

Irregularities in pilot licensing concerning

Take action against errant pilots, training academies, CAAB officials

We are alarmed by the findings of an investigation conducted by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh's (CAAB) internal safety department, which uncovered numerous irregularities in pilot licensing and training programmes. Reportedly, there have been serious violations related to pilot licences issued by CAAB, many within the past two years. Two training institutions—Galaxy Flying Academy and Bangladesh Flying Academy—recommended pilot licences without candidates completing the mandatory solo flight hours. Other violations included a pilot certifying himself, one falsifying flight hours to meet licensing requirements, and the appointment of an unqualified check pilot by a training academy. A recent inspection by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) also discovered that written tests for pilots had been conducted using unauthorised software. These findings raise concerns about our aviation safety, which must be addressed.

There are three types of pilot licences: Private Pilot Licence (PPL) for basic certification; Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL) for professional flying; and Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) for commanding commercial airliners, which is the highest certification and requires extensive training and flight experience. Worryingly, it has been found that the two above-mentioned training institutions recommended pilot licences for their students despite their failure to meet the mandatory flight requirements. Students reportedly skipped required stops on solo flights and did not follow the prescribed routes, raising concerns about whether their flying skills were properly tested. Both academies cited logistical challenges—such as engineer shortages and restricted access to certain airports—to justify these deviations. While experts argue that these issues could have been resolved with better resource allocation, such as placing engineers at transit airports or providing fuel at key locations, the problems remain unresolved.

Irregularities were also found in pilot recruitment tests, with a company named A4Aero Ltd conducting exams since 2017 using software it fully controls. CAAB also failed to follow procurement rules, and the software was never tested for quality—despite CAAB being classified as Critical Information Infrastructure. Additionally, A4Aero was not officially registered when it began administering exams.

Unfortunately, CAAB has been aware of many of these issues for a long time but has taken no action. The CAAB chairman has even downplayed concerns over training rule violations, stating that they do not pose a safety risk. Such a statement by the CAAB chief is unacceptable, particularly when their own investigation team found clear violations. We urge the regulatory body to take the investigation findings seriously, and undertake strict measures against those involved in the anomalies reported. Action must also be taken against the pilots involved in corrupt practices. Furthermore, the authorities must ensure that the flying academies abide by the standard rules of pilot licensing. All these measures are necessary to ensure an efficient and safe aviation sector.

Strengthening central bank was necessary

It is now up to the regulator to deliver

Under the Bank Resolution Ordinance 2025, the interim government has granted the central bank sweeping new powers to intervene in the banking sector, which continues to reel from the legacy of corruption and mismanagement indulged by the Awami League regime. As a result, the authorities can now take temporary control of any scheduled bank, if necessary, by issuing share transfer orders, provided the transferee is a government entity. The central bank had long sought such authority, as it would grant it greater freedom to intervene in the sector and restore discipline. In that respect, the ordinance marks a positive step forward.

The new law also authorises the central bank to act immediately in cases of fraud or gross mismanagement—such as when bank owners divert funds for personal use—by triggering formal resolution proceedings. Under the now-ousted regime, widespread corruption, particularly by bank owners with political ties to the government, seriously undermined the health of many banks. Consequently, at least a dozen of the country's 61 banks are currently believed to be in poor condition, with some surviving only through liquidity support from the central bank. Additionally, the central bank will now have the authority to appoint temporary administrators to manage distressed banks and implement necessary recovery measures. It can also raise capital from new or existing shareholders to strengthen their financial standing.

A notable feature of the ordinance is the introduction of "bridge banks," which are temporary financial institutions established to take over failed banks. These bridge banks will ensure the continuity of banking operations during the resolution process by temporarily holding the assets of failed banks until a permanent solution is found. Bridge banks can also act as a buffer, isolating distressed banks from the broader financial system to prevent panic withdrawals or bank runs. To support such interventions, a Bank Restructuring and Resolution Fund will be established through government contributions, support from international financial institutions, and risk-based levies on banks.

