

The Daily Star

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Mansur's abrupt dismissal is shocking Successor appointment raises conflict of interest concerns

We are concerned by the unceremonious manner in which the former governor of Bangladesh Bank (BB), Dr Ahsan H Mansur, was dismissed and replaced by a person with questionable qualifications. The noted economist, whose reformist policies helped stabilise the economy in the aftermath of Sheikh Hasina's ouster in August 2024, left office after learning of his replacement through the media, while a section of his colleagues held a demonstration calling for his resignation. Roughly two hours later, the ministry issued two notices: one cancelling Mansur's four-year contract, due to end in August 2028, and the other appointing the new governor, Mostaqur Rahman, a businessman with an accounting background.

The way this episode unfolded goes against the norms and etiquette of a rules-based democracy and raises troubling questions. Why did the government feel that the governor had to be removed? Mansur took charge when the country faced a volatile currency and severely depleted foreign exchange reserves. The banking sector was in disarray, with several banks on the brink of a run. He stabilised the currency by shifting to a more market-based exchange rate, and his strict monetary policy brought double-digit inflation down to single digits, though still relatively high compared to Bangladesh's neighbours. To the chagrin of many in the business community and among his colleagues, he dismantled weak banks and strengthened the central bank's supervisory role, improving governance and discipline across the sector.

For a government that came to power with a large mandate to boost the economy and strengthen the financial system, Mansur's actions should have been welcomed. A prudent administration would have reinforced such leadership. Instead, the newly formed BNP government allowed "mob" behaviour in one of the country's most vital institutions and stood by as the very person credited with preventing a deeper financial crisis was publicly undermined.

More troubling still is the choice of successor. The government has picked the owner of a company that recently fallen behind on repayment instalments for a Tk 89 crore loan and subsequently received a restructuring facility. This comes at a time when defaulted loans account for 36 percent of total disbursed loans in the country, according to BB data from September 2025. The new governor is also affiliated with several business bodies. How can the finance ministry fail to recognise that there is a potential conflict of interest here?

In Bangladesh's history, this is the first time a businessperson has been appointed governor of the central bank. Such appointments are rare even globally. It remains to be seen how he will handle the responsibility of controlling inflation, ensuring financial stability, and curbing banking sector irregularities. With Mansur at the helm, we had hoped for a more independent central bank operating beyond the finance ministry's direct intervention. After this sudden appointment—involving a figure linked to BNP's election steering committee only recently—the prospect of greater autonomy under proposed amendments to the Bangladesh Bank Order appears uncertain.

DU deserves an elected VC

Quality, not affiliation, should guide public university appointments

It is unfortunate that Dhaka University is once again poised to get another unelected vice chancellor for the third consecutive term, bypassing the electoral process required by the DU Order, 1973. With the resignation of Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan, who was appointed under a temporary provision, the government is now likely to invoke Clause II(2) once again to appoint a new VC. What was intended as an emergency measure is now gradually becoming the default method of appointment, which is concerning.

Over the past decade, DU has seen repeated appointments under the temporary clause, often without any genuine emergency. Such practices have fostered a dangerous culture where rules are often bent for political considerations. As one DU professor has noted, this has become a long-standing habit of successive governments. Reportedly, under Clause II(1) of the 1973 Order, the VC is to be appointed by the chancellor from a panel of three persons nominated by the Senate. If such a panel does not exist, the sitting VC is required to call a Senate session to elect one. However, DU has not seen a Senate session for over a year, despite the ordinance mandating at least one annually. Worryingly, five categories of Senate membership, comprising 60 of its 104 members, remain vacant currently, creating an institutional vacuum.

The consequences of politically influenced appointments are already evident: erosion of institutional autonomy, compromised recruitment processes, and an atmosphere in which academic priorities are often overshadowed by partisan calculations. Although the interim administration pledged merit-based appointments and cleaner governance, criticisms have persisted. Allegations of irregularities in appointments and promotions have emerged at DU and several other universities. A recent report by Transparency International Bangladesh even claimed that following the uprising, major political actors divided VC and pro-VC appointments among themselves, while recruitment and postings were influenced by public pressure.

This cannot continue. There is no alternative to appointing well-qualified and honest educationists without political affiliations as VCs if the credibility of our universities is to be restored. The new government must move away from the old practice of politically motivated reshuffling of VCs and other educational administrators. Any appointments must strictly follow proper procedures, and these should be part of a wider reform agenda, one that ensures improved academic governance, transparency, and genuine autonomy for universities. Since the appointments are yet to be finalised, it is crucial that the broader goal of merit, integrity and institutional stability remain the primary considerations.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

Mega earthquake strikes Chile

On this day in 2010, a magnitude 8.8 earthquake struck Chile, causing widespread damage and triggering a tsunami that devastated coastal areas. It was the most powerful earthquake to strike the region since 1960.

