

Minimum

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government officials have also been raised to a minimum of Tk 750 from Tk 500.

On June 3, following the placement of the national budget, the government issued a circular regarding the special allowances.

According to the circular, government staff under the national pay scale in grades 1 to 9 will receive a special allowance of 10 percent of their basic salary, while those in grades 10 to 20 will receive 15 percent of their basic salary.

However, in all cases, the increase will not be less than Tk 1,000.

The minimum special allowance was officially approved while approving the budget for the next fiscal year in a meeting presided over by the chief adviser on June 22.

Retired government pensioners, including reinstated pensionable employees, whose entitled monthly pension is Tk 17,389 or above, will receive an increase of 10 percent.

Those entitled monthly pension of Tk 17,388 or below will receive a 15 percent increase, but not less than Tk 750.

Additionally, MPO-listed teachers will receive a minimum special allowance of 10 to 15 percent based on their grades, but not less than Tk 1,500.

Meanwhile, officials of the judicial service and pensioners in that service will receive a special allowance of 10 percent of their basic salary.

Iran-Israel

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Bangladesh imports about 1.8 million tonnes of LPG annually through private operators. Around 12 companies are currently importing and distributing LPG, with a monthly demand of approximately 150,000 tonnes.

Meanwhile, a crude oil tanker departed from Saudi Arabia's Ras Tanura port on June 15 and is scheduled to arrive in Bangladesh's maritime boundary by Tuesday.

Another shipment carrying 100,000 tonnes of crude oil is expected to depart from the Jebel Dhanna port in Abu Dhabi on July 8 or 9 passing through the Strait of Hormuz, according to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation officials.

"If the conflict prolongs or the Strait of Hormuz is closed, fuel imports could face serious setbacks," BPC Chairman Md. Aminul Hsan told The Daily Star.

Iran's Supreme National Security Council must make the final decision to close the strait, Iran's Press TV said on Sunday, after parliament was reported to have backed the measure.

However, the decision to close the strait is not yet final, as parliament has not ratified a bill to that effect.

"The rapid price increase in the global market is also worrying us," Hsan said.

Washington's decision to join Israel's attacks on Iran has spurred forecasts of oil surging to \$100 a barrel.

Both Brent and West Texas Intermediate crude hit fresh five-month highs on Monday in choppy trade as investors weighed the potential risks to supply.

Shipping rates for supertankers, which can carry 2 million barrels of oil, have also soared, more than doubling in a week to over \$60,000 a day, reports Reuters.

"We are concerned about the situation in the Middle East since our energy sector heavily relies on it. We are closely monitoring developments in the region and maintaining constant communication with our suppliers to ensure the supply chain remains uninterrupted," said Zahidul Hasan, chief executive officer of BM Energy BD.

Man found dead

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officer-in-charge of Jagannathpur Police Station.

"We are still looking into the matter. It is unclear whose bullet caused his death," Imtiaz said.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Directorate said the joint forces operation was conducted at Hatiya village under Kulonj Union Parishad of Dirai upazila.

The drive was launched after armed professions and gunfire were reported amid clashes between two rival groups over supremacy in the area.

Members of one of the gangs, led by local union council Chairman Ekrar Hossain, fled to Gadalia village and started firing indiscriminately.

When they fired at the security personnel, the army retaliated in self-defence, the ISPR said. A team of the joint forces later recovered the body of Sayeed from the scene, it added.

It also said four criminals – Tajuddin, Amir Uddin, Hiron Mia and Jamir Mia – were arrested during the drive. Following information given by the suspects, five guns, a bullet, six bullet-proof jackets and some sharp weapons were recovered from their houses.

Quoting locals, OC Imtiaz said the leader of the gang, Ekrar, is also a Jubo League leader. Imtiaz said the locals identified the leader of the rival group as Atikur Rahman, president of BNP's local union unit.

Several attempts to reach Ekrar and Atikur were unsuccessful. Ekrar's phone was found switched off, while Atikur did not answer calls.

Outrage after assault on ex-CEC Huda

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including two other former CECs and deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, over alleged manipulation of the 2014, 2018, and 2024 parliamentary elections.

According to witnesses, a group entered Huda's home, assaulted him, put shoes around his neck in presence of law enforcers, and then handed him over to police.

Twenty-three eminent citizens in a joint statement issued by Human Rights Forum Bangladesh (HRFB) expressed grave concern, saying that any form of degrading or violent behaviour outside the judicial process violates individual rights and is contrary to the constitution.

The rights body added that such actions are punishable offences under the existing law.

The statement warned that mob violence must not be justified or tolerated.

HRFB also criticised the government's immediate response as insufficient, demanding public disclosure of legal actions taken and effective prevention of such incidents in future.