On paper, these additional measures could be useful tools in the central bank's toolkit for addressing the sector's longstanding problems. The need to strengthen the central bank has long been overdue. However, we hope that, beyond reinforcing the legal framework, efforts will also be made to improve the poor track record of enforcing rules and regulations in our financial sector. This is where the focus must now lie—to prevent banks from falling into disarray in future.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

US declaration of war on Mexico approved

On this day in 1846, tensions between Mexico and the United States—stemming from the US annexation of Texas (1845)—led the US Congress to approve a declaration of war against Mexico.

EDITORIAL

The upcoming budget should deliver economic stability



MACRO MIRROR

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Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

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As Bangladesh approaches the fiscal year (FY) 2025-26, the country stands at a critical juncture. The interim government is set to unveil a new national budget, which is expected to reflect both the pressing need for economic stabilisation and structural reform. With the economy grappling with high inflation, low revenue mobilisation, rising unemployment, persistent inequality, and the impending graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, the upcoming budget is poised to address these multifaceted challenges.

The formulation of the FY2025-26 budget occurs against a backdrop of significant economic and political upheaval. The ousting of the previous government in August 2024, following mass protests, led to the establishment of an interim administration on August 5, 2025, tasked with steering the country through turbulent times.

This is reflected in the World Bank's revised economic growth forecast for Bangladesh which dropped to 3.3 percent growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for FY2024-25, marking the lowest rate in 36 years. This reduction is attributed to high inflation, reduced investment, a weak financial sector, and political instability. As of April 2025, the point-to-point inflation rate stood at 9.17 percent, with a 12-month average of 10.21 percent. Although this reflects a decline from last month's 9.35 percent (point-to-point) and 10.26 percent (12-month average) respectively, inflation is still high, persisting for almost three years now. To combat inflation, the central bank has maintained a tight monetary policy, keeping the policy rate at 10 percent. These economic challenges are compounded by the upcoming graduation from LDC status in 2026, which will result in the loss of various flexibilities, including the loss of preferential market access for Bangladeshi products in developed and some developing country markets and access to finance at flexible terms.

Amid these challenges, exports have shown resilience. Export receipts during October-December 2024 increased by 5.1 percent compared to July-September 2024 and by 20.2 percent compared to October-December 2023. This is due

to increased export receipts from readymade garments, jute and jute manufacturers, and fish and shrimps. Despite these gains, the readymade garment sector could face headwinds due to new US tariffs and shifting global demand, potentially impacting future export performance.



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In a departure from previous expansionary budgets, the interim government plans to present a contractionary budget totalling Tk 7.90 lakh crore for FY2025-26, down from Tk 7.97 lakh crore in the current FY2024-25. This reduction reflects a strategic shift towards fiscal prudence in response to mounting economic pressures. The projected budget deficit is expected to be equivalent to about 4.6 percent of GDP. To finance this deficit, the government plans to rely on a combination of foreign borrowing, bank loans, and savings certificates. Over half of the deficit is expected to be covered by external sources. The government will have to be cautious in bank borrowing as it will increase its debt burden. Besides, funds should be available to the private sector whenever needed.

One of the challenges, as in the previous years, will be the financing

to enhance revenue mobilisation include the separation of tax policy and administration within the NBR to reduce conflicts of interest and improve efficiency. Automation of NBR and skilled human resources are other necessary measures. Without deep reform measures, tax evasion cannot be controlled. Therefore, sufficient resource allocation should be made to enhance the institutional capacity of the NBR.

Controlling inflation should be a top priority for the interim government. The new budget plans to reduce inflation to 6.5 percent by the end of FY2025-26. To achieve this, fiscal and monetary policies must be aligned. Fiscal policy should be designed in a way that ensures adequate allocations are made to priority sectors while pursuing a contractionary fiscal policy. Fiscal prudence should be ensured by

also expects the government to take decisive action against corruption and inefficiency, which have historically plagued budget execution. The interim government is in an advantageous situation to set an example by taking such action since this government have no electoral compulsion.

