Ad-din hospital's licence cancelled

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The hospital authority, in a press statement, hoped that, in the interest of patients, the government would allow the hospital to continue its regular operations until a final decision is made.

Six newborns, aged between one and four days, died within a few hours on the morning of May 27 at the hospital, triggering a public outrage.

Later, a DGHS investigation committee found clear negligence by the hospital authority, nurses and staff, as well as the absence of an on-duty physician in the post-operative room, to be responsible for the deaths of six newborns.

It also noted that severe overcrowding in a small post-operative room, coupled with an air conditioner remaining switched off for a prolonged period and the absence of any alternative ventilation system, created conditions unsuitable for the survival of the newborns.

Additionally, the building's infrastructure was unsuitable for operating as a 700-bed healthcare facility, and the post-operative ward in question was wholly inadequate for providing post-op care, it said.

Then, DGHS issued a show-cause notice to the hospital authority asking why its licence should not be cancelled, and in turn, the hospital authority submitted its reply on Tuesday. On the following day, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said they were not satisfied with the hospital's response.

Replying to a query at the press briefing yesterday, Prof Pravath said, "Since the hospital's licence has been cancelled, it can no longer provide medical services from this moment onwards. Therefore, the hospital is not permitted to admit or treat any new patients."

"The authorities may, if they choose, arrange for these patients to be transferred...If the patients seek help, we will support them," he added.

In response to a question on whether the licence was revoked solely because of the deaths of the six newborns, he said, "The deaths of the six infants certainly opened our eyes to the mismanagement at the institution. So, the two issues are closely linked."

After the press conference, a DGHS team led by its Director (Hospitals), Abu Hussain Md Moinul Ahsan, visited the hospital and handed over the closure order.

"We formally closed the admission register of the hospital and instructed them not to admit any new patients," Moinul told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said beds had been arranged at four government hospitals as well as Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute, and any patient wishing to be transferred would be accommodated there.

"Patients who are currently admitted will be allowed to continue their treatment at the hospital. However, the hospital authorities will not be permitted to admit any new patients," he said, adding that the DGHS will monitor compliance with the directive.

When abuse is hidden behind closed doors

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they arrive in a critical, near-fatal condition, or when a body finally appears in the media."

The study also found that nearly 60 percent of child domestic workers had no fixed working hours. Children as young as 10 were routinely forced into nine-hour shifts, while older children often worked over 12 hours a day.

Almost one-third earned Tk 500-Tk 1,000 a month; five percent earned less than Tk 500 and only 10 percent more than Tk 3,000. About 64 percent never received wages directly, with payments collected by parents or guardians.

'LEGAL SHIELDS A CONSOLATION PRIZE'

Abul Hossain, acting coordinator of the Domestic Workers Rights Network, said only three chapters of the Labour Act apply to domestic work: freedom of association, workplace injury compensation, and access to labour courts.

"Crucially, the entire chapter on child labour protections and age restrictions has been excluded for private households. As a result, the national minimum working age of 14 does not apply to domestic work, leaving the weak 2015 policy in place, which allows children as young as 12 to be employed under the guise of 'light work'."

Describing the provisions as a "consolation prize", he said children confined to private homes cannot exercise trade union rights, which require at least 20 members and formal documents such as appointment letters or identity cards -- none of which domestic workers possess.

"The Labour Court does not rely on verbal statements; it requires written evidence. But these children have no appointment letters or records specifying their wages or working hours," he said, adding that compensation frameworks designed for industrial accidents fail to address abuse such as burns and starvation.

CALL FOR 'OUTRIGHT BAN'

With the 2030 SDG deadline to eliminate child labour approaching, experts say stronger action is needed.

Laila Khondkar, convenor of Shishurai Shob, said placing domestic work on the hazardous occupations list is an urgent first step.

"Inclusion of this in the list will send a signal to society that child domestic work is unacceptable. The government and non-government organisations, employers, community members and parents will have to perform their responsibilities to ensure that children engaged in hazardous work are gradually reintegrated with families and have access to education and other skills development opportunities, which will give them an opportunity to engage in decent employment in future."

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, executive director of the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies, called for an outright ban.

"Domestic child labour should not merely be classified as hazardous; it must be completely and unequivocally banned," he told The Daily Star. "Even one case is harmful to society. Why should a child work in someone else's home?"

He identified three key issues: weak enforcement of justice, poverty, and discrimination, particularly against girls.

"I encountered a case at DMCH where a father had not seen his daughter in six years. He received Tk 2,000 a month via mobile banking, completely unaware that she was being systematically tortured."

"With the amount of money spent to eliminate child labour, no child in Bangladesh should have remained outside rehabilitation. The funds have simply been distributed without proper impact," he added, calling for a white paper to prevent further waste and ensure the effective use of funds.

Together, we can achieve anything

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brothers and sisters of Bangladesh", he would be able to carry out his duty.

"I have no doubt about it," said Trivedi, who is replacing Pranay Kumar Verma as India's ambassador to Bangladesh.

Verma has been appointed Indian ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and the European Union.

Trivedi is a rare politician in Indian history to be appointed high commissioner.

He served as union minister for railways and as minister of state for health and family welfare during the UPA regime in India, when he was a member of the Trinamool Congress.

He resigned from the Trinamool Congress on February 12, 2021, and joined the BJP on March 6, 2021.

He takes charge at a time when Indian push-ins have become a contentious issue in Dhaka-Delhi ties, despite efforts to repair relations strained by the fall of the Awami League government in 2024.

Trade restrictions imposed by both sides are affecting businesses, while India has yet to fully resume visa facilities for Bangladeshis.

Other important issues that remain to be settled include the renewal of the Ganges and Teesta water-sharing treaties.

Foreign policy analysts said Trivedi, who was born and raised in West Bengal and can speak Bengali, has in-depth knowledge of the politics of Bengal and Bangladesh, and that this will help him improve ties between the neighbours.

Relief for low-income groups, businesses

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to claim tax adjustments, and could instead pass the additional cost on to consumers.

The budget also proposes changes to the taxation of savings certificate income.

Currently, tax deducted at source on savings certificate profits is treated as the final liability. But under the proposed system, the deduction will be treated as advance tax, and the interest income will be added to the taxpayer's total income and taxed at the applicable slab rate.

Holders of savings certificates worth up to Tk 10 lakh currently pay 5 percent withholding tax, which may increase to 10 percent or above.

BOOST FOR DIGITAL ECONOMY, GREEN SECTOR

Income of freelancers and content creators across all categories will be fully exempt from tax.

Start-ups and tech-driven businesses will benefit from a zero percent turnover tax, while SME entrepreneurs will enjoy tax-free turnover thresholds of Tk 50 lakh, rising to Tk 70 lakh for women and persons with disabilities.

Importers of renewable energy equipment appear to be one of the biggest beneficiaries in the proposed budget.

Import duty and other taxes could be waived or reduced on solar inverters, lithium-ion batteries, battery pack housing, solar photovoltaic modules, and steel and aluminium mounting structures.

Corporate tax rates will be frozen to provide "policy continuity and certainty to investors."

Moreover, withholding tax rates on 60 essential commodities, including rice, wheat, potato, edible oil, and sugar, have been reduced to a uniform 0.5 percent from rates of up to 5 percent.

BLACK MONEY

A provision has been proposed for allowing taxpayers to legalise undisclosed income through property transactions.

The measure will enable buyers and sellers of land, buildings, and apartments to declare previously undisclosed funds. This will apply where the actual purchase or sale prices of land, buildings, or apartments exceed the value declared in official documents -- a common practice in Bangladesh's real estate market.

Individuals will be able to regularise the undisclosed portion of a property transaction by paying income tax at the applicable rate for individual taxpayers.

As per the proposal, no authority will be allowed to question or initiate proceedings on such income if the taxpayer voluntarily discloses it and pays the required tax, notwithstanding any provisions of the Income Tax Act or other applicable laws.

However, if tax authorities have already initiated proceedings over such transactions, the taxpayer will have to pay an additional 20 percent on top of the applicable tax on the excess amount, officials said.

The facility will not be available to individuals already convicted by a court over such matters.

REVENUE SOURCES

The NBR's revenue target for fiscal 2026-27 has been set at Tk 6.04 lakh crore, against a revised target of Tk 5.54 lakh crore for fiscal 2025-26, which is likely to be missed.

NBR officials said capital gains tax, increased collection from land developers and the scope to legalise undeclared incomes will generate significant revenue.

"There are very few significant tax measures that would substantially increase revenue collection in the coming fiscal year," said Snehasish Barua, managing director of SMAC Advisory Services.

"The source of the projected additional revenue remains unclear," he noted.

Barua warned that the compliance push may put pressure on small and marginal taxpayers if wealthier individuals and businesses outside the tax net are not brought under the system.

"The government will not be able to generate substantial revenue unless it can bring individuals with undisclosed income and assets into the tax net," he said, adding that personal tax slabs should be adjusted for inflation to prevent undue pressure on taxpayers.

Md Deen Islam, a professor of economics at Dhaka University, said the government appears to have deliberately avoided measures that could provoke public backlash.

"The strategy seems to centre on widening the tax base rather than imposing additional tax burdens," he said.

Bangladesh's overall revenue-to-GDP ratio stands at around 8 percent against a target of more than 10 percent for fiscal 2026-27. "The key question is how the government intends to achieve such a significant increase without introducing major new taxes or raising existing rates."

He argued that selective incentives for productive sectors, combined with stronger compliance, could raise revenue collection.

"The real challenge is implementation. The scope for raising revenue exists, but whether the government can effectively bring eligible taxpayers into the system remains the biggest question," he added.

Budget mostly reflects

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Agriculture's share of the budget has fallen to 5 percent, the lowest in at least a decade. The proposed allocation for the sector stands at Tk 46,821 crore, up Tk 1,032 crore from FY26. However, as the national budget expands 19 percent to Tk 9.38 lakh crore, agriculture's share has declined.

A review of the proposed initiatives suggests that, rather than targeted industry growth, farmers and fishers will largely be supported through social safety nets, including farmer cards and the inclusion of 15 lakh fisher households in the Vulnerable Group Feeding programme.

For farmer cards and a wider farmer protection system, the proposed budget has initially allocated Tk 1,062.50 crore. A total of Tk 1,567 crore has been allocated to waive loans of up to Tk 10,000 in the crop, fisheries, and livestock sectors.

BNP has also overlooked its election promise of establishing Agricultural Product Production, Preservation and Export Zones in the northern region.

In line with its flagship campaign promises on social welfare, the government increased social security spending by 14 percent. This expansion increases most existing allowances while introducing several new support schemes.

This includes family cards for 41 lakh families costing the government Tk 14,500 crore this fiscal year. This ambitious and costly welfare scheme still represents only a fraction of the 19.2 percent of the population living below the poverty line, leaving the government with large gaps to fill to fulfil its 2030 pledge.

While social safety spending ballooned, the newly announced tax regime does not introduce any measures to uphold its electoral pledge to "tax the wealthy and feed the poor". No wealth tax was introduced, and the wealth surcharge rates remained the same.

While the party pledged ambitious solar energy goals by 2030, the budget did not set any production targets for the grid. Instead, it focused on enhancement of existing programmes and exploratory assessments for future ones.

BNP's election manifesto also promised a high-speed bullet rail network that will connect Dhaka with major regional cities within one hour. The budget proposed a more realistic plan of constructing a chord line on the Dhaka-Cumilla section of the Dhaka-Chattogram railway corridor, reducing travel time between Dhaka and the port city to three hours.

"This budget is primarily production-friendly, investment-friendly, and business-friendly. We have never seen a budget like this before. The exemptions and rebates provided are unprecedented.'

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, LGRD minister

The budget also reflected its pledge to facilitate micro-entrepreneurship and promote the creative economy. An initial allocation of Tk 300 crore has been proposed for the development of the creative economy sector, and another Tk 500 crore fund will be collected from Bangladesh Bank's CSR sector. In ICT, BNP allocated Tk 500 crore for 200,000 IT jobs in IT-related areas and another 800,000 through freelancing and content creation.

Betting on growth revival

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Fund -- the deficit will be financed by domestic and foreign loans in roughly equal halves. Here, the budget performs its trickiest balancing act.

The same finance minister promising to discard the debt-driven model is simultaneously asking foreign lenders for Tk 1,09,850 crore. That is nearly double what the government managed to mobilise this year, largely because foreign money is vastly easier to budget than to disburse. Coupled with grants, external sources are projected to cover nearly half the deficit.

Khosru did not miss the opportunity to offer a pointed history lesson: foreign debt, he noted, grew sixfold between 2006 and 2024. The dates were not chosen by accident -- they neatly bracket his predecessors' years in power. The new government, he vowed, will walk the country's debt-risk rating back from "moderate" to "low".

But sometimes, a government must borrow in order to stop borrowing.

To avoid crowding out private enterprise, the state is deliberately dialling back its reliance on local banks. Domestic bank borrowing is capped at Tk 1,12,000 crore, a calculated cut designed to free up credit for businesses.

For a deeper fix, Khosru turned his attention to the stock market. The bourse, he said, has been "systematically devastated" by mismanagement, scams, and flawed policy, culminating in the "absolute erasure of investor confidence". It was a formal acknowledgement of what every small investor in Dhaka has muttered since the floor-price era trapped their savings and sent foreign funds fleeing.

To boost trade, the minister is also prying open doors that have long been shut to foreign capital. He proposed scrapping the 49 percent cap on foreign ownership of private off-docks and inland container depots, opening the sector fully to overseas investors. The bonded warehouse -- for decades the jealously guarded privilege of the garment industry -- will be thrown open to leather, electronics, and light engineering. Company registration in 48 hours; every licence processed through a single window in seven days. None of it is glamorous. But all of it is deregulation with a measuring tape.

While the government ultimately aims to boost healthcare spending to 5 percent of GDP, the next year's budget allocates 1.01 percent, leaving a steep climb for the years ahead. Education, however, sees a significant philosophical shift. The state is explicitly deprioritising "infrastructure-centred investment" in favour of teachers, research, and a technology-driven framework it calls "joyful education".

Woven into the fiscal math is a renewed pledge to honour the 2024 uprising that brought the new government to power. Families of martyrs will continue to receive Tk 20,000 a month, and injured fighters Tk 10,000 to Tk 20,000 depending on severity. The rolls are expanding to 16,513 beneficiaries, with Tk 300 crore set aside for housing the families of the dead and permanently disabled.

For the elderly, the gestures are smaller but targeted. The Old Age Allowance adds 1,00,000 beneficiaries to reach 62 lakh people, while seniors over 65 will receive free travel on state-owned trains and a 25 percent discount on the metro.

Khosru's most immediate challenge is execution. The IMF's next review will judge him purely on numbers -- revenue mobilisation, reserve accumulation, bank restructuring -- that no finance minister in Bangladesh has reliably delivered in the past.

Behind the fiscal challenge lurks a financial system in acute distress. By the government's own admission, the banking sector's capital buffers have eroded into negative territory, and depositors have struggled to access their own savings. The stock market has shed value even as the political clouds have lifted, with market capitalisation down nearly 9 percent since January 2024. Khosru has promised to fix the banks and revive the bourse simultaneously. Achieving either would be a monumental first-year triumph.

Yet, looming over every spreadsheet and policy initiative is a problem no budget line can solve: expectations.

This is the first budget of the first elected government since the 2024 uprising. It is being presented by a party returning to power after two decades, to a public that was promised not just economic growth, but justice -- an economy fundamentally cleansed of the looting they rose up against.

Even if the government achieves its goal of holding inflation to 7.5 percent, prices will still rise faster than most wages. The pledge of a trillion-dollar economy is dated 2034, but rice must be purchased today.

Furthermore, Khosru must navigate a gauntlet of external threats his speech only obliquely flags: a Middle East crisis pressuring energy prices, a depreciating taka inflating foreign-debt repayments, and the looming graduation from Least Developed Country (LDC) status, which will begin eroding the trade preferences and tariff revenues that the old economic model leaned on.

For the past four months, the finance minister has enjoyed the political luxury of blaming the nation's troubles on his predecessors. And justifiably so. Come July 1, those troubles belong to him.

Tigers seal historic series win

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little time making an impact yesterday. Taskin struck in the very first over when Matthew Short shouldered arms to an inswinger that crashed into the stumps. In the next over, Mustafizur induced an edge from Cooper Connolly before Matt Renshaw nicked another delivery behind on the final ball, leaving Australia reeling at zero for three.

It was only the fourth instance in ODI history of a team losing its first three wickets without scoring, with Bangladesh having suffered the same fate against Sri Lanka during the 2003 World Cup.

Mustafizur deepened Australia's troubles by dismissing the in-form Alex Carey for 13. Josh Inglis (34) and Cameron Green (25) attempted to rebuild, but spinner Tanvir Islam removed both as Australia slumped to 81 for six in the 22nd over.

Marnus Labuschagne and Xavier Bartlett then mounted a fightback with a 103-run partnership for the seventh wicket. Just as Australia looked set to launch a late assault, Taskin returned to break the stand in dramatic fashion. Bartlett, who struck his maiden ODI fifty, was bowled for 52 before Taskin produced another superb delivery to clean up Adam Zampa with the very next ball, reducing Australia to 184 for eight.

Australia reached 187 for eight in 42 overs before rain halted play for more than two hours, and the match was revised to a 41-over chase, leaving Bangladesh a revised target of 192. Taskin finished with three for 33, while Mustafizur claimed three for 27.

Bangladesh's reply began poorly as opener Tanzid Tamim fell for a duck, caught and bowled by Bartlett. Bartlett and Nathan Ellis then tested Soumya Sarkar and Najmul Hossain Shanto with a probing spell. Shanto survived an early chance and overturned an lbw decision before settling in alongside Soumya.

The pair added 85 runs for the second wicket, with both batters scoring 42 before departing in quick succession. Litton Das looked fluent for 21 before Green extracted steep bounce to dismiss him, and when Mosaddek Hossain fell cheaply, Bangladesh slipped to 144 for five.

Captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz (22*), despite taking a blow to the helmet, remained at the crease and combined with Towhid Hridoy (40*) to guide the hosts home. The unbeaten pair ensured there were no further hiccups as Bangladesh reached the target with six overs to spare and completed a landmark series triumph.

Trump calls off Iran strikes

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strikes and bombings against Iran this evening," he said.

Trump said that "discussions and final points have been, in both concept and great detail, approved by all parties involved, including the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Turkey, Pakistan, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan, Egypt, and others."

"Time and place of the signing to be announced shortly," Trump added.

Tehran did not immediately respond to Trump's latest remarks, but Iran's foreign ministry said earlier in the day that the ceasefire agreed in early April had been effectively rendered meaningless by the latest US attacks.

Trump has for weeks veered between proclaiming a deal and threatening Iran.

The US president, in his earlier post, also vowed to take the country's key oil infrastructure.

"At some point in the not too distant future, we will be taking Kharg Island, and other oil infrastructure points, and assume total control of their Oil and Gas Markets, much like we have with Venezuela," he said on social media.

Kharg Island is at the heart of Iran's oil export industry, a lynchpin of the country's battered economy. It sits off Iran's Gulf coast, hundreds of kilometres northwest of the narrow, strategic Strait of Hormuz.

Trump talked about a possible seizure of the island earlier in the US-Israeli war in Iran, which began on February 28. A fragile ceasefire has been in place since early April.

However, despite the tough rhetoric, Trump himself appeared divided about whether to proceed with the strikes in a telephone interview with Fox News shortly after his social media post.

He also said he preferred not to hit Iran's civilian infrastructure, after previously threatening to strike power plants and bridges.

"I'd rather not do it, because once you do that, the people suffer," Trump said.

In the tit-for-tat attacks before Trump's latest comments, the US struck targets across Iran early yesterday, and Tehran fired at US bases in the region following Monday's downing of a US Apache helicopter near the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian news agencies reported explosions in several cities and said five people were hurt.

Iran's new body overseeing the Strait of Hormuz yesterday confirmed a complete closure order for the strategic waterway until further notice.

Three Indian sailors on a commercial vessel hit by the United States off the coast of Oman are dead, New Delhi's shipping minister said yesterday. "It is deeply unfortunate to learn of the tragic incident aboard the Palau-flagged MT Settebello," Sarbananda Sonowal said in a statement, referring to the strike on the vessel a day earlier.

Meanwhile, Russia, Turkey, China, and Saudi Arabia yesterday reiterated their calls for peace and said the world is suffering from the crisis.

The World Bank yesterday lowered its global growth forecast to its lowest level since the pandemic, warning of the expanding economic impacts of the war in the Middle East on countries around the globe.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent meanwhile vowed to use Iranian funds to pay for damage that the country causes to Gulf allies.