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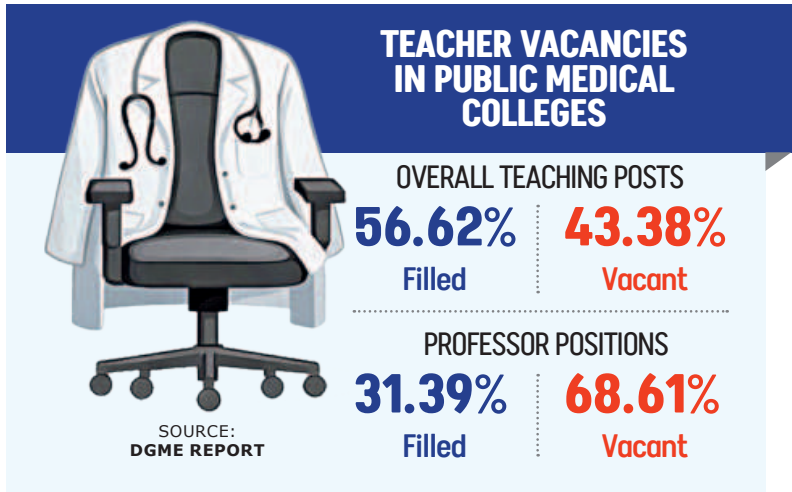
Infrastructure, teacher crises plague many govt medical schools

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The BNP government has approved the first public medical college in its current term, with plans underway to establish seven more, as many established medical schools grapple with severe shortages of teachers and infrastructure.

The resource and workforce crunch at the existing public medical colleges, particularly those set up in recent years, is so acute that the interim government cut a significant number of seats at 14 colleges after an assessment last year.

Against this backdrop, the health ministry, on May 14, approved the establishment of Thakurgaon Medical College, taking the total number of government medical colleges to 38.



The order, signed by Health Secretary Md Quamruzzaman Chowdhury, takes effect immediately, meaning the college authorities are cleared to begin admitting students from the upcoming academic session.

The approval process, however, bypassed the recommendations of the Health Sector Reform Commission formed by the interim government.

In its report submitted in May last year, the commission suggested that experts should thoroughly assess the necessity for and feasibility of establishing any new medical college.

Between 2010 and 2020, the Awami League-led government established 20 public medical colleges, with many of those approvals made on political grounds, officials said.

Ruling party leaders often believe that establishing a public medical college in their areas would bring in professor- or associate professor-level doctors and reflect their party's success.

The then administration had also increased seats by 1,030 for the 2023-24 session, a move widely criticised for being made without proper assessment despite shortages of teachers, infrastructure, and laboratory facilities.

The lack of teachers and infrastructure is hampering the quality of medical education, which will eventually have an adverse impact on the health sector, experts said.

After the fall of the AL regime in August 2024, the interim government sharply criticised the earlier expansion and announced plans to rationalise seats to uphold academic standards.

In November last year, the health ministry cut 355 seats across 14 government medical colleges, though new allocations elsewhere brought the net reduction to 280 seats.

The interim government, however, in January this year gave conditional approval for the establishment of a new public medical college in Munshiganj, saying academic activities could begin only after the necessary infrastructure had been developed.

Two advisers to the interim government from the district played a key

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Elite force needed, Rab or another

PM's adviser Zahed says Hasina won't face any extrajudicial steps

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An elite force, whether the Rapid Action Battalion or another, would continue to operate under well-defined laws, as it is necessary for the state, said Zahed Ur Rahman, adviser to the prime minister on information and broadcasting affairs, yesterday.

Speaking at a weekly press briefing at the Secretariat, he, however, said Rab may not remain in its current form, and the home ministry would decide whether the force will continue to exist under its current name.

He noted that Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed has already announced plans for a new law governing the force and that its name is likely to be changed.

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Palestinians inspect a house hit by an Israeli strike after residents were warned to evacuate, in Jabalia refugee camp, northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

New pay scale for govt employees from July 1

“We are working on the modalities of the rollout as the govt's financial capacity has to be considered too.”

Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government officials, pensioners, and MPO-listed teachers and staff are set to get a new pay scale from July 1 after the committee led by Cabinet Secretary Nasimul Ghani recommended the rollout of the revised pay scale.

“We are rolling out the new pay scale from July 1 for sure -- we are working on the modalities of the rollout as the government's financial capacity has to be considered too,” Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

About Tk 35,000 crore is likely to be allocated in the upcoming fiscal year's budget for the partial implementation of the new pay scale, The Daily Star has learnt from people involved with the proceedings.

The pay scale would be implemented over three years: 50 percent of the recommended basic salary would be hiked in the next fiscal year and the remaining portion in the following year;

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Local govt polls from Sept-Oct

Says LGRD state minister; parties begin gearing up

AHMED DEEPTO, MAMUNUR RASHID and SHAMIMA RITA

The government is preparing to hold elections to local government bodies in phases, beginning this September-October and continuing into early next year.

“The elections are likely to begin after the monsoon, around September or October,” LGRD State Minister Mir Shahe Alam told journalists in Bogura yesterday.

Citing an earlier statement by LGRD Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, he said polls to all five tiers of local government -- union parishad, municipality, upazila parishad, zila parishad and city corporation -- would be completed within next year.

He added that funding for the elections will be included in the upcoming budget, set to be presented in parliament this June.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmanel Masud said the commission has yet to receive any formal communication from the government. “However, we intend to complete preparations by June so as to be ready whenever the government approaches us with a schedule.”

Bangladesh currently has 13 city corporations, 495 upazila parishads, 61 zila parishads, 330 municipalities and 4,599 union parishads.

Most of these institutions have been functioning without elected representatives since the fall of the Awami League government following the mass uprising in July 2024.

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8-year-old girl found beheaded

Neighbours detained; police suspect murder after rape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An eight-year-old girl was found beheaded in her neighbour's home in Dhaka's Pallabi yesterday.

The victim, Ramisa Akter, was a second-grade student at Popular Model High School. Her body was found in the sublet room of Soheli Rana, 32, a rickshaw mechanic, who was detained later in the evening.

The horrific murder left the victim's family, relatives, and neighbours devastated and enraged.

Mostak Sarker, deputy commissioner of Mirpur Division Police, said Soheli went into hiding but was detained from Narayanganj's Fatullah around 7:00pm.

Soheli, a sublet tenant, was living in a room of a flat with his wife Swapna, while two other families occupied the remaining rooms. The other tenants were outside when the incident occurred.

Police and family members suspect that the detainee lured the child into his room, raped her, and then killed her when she screamed.

The incident took place in a second-floor flat opposite the victim's in Block B of Section 11 in Pallabi.

When the child's mother Parveen Begum, who was in her bedroom while her children were having breakfast and were about to get ready for school, saw that Ramisa was not in the flat around 10:30am, she began looking for her. The father was already out for work by then.

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