Rights activists include Hameeda Hossain, lawyers Sultana Kamal, Raja Devasish Roy, ZI Khan Panna, Sara Hossain, Manusher Jonno Foundation Executive Director Shaheen Anam, Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman, Nijera Kori Coordinator Khushi Kabir, and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad

President Fauzia Moslem signed the statement.

Rights organisation, Ain o Salish Kendra, said such public humiliation and violence undermine the country's constitution, basic human values, and the rule of law. Even if there are serious allegations, the only way to resolve them is through established legal procedures, not mob attacks.

ASK said at least 83 deaths occurred due to mob violence from January to June 2025, describing it as a sign of alarming lawlessness. "The government cannot avoid responsibility for such incidents."

In a statement, Human Rights Support Society condemned the "mob terrorism" and humiliation of a former senior government official. "Such actions are contrary to democratic etiquette and the rule of law."

"No individual should be subjected to mob violence. All must be judged under the existing laws of the country. These incidents severely undermine personal dignity, civil rights, and public trust in the rule of law."

The organisation called for a thorough investigation and prosecution of those responsible.

Another rights body, Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, expressed deep concern over the arrest of former CEC Huda from his Uttara residence and his harassment in front of law enforcers.

"BLAST demands immediate and fair probe of the incident and ensuring accountability and proper justice of those responsible, as well as

strong steps to stop such organised violence," the organisation said in a statement.

Speaking at an event in Gazipur's Kaliakair, Home Adviser Jahangir Alam described the assault on Huda as "completely unacceptable", reports BSS.

"The attack on Nurul Huda was carried out in the presence of law enforcement personnel. If any member of the law enforcement agencies is found involved in the incident, legal action will be taken after investigation."

He urged the people not to take the law into their own hands, stressing, "Offenders should be handed over to the authorities for appropriate legal action."

Meanwhile, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin told the media, "We don't believe in mob culture. We are relentlessly fighting for the establishment of the rule of law in the country."

He added that allegations against Huda, his arrest, and trial must be handled lawfully.

"We don't support the disgraceful behaviour he was subjected to."

He said this was an isolated incident. "If any BNP leader or activist is found to have been involved, the party will probe and take disciplinary action. That is our position."

The BNP leader also criticised Huda for his role in damaging democratic institutions but reiterated, "We don't believe in such toxic culture or mob justice."

Hasina found to be 'fully complicit'

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Additionally, the International Crimes Tribunal has been analysing documents abandoned at the Gono Bhaban after August 5, 2024.

Among them, the ICT discovered two handwritten notes by Rab officers, dated 2015. Addressed to the director of Rab's intelligence wing, the officers in the note refused to carry out unlawful orders.

"These weren't formal letters but personal declarations, yet even these had clearly been forwarded to Sheikh Hasina, who kept them in her files from 2015 until she escaped to India in 2024," the commission said.

Investigators have tracked down the officers who wrote the notes.

One of the notes read: "... when I was ordered to go on an operation by the Rab authority, I said that if there is any plan of extrajudicial killing or firing which is not permitted by the law of the country, I cannot take part in such an act."

In this context, the commission's report said, "The very existence of these notes, handwritten by junior officers yet deemed important enough to be placed before the then prime minister, underscores the extent of Sheikh Hasina's personal oversight."

"The generals who headed DGF [at that time] served as direct interlocutors between the armed forces and figures such as Sheikh Hasina and General Tariq Siddiqui when they ordered enforced disappearances."

The report further added that senior generals, along with high-ranking police and security officials, received instructions directly from the political leadership.

It noted that Major General Kabir Ahmed, currently the commandant of the School of Infantry and Tactics, told the commission that while serving as DGF's Counter Terrorism and Intelligence Bureau (CTIB) director, he personally discussed the illegal detention of Brigadier General Abdullahil Amaan Azmi with two DGF director generals – Lt Gen Saiful Alam and Lt Gen Ahmed Tabrez Shams.

Both Alam and Shams were sent into forced retirement by the interim government on September 12, 2024.

A junior DGF officer also told the commission that former CTIB director Brigadier General Ahmed Tanveer Mazher Siddiqui personally informed him of Brigadier Azmi and Michael Chakma's presence at the JIC, in order to coordinate their food supply.

The commission expressed frustration in its report over the fact that the top brass remain at large.

On January 6, 2025, the ICT issued arrest warrants for 11 individuals, based on prima facie evidence of complicity in enforced disappearances. The list includes Sheikh Hasina, former defence and security adviser Major General Tarique Ahmed Siddiqui, former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed, five DGF director generals, a DGF director, and the former head of the police's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit Md Asaduzzaman.

