

Straighten out the NBFIs crisis

Reforms urgently needed to save both banking and non-banking institutions

That non-performing loans (NPLs) have become a headache not just for banks but also non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) should not surprise us. What's alarming, however, is the scale of trouble NBFIs find themselves in and how little attention they have received from the authorities, unlike the crisis-ridden banks. According to a report by this daily, as many as 20 NBFIs—out of a total of 35 currently registered to operate under the Bangladesh Bank—have been put on the “red list” for giving out loans more than three times larger than the value of collateral they hold. And now the majority of these loans have turned bad. This needs urgent intervention.

According to our report, as of December 2024, the NBFIs in question disbursed Tk 25,808 crore in loans against collateral worth Tk 6,899 crore—26.73 percent of the loan amount. To make matters worse, 83.16 percent of these loans—or Tk 21,462 crore—have now been classified as NPLs. As the central bank has discovered, many of the loans were approved without adhering to due diligence: no proper assessment of the loan-seekers' repayment ability, no independent verification of collateral information. These NBFIs are now drowning in a crippling liquidity crisis, unable to pay off their depositors.

This crisis has long been in the making, as irregularities and mismanagement have been ailing both banks and NBFIs for a long time, particularly during the tenure of the Awami League regime that all but decimated the financial sector. However, troubles in the banks have always overshadowed problems in the NBFIs, owing to the sheer scale of the crisis in the former. An NBFIs sector leader pointed out that they had been raising the issues debilitating the sector with the authorities over the last several years, yet no action was taken to prevent its slide. Even after the August 5, 2024 political changeover, the central bank undertook a number of reform initiatives to straighten out the banking sector, but no visible steps were taken to restore the NBFIs.

This imbalanced approach to resolving our financial crisis needs to change. While we appreciate the central bank's belated assessment of the NBFIs' current state and the measures taken so far to sort out the mess, a lot more needs to be done, and urgently. Reform initiatives must focus on the entire financial sector, which means troubles gripping the NBFIs must be given due attention. The Bangladesh Bank and the government must take their fair share of responsibility, too: they must not only employ stringent policies and strict regulatory oversight for the NBFIs to operate under, but also work with them to figure out a plan to recover the money they lost to bad loans so depositors can be paid back. Most importantly, actions must be taken to restore the confidence that people have lost in the NBFIs due to the persistent problems.

Contain dengue spread outside Dhaka

Experts have warned of a severe outbreak in all districts

The dengue situation seems to be taking a critical turn as we pass through the monsoon season. In the first 12 days of July, 14 people reportedly died from the disease, bringing the total number of deaths this year to 56. While Dhaka was the hardest hit in previous years, this year all 64 districts are reportedly at risk of a major outbreak. As of July 14, the total number of dengue cases in the country stands at 14,880. Of them, more than 11,000 patients are from outside Dhaka. As dengue spreads across the country, it will be even more difficult to contain transmission, ensure proper treatment, and prevent further loss of life.

Reportedly, the cases outside Dhaka are increasing rapidly. For example, in Cumilla's Daudkandi, 65 new cases of dengue were reported in 24 hours from July 13 to July 14. Between June 18 and July 14, blood samples of a total of 11,708 people were tested in the upazila, and out of these, 3,294 were diagnosed with dengue. The situation in Chattogram and Barishal is similarly worrying, with more and more people being diagnosed with the virus as days go by. The situation in other districts is also deteriorating fast.

At this point, the authorities need to make targeted interventions to avert a potential nationwide crisis. While immediate steps should include managing the hotspots, entomologists have suggested prioritising larviciding and elimination of breeding sources over widespread fogging, since fogging has largely proven ineffective. Along with this, community-level efforts are needed to eliminate breeding grounds at the household level. For that, the government must undertake large-scale awareness campaigns. Particular interventions are also needed for the flood-affected districts to prevent people from catching dengue, with a special focus on coastal regions, as people there often store rainwater in poorly covered containers that may create an ideal breeding ground for Aedes.

