



NBR STRIKE

Trade thru ports halts on Day 1

Protesters demand removal of chairman, withdrawal of transfer orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Import and export across the country ground to a halt yesterday as National Board of Revenue officials enforced a complete shutdown, defying the government's call to withdraw the strike and threats of disciplinary action.

With export documentation and shipments coming to a halt, exporters are in serious trouble. Failure to ship goods on time could result in significant financial losses.

SYED M TANVIR,
managing director of Pacific Jeans



The strike severely disrupted operations at customs, VAT, and income tax offices, further slowing revenue collection, which is already lagging well behind targets. This shortfall has increased the government's reliance on domestic borrowing.

As trade and business activities suffered, top chambers and major business leaders voiced concern and called for urgent government intervention. At a joint press briefing in Dhaka, representatives from key sectors, including garments, pharmaceuticals, leather, and textiles, urged the Chief Adviser's Office to intervene immediately.

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Defying the government's call to withdraw their protest, NBR officials yesterday launched an indefinite work stoppage and staged a "March to NBR" in front of the headquarters in Agargaon, demanding the chairman's removal and an end to what they call "vengeful transfers".

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Govt looks to navy to run New Mooring depot for now

Talks with port authorities on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The government is considering appointing the Bangladesh Navy to operate the port's New Mooring Container Terminal (NCT) with assistance from the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) for the next six months.

The matter was discussed during a meeting between senior CPA officials and Shipping Adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) M Shakhawat Hossain at the CPA administrative building yesterday.

The meeting also reviewed the progress of several ongoing projects at the port, which was visited by Shakhawat earlier in the day.

A senior CPA official, seeking anonymity, confirmed the development and said the CPA had earlier proposed operating the NCT through its own management by floating a direct tender.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Shutdown is another economic peril

Finance ministry should start dialogue with NBR protesters now

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Bangladesh navigates a precarious economic recovery, a total shutdown of the country's customs and tax operations is another disruption the nation cannot afford. Yet that is precisely the reality the economy is now confronting.

Vowing to continue an indefinite work stoppage and stage a protest march on tax offices, the NBR Reform Unity Council has intensified its demands, including the removal of the NBR chairman. As the shutdown enters its second day, port clearances and tax functions remain paralysed, straining already fragile trade flows.

While the grievances voiced by protesting revenue officials stem from frustrations with top-down reform efforts, the tactics of crippling the tax machinery threaten to damage the economy.

The current standoff has its roots in a sweeping overhaul of the National Board of Revenue, proposed under an ordinance backed by the International Monetary Fund. The ordinance would split the NBR into two distinct divisions -- one responsible for tax policy and the other for revenue collection -- in a move the government said was aimed at eliminating conflicts of interest between policymaking and implementation.

After weeks of tension within the revenue administration, the government on May 25 announced a clear timeline to finalise amendments to the Revenue Policy and Revenue Administration Ordinance by July 31. The plan, issued through an official press release, pledged consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including those aligned with the protest. The finance ministry announced that the NBR would instead be transformed into a specialised, autonomous agency.

Against this backdrop, the decision by the protesters to go for a full-

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CONSENSUS TALKS

Appointment of caretaker chief to take centre stage

Discussions resume today on upper house

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The National Consensus Commission is likely to propose two options for appointing the chief adviser to caretaker governments: one involving parliament, and the other selecting an individual from among retired chief justices.

It will also invite political parties to propose how chief advisers should be appointed.

This will be part of broader discussions on the framework for an interim or caretaker government. The matter will be discussed as the consensus commission resumes talks with political parties today after a three-day break. This marks the seventh day of the second round of discussions.

Professor Ali Riaz, vice president of the consensus commission, told The Daily Star that the discussions would focus on the formation of an Appointment Committee for Constitutional and Statutory Bodies and the process of electing members to the upper house.

In the coming days, the commission and parties will discuss a wide range of issues, including the framework for interim or caretaker governments, he added.

Asked what the commission recommends as the method for appointing the chief adviser, Prof Riaz said that the Constitution Reform Commission had earlier

proposed that the National Constitutional Council would appoint the chief adviser. The Electoral Reform Commission also made a similar recommendation.

"But we are no longer in that position. We will have to develop a new proposal. We are currently reviewing and evaluating the options we have," he said.

At discussions with the Constitution Reform Commission, citizens expressed support for formation of an All-Party Parliamentary Committee, the members of which will be members from both the treasury and opposition benches. This committee will be involved in the appointment of the chief adviser.

"We will put this on the table during the discussions," he said.

Prof Riaz also mentioned that some political parties, during the first round of talks, favoured following the process outlined in the 13th amendment for appointing the chief adviser. That option will also be part of the discussions.

There are opinions against involving the judiciary in the process, he said. "We will take that into consideration as well."

Almost all political parties have supported the revival of the caretaker government system in the first round of discussions.

The system of a caretaker government was reintroduced after the fall of the Ershad regime in 1990.

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Nearly 1 lakh Palestinians killed in Gaza

Reports Israeli daily Haaretz

ANADOLU AJANSI, Jerusalem/Istanbul

Nearly 100,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's genocidal war on Gaza, representing about 4 percent of the territory's population, said the Israeli daily Haaretz.

The death toll contradicts the number of fatalities given by Gaza's Health Ministry, which stood at over 56,300 since October 2023.

Haaretz on Friday said in addition to the high Palestinian deaths from Israeli attacks, many people also died from the indirect effects of the war such as hunger, cold and diseases amid a collapse of the health system in Gaza.

The daily said while Israeli spokespersons, journalists and influencers reject with knee-jerk disgust the death toll announced by Gaza's Health Ministry as exaggerated, more and more international experts "are stating that not only is this list, with all the horror it embodies, reliable -- but that it may even be very conservative in relation to reality."

It cited a study conducted by Professor Michael Spagat, an economist at Holloway College at the University of London, a world-class expert on mortality in violent conflicts, about deaths in Gaza.

The study surveyed 2,000 households in the Palestinian enclave, comprising almost 10,000 people.

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Illegal shops and parked vehicles clog the entrance to the capital's Dhaka Medical College Hospital, causing severe public inconvenience. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Umama Fatema quits SAD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Umama Fatema, former spokesperson of the Students Against Discrimination, has officially stepped down from the platform, citing internal betrayal, political interference, and smear campaigns.

In a Facebook post yesterday, she wrote that her formal journey with the movement ended with its central council held on Wednesday.

"After the formation of

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