The DGF generals named are: Lt Gen (ret) Md Akbar Hussain, Maj Gen (ret) Md Saiful Abedin, Lt Gen (ret) Mohammad Saiful Alam, Lt Gen (ret) Ahmed Tabrez Shams Choudhury, and Maj Gen (ret) Hamidul Haq.

The report states that these generals were in command at DGF when individuals such as Brigadier Azmi, Lt Col Hasin, Ambassador Maroof Zaman, and others were detained inside the JIC.

"Based on repeated checks on the command structure, we can state with certainty that enforced disappearance at JIC during that period could not have occurred without the explicit knowledge and acquiescence of these generals."

While Lt Gen Akbar has not been arrested, he has responded to summons and appeared twice before the commission, beginning in December last year.

"He expressed frustration over the cancellation of his passport. He made it clear that he felt cornered, without any avenue of departure from the country," said the report.

IMF approves \$1.3b in loans

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staff," he wrote, referring to the IMF board meeting in Washington.

Additionally, the IMF executive board approved a modification of performance criteria and granted a waiver for the non-observance of the performance criterion related to the non-imposition and non-intensification of exchange restrictions, based on the temporary nature of the non-observance and the implementation of corrective measures.

Programme performance for the third and fourth reviews remains broadly satisfactory despite the difficult political and economic context, the IMF said in a statement after the meeting.

Bangladesh's macroeconomic challenges have increased since the 2024 uprising, which led to the ouster of the previous government. The timely formation of an interim government has helped stabilise political and security conditions, fostering a gradual return to economic stability.

"However, the economic outlook has worsened due to persistent political uncertainty, continuation of tighter policy mix, rising trade barriers, and increasing stress in the

banking sector," the IMF said.

Near-term policies should prioritise rebuilding external resilience and reducing inflation, said Nigel Clarke, deputy managing director and acting chair of IMF, after the board meeting.

The authorities' recent steps to implement a new exchange rate regime and include revenue-enhancing measures in the fiscal 2025-26 budget are "welcome", Clarke said.

A balanced policy mix, anchored in maintaining a tight monetary policy stance, greater exchange rate flexibility and revenue-based fiscal consolidation, will support efforts to restore both external and internal balances.

Efforts to raise tax revenues and rationalise expenditures, including through subsidy reduction, are critical for creating the fiscal space needed to strengthen social, development and climate initiatives.

"Sustained structural reforms are essential for Bangladesh to achieve its goal of attaining upper middle-income status," Clarke said.

"Key priorities include diversifying exports, attracting greater foreign direct investment, strengthening governance and enhancing data

Trilateral talks

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Bangladesh, statement, however, did not mention any such agreement.

All three countries, however, agreed to forge cooperation on the principles of openness, inclusivity, good neighbourliness, equality, mutual trust and common development.

"It was an informal meeting. Nothing substantial was decided," a foreign ministry official, wishing to remain anonymous, told this newspaper.

Bangladesh's inclusion in the "trilateral cooperation mechanism" drew questions from foreign policy analysts and an economist.

Selim Raihan, professor of economics at Dhaka University, said this trilateral initiative has significant geopolitical implications and raises an important question: "Does the current interim government have the mandate to commit the country to any strategic alignments?"

He stated that the interim government is primarily tasked with overseeing important reforms and preparing for the national election; its authority to enter into long-term international agreements would be highly questionable.

Obaidul Haque, associate professor of international relations at Dhaka University, thinks China has taken the initiative considering the short tenure of the interim government in Bangladesh.

He said the trilateral initiative could be intended to recalibrate power dynamics in the South Asian region and expressed his doubts

about its effectiveness in the long run.

He said it is important for Bangladesh to keep in mind the geopolitical reality.

"We have to be aware of our national interest."

Since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina, who is sheltered in New Delhi, the relations between Bangladesh and India have remained strained.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's relations with Pakistan have improved somewhat following the political changeover.

China has good relations with both Bangladesh and Pakistan – both members of China's Belt and Road Initiative, a geopolitical project of China opposed by India and the US and its allies.

Obaidul said, "Bangladesh and China already enjoy solid trade ties. As for Bangladesh-Pakistan relations, there's been some improvement lately – but it's unlikely to go much further since there's not a whole lot of economic incentive. Plus, there's still some historical baggage between them that hasn't really been dealt with."

Former ambassador M Humayun Kabir said the interim government already has a lot of work to do before the elections, and why it needed to be involved in such an initiative is not clear.

"It should have consulted the relevant stakeholders before such a trilateral meeting when we already have good bilateral relations with these countries."

"Whatever we do, we must think of the past, present and future. Prudence is better than repentance."

