

AWAMI LEAGUE RULE

Up to \$20b loan money laundered
Says BB governor Ahsan H Mansur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About \$18 billion to \$20 billion was laundered abroad during the Awami League regime, said Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur yesterday.

"Tracking where this money was used abroad or where it was diverted is a massive task for us – none of us were prepared to handle such tasks," he said at a press conference organised by the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit to unveil its annual report for 2023-2024.

Money was taken from the banking sector as loans.

Efforts are underway to reduce bureaucratic complexities to expedite the process of recovering the laundered funds, he said, adding that a joint investigation is ongoing involving 11 teams.

"If we speak frankly, inter-ministerial cooperation is a major challenge in Bangladesh. One

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A motorcyclist panics and falls on the road, with thick smoke from burning garbage visible in the background. The poor visibility, due to thick smoke from burning garbage next to the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Baliapur area of Savar, contributed to the accident. Battery-run rickshaws are banned on highways.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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Russia launches 60 drones at Ukraine

10 people hurt; Moscow says Ukraine trying to wreck peace talks

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russia launched 60 drones at Ukraine overnight, injuring several people, officials in Kyiv said yesterday, indicating a sharp decrease in the intensity of Moscow's attacks after it conducted three nights of massive aerial bombardment.

The earlier attacks – which the Ukrainian Air Force said included a record barrage of 355 drones on Sunday night – prompted US President Donald Trump to say that Russian President Vladimir Putin had "gone absolutely CRAZY" and threaten sanctions.

The air force said Russia's latest drone attack hit targets in nine locations and used 60 drones. A 17-year-old boy was among 10 people who were injured overnight and early yesterday, officials said.

"Air defence forces were working during the night in Dniproprovska," Serhiy Lysak, governor of the central-eastern region, said on the Telegram messaging app.

Meanwhile, Russia's defence ministry said yesterday that Ukraine, backed by certain European countries, had taken several 'provocative steps' aimed at derailing Moscow-initiated direct peace talks with Kyiv.

The first direct talks between Russia and Ukraine in over three years took place on May 16, but failed to produce a ceasefire agreement.

"At the initiative of the Russian Federation, direct Russian-Ukrainian dialogue on a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Ukraine has been resumed," the ministry said.

"At the same time, the Kyiv regime, supported by certain European countries, has taken a number of provocative steps aimed at disrupting the negotiation process."

According to the Russian ministry, since May 20, Ukraine has significantly increased drone and missile attacks on Russian territory, using Western-supplied munitions and targeting civilian areas.

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Muggers shoot money changer in Mirpur, rob Tk 22 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified criminals shot a man and robbed him of Tk 22 lakh in local and foreign currencies in broad daylight in Dhaka's Mirpur area yesterday.

The victim, Jahidul Islam, 55, is the proprietor of a money exchange service in the Mirpur 10 area.

Sajjad Rumon, officer-in-charge of Mirpur Police Station, said Jahidul was on his way to his shop from his home in Section 6 of Mirpur, carrying currencies worth Tk 22 lakh.

"When he reached Abdul Baten Road around 10:00am, six men in two motorcycles intercepted him. They demanded the money and, when he refused, one of them shot him on the left side of his waist," he added.

The attackers fled the scene with the money, the OC said.

Locals first rushed Jahidul to a nearby hospital. He was later transferred to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital.

Law enforcement officials are

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Surrounded by Meghna river tributaries, residents of Narsingdi's Alokballi union require this slender bamboo bridge to get to the neighbouring Hairmara union on foot. With ominous clouds signalling heavy rain, this bridge is likely to disappear underwater, at which point boats will become the only means to leave their villages. The photo was taken in Khodadila village of Alokballi on Monday afternoon.

PHOTO: JAHIDUL ISLAM JOY

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ECONOMIC REFORMS
Patchworks won't do, show commitment

CPD urges govt; 'time to announce a polls date'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday urged bold reforms in the economic sector to attract investment, ensure inclusive growth, and build a resilient economy.

The think tank said the government must move beyond piecemeal measures and demonstrate a clear commitment to comprehensive reforms, as the economy faces challenges including persistent high inflation, political and policy uncertainties, and sluggish investment.

