh Chamber of Industries, said the economy had been in decline since the previous government forcibly increased gas prices, leading to reduced investments and a 35% drop in factory production capacity.

“The cost of importing fabric from India has become cheaper than producing cotton locally. Do we want to increase our dependence on India in this sector?” he asked.

Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the previous government raised gas prices by over 150% in one go, placing a massive financial burden on industries.

“As a result, a factory that used to pay Tk 2.1 crore per month in gas bills now pays Tk 5.25 crore,” he said, calling the decision “self-destructive” for Bangladesh’s industries.

Showkat Aziz Russell, president of the Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), urged not to take steps that may jeopardise businesses here and aid the neighbouring countries.

“We are trapped in our investments here,” he said, demanding tax reductions and lower gas prices.

Other industry leaders echoed similar concerns. Bangladesh Steel Mills Association President Mohammad Jahangir Alam suggested aligning industrial gas prices with those charged to power plants.

Ceramic Manufacturers and Exporters Association President Moynul Islam warned that higher gas prices could shut down ceramic industries, which rely heavily on gas.

“We need an uninterrupted gas supply before any price hike,” he urged.