Govt turns to AI for faster

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Officials with knowledge of the planned programme say the new system will address long-standing bottlenecks in project formulation and execution by introducing a single digital platform for end-to-end processing, with AI integrated into decision-making, monitoring and risk management.

The move comes in response to chronic inefficiencies in the current system. On average, it takes three years to prepare, process, and approve a project. This results in more than 1,000 projects requiring revisions or deadline extensions each year, according to the planned project's proposal.

To improve performance with the new programme, the government plans to build a centralised platform integrating IBAS++ (Integrated Budget and Accounting System (IBAS++), e-PMIS (electronic Project Management Information System), and related asset and project management systems.

A single sign-in mechanism will allow real-time data exchange across agencies, while AI tools will help analyse project data and identify delays or implementation issues.

Civil servants will receive training in AI-based analytics, cybersecurity, and risk management to support the transition.

Around 36 percent of the project's budget is likely to be allocated for ICT equipment, software, and databases. A further 20 percent is expected to go toward local and foreign training, and 28 percent will likely be earmarked for consultancy services.

The AI-driven reform project is one of six proposals expected to be up for approval at today's ECNEC meeting, with a combined value of Tk 4,017 crore.

Among them is a Tk 552 crore project titled "Procurement Modernisation to Improve Public

Swechchhasebak Dal

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The OC said drives are underway to arrest the other who took part in the assault.

On Sunday evening, a mob, which police said consisted mostly of local members of Swechchhasebak Dal, gathered in front of the former CEC's residence in Uttara and assaulted him. They later handed him over to the police.

The video of the assault has gone viral on social media.

Earlier, Hafizur Rahman, while talking to The Daily Star, said that police have identified Mozammel Haque Dhali, a Swechchhasebak Dal activist, who was seen assaulting the former CEC in a video.

A case was in the process of being filed, he added.

According to police sources, at least 200 people were present in the area during the attack, led by Sheikh Farid Hossain, president of Swechchhasebak Dal's Dhaka city north unit.

Farid, however, denied being present at the scene.

"I was in Gulshan when the incident took place. I later asked some of our party men to go there to ensure that no one takes the law into their own hands," he said.

When asked if Dhali is affiliated with his party, Farid said he does not hold any position but is an activist of the Swechchhasebak Dal.

A video of the incident shows Nurul Huda, dressed in a white T-shirt and lungi and with a garland of shoes around his neck, surrounded by a group of people. At one point, a bearded man hit Huda in the face twice with a

Service Delivery", which is expected to receive Tk 433 crore in financing from the World Bank. It aims to upgrade the electronic government procurement (e-GP) system with a new data centre, updated modules, contract management tools, and online training platforms.

Emerging technologies, including AI, machine learning, and Open Contracting Data Standards, will be used to enhance transparency, enable real-time analytics, and strengthen evidence-based procurement decisions. The project also includes a long-term capacity-building strategy to professionalise procurement and encourage sustainable, eco-friendly practices.

Another major project on the agenda is a Tk 652 crore programme to improve access to safe water, sanitation, and waste management for Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char. The Asian Development Bank is expected to provide Tk 420 crore in grant financing.

Key interventions include building new pipelines, installing household connections, improving surface water reservoirs, and setting up human waste management systems in the refugee camps.

The government also plans to undertake a Tk 2,009 crore project titled "TVET Teachers for the Future (TTF) Programme" to improve the quality of technical education. The Asian Development Bank is expected to finance Tk 1,800 crore of the total cost.

Bangladesh currently has 55,304 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) teachers, of whom 21 percent are women.

The project aims to provide high-quality teacher training in five priority technology areas aligned with future industry needs: electrical and electronics, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, computer science and engineering, and agriculture and food.

shoe, while others nearby appeared to attempt to stop the assault.

A few seconds later, a policeman grabbed Huda by the hand and took him away. At that moment, someone was heard saying, "We've been keeping him [Huda] on watch since last night [Saturday]."

When the former CEC was being put into a police vehicle, the people gathered there were heard chanting pro-BNP slogans.

On Sunday afternoon, the BNP filed a case against three former CECs, including Huda, deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, 10 election commissioners, and 10 others over election irregularities with the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.

The two other CECs are Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad and Kazi Habibul Awal, who presided over the 2014 and 2024 national elections.

Opposition parties allege that ballot box stuffing took place on the night before election day in 2018 under the KM Nurul Huda-led election commission.

After the incident, the government urged people not to take the law into their own hands.

"Physically abusing an accused is illegal and a criminal offence," the government said, adding that the former CEC was arrested in connection with a specific case.

The law enforcement agencies will identify those responsible for instigating chaos through mob action and will take appropriate steps against them, it added.

"All accused will be brought to justice in accordance with the country's law," it added.