



"I ask if you can have mercy. It's good for you and good for the Palestinians. It's good for humanity."

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus begs Israel to show 'mercy' in Gaza

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TO KNOW

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Where
Nazrul's
flute still
echoes
WR1



Trapped
within
borders
WR2



The Kajoli
Model: Learning
with laughter,
growing with joy
WR3



Iran, US hold
new round of
nuclear talks
in Rome
P5

NATIONAL BUDGET FY25-26

Govt to recast social safety net schemes

Cut one-third of programmes but increase number of beneficiaries

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The interim government is likely to introduce a transparent system for social safety net schemes in the upcoming budget, increasing the number of beneficiaries by around 10 lakh while slashing one-third of the existing programmes.

In the new system, there will be fewer than 100 schemes, down from the current 140. Thirty-eight of the schemes will be grouped as "pro-poor" as suggested by the European Union and other development partners.

Assistance under this section will be targeted at the extreme poor, finance ministry officials said.

Economists have for years pointed out that the budget allocation for the social safety net seemed larger than it actually was, because the allocation included funds for various programmes, including ones under the development budget.

The government intends to streamline the system by removing such programmes to reflect a more accurate picture, according to the officials.

The upcoming budget documents will detail the specific allocations for each of the social safety net schemes, they said.

For the social safety net schemes, the government is likely to set aside Tk 95,908 crore in the fiscal year (FY) 2025-26, accounting for 12.18 percent of the total outlay. In the current fiscal year, the allocation for these schemes was Tk 90,468 crore, which was 11.35 percent of the total budget.

The allocation for the existing 140 social safety net programmes was Tk 136,026 crore in the current budget. If these programmes were carried forward, the total allocation in FY26 would rise to Tk 144,655 crore.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM), a think tank, said there had been a longstanding demand for streamlining the social protection schemes.

"I think it is good that the government intends to streamline the social safety net programmes, though I am not sure which programmes are being dropped," he told The Daily Star.

Social safety net programmes are designed for poor and marginalised families, but their allocation remains inadequate. "In terms of the GDP, Bangladesh spends the least in the world. We must see how these concerns are addressed in the next budget," he said.

BOTH ALLOWANCE AND BENEFICIARIES TO RISE

Apart from the number of beneficiaries, the monthly allowance in core cash assistance programmes will increase by only Tk 50 to Tk 100 in the next fiscal year.

About the allowance, Selim said such an increase had been made in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

- Number of schemes likely to be reduced to around 100
- Allocation for the schemes to rise to Tk 95,908 crore
- 38 schemes to be grouped under a 'pro-poor' section
- Cash assistance to rise by Tk 50-100 per person
- Number of beneficiaries to rise by 10 lakh

A lush mango orchard is brimming with a dozen different varieties of mangoes, each carefully protected in paper bags. This method safeguards the fruit from pests and weather damage, leading to healthier harvests. The photo was taken in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

COMMENTARY

Please don't resign An appeal to Prof Yunus

A captain cannot abandon ship, especially when the sea is turbulent

MAHFUZ ANAM



Every beat of my patriotic heart, every spark of my nation building energy, every iota of my common sense, every conclusion of my rational thinking compels me to most ardently, passionately and humbly appeal to Prof Yunus not to resign from the position of holding the helm of the nation at this crucial time. He may have all the frustrations in the world but his sense of responsibility as the head of the government must outweigh every other emotion, consideration and conclusion. We

know and believe that he loves Bangladesh in which case resignation is not his option but holding the helm is. Leading the country firmly, effectively and decisively till the next election is his only option and something for which people and this country will remain forever grateful to him. He must decide to stay the course and we, the media, will support him all the way. However independent media's form of support, which is its moral duty, is to present alternatives, multiple views and analyses, including

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Govt firm on carrying out 3 responsibilities Plans to meet parties over reforms, trials and polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering engaging with political parties to signal that it expects no obstruction from them in fulfilling three of its key responsibilities.

These responsibilities include implementing ongoing reforms, conducting trials of Awami League leaders for their alleged role in mass killings during the July uprising, and holding the next general election between this December and next June.

Sources familiar with discussions held yesterday at the Chief Adviser's Office and his official residence, Jamuna, said various political parties have reached out to advisers and other officials since news broke that Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus is considering resignation.

The advisers are expected to sit within a day or two to deliberate on the government's message, with options on the table including possible dialogues with all the political parties, according to the sources.

A highly placed source said Prof Yunus remains firm on his position that he should step down if the current political tension does not ease.

The chief adviser insists on having full authority to make decisions -- authority he says was assured when he took charge, according to a highly placed source.

He has also questioned the emergence of obstacles, pointing out that his government had initially received a clear mandate to pursue reforms, try Awami League leaders, and hold the general election.

Frustrated by recent political tensions, the chief adviser, during an informal discussion at Thursday's advisory council meeting,

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



Grief-stricken mourners weep as they attend the funeral of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Only election roadmap will ease tensions Say BNP leaders

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP believes that only a clear roadmap for the election will be able to improve the present volatile situation in the country's politics.

BNP leaders said they believe the situation resulted from divisions among the political camps that supported the July uprising, particularly over issues like the timing of the election and the demand for the resignation of certain advisers.

The other contentious issues include a proposed humanitarian corridor to Myamar's war-torn Rakhine state and the government move to hand Chattogram port's management to a foreign company.

BNP leaders believe it is possible for the interim government to unveil the election roadmap by June. The sooner it is announced, the quicker the political atmosphere will be clarified, the party leaders said.

BNP leaders said they have been communicating with its allies over the past two days. A source said a formal meeting with the allies might take place in a day or two.

Meanwhile, the Ganosamhati Andolon also said an immediate announcement

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

NCP, IAB urge Yunus to stay, make good on reform promises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party yesterday urged Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus to resolve the problems while remaining at the helm, and the Islami Andolan Bangladesh requested him to make reforms, saying his loyalty should lie with the martyrs of July.

The parties are saying these amid reports that Yunus expressed his desire to resign on Thursday.

NCP Convener Nahid Islam wrote on Facebook last night that Prof Yunus must make good on his promises on reforms, justice, and voting rights.

"He must resolve all political problems while remaining in his position," Nahid wrote.

The election will be held within the timeframe given by the government, and the July Charter outlining the fundamental reforms would be drafted before the election, he wrote.

There must be visible justice for the July massacre before the election, and a roadmap to the trial must be announced, he added.

The elections to the Constituent Assembly and National Parliament must be held simultaneously, he added.

Nahid said the country had been repeatedly divided, national unity

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4