

The Daily Star

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Business as usual for BNP?

Ordinances promoting good governance cannot be abandoned

We are disappointed by the parliamentary special committee's decision against ratifying 20 ordinances passed during the interim government's tenure, many of them central to the reform proposals of the July National Charter. The issues these ordinances were meant to tackle include judicial independence, prevention of enforced disappearance, and strengthening of crucial institutions such as the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission. The charter reforms were extensively discussed by the National Consensus Commission with all parties, including BNP. So, what does the allowing of these 20 ordinances to expire or lapse say about the ruling party's commitment to the aspirations of the 2024 uprising as expressed through the signing of the July charter?

Three of the ordinances, considered landmark decisions, related to ensuring separation of the judiciary from the executive. They included a legal framework for appointing judges to the apex courts, creating a secretariat for the Supreme Court, and granting the judiciary administrative and financial autonomy. This was to ensure that appointments of judges and all things related to the courts would not be influenced by the executive. Dropping these ordinances risks reverting to the age-old practice of Supreme Court appointments being influenced by the ruling party's preference. Meanwhile, failure to ratify the ordinance that aimed to criminalise enforced disappearance (with the highest punishment) is disturbing. Why would the BNP have any reservations against making disappearances, which their own members had been victims of, punishable?

In the same vein, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Ordinance, 2025 would have strengthened the commission with a mandate to conduct its own investigations, including inspecting the facilities of various security agencies. What technicalities prevented the special committee from ratifying this ordinance? The unbridled corruption of Sheikh Hasina's regime was one of the major catalysts of the July uprising. Which is why the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025 was welcomed by the people as it would further strengthen the commission, allow it to directly file cases, and investigate financial crimes abroad. That the committee would decide to ignore this crucial ordinance gives rise to questions.

According to parliamentary rules, the 16 ordinances that have been dropped can be reintroduced in parliament after scrutiny and revision. But this has to happen within 30 days from the first sitting of the parliament, which would make April 10 the deadline. After this date, the ordinances will expire. Will the level of scrutiny required be completed within less than a week?

It is now difficult not to be skeptical of the ruling party (which holds a two-thirds majority in parliament) and its commitment to bringing about major reform in governance. Strengthening democratic institutions and making them independent of political influence were major aspirations of the July uprising and its actors. But the dropping of ordinances that, if ratified into laws, could have realised these very aspirations takes us back to the politicisation of key institutions, which we saw during the time of the fallen Awami League regime. We sincerely hope that our misgivings will be dispelled and these key ordinances that reflect people's aspirations of true democracy will be revived and ratified into laws after quick review by parliament.

Vaccination drive mustn't falter

Those responsible for the measles outbreak must be held accountable

Between March 15 and April 3, the government reported 94 suspected measles deaths among 5,792 suspected cases across the country. Most of those dead are children. To put this into perspective, the total number of measles cases last year was reported to be 125. While the highest number of suspected cases have been reported in Dhaka, the figures are considerable in other divisions as well. What's exasperating is that this outbreak is largely due to entirely avoidable reasons, and especially the previous interim government's attempt to reform a system that was not broken in the first place.

Through continuous and planned efforts over the last few decades under the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), measles had practically become a disease of the past in Bangladesh. While there were reportedly discussions in 2017 of shifting the costs of the vaccination programmes away from Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, and Unicef, and to the country's budget, this gained no momentum. The last special vaccination campaign (meant to cover those missed during the EPI's regular campaigns) was held in 2020, with the 2024 one being disrupted by the political changeover. Meanwhile, routine vaccinations were disrupted at least three times last year due to strikes by health sector assistants in rural areas. And to put the nail in the coffin of Bangladesh's measles prevention, the interim government scrapped the proposed fifth Health, Population, and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP) in March 2025 and decided to procure only half the vaccines via the long-time arrangement with Unicef, and the other half via tender. This decision, and the consequent, characteristic bureaucratic indecision, is now manifested in the current deadly outbreak.

It is, of course, reassuring that the current government is taking prompt action: an emergency measles vaccination campaign will begin today across 30 high-burden upazilas in 18 districts. Reportedly, Gavi has provided two crore doses of the measles vaccine, while central stocks were exhausted. We urge that this vaccination campaign be conducted with care and efficiency at all levels and that the government do its utmost to reach as many unvaccinated babies and children as possible. Simultaneously, efforts must be made to inform families of young children of symptoms and prevention techniques. Most crucially, ICU capacity and accessibility must be bolstered across the country, especially in rural areas. Also, those responsible for this outbreak should be held accountable accordingly. Each of the confirmed measles deaths so far was preventable. What we desperately need now is a return to a time when measles could not turn fatal for any child.