A controversial decision

Can an accountable government take such action without public explanation?



THE THIRD VIEW
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Critical decisions are usually judged by three things: their merit, method, and meaning or significance. The government's decision to remove Dr Ahsan H Mansur from the post of Bangladesh Bank governor has failed in all three aspects. Since the news broke on Wednesday, there has been widespread questioning about its merit; it was crude, undignified, and mobbish in terms of method; and it is quite incomprehensible in terms of meaning, particularly as to its timing.

First, let's look at the merit of the decision. Of course, the new government has every right to make new appointments in key positions so that the best-suited individuals are there to implement its policies. This is especially necessary for pivotal posts such as the governor of our central bank. But what is the merit of Wednesday's decision?

This particular position deals with the most sensitive sector in the economy—banking—which has long been plagued by mismanagement, corruption, cronyism, capital flight, and so on. The depletion of our reserves and syphoning of profit abroad has led to a severe crisis that the central bank has been struggling to deal with. Every word or action of the governor affects the economy. The governor does not just control the central bank; through his leadership, he influences the

Given the pivotal role that the central bank governor plays in controlling the important aspects of the economy, do the questions of academic qualifications, personal experience, institutional exposure, training and knowledge of how the global economy functions justify the appointment of the person now adorning the post? This is no criticism of him personally, but a focus on the bigger picture—the needs of the country and specifically of this government. How competently will he be able to serve the government's goals, as enshrined in its 31 point programme? The new governor may be very well-suited for many things, but for this?

An awkward fact that may greatly



VISUAL: STAR

One of the pledges of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has been that every major action of his government will be well-justified and transparent. The justification given by the finance minister refers only to the right of the government to make new appointments. Not a word so far explains why this appointment came so suddenly, dramatically, and insultingly to the incumbent.

whole banking sector. And the sector has been suffering from structural, institutional and managerial problems. The huge and largely unmanageable non-performing loans (NPLs) have been caused by inefficient, politically compromised, and corrupt leadership from the Bangladesh Bank.

impact his credibility is that he had his own loan rescheduled just in December last year. There are two kinds of loan defaulters: wilful and circumstantial. We hope he did not fall into the first category. Loan default is the biggest disease of our banking system and has greatly affected the operations of all banks. How sternly and decisively the new governor will deal with other loan defaulters when he was one himself is an open question. Rescheduling loans does not exonerate the borrowers; it merely gives them a way out of the predicament.

Another question concerns the governor's political affiliation. He was a leading member of the election team that brought such grand success for BNP in the February 12 election. Is this a reward? Has our experience not taught us that such a position should go to a non-political, unbiased professional? Is it not also a lesson from the past regime that the central bank must not become an extension of the finance ministry, and must be given an element of autonomy in its operations? To ensure that, the governor must be a person of stature,

Minimum courtesy demands that the finance minister call Mansur to his office and inform him of the decision, or at least inform him over the phone. Minimum decency demands that he be given some time to vacate his office, say farewell to his staff, and leave with some show of honour. Instead, he heard about his departure from the media and decided to leave office on his own. Around the same time, an adviser to Mansur was allegedly mobbed and forced out of the central bank premises by a group of disgruntled officials.

Such behaviour stands in sharp contrast to the standard set by the head of the government. The prime minister's demeanour of dignity, sobriety and composure in dealing with the processes of decision-making and their implementation contrasts starkly with the indignity that a man holding the position of central bank governor was made to suffer by the finance ministry.

Finally comes the "meaning" of the decision. What does it signify? What message is the government trying to convey through this dramatic and humiliating change at the top of such a critical and sensitive institution—one that has been severely maligned

and weakened in the past and whose rebuilding is so crucial? Why remove the governor at this very moment, when the new government is settling down, learning how the vast machinery of government functions, reorganising the law enforcement agencies, and making new appointments to other key posts?

