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BB to provide policy support for importers to ease inflation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank has agreed to provide policy support for importers to stabilise the prices of essential commodities in a bid to ease high inflation.

As part of the move, the regulator will relax import rules for essentials and provide US dollar support if necessary.

The decision came from a meeting between the central bank and around 20 leading business groups at its headquarters yesterday.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur presided over the meeting, which was attended by top officials and representatives of Meghna Group, City Group, TK Group, ACI Group, Bashundhara Group, Nabil Group, and Pran-RFL, among others.

The importers assured the governor that they would keep the prices of essential commodities stable.

Inflation last month eased slightly to 8.29 percent from 8.55 percent in

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Ritu Moni takes a selfie with teammates Sharmin Supta, Sanjida Akter Meghila, Fahima Khatun and Shorna Akter after their pre-departure photoshoot. The Bangladesh Women's Cricket Team leaves for Colombo today to compete in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup, jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka, beginning September 30.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Quasi-moon near Earth discovered

CNN ONLINE

Astronomers have spotted a quasi-moon near Earth, and the small space rock has likely been hanging out near our planet unseen by telescopes for about 60 years, according to new research.

The newly discovered celestial object, named 2025 PN7, is a type of near-Earth asteroid that orbits the sun but sticks close to our planet. Like our world, 2025 PN7 takes one year to complete an orbit around the sun.

Quasi-moons differ from temporary mini-moons that occasionally orbit Earth, such as 2024 PT5, which circled the planet for two months in 2024 and could be an ancient fragment that was blasted off our primary moon.

The newly found 2025 PN7 is just one of a handful of known quasi-moons with orbits near our planet, including Kamo'alewa, which is also thought to be an ancient lunar fragment. Kamo'alewa is one of the destinations of China's Tianwen-2 mission launched in May, which aims to collect and return samples from the space rock in 2027.

The quasi-moon managed to escape the notice of astronomers for so long because it is small and faint, said Carlos de la Fuente Marcos, a researcher on the faculty of mathematical sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid who recently authored a paper about the space rock. The paper was published on September 2 in the journal Research Notes of the American Astronomical Society, which is for timely non-peer-reviewed astronomical observations.

Women account for only 10% of judges in higher judiciary

Lack of institutional support, gender stereotypes blamed

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Women remain severely underrepresented in Bangladesh's higher judiciary, making up less than 10 percent of all judges in the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court.

Out of the 118 judges serving in the SC, 11 are women – 10 in the HC and only one in the Appellate Division.

Since independence, the country has seen appointments of 25 chief justices, but the top judicial post has never been held by a woman.

Besides, only five female judges from the HC have been elevated to the Appellate Division over the last five decades.

The disparity is also evident in lower judiciary. There are 496 female judges compared to 1,691 male judges across the country, according to SC sources.

Systemic barriers discourage young women from pursuing judicial careers, legal experts said, calling for measures to address the underrepresentation of women in the judiciary.

Referring to systemic barriers for women in upper tiers of the judiciary, Ishrat Hasan, a lawyer at the SC, said, "The appointment process often favours male-dominated networks of senior lawyers. Other barriers include a lack of institutional support, such as maternity-friendly policies, and stereotypes suggesting that women are less capable of handling complex or sensitive cases."

The low representation of female judges in the Appellate and High Court

- Only 11 of 118 SC judges are women
- Just 1 woman serves in Appellate Division
- No female chief justice appointed in 54 years
- Only 5 women elevated to Appellate Division in five decades

Divisions reflects a serious imbalance in the justice system," she told The Daily Star.

This crisis deprives courts of diverse perspectives – particularly in cases involving gender-based violence, family disputes, and women's rights, Ishrat pointed out.

Another SC lawyer, Shukla Sarwat Siraj, said the scrapping of quota for women in government jobs has further curtailed opportunities for women.

A year has passed since the quota was abolished, yet no reforms have been

carried out even though quota reform was the main demand of the July uprising, she said.

"It is likely that the presence of women in the judicial service will gradually decline," she said.

Momtaj Parvin, a SC lawyer, said, "Our society has not yet been able to break free from deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes."

Women are doing well as judges in lower judiciary, but many of them are not making it to the HC, she said, adding that when 25 judges were appointed to the HC most recently in August, only three of them were women.

SUGGESTIONS

Shukla proposed reserving a specific number of positions for women in the judiciary, similar to the system of reserved seats in parliament.

Ishrat stressed the need for transparent and gender-sensitive appointment policies, career development opportunities for women in law, and conscious efforts to counter gender stereotypes.

When asked, Md Muajjem Hussain, spokesperson for the SC, said the number of female judges in the apex court is expected to rise, as appointments are now being made through a transparent process under the recently enacted Supreme Court Judges' Appointment Ordinance, 2025.

A total of 48 HC judges were appointed in two phases since Syed Refaat Ahmed took charge as the chief justice in August last year. Four female judges were appointed in the first phase, and three more in the second one, he said.

'Election in Feb still uncertain' Says Patwary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party (NCP) Chief Coordinator Nasiruddin Patwary yesterday said there is still uncertainty about whether the election will be held in February.

"The government is pressing hard to hold the election in February. But regarding the July Charter's legal perspective, no solution has been reached yet," he told reporters after meeting Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin at the EC headquarters in Dhaka.

Patwary alleged that because of the "hypocrisy" of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, the country cannot move towards the polls. He urged the parties to reach agreement on the legal basis and implementation method of the July Charter and join the election.

He said the party could win around 150 seats in the polls, with preparations underway to field candidates in all 300 constituencies.

He said NCP remains committed to a fair election but with the completion of reforms and a quick transition to restore democracy.

Asked how many seats BNP and Jamaat will get, he said, "BNP will not go above 50 to 100 seats. But you can see the real scenario now – which way things are sinking. It will happen."

Patwary said NCP would remain with its own banner and symbol. "Other parties will be dissolved, and many will come under the NCP. We are going to make this a major party," he said, adding that NCP is adamant on PR in the upper house only.

The NCP leader also reiterated the demand for its proposed symbol, the shapla (water lily), despite disputes over its availability on the EC's list.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Baskets of hilsa being unloaded from fishing trawlers lining the shore at Gohira beach in Chattogram's Anowara upazila yesterday. After a disappointing peak season, fishermen finally netted a good catch, while the government mulls imposing the 22-day ban on hilsa fishing from October 5 to protect brood hilsa. The fishermen, however, are demanding that the ban be delayed until October 18 so they can recover from their losses.

Russia, Ukraine trade blame for deadly strikes

AFP, MOSCOW

The head of the Kremlin-backed government in annexed Crimea blamed Ukraine yesterday for a deadly drone strike, while Kyiv said a Russian attack had killed three people in the country's southeast.

Sergey Aksyonov said the Ukrainian military had targeted the Crimean resort town of Foros, damaging the grounds of a sanatorium and a school building.

"According to updated data, three people were killed and 16 were wounded as a result of (the) UAV attack," Aksyonov said on Telegram.

Fragments of the downed drone also caused a fire near the coastal city of Yalta, he said.

Russia's defence

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