At a press briefing at its office, the CPD said government reform initiatives, such as splitting the NBR and steps to address the banking sector's weaknesses, have not delivered optimal results.

"Governance challenges and regulatory bottlenecks continue to undermine investor confidence and impede economic potential," said CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatoon.

Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the CPD, said Bangladesh lacks investment dynamism despite the promotional efforts of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA).

He noted that while exports are growing at nearly 10

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Overhaul the power structures before polls
NCP demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party leaders have demanded fundamental reforms in the country's power structure before national election.

They also warned that without decentralisation and accountability, polls would only legitimise a flawed and authoritarian system.

Speaking at a discussion titled "Democratic Transformation: Fundamental Reforms and Elections" at the Jatiya Press Club, the leaders said the political framework in Bangladesh has long enabled concentrated power and partisan control of state institutions.

They said the demand for reform, which stems from two mandates, the 1971 Liberation War and the July uprising, rejects authoritarianism.

NCP Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary said any attempt at reform or election ignoring the foundational values of equality, human dignity, and justice would amount

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EXPECTANT MOTHERS

Govt struggling to ensure adequate care

Healthcare professionals cite lack of manpower and facilities

NILIMA JAHAN

Even as pregnancies rise across the country, fewer women are turning to government health facilities, the most accessible and affordable source of care, for help during and after childbirth.

Despite the often-life-threatening risks of pregnancy-related complications, recent data from the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division shows a steady decline in antenatal check-ups, deliveries, contraception use, and postnatal care in public hospitals and clinics.

Healthcare professionals cite shortages of medical staff, essential equipment, available beds and reliable medication as key deterrents, along with limited awareness among expectant mothers.

Meanwhile, the number of deliveries nationwide jumped from 2.79 million in 2023 to 3.03 million in 2024, according to the Directorate General of Health Services. But this surge has not been matched by a rise in the use of public health services, raising urgent concerns about the wellbeing of mothers and newborns.

Government health facilities handled just over

six percent (193,755) of total deliveries in 2023-24, slightly down from 194,992 the previous year, according to the Medical Education and Family Welfare Division's report.

WHO now recommends eight antenatal care (ANC) visits during pregnancy, but in Bangladesh, even the older target of four is becoming harder to meet.

In 2023-24, only 5.14 lakh pregnant women received the recommended four ANC check-ups at government facilities – down from 10.7 lakh in 2019-20. Postnatal care has followed the same trajectory, with only 3.55 lakh women receiving four full check-ups in 2023-24, compared to 5.7 lakh four years ago.

Contraceptive use has also dropped sharply, especially for long-term methods like injectables, IUDs, no-scalpel vasectomy, and tubectomy.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the national Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) stands at 136 per 100,000 live births. In rural areas, the figure is even higher at 157 – still far from the Sustainable Development Goal of reducing MMR to less than 70 by 2030.

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Bangladesh is celebrating yet another Safe Motherhood Day today to raise awareness about maternal health and promote safe healthcare for women during pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum periods.

Dhaka expects \$750 million in support from Japan
Yunus leaves for Tokyo today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus leaves Dhaka today for a four-day official visit to Japan.

During his visit, Bangladesh is expected to secure \$500 million in budgetary support from Japan, along with \$250 million for the railway sector and additional commitments across other areas.

The visit also aims to strengthen bilateral relations and deepen economic cooperation between the two countries, said Shafiqul Alam, chief adviser's press secretary, at

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YUNUS CALLS FOR FASTER INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF MATARABI-B4

Army won't manage Eid waste: ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Army has no plans to engage in waste management of sacrificial animals or dengue mosquito control during the upcoming Eid-ul-Azha, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a press statement yesterday.

The clarification came after media reports quoted Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Administrator Mohammad Azaz as saying the army would assist in post-Eid cleanup and mosquito eradication efforts.

"To inform all, it is hereby clarified that the Bangladesh Army is not aware of any such assignment, nor does it have any plans to be involved in such activities in the future," the ISPR statement read.

It added that such civic responsibilities fall under relevant city corporations and not the armed forces.

"The army remains focused on safeguarding national sovereignty and public security," it said.

Subsequently, DNCC said in a press statement the mayor's statement was misrepresented in

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