

Fakhrul slams Jamaat for skipping talks

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday criticised the Jamaat-e-Islami for skipping Tuesday's National Consensus Commission meeting.

In an oblique reference to the Jamaat, he said the party is concerned about how much influence it will retain after the election.

"That is why they were disappointed and did not attend the meeting," Fakhrul said at a programme of Dhaka North City Unit BNP.

"Many were not happy with the meeting outcome because the election would bring danger for them. As long as there is no election, they hold considerable importance," he said.

Once the election concludes, the BNP leader said, the party supported by the people will come to power.

The programme was held on the premises of Sunbeams School to launch the distribution of membership forms



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BNP leader Ishraque Hossain operates a fogging machine at the Nagar Bhaban to launch a mosquito control drive yesterday, as he continues his movement demanding to be sworn in as DSCC mayor.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Rooppur loan utilisation to get 3-yr extension

Partial supply expected in Sept or Oct, full operation early next year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The loan utilisation period for the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant is set to be extended by three years, as about \$3.38 billion of the Russian credit remains unspent after the original deadline expired in December 2024.

An amended protocol to this effect was finalised earlier this month during a high-level meeting between Bangladesh and Russia. Both sides agreed to extend the deadline until December 2027.

Under the original agreement signed on July 26, 2016, Russia committed \$11.38 billion, to be fully utilised by December 2024. However, as of April this year, only about \$8 billion had been disbursed, according to the Economic Relations Division (ERD).

The decision to extend the loan tenure was made at the 9th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meeting, held on June 3 at a Dhaka hotel. The meeting was chaired by Salehuddin Ahmed, adviser to the ministries of economy, science and technology, while the Russian delegation was led by AY Petrov, first deputy director general of Rosatom, Russia's state atomic energy agency.

"Both sides have agreed to extend the loan utilisation period. The protocol will be signed soon," Salehuddin told The Daily Star.

The Russian side also accepted several other proposals from Bangladesh. Notably, a 0.5 percent commitment fee on the undisbursed amount, originally part of the loan terms, will now be capped at \$250,000.

Officials from the Ministry of Science and Technology attributed the delay in project implementation to the Covid-19 pandemic and sanctions arising from the Russia-Ukraine war. They said without the revised protocol, Bangladesh would have incurred substantial commitment charges.

Russia also agreed not to impose any penalty interest on delayed repayments. Bangladesh currently owes around \$700 million in interest arrears, which remain unpaid due to sanctions-related complications.

While principal repayments will start after a grace period, interest has been accruing since disbursement. Bangladesh had requested a reduction in the loan's interest rate, but Russia maintained the original

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposed budget for fiscal 2025-26 failed to meet people's huge expectations, said economists, entrepreneurs and representatives from marginal people.

"This government came into power through a big change. On this ground, people had a huge expectation from this budget," said Debapriya Bhattacharya, convenor of Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh.

Bhattacharya's comment came in a discussion titled "National Budget 2025-26: What is There for the Left-behinds?", organised by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh held at the capital's Lakeshore Hotel.

The budget failed to address people's aspirations.

"So the budget of expectations became the budget of disappointment."

The budget formation process was problematic as the government did not consult with all the political parties and stakeholders, he said.

The interim government formed several commissions and committees and they have done their work free of cost.

But their activities and suggestions were not addressed in the budget, said Bhattacharya, who headed the white paper committee on the Bangladesh economy.

"The government did not take the recommendations from the

commissions seriously -- I feel cheated," said Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, head of the labour reform commission.

The budget could have removed some of the inequality in the society by implementing suggestions from several reform commissions, he added.

The structure of the proposed budget is the same as the previous ones said Bhattacharya, also a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"There is a striking disconnect between budgetary efforts and reform efforts," he added.

Since it is an interim government, implementation of reform measures

research fellow of CPD.

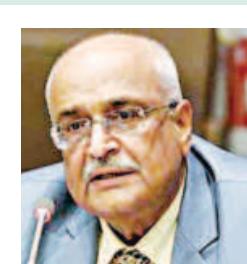
Though the government acknowledged the reports of the white paper committee, task force and reform commission, neither the budgetary allocations nor the fiscal measures were systematically designed to reflect the recommendations.