The FY2025-26 budget presents a critical opportunity for Bangladesh to recalibrate its fiscal policies and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic growth. By focusing on revenue mobilisation, inflation control, and strategic investments in key sectors, the interim government can navigate the current economic challenges and set the stage for a more resilient future. The success of this budget will depend on the government's commitment to transparency, accountability, and the effective implementation of its proposed measures.

The struggle for justice should not involve injustice to others



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In a democratic society, the right to protest is fundamental and necessary for a just and inclusive political system. Public demonstrations, student movements, and citizen activism are signs of a politically aware population that wishes to be heard. However, as our society matures, we must improve our self-expression methods.

Recent protests by students of polytechnic institutes have sparked fresh debate around this issue. Their demands, from administrative changes to curriculum restructuring, are legitimate and deserve attention. Yet, how these protests have come about is deeply concerning. In a series of demonstrations, roads and railways across the country were blocked, bringing entire districts to a standstill. In Dhaka, the already strained traffic system collapsed under the weight of such blockades.

While freedom of speech and assembly are protected rights, we must exercise them responsibly. Protests that inconvenience thousands, stranding patients on their way to hospitals, halting emergency services, and making parents miss work and children miss school, cannot

be justified under the umbrella of democracy. This is not freedom of speech; it is the imposition of suffering on the innocent.

In developing countries like ours, where infrastructure is weak and cities are overburdened, we need a more sensible and structured approach to protests. The idea that roads must be blocked and transport systems must be shut down to make voices heard is outdated and destructive. It emerges from a legacy of authoritarian rule, where public discontent could only be acknowledged through extreme pressure. But now Bangladesh is in a new era, and it's time we left those old habits behind.

In many developed democracies, protest is a well-organised affair. In the United Kingdom, Hyde Park's Speakers' Corner is a globally recognised venue for public expression. In the United States, permits are required for large gatherings, and marches are often guided by police to ensure minimum public disruption. In Germany, public squares are designated for rallies, allowing protesters to voice their concerns without paralysing cities. These models show us that it is possible

to protest passionately and effectively, without turning daily life into chaos. One of the main issues in Bangladesh is the absence of designated protest zones. The government should urgently consider allocating specific areas in each city, especially in Dhaka, where people can gather, chant, march, and raise slogans without affecting traffic or daily life. These areas can be equipped with basic facilities and proper security so protests can be safe, visible, and impactful.

At the same time, institutions and government agencies must be more responsive to citizen complaints and grievances. Creating dedicated "grievance redressal cells" within key ministries and organisations can go a long way in restoring public trust.

These units should be empowered to receive complaints, acknowledge them, and work towards a resolution within a specified time frame. If people feel that their issues are being taken seriously, the likelihood of disruptive protests will decline.

The present government has shown a greater openness to addressing public demands than previous administrations. The swift removal of the Dhaka Polytechnic Institute principal after student protests is a case in point. Such responsiveness is commendable, but it should not be reactive. It must be part of a larger, systemic culture of listening to people before they are forced to resort to demonstrations.

Another vital step is public education. Our citizens, especially young people, must be taught the principles of civic engagement

and responsible activism. Schools, universities, and community organisations can help instill the values of nonviolent protest, negotiation, and dialogue. Social media, too, can be used as a powerful tool for advocacy. It is equally necessary for law enforcement forces to maintain order. The police must be trained to distinguish between peaceful protesters and those who engage in unlawful acts. Using force should be the last resort and only when public safety is at serious risk. But when roads are blocked for hours, emergency services are halted, and chaos ensues, law enforcement must step in and restore order.

As we approach another election season, various protests will likely intensify. Political parties, student groups, and many professional bodies may all take to the streets to make their demands known. But let us make one thing clear: protests that hold an entire city hostage are not a sign of democratic maturity. They are a failure of imagination, a stubborn refusal to find better ways of expressing legitimate discontent.

We can and must do better. We must protect our right to protest, but this right should never come at the cost of the common good. We need a national conversation on protest culture, one that involves students, civil society, government officials, and ordinary citizens. Together, we must draft new norms and guidelines that ensure protests are safe, effective, and respectful of everyone's rights.

It's time we recognised that the struggle for justice should not involve injustice to others.