

UN stands ready to aid reforms, transition

Guterres tells Bangladesh, hears from parties about reforms, election timing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said the UN stands ready to assist Bangladesh in fostering peace, national dialogue, trust and healing as the country undergoes important reforms and transitions.

"You can count on the UN to be your steadfast partner, working alongside the people of Bangladesh to help build a sustainable and equitable future for all," he said at a joint press briefing with Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain at a city hotel yesterday.

The UN chief said the international community must play its part in supporting Bangladesh in this pivotal moment as the country works to achieve a just, inclusive, and prosperous future.

"I am particularly pleased to be in Bangladesh at this important

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BURNING BLIGHT
Plumes of smoke rise from burning garbage at the Aminbazar landfill, enveloping the surroundings in toxic fumes. Though the site is on the outskirts of Dhaka, people living as far as in Mohammadpur often complain about the persistent stench and hazardous air. Experts stress the urgency for authorities to adopt environmentally friendly waste management systems to improve Dhaka's air quality, which remains among the worst in the world.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Aid to Rakhine via Bangladesh can help

Says UN chief, as conflict across the border rages on

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Bangladesh authorities yesterday discussed whether it would be possible to deliver humanitarian aid inside Myanmar through Bangladesh, so that the Rohingyas could return to their homeland.

Dignified repatriation of Rohingyas would be extremely difficult at the moment, given the ongoing conflicts between the Myanmar military and Arakan Army in Rakhine, he said.

That's why it is essential to mobilise the international community, especially the countries neighbouring Myanmar, to put pressure on it to find a solution, he said.

Ending the violence and creating the mechanisms of dialogue leading to a true democratic solution in Myanmar would naturally facilitate the return of the Rohingya refugees, he said.

At the same time, it is important to intensify humanitarian aid inside Myanmar to create the conditions for the return to be successful.

"And that is the reason why one of the discussions we had was about the possibility, if the circumstances allow, to have also humanitarian aid channelled from Bangladesh. But that is, obviously, a matter that would require the authorisation and the cooperation of the parties to the conflict," Guterres said.

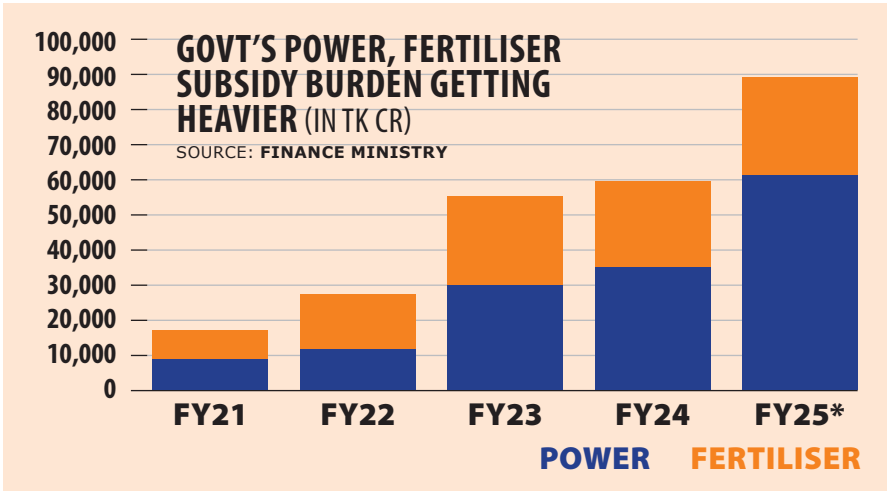
Guterres arrived in Bangladesh on March 13 on a four-day visit.

Bangladesh has been facing the enormous challenge of providing

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REVISED BUDGET FOR FY25

Power, fertiliser subsidies to balloon



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's subsidy burden for power and fertiliser is set to increase by 57.9 percent to Tk 90,000 crore in the revised budget for this fiscal year as it looks to keep energy and agricultural inputs affordable amid high inflation.