The removal also comes against a man who succeeded in addressing many of the problems our economy faced following the ouster of Sheikh Hasina. His 18-month tenure can be defined by aggressive macroeconomic stabilisation. Ahsan Mansur successfully transitioned the country to a more market-based exchange rate, which many feared would depress the value of the taka. But the taka actually stabilised against the dollar. During his time, our gross forex reserves increased from \$25 billion to \$35 billion. He followed a strict and tight monetary policy to contain inflation and prioritised economic discipline and price stability over loose credit. He took bold steps to restructure the boards of at least 11 troubled banks. Generally speaking, he accurately diagnosed the financial sector's vulnerabilities and strengthened the central bank's supervision. Most importantly, he was able to create a sense of confidence about the country's economy at the international level. This is one area where the country not only needs to perform well but also needs to convince the global market that it is performing well. Ahsan Mansur was able to do that to a large extent. His removal may trigger uncertainty on the global stage and further jeopardise our recovery.

One of the pledges of Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has been that every major action of his government will be well-justified and transparent. The justification given by the finance minister refers only to the right of the government to make new appointments. Not a word so far explains why this appointment came so suddenly, dramatically, and insultingly to the incumbent.

The greatest damage this action may cause stems from the impression that it was done in response to "mob" pressure. There is no indication that this decision followed deep analysis of the situation, careful weighing of the various factors that accompany a change in such a vital position, or serious consideration of its implications. It came amid gathering of some staff with demands that were mostly administrative in nature.

One of the first pledges the new government made was not to allow mob rule. Will what happened at the Bangladesh Bank not trigger similar moves in other institutions? We urge the prime minister to examine this event very carefully and reflect seriously on what it means for his government and what he needs to do to prevent a repeat. Such actions cast a questioning shadow over the government, and some consequences may be long-lasting.

Education system must be built on proficiency, not pass rates



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In Bangladesh, education certificates often promise more than the learning they represent. Many conventionally successful students struggle to read with confidence, mathematics feels too mechanical, and concepts memorised for examinations fade quickly. This is hardly a failure on the children's part, but a predictable outcome of an ineffective system.

Bangladesh achieved remarkable progress in expanding schooling over the past two decades, with more children entering classrooms, more schools built, and increasing participation in public examinations. Yet, the deeper gaps students have in weak foundational skills in subjects like science and mathematics have not been addressed.

The system revolved around measuring what was most convenient, even if superficial, such as enrolment, grade completion rate, pass rate, and syllabus coverage. Thus, stakeholder

behaviour adapted accordingly. Teachers had to focus on completing overloaded curricula, rather than ensuring understanding; examinations emphasised predictable recall; and students progressed even without a proper grasp of the courses they took. Similarly, households responded in predictable ways—those who could afford it, turned to private tutoring and the responsibility for actual learning shifted from the system to families. Social and income inequality widened and trust in institutions eroded.

A government review of secondary and higher secondary education examined these patterns and it reached a direct conclusion: as long as progression, certification, and institutional performance are considered a more reliable measure of success than demonstrated learning, weak outcomes will persist. So, one of the toughest challenges for the new government is to ensure just

educational opportunities for over four crore young people.

The way BNP's election manifesto covered pledges involving education—signalling increased public investment in education, stronger teacher capacity, expanded primary support, credible assessment, digital tracking, and wider access to technical and vocational education—is promising. And for these promises to materialise, incentives that shape everyday behaviour in schools have to be aligned with learning at its centre.

Any new education policies must keep in mind that a system cannot deliver high-quality technical education if students progress without foundational mastery and examination credibility cannot be restored if results are expected to remain stable regardless of actual performance. At the same time, digital tools cannot improve outcomes if teachers lack the time, support, and incentives to respond to learning gaps.

To truly reform Bangladesh's education sector, the curriculum must be realistic and teachable and students' class progressions must reflect their actual learning. Assessment must be credible and institutions must ensure that any students with a comparatively weaker academic standing are receiving timely support. These principles do not conflict with the new government's stated commitments, but makes them

all the more achievable.

Every proposal placed before the BNP administration should therefore be judged by a single question: does it strengthen real learning and the system's ability to respond to gaps in real time? If the answer is yes, it deserves priority. If the answer is no, it must be reconsidered.

For example, the BNP's stance to prioritise digitalisation in the education sector—presenting "One Teacher One Tab" together with "Edu-ID"—reflects a forward-looking approach. These initiatives will advance learning only if they are implemented to help teachers see where students are struggling and adjust their instructions and support accordingly. However, if not tied strictly to actionable practices, these tools will risk being tokenistic, rather than transformative.

Bangladesh is nearing the end of its demographic dividend. The students now in school will soon form the core of the labour force. If they enter adulthood with solid certificates but fragile skills, the cost will be felt in productivity, social mobility, and trust in public institutions. The diagnosis is clear: Bangladesh must realign incentives, restore credibility, and enforce standards that put learning at the forefront. The current government has both the chance and the obligation to bring about this change.