

DHAKA THURSDAY MARCH 6, 2025

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 51

FALGUN 21, 1431 BS

www.thedailystar.net

RAMADAN 5, 1446 HIJRI

16 PAGES PLUS CAMPUS: TK 15.00

WFP halves food ration for Rohingyas

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The World Food Programme has cut the monthly food aid for the Rohingyas in Bangladesh from \$12.50 to \$6 per person, beginning in April, raising the risk of widespread hunger in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char.

"What they are receiving now is already not enough. So, it's hard to imagine the consequences of this new cut," Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Refugee, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner, told news agency Reuters yesterday.

Rahman received the letter confirming the \$6.60 cut from April 1 yesterday after being informed verbally the previous day.

A spokesperson for the UN World Food Programme in Dhaka did not immediately return a Reuters request for comment.

The WFP decision comes amid the Trump administration's termination of USAID funding worldwide. Initially, when the decision was announced in January, it was said that emergency food aid would remain out of the purview.

The WFP, however, did not specify in its letter if the reduction was due to the decision by the Trump administration, Rahman told Reuters.

But he said it was likely as the US was the top donor to the refugee response.

The US Embassy in Dhaka did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In the letter to the RRRC, seen by Reuters, the WFP said it had been

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Fear of hunger grips camps

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

Rohingya refugees and locals of Cox's Bazar have expressed a deep concern over the reduction in funds for food aid.

They fear that it will lead to limited access to nutritious food, a rise in crimes in the refugee settlements and their surrounding areas, and increased tension between locals and refugees.

Currently, the World Food Programme provides \$12.50 a month for food for each Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh. From April, the allocation will drop to \$6.

Relief officials warn that this decision will worsen food shortage and malnutrition in the camps.

"I am speechless hearing the news," said Mohammad Zubair, chairman of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights.

"There is no way for Rohingyas to survive. Even what we get now is not enough to maintain a nutritious diet," he said, adding that hunger may cause a spike in crimes like robberies, theft, and drug trafficking in the area.

"We don't want to live here on financial assistance. We want to return to our country and grow our own food," he said, urging UN agencies to establish a safe zone in Rakhine State for the Rohingyas.

Selim Khan, a Rohingya youth from Kutupalong camp, said, "We have no earning. We live entirely on food assistance. This is devastating news," he added.

SM Suza, secretary of the Rohingya Affairs unit of Jatiya Nogorik Committee, said, "When their food rations are cut, they will leave the camps in search of livelihood, putting immense pressure on local job market."

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Mob ransacks Gulshan flat late at night
Attack follows rumours of stashed cash; three held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mob stormed a flat in the capital's Gulshan on Tuesday night, claiming that it belongs to Tamir Imam, the son of HT Imam, who was an adviser to the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Alleging that a large cache of illegal weapons and cash were there, the mob ransacked the flat.

Mokhlesur Rahman, inspector (investigation) of Gulshan Police Station, told The Daily Star the flat does not belong to HT Imam or his son.

The daughter of the flat owner, one Rahman, had married Tamir, a former lawmaker, but they got separated around 20-25 years ago.

Talebir Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police,

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Focus should also be on healing, reconciliation

Says Volker Turk about Bangladesh's future course

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh must focus not only on accountability but also healing and reconciliation, said Volker Turk, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at a press conference in Geneva yesterday.

"I think it's a historic opportunity for the country to stop the cycle of reprisals that we have seen in the past, to bring the nation together, to engage in trust building and healing," said Turk.

He said the process of healing must involve truth telling, reconciliation, memorialisation, and reform. He called it a unique chance for every citizen of Bangladesh, irrespective of whatever group or community they belonged to.

"It's a huge chance for the country and its people to deal with its past, to overcome its past, to reach a moment of healing and truth-telling. And that includes each and



"It is absolutely critical to overhaul and dismantle the repressive laws and institutions that were there for much too long."
VOLKER TURK

everyone within the society of Bangladesh. It includes people from different religious and ethnic groups. It is one country. It is one citizenship."

Turk said that if all groups and political parties have the spirit to make this happen, "[...] the world will have a story of hope to tell in what is otherwise, frankly, a very difficult environment all over the place."

Citing the UN fact-finding report, Turk said the UN had reasonable grounds to believe that crimes against humanity were committed, directed against protesters during the July-August massacre that killed 1,400 and injured thousands.

"It is absolutely critical to overhaul and dismantle the repressive laws and institutions that were there for much too long."

He called on the international community to aid Bangladesh in its rebuilding efforts.

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Leading the world from home

CR Abrar outlines visions for students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The size of the interim government, led by Prof Muhammad Yunus, increased once again yesterday -- the third such expansion.

An oath-taking ceremony was held at 11:00am at the Bangabhaban, where migration expert and former Dhaka University professor Chowdhury Rafiqul Abrar, known as CR Abrar, was sworn in as an adviser.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin administered the oath. With Prof Abrar's inclusion, the number of advisers in the government now stands at 23.

After assuming office at the education ministry, Prof Abrar outlined his vision for the education system "where students can see their futures right here, in our own country".

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PRY, SECONDARY SCHOOLS Millions of students still without textbooks

Govt misses deadline again

ARAFAT RAHMAN

Despite repeated assurances, the interim government has once again failed to distribute textbooks to crores of students across the country, with the 40-day Ramadan and Eid vacation already underway.

After missing the usual January deadline, then education adviser Wahiduddin Mahmud stated that the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) would complete the distribution of all 40.15 crore textbooks by February. However, this deadline was also missed.

With students now on their Ramadan and Eid holiday, Wahiduddin, on his final day as adviser yesterday, once again promised that the books would be delivered by March 10.

NCTB officials, however, have indicated that this deadline may also be missed due to a scarcity of paper.

Amid these repeated promises and missed deadlines, students remain the worst affected.

Crates of children began their academic year without essential textbooks, and now, as they enter their long holiday, their studies have been severely disrupted.

Secondary school students commenced their vacation on February 27, while primary school students began a day earlier. By that

"It's true that we aim to print all the books by March 10. However, we need help from the printing industry owners. As far as we know, there is a scarcity of paper, which has contributed to the delay."
NCTB Chairman Prof REAZUL HASSAN

same issue," Rihad told this newspaper.

His elder sister, Jasmine Ara, expressed frustration, saying, "Teachers have given study assignments for the holidays, but how can he study when he only has two books? When I asked this, they suggested printing PDFs of the books as a temporary solution."

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Perks, bonuses of MPO teachers set to increase

Says Prof Wahiduddin on his last day as education adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On his last day as education adviser yesterday, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said he believed private institution teachers' demand for a pay rise is fair but the issue cannot be settled with just one or two years' budgets.

"It is very difficult to make people understand this.... However, the process must begin, and [the authorities] are taking that first step," the adviser said.

He said that private institution teachers under the government's Monthly Pay Order (MPO) scheme would see increases in their allowances for festivals, entertainment, house rent, and medical, starting from this year's Eid-ul-Azha and in the next budget.

"I am not making any announcements regarding the exact amount of the increase. However, I know that the current budget will cover parts of it, and next year's budget will provide further provisions," he added.

Prof Wahiduddin said that a portion of the funds for the retirement and welfare benefits of MPO-listed private institution teachers is being established this year.

"Some of it has already been set up, and more will be allocated in the next budget. However, making the entire fund sustainable will not be possible within one



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Obituary



**In Loving Memory of
Mrs. Hosne Huq
(01 February 1947 – 02 March 2025)**

We announce with deep sorrow the passing of Mrs. Hosne Huq on 2nd March 2025, following a cardiac arrest at United Hospital, Dhaka. (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Layhi Rajiun).

She touched countless lives with her inimitable joy for life and kindness. She was a source of love and strength for her husband Captain Nurul Huq, first Chief of Naval Staff of Bangladesh.

She will be deeply missed by her son, Saad Huq, daughter, Samia Huq, son-in-law Syed Nasim Manzur, and beloved grandchildren Saira, Nemat, Sana and Niam.

We request your prayers for her departed soul. May Allah grant her eternal salvation. Ameen.