Times are changing, so too must the way the state communicates



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Communication is now one of the most decisive forces governing the state in Bangladesh. Policymaking, administrative control, and conventional political management remain as necessary as ever, but they are no longer enough on their own. Today, a rumour can spread faster than an official instruction. A Facebook post can trigger market anxiety before any formal announcement appears. State silence is often read not as deliberation, but as weakness, secrecy, or incompetence. In this reality, communication is not an accessory to governance. It is part of governance itself, and increasingly a condition for public order, trust, and national stability.

Government communication has traditionally been treated as a defensive form of public relations, something activated only after criticism grows or a crisis erupts. That approach is now costly. By the time the government begins speaking, speculation has already spread, public opinion has hardened, and trust has started to erode. This is why Bangladesh urgently needs to rebuild the state's communication architecture through an integrated and professional system built on three connected pillars: strategic communication, risk communication, and crisis communication.

Strategic communication explains the long-term direction of the state and the logic behind major choices. Risk communication prepares the public in advance for possible disruptions or painful adjustments. Crisis communication delivers fast, clear, and credible guidance when danger is already unfolding. These three are linked, but each has a separate purpose. Without all three working together, it becomes difficult to govern sensitive sectors such as energy, migration, and macroeconomic management.

The current situation in the energy sector makes this especially clear. For instance, fuel pricing in Bangladesh impacts transport costs, industrial production, household survival, market prices, as well as political sentiment. Yet, price adjustments have often appeared sudden, unprepared, and imposed from above. Sometimes, secrecy has been used as if it could calm the situation. In reality, secrecy often creates fear, encourages hoarding and market manipulation, and gives people the impression that the government is not managing the problem but rather reacting under pressure.

Economic decisions quickly become political decisions when people do not understand why they are being made.

The deeper problem is not simply the price increase itself. It is the absence of credible explanations before the decision arrives. If market-adjusted pricing is going to shape Bangladesh's energy future, the public must be prepared well in advance. People need context, not slogans. If explained consistently and factually,



FILE VISUAL: ANWAR SOHEL

even difficult decisions can become more understandable and acceptable.

This is where risk communication matters. The relevant ministries should not wait until a price revision is announced, but should instead provide regular, forecast-based explanations in simple language. If Brent crude rises, citizens should not learn about its implications only from foreign media or partisan political commentary. They should hear it directly from their own government, through clear language, visuals, and public briefings. The message should not be framed as mere suffering. It should explain how the state is trying to protect supply, reduce long-term vulnerability, and manage risks before they become shocks. Effective communication does not exist to make people feel good. It exists to help them understand reality.

Transparency becomes even more important when a crisis actually unfolds. In energy management, fear of shortage can itself intensify the scarcity. If the public suspects that fuel is running out, panic behaviour

can accelerate the crisis. In such cases, real-time information becomes more powerful than generic assurances. If people know how much fuel is available, where supplies are stored, and how distribution is moving, panic can be eased. Opacity deepens uncertainty. Transparency reduces it.

The migration and remittance sector presents another major test. In a world marked by regional conflicts, labour market uncertainty, and rumours flow rapidly, migrant communication must be redesigned around trust, preparedness, and visible protection. If expatriate workers are truly national assets, then the state must communicate with them not only in the language of administration but also in the language of responsibility. Migrants should know that the government has contingency plans, diplomatic channels, emergency support systems,

the government says one thing to international lenders and another to the domestic public, credibility quickly weakens. If policy messages are late, vague, or contradictory, traders turn defensive, speculators grow active, and ordinary people become anxious.

What is needed is a disciplined culture of economic communication. The Ministry of Finance and Bangladesh Bank should publicise timely briefings and communicate quality public data, and forward guidance regularly, predictably, and clearly to stabilise expectations even when the news is difficult. Honesty is essential. It is better to acknowledge reserve pressure early than to let outside actors reveal the damage later. Trust is not lost only because the news is bad. It is often lost because people feel the truth was hidden. Similarly, when it comes to rumours in the banking sector, silence

is rarely neutral. It is often interpreted as confirmation. In such situations, visible leadership, credible data, and plain explanation must move together. That is why strategic, risk, and crisis communication must be treated as one governing framework.

