



"I want to see safety for the people of Gaza. They've gone through hell."

US President DONALD TRUMP on Gaza ceasefire

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Life-saving care hampered in 25 govt hospitals

ICUs inoperative or partially functional in these facilities

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Intensive Care Units at 25 public hospitals across the country have remained non-functional or partially operational over the last few months largely due to a manpower crisis, depriving many critically ill patients of life-saving care.

These ICUs with a total of 240 beds were set up in 22 districts between 2020 and last year under the Covid-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness (ERPP) Project, largely funded by the World Bank.

Seventy-four government hospitals in 42 districts have a total of 1,372 ICU beds, meaning 22 districts still don't have any ICU facilities, as per the latest DGHS data.

Over 1,000 staffers, including medical officers and technicians, were recruited to operate the units. However, their contracts expired in December last year, and the government neither reappointed them nor made any replacements.

This has strained the ICU facilities at other government hospitals, particularly at the district level, making it extremely difficult for many to access critical care. Besides, private hospitals charge exorbitant fees for ICU services, rendering them unaffordable to most patients.

A recent rise in Covid-19 cases has heightened concerns over access to critical care. If the situation worsens, the demand for ICU services is likely to increase further.

According to the latest DGHS data, 74 government hospitals in 42 districts have a total of 1,372 ICU beds, meaning 22 districts still don't have any ICU facilities. Besides, of these beds, 758 (55 percent) are concentrated in 22 Dhaka-based hospitals.

Under the project taken up in 2020, 10-bed ICUs were set up at 13 public hospitals in Cumilla, Noakhali, Gopalganj, Feni, Munshiganj,

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Chattogram city's first-ever centralised sewage project aims to modernise sanitation, prevent water pollution, and benefit thousands of port city dwellers. The project, with its physical work beginning in January 2022, has experienced significant delays and cost overruns. Its initial phase is now slated for completion in June next year. The photo was taken recently in the city's Halishahar area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

BANGLADESH'S BANKING SECTOR REFORMS

ADB to provide \$1b in budget support

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

The Asian Development Bank plans to provide \$1 billion in budget support to advance Bangladesh's banking sector reforms, contingent on 25 conditions including the creation of a financial stability fund for banks facing capital shortfalls.

The funds will be released in two phases -- \$500 million in the current fiscal year and the remaining \$500 million in the next, according to a recent ADB report.

This follows last month's approval of a separate \$500 million allocation, granted after the government and the Bangladesh Bank undertook initial reform measures.

The reforms were launched in response to the deteriorating financial health of several banks weakened by irregularities and scams during the Awami League government's tenure.

Among the conditions for the \$1 billion package, the ADB has asked the central bank to complete asset quality reviews (AQRs) of stressed banks to

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◆ \$500m to be disbursed this fiscal year, the rest in next fiscal year

◆ 25 conditions including creation of a stability fund to recapitalise distressed banks

◆ Central bank will formulate detailed strategies utilising these funds

Some reforms needed for fair election

Says Jamaat chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday condemned mob attacks, saying that these incidents have created such an environment that is not conducive to election.

"For a fair election, some fundamental reforms must be implemented," he said while addressing the party's divisional rally at Rangpur Zilla School ground.

Referring to the recent attack on Patgram Police Station in Lalmonirhat, he said, "It's not just Patgram. A group has turned entire Bangladesh into Patgram."

A mob attacked the police station and snatched away two convicts from custody on Wednesday night.

"Open any newspaper or turn on a television channel, you'll see mob attacks taking place somewhere in the country," Shafiqur said.

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Rice, veggies, fish get pricier

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of daily essentials such as rice, vegetables, and fish have gone up in the capital, causing concern among consumers, especially those with limited income.

Many shoppers say the rise in prices after Eid has made it harder to manage household expenses.

Over the past four weeks, different types of rice have become costlier by Tk 3 to Tk 6 per kg.

Abdur Rahman, who runs a small roadside hotel, came to Karwan Bazar from Agargaon to buy daily kitchen items.

"After Eid, the price of all vegetables went up by around Tk 10 per kg," he said.

"Potatoes are more expensive now. If the government does not monitor the market properly, prices may rise even more. It's becoming a burden on my family," he added.

The price of Sonali chicken has dropped slightly. It now costs Tk 300 to Tk 320 per kg, down from Tk 330 a few weeks ago. However, the price of broiler chicken has stayed the same.

During visits to markets in Karwan

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NEWS ANALYSIS

Can Bangladesh retain its foothold in US market?

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

As Bangladesh races against a July 9 deadline to secure a lower tariff regime with the United States, the stakes could not be higher. Without a breakthrough in ongoing negotiations, the tariff on Bangladeshi garment exports could skyrocket to 53 percent from the current 16 percent. And in that case, Bangladesh risks surrendering its hard-won foothold in the world's largest apparel market.

The US is Bangladesh's single largest export destination, with annual shipments exceeding \$8 billion -- over 95 percent of which are garments. Despite facing a relatively high tariff of 16 percent, Bangladesh has maintained its position as the third-largest garment exporter to the US, trailing only China and Vietnam.

"Bangladesh's competitiveness in the US market is depending on the new tariff rate," said Mahmud Hasan Khan Babu, president of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA). "Let us wait and see as the negotiation is still underway."

Despite these headwinds, Bangladesh's apparel sector has held its ground, powered by low prices, high compliance standards, and competitive labour costs. Yet that may not be enough in a dramatically shifting trade environment. The Trump administration



Bangladesh's competitiveness in the US market is depending on the new tariff rate. Let us wait and see as the negotiation is still underway.

MAHMUD HASAN KHAN BABU, president of BGMEA

has just concluded a deal with Vietnam that fixes a 20 percent tariff on Vietnamese garment exports to the US, in exchange for zero-duty access for American goods into Vietnam. Transshipment of Chinese goods through Vietnam, meanwhile, would incur a 40 percent tariff -- still 13 percentage points below what Bangladesh might face if talks falter.

"If Bangladesh cannot strike a better deal and it maintains the reciprocal tariff at 37 percent, it will be challenging," said Mohammad Abdur Razzaque, chairman of the Research and Policy Integration for Development (RAPID). "But it also depends on how other countries, such as India, are negotiating their own deals."

Vietnam's deal may be attractive on paper, but it's unlikely to fully displace Bangladesh's role. "Vietnam alone cannot supply all the required demand for garments to the US -- they simply don't have the capacity," said Fazlee Shamim Ehsan, executive president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA). "Bangladesh remains a globally strong garment supplier and a long-time trusted sourcing destination for US retailers."

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THE JULY THAT ROCKED BANGLADESH

JULY 5, 2024

Nationwide protests persist despite holiday

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

Even on a holiday, the quota reform protests show no sign of slowing.

Students across Bangladesh take to the streets, block roads, form human chains, and voice their rejection of the reinstated quota system in government jobs.

What began as student anger has now grown into a nationwide movement, with teachers, political groups, and ordinary citizens extending their support.

In Chattogram, students of Chittagong University gather at Shaheed Minar and later block the Sholoshohor road from 4:00pm, halting traffic for nearly an hour and a half. They chant slogans demanding an end to discrimination and call for the complete abolition of the quota system.

In Dinajpur, braving rain, students of Hajee Mohammad

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