



DHAKA TUESDAY APRIL 29, 2025

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXV No. 101

BAISHAKH 16, 1432 BS

www.thedailystar.net

SHAWWAL 30, 1446 HJRI

16 PAGES PLUS LIFE STYLE : Tk 15.00

Aid allocation to be trimmed in next budget

The plan comes as \$42.85b foreign funds remained unused at start of current FY

REJAU KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The interim government plans to lower its foreign aid utilisation target by 15 percent to Tk 85,000 crore for the next fiscal year, as sluggish project execution in Bangladesh leaves billions of dollars in development funding unspent.

The proposed allocation under the Annual Development Programme will mark a step down from the Tk 100,000 crore target set for the current fiscal year, testifying to persistent inefficiencies in aid-backed projects.

At a Fiscal Coordination Council meeting on April 15, officials outlined a draft budget proposing an overall ADP

In first 9 months, 32.50% of the spending target was achieved

Utilisation of foreign funds in pipeline likely to drop this fiscal year from around 19% in FY 2023-24

outlay of Tk 230,000 crore, including Tk 85,000 crore in foreign funds.

A finance ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the reduced target reflects the spending capabilities of various ministries and divisions.

In the first nine months of the current fiscal year, ministries and divisions managed to spend only Tk 32,411 crore in foreign funds,

or about 32.5 percent of the target. In comparison, spending during the same period a year earlier was Tk 44,066 crore, or 46.8 percent, according to data from the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division.

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Farmers taking their paddy home on a boat after harvest. Many growers have hurriedly reaped their crops fearing early onset of the monsoon and flash floods. Farmers of the haor region in the northeastern part of the country in particular were harvesting early. The photo was taken at Moglabazar in Sylhet's Fenchuganj recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

SHRABAN MURDER CASE

Three witnesses named without their consent

MUNTAKIM SAAD and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Three individuals named as witnesses in the case filed over the killing of Mahfuz Alam Shraban during last year's mass uprising said they were unaware of being listed as witnesses.

The case statement lists eight witnesses, including the plaintiff, and mentions the phone numbers of four of them.

This newspaper spoke to all four, and three of them said they had no knowledge of their names being included.

"I didn't know I was made a witness. Who put my name there?" Saiful Islam, 35, told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

Saiful, a grocery trader who lived in the same area as the victim, said he had known Shraban as a pharmaceutical officer for a few months but was not present during the incident.

"No one contacted me to be a witness," he said, adding that he had only heard about the incident later.

Shraban's brother, Mostafizur Rahman Bappy, a trader from Naogaon, filed the case with a Dhaka court in March. Following court directives, Mirpur police registered the case as a First Information Report on April 20.

It accuses ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and 407 others of involvement in Shraban killing in the

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JULY UPRISING CASES IN 4 DIST

137 journalists sued so far

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

At least 137 journalists have been implicated in 32 criminal cases filed in Dhaka, Chattogram, Bogura, and Rajshahi centring the July uprising.

According to case documents and police records, they have been charged with murder, attempted murder, unlawful assembly, rioting, abduction, vandalism, extortion, assault, and in certain cases, genocide, and crimes against humanity.



Implicating them [journalists] in murder cases has been a new phenomenon since August 5. This definitely violates their professional freedom, which is guaranteed by article 29 of the constitution.

JYOTIRMOY BARUA, Supreme Court lawyer



The 32 cases were filed between August 21 last year and April 20 this year. The Daily Star obtained most of the case documents. Many of the cases name them as co-accused alongside deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

Charges have even been brought against the journalists under the Explosive Substances Act.

Dhaka Union of Journalists and a rights activist have raised concerns over press freedom.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi said

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Many cases being filed for personal gains

Says law adviser; IGP assures that innocents won't be arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current process for filing complaints at a police station does not allow officers to initially authenticate the claims. As a result, this system is exploited, leading to the filing of many cases intended for personal or financial gain, revenge, or harassment against others.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Baharul Alam and Law adviser Dr Asif Nazrul made such remarks at separate events yesterday, days after a murder case was registered against Sheikh Hasina and some 407 others, including an actor, doctors, journalists and lawyers, over the killing of BNP activist Mahfuz Alam Shraban in the capital's Mirpur during last year's mass uprising.

Both the adviser and the police chief said law enforcers have been instructed not to harass or arrest any innocent people implicated in those cases.



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BARISHAL 'GUNFIGHT'

Locals contradict Rab claims

Victims had no criminal records

SUSANTA GHOSH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Police have not found any prior criminal records of the two students shot in a "gunfight" with the Rapid Action Battalion during an anti-narcotics drive in Barishal's Agailjhara upazila on April 21.

One of them, Siam Molla, an 11th-grade student of Karfa Ideal College, was killed while the other, SSC examinee Rakib Molla, was critically injured.

Siam was 17 years old, and Rakib is 18, according to their birth certificates.

Rab-8, however, in the first information report (FIR) filed with Agailjhara Police Station on April 22, claimed both were 20 years old.

Rakib is now undergoing treatment at Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal.

According to the FIR, the Rab conducted the drive at a graveyard in Dakshin Mollapara village under Ratnapur Union at 5:40pm on a tip-off that some people gathered there to trade drugs.

The Rab said in the FIR that its personnel nabbed Siam and Rakib, and found 393 Yaba pills on them while the other suspects fled the scene.

It said the other suspects returned to help Siam and Rakib when they started shouting during the arrest. The Rab members chased Siam and Rakib after they resisted arrest and ran away. At one stage, Siam and Rakib hit two Rab members with sticks and injured them critically, the FIR said.

It said that when someone from the suspects opened fire, one

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We have not yet obtained any information that Siam and Rakib were involved in drug dealings.

MILTON MONDAL
sub-inspector of
Agailjhara Police Station



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