Fertiliser subsidy will increase to Tk

28,000 crore in the revised budget, up by 64.7 percent from the original. Power subsidy will rise by 55 percent to Tk 62,000 crore. The subsidy for liquefied natural gas (LNG) will remain unchanged at Tk 6,000 crore.

"The subsidy burden has grown heavier this year as the government refrained

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Shady firm took Tk 950cr from Islami Bank

A Nabil Group employee and a relative of its chairman own the firm

MD MEHEDI HASAN

It happened in just two days. A company that existed only on paper walked away with Tk 950 crore from Islami Bank Bangladesh.

The company, Market Master Analyzer Ltd, managed to secure the disbursement of Tk 450 crore on August 10, 2022, and Tk 500 crore the following day, according to documents reviewed by The Daily Star.

The bank's Gulshan-1 branch disbursed the funds by blatantly ignoring fundamental banking regulations. The total outstanding loan amount has now grown to Tk 1,054 crore.

Market Master Analyzer secured this massive loan just a month after it was registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) on July 6, 2022, and despite having an authorised capital of only Tk 5 crore.

The company's address was Banani, Dhaka on RJSC records. However, when this journalist visited the location, no such company was found—only an office of Nabil Group was located nearby.

Market Master Analyzer is owned by two individuals: Chairman Md Shariful Islam and Managing Director Md Sha Alam.

An investigation revealed that Shariful is a close relative of Md Aminul Islam, the founder and managing director of Nabil Group.

Sha Alam works as a junior officer at Nabil Group's Rajshahi

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THE DISAPPEARED OF THE JULY UPRISING ■ PART 4

Families want closure, however painful

Seven months after the July uprising in Bangladesh, many protesters still remain missing. We investigated 31 cases: six were buried as unclaimed bodies at Rayerbazar graveyard; four were identified by families from among the charred bodies in Ashulia; two were handed over to families after DNA testing; and 19 are still unaccounted for. We found evidence of systematic government efforts to cover up medical records and bodies of the victims so they can never be found again. This four-part series also documents how families were denied time to collect the corpses from hospital morgues, and how they are now waiting for the bodies of their loved ones. This is the fourth and the last part of the series.

MASHFIQ MIZAN, KEERO ADHNAN AHMED and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

When we first started visiting Dhaka Medical College Hospital in January for this story, there were seven protest-related unclaimed bodies freezing in its mortuaries. One of them, Md Hasan, a teenage trader from Gulistan, was handed over to his family on February 14 after DNA tests. The remaining six are still stored at DMCH morgue, growing colder.

Hasan's father, Md Monir Hossain, had searched for his son everywhere — hospitals, clinics, cemeteries, and even Anjuman Mufidul Islam since his son went missing on August 5, 2024, the day Sheikh Hasina fell and fled the country.

"After four months, student leaders told me about the seven bodies at Dhaka Medical. I identified my son from his clothing. He always wore white."

Md Sogir from Sylhet believes his son, Md Waliullah, 25, a trader from Elephant Road in the capital, is also among the bullet-ridden bodies in the DMCH mortuary.

"My son went missing in July. I



PHOTO: STAR

Rasheda Begum wants to know where her son was buried.

looked for him for five months. The bodies are barely recognisable, but I identified my son through an old surgery mark on his right leg."

Sogir has given his DNA sample to the Criminal Investigation Department of police and is awaiting confirmation.

A SYSTEM FAILING THE VICTIMS
If the sample does not match and if no one comes looking for the rest of the bodies still freezing at DMCH, these men, who were once

someone's family, will likely be buried as "nobodies" in unmarked graves like many others (read more in Part 1).

On January 25, 2025, former information adviser Nahid Islam visited the Rayerbazar graveyard to pay tribute to the unidentified martyrs of the July uprising. There, Nahid, currently the leader of National Citizen Party, assured the families of these victims that efforts to identify those buried in unmarked

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