

NEWS

Expat ministry's statement and our reply

FROM PAGE 3
Conduct Rules, 2025. Based on intelligence reports and recommendations from an inter-ministerial committee, licences were granted to 252 agencies, following assurances that no prior licence existed in the name of the applicants or their family members.

The ministry further states that out of a total of 2,646 licensed recruiting agencies, 1,865 are currently active, and that with the addition of the 252 newly licensed agencies, the number of active agencies will stand at 2,117. It argues that this number is not excessive for a country of about 180 million people and claims that strengthened digital monitoring, audits, grievance mechanisms, and punitive measures are in place to ensure accountability.

OUR REPLY
The Daily Star's report examined the policy outcome of approving 252 new overseas recruiting agencies, which raised the total number of licensed agencies to 2,646, according to data provided by the ministry itself.

The ministry's clarification that some

applications had been pending since 2023 does not address the core concern raised in the report. The central issue is not how long the applications remained pending, but the rationale behind expanding the number of licensed agencies at a time when the labour migration sector is hit by shrinking overseas markets, persistently high migration costs, widespread complaints of fraud, and weak enforcement of rules and regulations.

More importantly, the decision directly contradicts the recommendation of the government-commissioned White Paper on the economy, released in December 2024, which explicitly called for a reasonable reduction in the number of recruiting agencies to curb corruption, exploitation, and financial irregularities. The ministry's statement does not explain why this key recommendation was disregarded, nor does it provide evidence-based justification for reversing that policy direction.

The ministry also did not clarify what new developments, market

assessments, or policy evaluations prompted the approval of such a large number of licences at this juncture. Assertions about strengthened digital monitoring and accountability mechanisms remain unsubstantiated, particularly when official data show thousands of complaints filed against recruiting agencies each year and an extremely low conviction rate in human

trafficking cases. Whether agencies are currently "active" or "inactive" does not change the regulatory reality. All licensed agencies remain legally entitled to operate at any time, and their sheer number inevitably increases the burden on an already overstretched oversight system.

It is also notable that the ministry did not dispute any factual information

presented in the report, including comparative regional data, statistics on complaints, or expert opinions. The report incorporated the views of the ministry's senior secretary, who defended the decision, and clearly stated that the adviser to the ministry did not respond to this newspaper's requests for comment.

The Daily Star stands by its report.

BNP walking

FROM PAGE 3
nominations, the party as an alternative candidate. Eventually, the BNP nominee did not withdraw. "BNP announced Bogura 2 for me, then nominated another leader as an alternative. Later, my nomination was declared valid, but the BNP candidate kept creating problems. Now I really do not know what more there is to say," Manna said.

In Narail-2, Fariduzzaman Farhad, chairman of the National People's Party, dissolved his party and joined BNP to contest the seat.

Tenants must pay rent by the 10th of each month, and landlords must issue written receipts.

Tenants (with landlord approval) may use rooftops, balconies, and open spaces. For safety reasons, landlords must provide tenants with keys to the roof and the main gate under certain conditions.

If

a tenant fails to pay rent on time, the landlord may issue verbal and written warnings. Continued noncompliance may result in a written notice, after which the landlord may terminate the contract.

Regarding the new guideline, Morshed said DNCC suggested resolving disputes at zonal offices. "But the zonal office has no legal authority. The law does not mandate that disputes must be resolved there. It's only a suggestion, not legally binding."

"If one party refuses to comply, there is no punishment. Tribunal decisions, however, are legally binding," he said.

Noorjahan Begum, a resident of Indira Road, said tenants often feel helpless and are forced to accept rules imposed by landlords.

"If this guideline is followed properly, it may bring some relief. Earlier, we had nowhere to complain," she said.

According to the 16-point

guideline, rent can be increased only after two years, with adjustments during June-July.

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Section 15 of the House Rent Control Act, 1991 states that standard rent should equal 15 percent of a house's market value. However, the law has not been effectively enforced, with no rent controllers appointed and few cases taken to court.

In 2010, Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh filed a writ petition seeking enforcement of rent control, which remains pending.

In 2015, the High Court directed the government to form a commission to set rent limits and appoint rent controllers at the ward level.

BNP should not have thought its responsibility was finished just by expelling the rebels. The party should have called them, explained the situation, and tried to solve the problem through discussion, but it did not do that," he added.

In Sylhet-5, Jamiat candidate Md Ubaidullah Faruq is contesting, while Sylhet district BNP Vice-President Mamunur Rashid remains in the race as a rebel.

In Narayanganj-4, two expelled BNP leaders -- Shah Alam and Giasuddin

DHAKA FRIDAY JANUARY 23, 2026

MAGH 9, 1432 BS

The Daily Star

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ICT-2 frames

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11 and 16, 2024, Quader issued direct instructions to crush the movement, including exhortations to kill protesters, publicly branding demonstrators as "Razakars", mobilising armed party cadres, financing violent operations and ordering internet throttling.

These acts allegedly led to the killing of six people and serious injuries to more than 300 on the Dhaka University campus, in Chattogram and elsewhere. Count 2 said that between July 17 and 20, 2024, Quader directed nationwide preparations for repression, ordered street-level resistance by party forces, publicly endorsed curfews with "shoot-at-sight" instructions, conspired with senior leaders and law enforcement agencies, and authorised lethal operations, including helicopter firing.

During this period, 36 people were killed in the Mirpur and Mohakhali areas of the capital, the prosecution alleged.

Overall, the prosecution claims that more than 1,400 protesters were killed and over 25,000 seriously injured in widespread, systematic and targeted attacks carried out with the accused's knowledge and involvement. The tribunal fixed February 17 for the prosecution's opening statement and the recording of witness testimony.

Meanwhile, the prosecution yesterday completed the second day of arguments in the Abu Sayed killing case. Arguments are set to resume on Sunday.

US praises

FROM PAGE 4
Meanwhile, Major General E Darrin Cox, commanding general of the 18th Theater Medical Command US Army Pacific (USARPAC), visited Bangladesh from January 18 to 22 to strengthen medical partnerships with the Bangladesh Army Medical Forces.

"This engagement supported US Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) and US Army Pacific (USARPAC) goals to enhance collaboration and build partner capacity," US embassy spokesperson Poornima Rai said in a statement yesterday.

Meetings in Dhaka and visits to Jalalabad Cantonment and the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Sylhet laid the foundation for future joint exercises and expert exchanges in key medical specialties, she said.

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 23

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:30 4:15 5:40 7:00

JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:44 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

HC questions legality

FROM PAGE 3
AK Mahbubur Rahman, secretary general of Bangladesh Unani Medical Association.

Senior lawyer Subrata Chowdhury assisted by Advocate AKM Jaglu Haider Afric Advocate Sanjid Rahman Shuvo appeared for the petitioners while deputy attorney generals Khan Ziaur Rahman and Mohammad Abdul Karim, along with Assistant Attorney Generals Khorshed Alam Selim, Md Uzzal Hossain and Rayhanul Islam represented the state during hearing of the petition.

Jaglu Haider told The Daily Star yesterday that the task force traditionally included representatives from all streams -- Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani, Homeopathic, Biochemic and Herbal. In this instance, only allopathic representatives were included.

The petitioners said on November 10, 2024 the Advisory Council (Cabinet Division) issued directives regarding the approval of the Essential Drug List.

The directives said the Health Services Division's "Essential Drug List" is timely, but it should be reviewed by a high-level task force comprising all stakeholders.

Subsequently, an 18-member task force was formed to make recommendations on the preparation of the National List of Essential Medicines and ensuring their availability.

Professor Shahinul Alam, vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Medical University, was made its chair, and Muhammed Mozammel Hossain Khan, joint secretary (Drug Administration Wing) of the

Health Services Division, was made its member secretary.

Section 13 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 2023 provides for the formation of a National Drug Advisory Council and specifies the matters on which it will advise the government.

Under this section, the government must form a National Drug Advisory Council comprising a chairman and such number of members as it considers appropriate from time to time. The council will advise the government on implementing the National Drug Policy, developing the domestic pharmaceutical industry, and ensuring the production and supply of medicines to meet national demand.

The same section also provides that, to fulfill the objectives of developing the domestic pharmaceutical industry and meeting national demand, certain medicines from Allopathic, Ayurvedic, Unani, Homeopathic, Biochemic, Herbal and Veterinary Categories will be declared as "essential medicines" with a list to be published and updated every two years, the petitioners stated in the petition.

The petitioners alleged that the formation of the 18-member task force violates Section 13 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 2023.

When contacted, Zakir Hossain, secretary general of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, said "We agree with the arguments made by the petitioners. Our position is that until the matter is resolved by the court, the ministry should refrain from taking further action."

The country is passing through a critical juncture, but people are conscious. They know there is no alternative to the 'Sheaf of Paddy' to protect independence and

sovereignty," he said.

The two parties have distinct styles on the ground.

Mahmud Shobir of

Shewrapara said Jamaat

workers are focusing on

door-to-door campaigns,

while BNP activists are

organising processions and local gatherings.

Shah Alam Tuhin, member

secretary of Jamaat's

election management

committee, said they are receiving

an "extremely positive"

response. "We have a

strong organisational base

in Manipur, Shewrapara,

Kazipara, and Ibrahimpur,"

said Tuhin.

However, Tuhin raised

concern over security,

alleging that "vast amounts

of illegal weapons and

money linked to the previous

"fascist" regime remain

uncovered. He called for strict administrative

vigilance to prevent violence.

Despite the rivalry, Tuhin

noted that they maintain a

"cordial relationship" with BNP candidate Milton.

Milton, however,

described Dhaka-15 as a BNP

stronghold.

Citing his local roots and

experience, he expressed

confidence in his party's

organisational strength.

He was quick to point

out the past, saying, "In the

229 sued

FROM PAGE 4

Motaleb Hossain Bhuiyan, a deputy assistant director of Rab-7, and three other members of the elite force were injured.

Law enforcement officials said the injured were rescued and taken to the Combined Military Hospital in Chattogram, where doctors declared Motaleb dead.

The deceased officer had been serving with BGB-2 Teknaf Battalion before joining Rab on deputation in April 2024.

Describing the incident, ARM Mozzafar Hossain said a team of 43 Rab members went to Jungle Salimpur in Salimpur union that afternoon to arrest armed criminals.

"Following announcements made through loudspeakers, 400 to 500 people gathered and assaulted the team," he said.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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Date: 21.01.2026

Memo No. 35.01.9100.473.07.017.23.340

e-Tender Notice 37(Thirty-Seven)/2025-2026

Open Tendering Method (OTM)

e-Tenders are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, RHD, Sylhet Road Division, Sylhet. For the procurement of following work.

Tender ID No & Package No.	Name of work	Tender Document last selling / downloading Date and Time	Tender Closing & Opening Date and Time
Tender ID: 1217879 Tender Package No: eGP-35/PMP-Road/EE/SDR/Syl/2025-26 (Re-Tender)	Periodic Maintenance work under PMP (Road-Major) providing Partial Strengthening, DBS Base Course, DBS Wearing Course, Road Marking, Reflecting Road Stud, Traffic Sign & Sign Post Work Ch.00+000 to Ch.03+984 (Ambarkhana to Tilagar) of Ambarkhana-Shahi Eidgah-M. C. College-Tilagar (R-248) Road under Sylhet Road Division, Sylhet during the FY 2025-2026.	08-Feb-2026 17:00	09-Feb-2026 17:00
Tender ID: 1217997, Tender Package No: eGP-32/PMP-Road/EE/SDR/Syl/2025-26 (Re-Tender)	Periodic Maintenance work under PMP		