Furthermore, dengue should be declared a reportable disease. Currently, we do not know the real picture of the spread outside Dhaka, since not all hospitals and diagnostic centres submit reports of dengue cases to the respective district civil surgeon's office. Reporting should thus be made mandatory. Lastly, all hospitals and health complexes at the district and upazila levels must be properly equipped to provide essential care, so that critically ill patients do not have to be rushed to Dhaka at the last moment.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Mariner 4 sends Mars photos

On this day in 1965, Mariner 4, an uncrewed space probe launched by NASA in 1964, flew by Mars and returned close-up pictures of its surface. The pictures were proof that the planet's rumoured canals were actually illusions.

AGAINST LAW AND HUMANITY

Why India's push-ins must stop



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Despite repeated protests by the Bangladesh government and human rights groups in both countries, India's controversial practice of forcibly pushing people into Bangladeshi territory—known as “push-in”—continues without legal or diplomatic justification. These push-ins involve a wide range of individuals, including alleged undocumented migrants who crossed over to India from Bangladesh years ago, Rohingya refugees registered with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in India, and even Bangla-speaking Indian Muslims from various states.

A BBC investigation has highlighted that many Assamese Muslims, despite holding valid documents and living in India for generations, have been rounded up and pushed across the border into Bangladesh. Similarly, *The Hindu* reported incidents where Bangla-speaking workers from West Bengal, employed in cities like Mumbai, were forcibly deported into Bangladesh by India's Border Security Force (BSF). More than 200 Rohingya have so far been pushed into Bangladesh from India, including over 100 who were registered with the UNHCR in India.

If a citizen of one country illegally enters another country, they must be deported in accordance with bilateral agreements and international law. But the way India pushed these people into Bangladesh without following due process is completely illegal and against human rights and international norms.

This kind of push ins by India was last observed around 2002-2003, when the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was in power. For example, on February 2, 2003, *Prothom Alo* reported that around 200 Bangla-speaking individuals, including women and children, were forcibly sent across the Meherpur border at gunpoint by BSF personnel. Thousands more were reportedly gathered in areas such as Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri for similar operations.

Although such actions subsided for a period, they have now resumed. This resurgence appears to be politically calculated, rather than a response to irregular migration. Some argue that, on the one hand, it reflects the BJP's Hindutva agenda, which seeks to portray Muslims as outsiders and security threats. On the other hand, it seems to be a strategic pressure tactic directed at Bangladesh, especially after the fall of the Awami League regime, which was overly subservient to India, through a mass uprising.

Bangladesh has not retaliated or suspended India's access to transit routes and ports in response, nor has it

revoked trade or security cooperation. In contrast, India has recently withdrawn certain transit privileges unilaterally, restricted imports from Bangladesh through land ports and, most alarmingly, continued cross-border shootings that result in the



Media investigations revealed that the Indian authorities rounded up many Indian Muslims, holding valid documents and living in India for generations, and pushed them across the border into Bangladesh. PHOTO: REUTERS

deaths of Bangladeshi civilians by the Indian BSF.

Push-ins, therefore, could be seen as part of a broader pattern of pressuring diplomacy and unilateralism. If India were genuinely concerned about illegal migration, it would have opted for dialogue, verification, and repatriation under international law. Instead, individuals—often blindfolded, abused, and left without food—are being dumped across the border in an inhumane manner. This has nothing to do with border security; it is a deliberate effort to unsettle, embarrass, and pressure a sovereign neighbour.

Bangladesh and India have formal agreements to manage border issues cooperatively. These include the 1975 Joint India-Bangladesh Guidelines for border authorities of the two countries and the 2011 Coordinated Border Management Plan (CBMP). Through dialogue under these protocols, it is possible to

resolve all kinds of border problems, including human trafficking and undocumented migration. For example, the CBMP has designated responsible officers (nodal officers) from India's BSF and Bangladesh's BGB to resolve issues such as illegal infiltration and human trafficking. Their job is to take initiatives to resolve any disputes regarding border management peacefully through dialogue and, if necessary, to inform higher authorities. Unilateral actions like mass push ins, therefore, violate these standing agreements. They undermine trust and erode the institutional mechanisms that were built over decades to handle precisely

these sorts of situations. India's actions also constitute a clear breach of international law. Article 13 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulates that no lawfully residing individual may be expelled from a country without due legal process. Article 12(4) of the same covenant asserts that no one can be arbitrarily denied the right to enter their own country.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee has interpreted these provisions to extend protections not only to legal citizens but also to long term residents who may lack documentation. Both Bangladesh and India are parties to the ICCPR, and thus legally bound by its terms. So, India is directly violating this international agreement by pushing its Bangla-speaking citizens and long term residents into Bangladesh.

