

## BPSC rolls out one-year reform plan to streamline recruitment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Public Service Commission yesterday unveiled a one-year reform report, outlining a set of measures aimed to strengthen the public recruitment system, improve efficiency, cut delays, digitise recruitment, and ensure fair and transparent government hiring.

The report, titled "From Gridlock to Governance Renewal: One Year of Institutional Reform", covers reform steps taken between October 2024 and November 2025. It was presented by BPSC member Prof Chowdhury Saima Ferdous at an event jointly organised by the BPSC and UNDP at a Dhaka hotel.

BPSC Chairman Prof Mobasser Monem said the commission had taken a structured

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Large papier-mâché sculptures, crafted over the past few days, sit ready at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Dhaka University ahead of the Baishakhi Shobhajatra (formerly known as the Mongol Shobhajatra), to be held this morning, on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh. With the Bangla New Year set to begin with the rising sun, the faculty is abuzz with last-minute preparations as fine arts students put finishing touches on the motifs that will lead the Baishakh procession.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## PAHELA BAISHAKH A festival of hope and new beginnings

The celebration, shaped by history, bridges agrarian roots with vibrant urban expressions

DIPAN NANDY

The first morning of the Bangla New Year carries a distinct atmosphere. The light feels softer, the air holds a quiet promise, and unspoken hope weaves through the melody of the morning raga.

Pahela Baishakh is more than a date on the calendar; it is a cultural rebirth where history, tradition, and aspiration meet.

Banglapedia describes the day as a joyous folk festival that encourages people to leave behind past burdens and embrace a hopeful future.

Rooted in agrarian life yet vibrant in modern cities, the celebration carries the scent of harvests, the rhythm of folk traditions, and the resilience of a people who express their identity through culture.

The origins of the festival trace back to the Mughal era. During the reign of Emperor Akbar, land taxes were collected based on the Islamic lunar calendar, which did not align with agricultural seasons. This often forced farmers to pay taxes before their crops were ready, creating hardship.

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## 25YRS OF RAMNA BLAST No appeal filed yet to challenge HC verdict

Full text of HC judgement still unreleased; 2 convicts released from jail

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

This Pahela Baishakh marks the 25th year of the gruesome bomb blasts at Ramna Batamul in Dhaka during Bangla New Year celebrations that left 10 dead and scores injured.

On May 13 last year, a High Court bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Nasreen Akter reduced the sentences of 10 convicted leaders of the banned militant outfit Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji), rejecting the death reference and disposing of the appeals filed by the convicts.

**Last year, a High Court bench reduced the sentences of 10 convicted leaders of the Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji), rejecting the death reference and disposing of the appeals filed by the convicts. The convicts had earlier been handed either the death penalty or life imprisonment by the trial court in the murder case filed over the incident.**

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However, even 11 months later, no appeal has been filed with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the High Court verdict.

Moreover, the full text of the HC verdict is yet to be released, although it was expected within a few weeks, said a source close to the HC bench.

The full text of any HC judgement is required to move an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, two accused in the murder case have already been released from jail.

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## A road to cut through Osmani Udyan

Authorities cite parking needs; planners warn of long-term environmental damage, call for project cancellation

HELEMUL ALAM

Ignoring concerns raised by environmentalists, the government has constructed a around 20-foot-wide road through Osmani Udyan, connecting Fulbaria's Phoenix Road with Abdul Gani Road to facilitate vehicular movement towards the Secretariat.

The construction, now in its final stage, has led to the removal of numerous trees within the 29-acre park, which has remained closed for the past eight years due to an ongoing "modernisation" project.

During the tenure of the interim government, a component for a July monument was added and is nearing completion. The same administration also approved the road project, which was implemented after the 13th national election.

Muntasir Mamun, executive engineer of the Eden Division of the Public Works Department, said the initiative is part of a broader plan to address acute parking shortages and space constraints inside the Secretariat.

To tackle the issue, the Ministry of Housing and Public Works has undertaken a project titled "Construction of Ground Floor Office Building of the Government Transport Department with Car Parking Facilities", with an estimated cost of Tk 448 crore.

The proposed 20-storey building will house transport workshop operations on the basement, semi-

basement, and ground floors, while the upper floors will be used for elevated parking. Floors above the 10th level may be used for offices, as parking becomes less practical at higher levels.

Mamun said the project was reviewed by the Planning Commission and sent back for revision following observations.



**This is a terrible decision. Destroying parks and playgrounds to accommodate private cars is unacceptable. If this road is built, it will cause irreversible damage to the park's environment.**

ADIL MOHAMMED KHAN  
Chief executive of Institute of Planning and Development

One key recommendation was to introduce a circular, one-way traffic system to ease congestion, which led to the construction of the new road through the park.

The road project began with a special allocation in the previous fiscal year but was delayed due to

time constraints. Work resumed in the 2025-26 fiscal year and is now almost complete, with only finishing work remaining, he said.