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DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA



On top of that, many steps were taken in the budget which went against neglected and marginal people, he added.

Core expectations from the budget were strengthening macroeconomic stability, incorporating reform, safeguarding marginalised citizens and promoting jobs and investment, said Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior

cannot be expected from it, said Anu Muhammad, a former chairman of the economics department at Jahangirnagar University.

"I did not have huge expectations that it would implement reforms. But I expected that it will at least start reform activities like reducing the contribution of VAT and so on."

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DHAKA SOUTH CITY Asif, Ishraque trade barbs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain and BNP leader Ishraque Hossain yesterday sparred over the latter's push to be sworn in as the mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

Asif said Ishraque's occupation of the mayor's office and obstruction of DSCC activities amounted to criminal offences, while Ishraque dismissed him as immature.

Speaking at the Secretariat, Asif said the government could not administer Ishraque's oath as the matter became sub judice after a writ petition.

Legal notices were issued, and the case later went to the Appellate Division, which kept it pending, he added.

He said preparations for oath-taking were in place on May 25, ahead of the May 26 deadline. However, the law ministry, after consulting the attorney general, advised against administering the oath due to the risk of contempt of court as the matter was pending with the Appellate Division.

By June, the gazette had lost its effectiveness, and the government could not act on such an expired notification, he claimed.

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20 pushed in through border in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Twenty individuals were detained from Masudpur border under Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj early yesterday after they were pushed into Bangladesh allegedly by India's Border Security Force.

The detainees include three men, seven women, and 10 children, said Lt Col Fahad Mahmud, commanding officer of BGB battalion 53 in Chapainawabganj.

A patrol team from Masudpur BGB Border Outpost detained the people near the zero line shortly after they were pushed in around 4:45am, said Lt Col Fahad.

The BGB official said none of them possessed any Bangladeshi national identity documents or birth certificates.

Upon primary interrogation, they provided their names and addresses, most of which traced back to different villages in Kurigram and Rangpur districts, he told this newspaper over the phone.

He also said the 10 adults had been living in the Indian state of Haryana for years after entering India illegally in search of employment.

The 10 children were born in India during their stay, the BGB official said, quoting the detainees.

The BGB official could not say the exact time when they had entered India for jobs.

The 20 detainees were handed over to Shibganj Police Station, he said.

The BGB already protested the push-in strongly, sending an official letter of protest to the BSF at the battalion commander level, the commanding officer added.



MONSOON BLOOMS ... A young vendor arranges burflowers, locally known as Kadam Phool, for sale at the TSC area of Dhaka University. Always in high demand during the monsoon, each flower is being sold for Tk 15-20. The photo was taken yesterday.

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ঢাকা উত্তর সিটি কর্পোরেশনের সম্মানিত করদাতাগণকে অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, হোল্ডিং ট্যাক্স, ট্রেড লাইসেন্স ইস্যু ও নবায়ন ক্ষি. এবং ডিএনসিসির মালিকানাধীন মার্কেটের সোকান ভাড়া ইত্যাদি পরিশোধের সুবিধার্থে ৩০ জুন ২০২৫ খ্রি। পর্যন্ত নিয়মিত কার্যদিবস ছাড়াও সরকারি সাংগ্রহিক ছান্টির দিন (শনিবার) সকাল ৯:০০ ঘটিকা থেকে বিকাল ৩:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত ডিএনসিসির ১০টি আঞ্চলিক কার্যালয়ের রাজ্য বিভাগসহ প্রধান রাজ্য কর্মকর্তার কার্যালয়ে অবস্থিত বাজার শাখা খোলা থাকবে।

নগরীর উন্নয়নমূলক কাজে সহযোগিতার জন্য সম্মানিত করদাতাগণকে চালতি অর্থ বছর অর্থাৎ ৩০ জুন ২০২৫ খ্রি। তারিখের মধ্যে কর পরিশোধ করার জন্য বিশেষভাবে অনুরোধ করা হলো।

প্রশাসক
ঢাকা উত্তর সিটি কর্পোরেশন