Furthermore, Article 22 of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant

Workers and Members of Their Families clearly prohibits collective expulsions and requires that each case be individually assessed under due legal procedure.

Other international instruments that echo the same principle, include Article 4 of Protocol No 4 of the European Convention on Human Rights; Article 22(9) of the American Convention on Human Rights; Article 12(5) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; and Article 26(1) of the Arab Charter on Human Rights.

So, India is clearly violating numerous international laws, customs, and conventions by pushing

Bangla-speaking people, who have been living in that country for a long time, and Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh en masse.

India's approach to border management has long been hawkish, often violent. The extrajudicial killings of Bangladeshi civilians by BSF have drawn global condemnation. Now, with the added dimension of large-scale push-ins, India is escalating its disregard for bilateral and international norms.

The Bangladesh government must act with resolve. While diplomatic channels should remain open, the issue must also be internationalised. The UN and relevant international bodies should be engaged to mediate and document these violations. If Bangladesh, even under the leadership of the internationally recognised Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, fails to bring this issue to the global stage, it would be doing a disservice to both national sovereignty and human dignity.

The environmental cost of food delivery in Bangladesh



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Over the last couple of years, cities in Bangladesh have seen a rapid growth in online food delivery services. From local catering houses to global fast food chains, everything is a matter of a tap away. However, the unchecked use of single-use plastic in food delivery is a matter of concern.

Multiple layers of plastic, including containers, cutlery, sauce sachets, and plastic bags, are used in packaging during the delivery of the meals. In Dhaka, thousands of orders for daily meals are a usual scenario. Food packed in plastic package contributes to worsening environmental degradation. According to Somoy TV, 30,000 tonnes of solid waste are generated on a daily basis in the

country, where 10 percent is single-use plastic.

The business model of food delivery platforms primarily relies on the use of plastic, particularly cheap plastic containers, to minimise costs. Few businesses have experimented with eco-friendly paper boxes or biodegradable packaging, which are associated with high production costs and limited suppliers. Moreover, the current business regulations in the country do not include special incentives for entrepreneurs who offer food in eco-friendly paper boxes or biodegradable packaging.

If we look at the global lesson, we see that India and Indonesia have already piloted the “Green Delivery”

business model for food delivery with biodegradable packaging. In contrast, Bangladesh has made very little progress in regulating single-use plastic in the digital food economy. The country declared a complete ban on using polybags in 2002. However, single-use plastic was not included in the ban. The legal vacuum encouraged the growth of the single-use plastic sector.

However, can biodegradable alternatives cover the demand? Some socially responsible businesspeople have started using biodegradable packaging made from jute, bagasse, and cornstarch. This initiative is considered an emerging market in Bangladesh, but scaling up is a challenge due to prices that are several times higher than traditional plastic packaging. There is also a lack of government subsidies, tax relief, and public-private partnerships.

The government, private sector, and consumers altogether need to put a coordinated effort to address this issue. The government can review the existing laws and regulations. It should also create accountability for

businesses by imposing mandatory reporting to the relevant departments. Incentives and lower taxation can promote biodegradable packaging in food delivery. Food delivery platforms should introduce themselves as socially responsible businesses by providing biodegradable packaging and educating other franchisees about sustainable practices. People's consumption habits need to be shifted towards green delivery. The Bangladesh Bank nowadays encourages start-up businesses targeting the young generations. They can provide incubation and investment support for affordable biodegradable packaging.

The food delivery in our cities reflects the digital food economy progress as well as the urban transformation. It is now high time to check the growth of the single-use plastic sector to avoid environmental degradation and promote public health. The path is not easy, but redefining sustainability is crucial, considering that it is an integral part of how we eat, deliver, and live.