Bangladesh must move from reactive messaging. It needs inter-ministerial coordination that can detect panic, rumours, and confusion early. It needs a culture of timely disclosure, honest interpretation, and empathetic language, especially where policy decisions affect kitchens, savings, migration routes, and everyday survival. In an age of unstable information flows, the public sphere never remains empty for long. If the state leaves it vacant, rumours, fear, and propaganda will take over. And once they do, governing becomes increasingly difficult. Bangladesh's future stability will depend not only on what the state does, but also on how honestly, prudently, and responsibly it speaks to its people.

Macroeconomic stability also depends heavily on communication. Economic language is often technical, but its social and political effects are immediate. Markets do not run only on numbers. They run on expectations, trust, and perceived credibility. If

The missing link in our renewable energy transition lies in quality assurance



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Geopolitical crises have repeatedly exposed Bangladesh's excessive dependence on imported fossil fuels, driving up energy prices and depleting foreign exchange reserves. The ongoing war in the Middle East has once again highlighted this structural vulnerability. To mitigate such external shocks, Bangladesh must urgently expand its domestic renewable energy capacity. But to what extent does the government demonstrate genuine commitment to a renewable energy transition? And if such intent exists, are current policies and strategies being implemented effectively? The answer, unfortunately, appears to be no. While financing constraints, investment gaps, and taxation remain the primary barriers to renewable energy expansion in Bangladesh, another critical issue has received far less attention: barriers related to imported renewable energy components.

Renewable energy systems typically rely on high-quality components that can deliver efficient, stable, and durable performance under challenging environmental conditions. A robust solar components testing facility is, thereby, essential to ensuring that these

products meet international safety and performance standards. Proper testing ensures optimal energy conversion and storage, and safe operation in challenging environmental conditions. It improves system efficiency, reduces failure risks, and ensures maximum return on investment for end users.

Bangladesh needs its own dedicated renewable energy components testing institute for a successful renewable energy transition. Countries currently leading in renewable energy transition—such as Germany, Italy, the US, China, and India—all have their own specialised testing institutes for renewable energy components. Even Pakistan, which has recently achieved a 46 percent share of renewable energy in its electricity generation mix as of September 2025, established a state-of-the-art solar panel testing facility in collaboration with South Korea in December 2025.

However, there is no single dedicated renewable energy components testing institute in Bangladesh. Neither does the country have its own comprehensive solar components testing facility, although approximately 78 percent of the total renewable energy capacity

comes from solar power in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) has performed a limited role in this area, but its capacity remains significantly constrained. For instance, its capabilities for testing solar inverters are negligible, and it does not offer testing services for other solar components.

Normally, solar panels are certified based on internationally recognised standards, which are enforced by national testing authorities. Unfortunately, Bangladesh has not developed its own certification framework for solar panels. Instead, it adapts different international standards such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), etc. Moreover, BSTI's testing system is mainly documentation-based. It is not based on direct physical testing. Usually, a company imports solar components and submits the certificates to BSTI, and then BSTI reviews them to determine compliance with the required standards. If approved, the product is listed in BSTI's database. Once a specific model is listed, subsequent imports of the same model do not require further testing. However, bureaucratic delays often complicate the process. Sometimes, even with BSTI certifications, the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority (SREDA) conducts unnecessary and lengthy documentation checks that may take three to four months. As a result, importing companies cannot install

solar panels for the customers on time, escalating project costs and diminishing efficiency.

Another major concern is that BSTI lacks adequate modern and advanced testing equipment for testing solar panels and solar inverters. Without proper testing infrastructures, imported solar panels and inverters often fail to meet their claimed quality and performance standards: for example, a solar panel advertised as having a capacity of 500 watts delivers only 300 watts. Therefore, the current government should urgently establish a separate testing institute for renewable energy components, if the funds for such a project are available. If not, the existing capacities of BSTI should be strengthened, modernised, and upgraded. Also, BSTI must introduce direct physical testing-based methods for all renewable energy components, rather than a purely documentation-based system. Another solution could be to establish port-based testing facilities that could significantly decrease delays by enabling rapid testing of imported products upon arrival. Otherwise, several months are wasted in bringing these components to Dhaka and distributing them among the city's few testing labs.

As technology is changing rapidly around the world, BSTI's testing equipment needs to be updated and modernised accordingly. In addition, the government should encourage the establishment of testing laboratories in the private sector to enhance capacity and encourage competition.