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Sports, politics remain entangled as BCB polls near

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New med school gets nod amid teacher scarcity
Thakurgaon Medical College first of many in pipeline
Tuhin Shubhra Adhikary

The BNP government has approved the first public medical college in its current term, with plans for setting up seven more colleges underway, as several recently established medical colleges struggle with a lack of teachers and infrastructure.

On May 15, the health ministry 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 likely 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 last May, the commission suggested that independent experts should thoroughly assess the necessity 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.

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.

After the fall of the Awami League-led government in August 2024, the interim government sharply criticised the earlier expansion and

Carrying bamboo baskets on their shoulders, farmers return home at dusk after spending the day harvesting ripe paddy from higher-lying haors and beels in Baurkandi village of Sylhet's Sadar's Baistila area yesterday.

PHOTO : SHEIKH NASIR



TEACHER VACANCIES
IN PUBLIC MEDICAL
COLLEGES

OVERALL TEACHING POSTS

56.62%

Filled

43.38%

Vacant

PROFESSOR POSITIONS

31.39%

Filled

68.61%

Vacant

SOURCE:
DGME REPORT

announced plans to rationalise seats to uphold academic standards.

Subsequently, in November last year, the health ministry reduced a total of 355 seats across 14 government medical colleges, though new allocations elsewhere brought the net cut 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 role in establishing the medical college, according to health ministry officials.

Then, on April 22, Health Minister Sarder Md Sakawat Husain told the parliament that the government is planning to establish medical colleges in seven more districts.

A health ministry official said another district was recently added to the list, taking the total number of medical colleges under process to eight, including the one in Thakurgaon.

A Directorate General of Medical Education (DGME) team has already submitted assessment reports on proposed medical colleges in Narsingdi and Brahmanbaria to the health ministry.

The ministry sent back the report on the Brahmanbaria medical college due to issues related to land, the official said, requesting anonymity.

The DGME was also asked to assess the proposals for medical colleges in Sherpur, Laxmipur, Narsingdi, Natore, Bhola and Joypurhat.

Save for Joypurhat, the proposals for medical colleges came to the health ministry during the interim government's tenure. For instance, Mahfuj Alam, the information adviser, wrote to the health ministry seeking a medical college in his hometown, Laxmipur.

After the BNP came to power, Shahiduddin Chowdhury Anee, water resources minister and a lawmaker from the district, also pushed for the medical college.

Trump pauses attack on Iran

Says a nuclear deal still possible; Tehran warns of 'new fronts' if attacked

AGENCIES

Iran's army yesterday warned it would "open new fronts" against the United States if it resumes attacks, after President Donald Trump said he had held off launching a new offensive in hopes of striking a deal.

The warning came amid a shaky ceasefire in place since April 8, with Washington and Tehran exchanging proposals in an effort to end the Middle East war, which began on February 28.

In a post on his Truth Social platform, Trump said Gulf leaders had asked him "to hold off on our planned Military attack of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was scheduled for tomorrow, in that serious negotiations are now taking place".

But Trump added he had instructed the US military to be "prepared to go forward with a full, large scale assault of Iran, on a moment's notice, in the event that an acceptable Deal is not reached".

Yesterday, Iran's army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia warned "to open new fronts against" the United States if it resumes attacks on the Islamic republic.

He added that Iran's military had used the ceasefire as an opportunity "to strengthen its combat capabilities", without elaborating.

Qatar, which suffered Tehran's retaliatory strikes following US-Israeli assaults during the war, emphasised that more time was needed for the ongoing Pakistani-mediated efforts to push for Iran-US talks.

Govt plans major fire service boost

20 fire stations, 100 ambulances in the works, says Salahuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has undertaken a series of initiatives to strengthen the operational capacity of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, including the construction and reconstruction of 20 fire stations and the procurement of 100 ambulances.

It is also considering a proposal to expand the agency's workforce to 30,000 personnel, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said yesterday while speaking as the chief guest at a programme marking Fire Service and Civil Defence Week 2026 at the Fire Service and Civil Defence Multipurpose Training Ground in Purbachal.

This year, Fire Service Week 2026 is being observed with the theme: "Firefighters' sole vow: We will keep life and property safe." A three-day nationwide awareness programme is also being held to mark the week.

"We are undertaking numerous initiatives for the overall development of the fire service," he said, adding that the construction and reconstruction of 20 fire stations are currently underway across the country to improve emergency response services.

"The procurement of 100 ambulances is also underway to expand services."

Salahuddin noted that while 538 fire stations are currently operational, the number remains inadequate given the country's population and rapid urbanisation.

PHOTO : PRABIR DAS

Flags and jerseys of football powerhouses flutter above a street market in the capital's Gulistan area as traders stock up on merchandise ahead of the FIFA World Cup, which kicks off on the night of June 11. From Argentina and Brazil to Germany and Spain, the colourful display reflects the feverish enthusiasm that grips Bangladesh whenever the world's biggest football tournament approaches. The photo was taken yesterday.