He added that only a small portion of the park is being used for vehicle movement and that no permanent structure will be built - only open paved space. The initiative, he said, is being carried out in the "greater public interest" to reduce roadside parking and congestion around the Secretariat.

Abdus Salam, administrator of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), said the permission was granted by a previous administration and is being implemented by the housing and public works ministry. "I will visit the site and take necessary steps," he said.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Urban planners and environmentalists have strongly criticised the decision, warning of long-term environmental damage.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) demanded cancellation of both the road construction and the planned 20-storey parking facility within the park.

After publishing a report in The Daily Star on February 6, 2025, BELA, in a letter sent on February 9 that year, called for an immediate halt to all activities encroaching on open spaces and urged consultations with urban planners to restore public access.

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## 'Govt's submissive stance enabling mob violence' Teachers' Network, We Can condemn Shahbagh attack, demand swift action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Teachers' Network and Amrai Pari Paribarik Nirjaton Protirodh Jote (WE CAN) have expressed deep concern and strongly condemned a recent attack on a gathering in the capital's Shahbagh, as well as the growing incidents of mob violence across the country.

In separate statements issued yesterday, the two organisations criticised law enforcement agencies for failing to ensure citizens' safety and demanded exemplary punishment for those responsible.

According to the statements, a group of friends, who were having tea in Shahbagh, was suddenly attacked and indiscriminately beaten on April 10. At least eight people, including a private university teacher and several rights activists, were injured. The attackers allegedly targeted the victims by labelling them as "homosexual," "transgender," or "hijra."

Expressing outrage, the Teachers' Network said the attack took place right in front of Shahbagh Police Station, yet police remained silent spectators.

The police station even refused to register a case or a general diary (GD) when the victims approached them, the network said.

The statement further highlighted incidents of mob violence outside Dhaka. On April 10, members of the Hindu community and their businesses were attacked and vandalised in Rangpur. A day later, a pir was beaten to death and his shrine set on fire in Kushtia's Daulatpur over allegations of blasphemy.

The Teachers' Network said despite the

**A citizen's gender identity or sexual orientation can never justify violence, and gender-diverse individuals have equal rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.**

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## Barrister Shafique laid to rest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist and former law minister Barrister Shafique Ahmed was laid to rest at Azimpur Graveyard in Dhaka yesterday, as people from across professions paid their final respects, his son Barrister Mahbub Shafique told The Daily Star.

His body was kept at the Supreme Court premises from 2:00pm for about an hour, where judges, lawyers, law officers, officials, political leaders, educationists and family members gathered to pay tribute. His second namaz-e-janaza was held there.

Law Minister Md Asaduzzaman, Appellate Division judge Justice SM Emdadul Hoque, Attorney General Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal, Supreme Court Bar Association President AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon

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## KAKINA ZAMINDARBARI once vibrant, now stands silent

Historic landmark faces ruin after decades of neglect

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The Kakina Zamindarbari, a historic palace located in Kakina village under Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat, was once a centre of wealth, education, culture, and self-governance in the region.

However, the century-old landmark from the erstwhile feudal era in Bengal is now on the verge of ruin following decades of neglect, lack of maintenance and renovation. Once vibrant with dazzling cultural gatherings, the palace now stands silent, holding only the remnants of past memories.

Dr Ashrafuzzaman Mondal, director of the Lalmonirhat District Museum, said the Kakina area used to be an ancient settlement that flourished in the northeastern edge of the Indian subcontinent, with a history spanning several centuries. Over time, the region used to be known by various names such as Konkona, Konkania, Kankina, Koikina, Kakinia, and Kakina.

He also said that about 300 years ago, a zamindari (feudal estate) was



established in Kakina through a land grant by the then Mughal emperor to Zamindar Kashinath Roy, the patriarch of this influential family. Kashinath later reorganised agriculture, trade, architecture, and administration in the region. His successors, Mahima Ranjan Roy and Shambhucharan Roy, further expanded the estate and its influence, turning Kakina into an economic and cultural hub of northern Bengal.

Zamindar Mahima Ranjan Roy Chowdhury played a significant role in the development and cultural advancement of Kakina. He established "Banga Bidyalaya" in Rangpur, which later became known as Kailash Ranjan High School.

During his time, Mahimaganj, Teesta, Mahendranagar, Lalmonirhat, Aditumari, Mogolhat, and Kakina railway stations were established under the Kakina Zamindari. He was also the founding president of the Rangpur Literary Society and had donated land for the construction of a theatre hall.

Nurul Amin, a local college teacher

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## Dhaka urges New Delhi to curb Hasina's activities

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka requested New Delhi to ensure that deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina does not do anything to destabilise Bangladesh using the soil of India, said Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Humaiun Kobir.

"There would be some challenges as Hasina is still staying there [India]," he told reporters at the Secretariat yesterday.

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman and Humaiun Kobir held meetings with Indian External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, Oil and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and National Security Adviser Ajit Doval in New Delhi on April 8, reports UNB.

"We will continue to seek her extradition through a transparent judicial process. It will be dealt

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