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**ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়**

Prof Yunus launches new hajj app ‘Labbaik’

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the mobile app “Labbaik” is ready to provide services for hajj pilgrims and will play a crucial role in ensuring they can perform their religious duties smoothly.

He made this statement while inaugurating the app, which has been developed under government management for the first time, at the state guest house Jamuna.

The app features emergency support, prayer times and weather updates, flight information, location tracking and accommodation information, among others options.

Urging pilgrims to use the app, the chief adviser said, “It will be helpful in performing religious duties,

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Despite an approaching train, a man crosses the tracks, walking directly over the rail lines. In the background, some individuals are even seen sitting right beside the tracks. This reckless behaviour poses a constant risk of accidents. The photo was taken in the Tejgaon Railway tracks area yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Four lakh children under-immunised

Says joint statement of Unicef, WHO, Gavi on Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Marking the launch of World Immunization Week 2025, Unicef, WHO, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, warned that despite Bangladesh’s progress in increasing immunisation coverage, significant disparities persist, putting nearly half a million children at risk.

In a joint statement yesterday, the organisations said although the country’s Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) has achieved remarkable results, around 4,00,000 children remain under-immunised, and about 70,000 (1.5 percent) have received no vaccines at all.

The gap is wider in urban areas, where 79 percent of children are fully vaccinated, 2.4 percent have received no vaccines (zero-dose), and 9.8 percent are under-immunised, compared to 85 percent coverage in rural areas, the statement said.

“Since the launch of the EPI in 1979, Bangladesh has raised full immunisation coverage from just two percent

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EC mulls hybrid voting method for expatriates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is exploring a hybrid voting system for expatriate Bangladeshis in the upcoming 13th national elections, combining postal ballots, online voting, and proxy voting -- instead of relying solely on the existing postal ballot system.

Under the proposed plan, expatriates would be required to register online for their preferred voting method among the three.

Currently, postal voting is the only option for expatriates, but it has proven ineffective due to time constraints. According to an EC concept paper to be presented at a seminar today, no expatriate has successfully voted through postal ballots from abroad yet.

“The long-awaited inclusion of expatriate Bangladeshis in the election process has yet to be realised,” the paper notes, citing the impracticality of completing postal voting within the necessary timeframe.

Given these challenges, the EC is considering a hybrid system to better facilitate voting for millions of Bangladeshis living overseas.

The Electoral Reform Commission has proposed two main methods -- postal and online voting, both dependent on digital processes. Additionally, the EC is considering proxy voting, allowing a designated voter in Bangladesh to cast a ballot on behalf of an expatriate.



Trafficked, forced to fight, killed in a foreign war

At least 3 Bangladeshis killed in Russia-Ukraine war after being trafficked; accused agency get invited to govt workshop

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Promised lucrative jobs in Russia, Bangladeshi workers were instead trafficked, tortured, and forced to fight in a war thousands of miles from home, a conflict they had no stake in and no training for.

According to the Human Trafficking Cell of the Criminal Investigation Department, Dhaka-based agency Dream Home Travel allegedly trafficked around 20 Bangladeshis to Russia during the last two years. The victims were offered salaries between Tk 2 lakh and Tk 2.5 lakh per month to work in chocolate factories, or as cleaners and cooks.

Initially, 10 individuals were first sent to Saudi Arabia on Umrah visas. After performing Umrah, they were trafficked to Russia and sold to a man named Sultan, who then handed them over to Russian soldiers.

Then, the ten were pushed into the frontlines, forced to fight Russia’s war on Ukraine with little to no training. Those who

refused faced brutal physical and psychological torture, including food deprivation, CID officials said.

At least three Bangladeshis have already been killed, they added.

Humayun Kabir from Singra upazila of Natore was one of them.

**According to the Human Trafficking Cell of the Criminal Investigation Department, Dhaka-based agency Dream Home Travel allegedly trafficked around 20 Bangladeshis to Russia during the last two years.**

Meanwhile, Aminul from Keraniganj, Dhaka, sustained critical injuries. His wife, Jhumur Akter, later filed a case with Banani Police Station.

On April 14, the family of Akram

Hossain, 25, from Hosenpur village in Brahmanbaria’s Ashuganj upazila, received news that Akram had been killed in a drone attack.

Akram had left for Russia nine months ago, hoping to lift his family out of poverty by working as a welder.

Akram’s father Morshed Mia said, “We sent Akram to Russia by borrowing money from relatives, paying Tk 9 lakh to middlemen.”

At first, Akram worked at a Chinese company in Russia for six months as a welder. The company stopped paying him around two and a half months ago.

Two months ago, the same brokers who brought Akram and other Bangladeshis to Russia forced them to join the military as “contract fighters”.

After 15 days of basic training, Akram was sent to the warfront in Ukraine.

Dream Home Travels’ partner Fabia Zerir Tamanna was arrested on February 5 at Dhaka airport while trying to flee to Nepal. She is

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CONSENSUS COMMISSION Gono Odhikar Parishad for nat’l constitution council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Odhikar Parishad yesterday opposed a proposal to include “pluralism” in the preamble of the constitution. Instead, it called for the inclusion of “religious harmony” during its meeting with the National Consensus Commission (NCC) at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

The party endorsed several reform proposals, including limiting a prime minister to two terms, ensuring the prime minister and leader of the house are separate individuals, introducing a bicameral parliament, and reserving 100 seats for women in the lower house.

However, it rejected the idea of allocating seats in the proposed upper house (senate) based on the percentage of votes won in the lower house. Instead, it suggested that any party securing at least 1 percent of the national vote should gain representation in the senate.

The party supported forming a National Constitution Council and proposed bringing the appointment of the police chief and the heads of the three security forces under its authority.

On reforming Article 70 of the constitution, Gono Odhikar Parishad partially agreed,

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SIX DEMANDS OF POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS ‘Concerns genuine, but reforms need planning’

ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Polytechnic students across the country resumed protests on Saturday, demanding urgent reforms through a six-point charter to fix long-standing problems in recruitment policies, education standards, and job opportunities.

A government-appointed review committee, which was formed on April 22 to draft a roadmap for implementing those demands, held its first meeting on the same day.

However, initial discussions within the committee indicate that while some student demands are valid, others may face major challenges in terms of feasibility and policy execution.

After the committee’s first meeting, three of its members told The Daily Star that without addressing fundamental problems like teacher shortages, weak governance, and poor enforcement, meaningful change is unlikely -- no matter

how promising reforms may look on paper.

The students’ six demands include abolishing the 30 percent promotion quota for craft instructors, standardising the diploma-in-engineering curriculum to four years, and ensuring reserved quotas in technical Grade-10 posts.

Students had initially suspended their protests on April 22 after the committee’s formation. However, they resumed demonstrations the following day, citing dissatisfaction with the government’s response and remarks made by some officials.

Among the demands, the call to abolish the promotion quota has broad support. Student leaders argue that promoting instructors based on seniority rather than merit weakens education standards.

Although the High Court had earlier allowed these promotions, the Supreme Court’s Chamber Court recently stayed that order. Students insist that only a

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A child joyfully catches rainwater in a bowl and pours it over his head, delighted by the monsoon rain that finally arrived. After weeks of scorching heat and humidity in Khulna, the downpour brought immense relief to all. The photo was taken yesterday in the Bastahara area.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN