

Expat ministry's statement and our reply

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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 recommendations 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.

DNCC backtracks on rent guidelines

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Supreme Court lawyer Manzill Murshid said the key issue lies in how the 15 percent rent cap under the House Rent Control Act, 1991 is calculated.

"If applied to current market values, rent becomes extremely high," he said.

He also pointed out that although the law requires written contracts and rent receipts, these are rarely followed in practice. "The law mentions one month's advance, but landlords often take three to six months," said Manzill, who is also president of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

Another problem, he said, is eviction. "Once a two year contract is signed, tenants cannot be evicted except for renovation or personal use. But landlords often force tenants out early to rent to someone else at a higher rate," he said.

Manzill said the absence of an effective dispute resolution mechanism is the core problem. Although the law allows for tribunals, cases are delayed and costly, discouraging tenants from seeking legal remedies.

"That is why we opposed this system and said that if the government really wants a tribunal under the law, it should be formed at

the ward level, with two or three respectable people in each ward acting as tribunal members," he added.

"The biggest issue is the lack of a rent fixation system. If rents were fixed, most problems wouldn't exist. For example, in government housing, rent is fixed. But for private housing, landlords set rent arbitrarily," he said.

He added that if the government formed a commission to fix area-wise rent based on house quality and other factors, most disputes would be resolved.

Regarding the new guideline, Moshed 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.

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.

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 has given four seats to Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Bangladesh -- Sylhet-5, Narayanganj-4, Brahmanbaria 2, and Nilphamari-1. Three of those constituencies have BNP rebel candidates.

Jamiat Secretary General Manjurul Islam Alendi said, "The BNP gave us four seats, and three of those have rebel candidates. This is embarrassing, uncomfortable and painful for us," he said.

"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

According to the 16-point

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, Biochemical 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 Muhammad 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, Biochemical, 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."

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referendum to be held alongside the February 12 election.

The three canals in this constituency have turned into garbage dumps," he said. He also cited problems such as polluted canals, a shortage of colleges and hospitals, and the spread of drugs and crime, and promised to address gas and water shortages by involving local residents.

Meanwhile, BNP Central Executive Committee member and local resident Mamun Hasan said the party has adopted a "special electoral strategy" as the highest Jamaat leader is contesting the seat.

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 Shoeb 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 unrecovered. 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 2018 election, the Jamaat Ameen contested from this seat under the BNP's 'Sheaf of Paddy' symbol and was defeated. Recently, Jamaat workers faced public backlash while trying to collect personal data from households and had to apologise."

Dhaka-15 is home to key institutions such as Manipur School, Hermann Gmeiner School, the National Heart Foundation, and the BRTA.

The constituency has 351,718 voters -- including 179,616 men, 172,098 women, and four hijra voters -- more than 7,000 higher than in the previous election.

Other candidates in the race include Ahmed Sajedul Huq Rubel (CPB), Md Shamsul Haque (Jatiya Party), Md Ashfakur Rahman (Bangladesh Jasad), Khoabar Hossain (Janata Dal), and Md Nilav Parvez (Amjanatar Dal).

Over the past 50 years, since the establishment of diplomatic ties, China and Bangladesh have always supported each other, treated one another as equals and engaged in win-win cooperation, the embassy said.

Now, our election steering committee and BNP's top leadership will hold discussions with them. Even after that, if anyone remains in the race, organisational action will be taken," he said.

BNP has already

expelled more than a dozen

leaders for contesting the polls in defiance of party instructions.

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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 at Ch.00+00 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 (Road-Major) providing by Rigid Pavement Work at Ch. 218+320 to Ch. 219+450 Km (Lalabazar North to Lalabazar) of Dhaka (Katchpur)-Bhairab-Jagadishpur-Shaistaganj-Sylhet-Tamabil-Jaflong Road (N-2) under Road Division Sylhet, during the year 2025-2026.	08-Feb-2026 17:00	09-Feb-2026 17:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/ hard Copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System portal (<http://eprocure.gov.bd>) The fee's for downloading the e-tender documents from the national e-GP portal have to be deposited on line through any member of schedule bank for e-GP.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

GD-173

PRAYER TIMING
JANUARY 23

Faz Juma	Asr	Magrib	Esha
05-30	12-30	4-15	5-40
06-05	1-15	4-30	5-44

Source: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

(Anup Hossain)
ID No: 602205
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Sylhet.

BNP walking

FROM PAGE 3

General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim; former state minister for information Mohammad Ali Arifat; Jibon League Chairman Sheikh Fazle Shams Parash and its General Secretary Moinul Hossain Khan Nilhili; and Chhatra League President Saddam Hussain and General Secretary Sheikh Wali Asif Enan.

In Brahmanbaria-2, Jamiat leader Junayed Al Habib is contesting, while BNP rebel candidate Rummen Farhana has also stayed in the race.

BNP allocated two seats to Gono Adhikar Parishad, with its president Nurul Haq contesting on his party's symbol and former general secretary Rashed Khan joining the BNP to contest as its nominee. Both seats have rebel BNP candidates.

According to the prosecution, Quader, as AL general secretary and a cabinet minister, exercised command and control over law enforcement agencies and armed cadres of the AL, Jibon League and Chhatra League to violently suppress the quota reform movement that began on July 1, 2024.

Count 1 alleged that between July 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.