



Streets and skylines have been overwhelmed by a clutter of posters, banners, and billboards of political hopefuls, turning public space into visual pollution for residents and passersby at Kadamtali in Keraniganj, Dhaka. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Jobless growth, gender gaps fuel poverty rise

Speakers tell PPRC discussion, urge for coordinated reforms to address the issues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government must take urgent and decisive steps to address the country's worsening employment crisis, declining educational outcomes, and persistent gender inequalities, said speakers at an event yesterday.

Without bold, coordinated reforms in these critical areas, they warned, the risk of entrenched and widespread poverty will continue to grow, undermining Bangladesh's long term development trajectory.

The event, styled "Ajker Agenda: What is Driving the Poverty Reversal in Bangladesh?", was organised online by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC).

Imran Matin, executive director of the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, said the reversal in poverty trends is not an isolated event but reflects both the impact of overlapping shocks and a deeper structural fragility in Bangladesh's poverty reduction model.

"For too long, progress has been concentrated around lifting people just above the poverty line, without securing a sustained escape from poverty. This has created a vulnerable population that is highly susceptible to crises," he said.

"We now face a twin challenge: a sharp rise in vulnerability-induced transitory poverty, and a worrying uptick in extreme or chronic poverty. Addressing this dual crisis demands a differentiated and targeted policy response."

"Current systems are outdated, fragmented, and misaligned with today's realities. We need a new generation of social protection that is care-responsive, shock resilient, and programme-specific.

This calls for a large scale, disaggregated survey to inform smarter, more inclusive interventions."

A recent PPRC study shows that poverty in Bangladesh has surged over the past three years, with nearly 28 percent of the population now poor compared to 18.7 percent in 2022.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Reimagine social protection
- Generate decent jobs
- Ensure affordable, quality education
- Address gender inequality
- Revive rural economy
- Support youth employment

DGHS restricts medical reps' hospital visits to 2 days a week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) has restricted pharmaceutical company representatives from meeting government doctors to only two days a week -- Mondays and Thursdays.

According to an eight-point directive issued on September 11, representatives will be permitted to meet doctors between 12:00pm and 2:30pm on those days only.

They must carry their company identity cards during visits and will not be allowed to remain on hospital premises beyond the designated hours.

Officials said the move is intended to "save the image of government doctors working at all public hospitals and institutes, and ensure proper service to patients".

The DGHS warned that any pharmaceutical representative violating the directives will face legal action. They have also been barred from taking photos of prescriptions, documents, or any other hospital information.

The circular also set out restrictions for government doctors. They are prohibited from writing prescriptions or test orders on pads supplied by private diagnostic centres or carrying their logos.

Doctors cannot prescribe medicines or recommend tests from private companies if the same are available at government hospitals.

In addition, they may not use any seal other than those issued by the government, nor display drug lists supplied by pharmaceutical companies on their tables.

The directive followed allegations that many doctors prescribe medicines from particular companies or recommend tests at specific diagnostic centres in exchange for benefits.

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Contraceptive crisis grips health centres

Shortage leaves rural women without pills, injections, essential maternal care

MOSTAFA SHABUI

An acute shortage of contraceptives in health centres across the country is severely affecting reproductive and maternal healthcare, with marginalised communities in rural and remote areas suffering the most.

At community clinics, Family Welfare Assistants (FWAs) usually provide free contraceptives such as condoms, oral contraceptive pills, and injections six days a week. But visits to local hospitals, upazila health complexes, union sub-centres, and remote community clinics revealed that supplies have been shrinking since mid-2024.

Rahima Begum, a resident of Char Korai Barishal in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, said, "We used to receive contraceptive pills and women's health services from an FWA for free. But now, we are not getting them; instead, we have to buy pills from outside."

Shirina Akter of Guptamoni Char in Gaibandha's Fulchhari upazila shared similar experiences.

Parvin Khatun, an FWA at Char Korai Barishal Community Clinic, said, "We used to receive 250 strips



of contraceptive pills monthly. Now we are getting only 30-40 strips. We have the injections, but no syringes. As such, we can't meet the local demand adequately."

Jesmin Aktar, an FWA at Uttar Karamja Community Clinic in Bogura's Sonatala upazila, said the supply of contraceptives has dropped significantly over the past year, sometimes stopping altogether for one or two months.

"Adolescent girls, pregnant women, and mothers of new-borns

used to get iron-folic acid tablets free of cost from community clinics. However, supply of these important medicines has remained halted since last year," said Moyna Begum of Radhanagar village in Sylhet's Moulvibazar upazila.

Data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's supply chain management portal show that 7.27 million condoms were distributed in July 2024. This fell to 2.92 million in June 2025 and rose slightly to 3.56 million in July 2025. By the end of July, 154 upazilas had no stock and 140 faced potential

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Independent rights body key to democracy

Speakers tell discussion

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A truly independent and accountable Human Rights Commission can only thrive when it is free from political influence and rooted in citizen participation, said Law Adviser Dr Asif Nazrul yesterday.

He made the remark while addressing as chief guest a "Stakeholder Consultation on the Reform of the National Human Rights Commission Act 2009" held in Cox's Bazar.

The event was organised by the law ministry in collaboration with UNDP through its Strengthening Institutions, Policies and Services (SIPS) Programme, with support from the Embassy of Switzerland.

In a statement, UNDP Bangladesh said the draft NHRC Ordinance seeks to enhance the Commission's independence, inclusivity, and accountability.

It aims to align the NHRC's mandate with relevant parts of the Paris Principles and addresses key recommendations from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

UNDP said unveiling the draft ordinance marks a significant step forward in Bangladesh's commitment to human rights protection and alignment with international standards.

Housing and Public Works Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan said, "A truly independent and inclusive Human Rights Commission is essential if Bangladesh is to meet international standards and restore public trust."

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ADILUR RAHMAN KHAN

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STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS

Code violations cloud run-up to Rucsu polls

Allegations of feasts, gifts, hall tours by aspirants run rife

NUR AHSAN MRIDUL

With the Rucsu election approaching, Rajshahi University is already witnessing breaches of electoral codes, as student panels are campaigning in halls and other places well before the official campaign period.

The election to the Rajshahi University Central Students' Union will be held on September 25. There are about 24,892 voters in Rucsu.

As per schedule, the final list of candidates will be published today. The campaigning will start the same day.

Although rules bar campaigning until the final list of candidates is published, contenders from major organisations and independents are visiting halls, hosting events, and seeking support in advance.

The code allows campaigning only between 10:00am and 10:00pm after

the final list is announced. Candidates must also seek permission before entering halls other than their own.

Yet across halls, classrooms, and spaces like Tukitaki Chattar and Amtola, campaign activity is in full swing.



Some students argue ballot numbers should be the only identifier, but contenders are introducing themselves early, raising concerns over fairness and enforcement.

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Farmer Abu Zafar sprays insecticide on his flowering bean plants in Ranai village of Khornia Union, Khulna, to protect them from pests and boost yield. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN