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Bigger gender budget masks weak funding for women

Say economists and gender specialists

NILIMA JAHAN

The government has proposed a gender-responsive budget of Tk 3,26,059.8 crore for FY2026-27, accounting for 34.8 percent of the national budget of Tk 9.38 lakh crore and 4.8 percent of GDP.

Compiled through the Finance Division's gender budgeting framework across 61 ministries and divisions, the allocation marks an increase from Tk 2,64,718.6 crore in the previous fiscal year, when gender-relevant spending stood at 33.5 percent of the total budget and 4.2 percent of GDP.

However, economists and gender specialists caution that the increase masks persistent weaknesses in institutional funding for women's empowerment, particularly in ministries tasked directly with delivering gender-focused outcomes.

The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, for instance, has been allocated Tk 5,196 crore for FY2026-

Tk 83,076.9 crore, accounting for 25.5 percent of the gender budget. Theme 2, focused on economic participation and equality, saw the strongest growth at Tk 1,03,738.7 crore, or 31.8 percent.

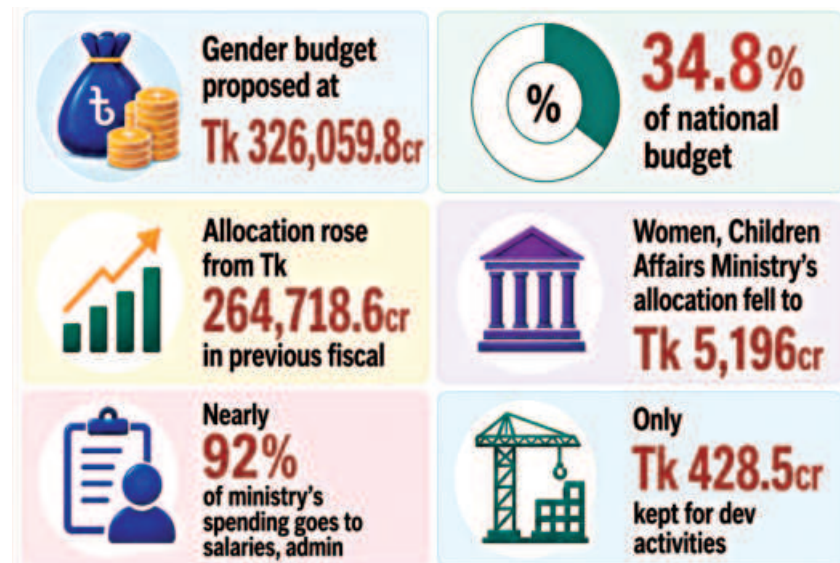
Theme 3, women's access to public services, declined to Tk 34,439.2 crore, while Theme 4 -- education, health and women's wellbeing -- remains the largest category at Tk 1,04,804.9 crore, or 32.1 percent.

Despite this distribution, disparities persist across ministries.

Several ministries linked to long-term human capital development saw declines.

The Primary and Mass Education Ministry fell to 59.3 percent from 67 percent, while Secondary and Higher Education declined to 46.4 percent from 48.4 percent.

The ICT Division dropped to around 33 percent from 36.9 percent, and the Health Services Division to 40.8 percent from 45.2 percent.



27, down from Tk 5,371 crore in the revised budget of the previous year.

Although 94.7 percent of its spending is classified as gender-relevant, nearly 92 percent is absorbed by salaries and administrative costs, leaving just Tk 428.5 crore for development activities.

Of this, only 57.4 percent is earmarked for gender-focused programmes.

STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS IN THE SYSTEM

According to the Finance Division's Gender Budget Report, spending has been grouped under four strategic themes.

Theme 1, covering women's empowerment and social status, rose to

'NOT A SEPARATE FUND FOR WOMEN'

Dhaka University Economics Prof Sayema Haque Bidisha said the gender budget is frequently misunderstood as a standalone allocation for women, whereas it is in fact a classification of existing public expenditure.

Operational spending reflects the share of female staff, while development projects are scored between 0 and 100 by the Ministry of Finance through the Budget Call Circular. These scores are then processed through the Recurrent, Capital, Gender and Poverty (RCGP) model to generate final estimates.

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In a bid to save time, pedestrians jaywalk across a busy road in the Signboard area along the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway yesterday, ignoring nearby designated crossings and footbridges and risking their lives.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

FROM THE JS GALLERY

Fences planned along Myanmar border: minister

Salahuddin says BSF pushes, border killings being addressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday told parliament that the government has taken initiatives to construct barbed-wire fences along the Myanmar border to strengthen security and curb border killings, infiltration, and cross-border crimes.

Replying to a query from MP Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, he said barbed-wire fences have already been erected at sensitive points along the Indian border, while plans for further construction are under consideration.

The minister said Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) is implementing coordinated measures to protect national interests and reduce border crimes.

A "Smart Border Surveillance System" has already been installed in highly sensitive areas along the southwestern and northwestern borders, he said.

He added that construction of border roads in remote hilly areas is progressing, enabling quicker

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Recruitment of teachers stalled due to pending cases

Says edn minister

UNB, Dhaka

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon yesterday told parliament that the recruitment and promotion of teachers, as well as appointments to key administrative positions in educational institutions across the country, have remained stalled for a prolonged period due to various legal complications.

The statement came after ruling party lawmaker Zainul Abidin Faroque raised concerns on a point of order regarding the acute shortage of teachers and the legal complexities surrounding recruitment.

Milon, who also oversees the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, said the recruitment process for 32,500 teachers, along with separate initiatives to

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Action if negligence found in measles vaccine handling

Tarique tells JS; Teesta barrage assessment underway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday told parliament that action would be taken if a review finds evidence of negligence by any individual or organisation in the procurement, storage or distribution of measles vaccines.

The government has been implementing the National Programme for Immunisation with utmost importance to prevent measles outbreaks in the country, he said while replying to a query from lawmaker Mustafizur Rahman Babul.

He made the remarks in a scripted answer tabled by Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad at the start of the day's proceedings.

The PM said the causes of measles outbreaks, their spread, and the impact of different policy and operational issues on the vaccination programme are regularly reviewed and evaluated.

The government has already taken initiatives to ensure continuity of vaccine supply, strengthen vaccine stockpile management, expand disease

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Safe water goals still off track

Experts cite urban-rural divide despite higher WASH spending

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has reversed three years of declining WASH spending in the FY2026-27 budget with a 25 percent rise, but experts yesterday warned that urban-rural gaps, climate risks, and a policy-budget mismatch could

still hinder progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The briefing was organised by the Power and Participation Research Centre in collaboration with WaterAid and WASH networks at the PPRC office in Dhanmondi.

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Two beaten to death in Jashore and Rangpur

STAR REPORT

At least two persons were beaten to death in separate incidents in Jashore and Rangpur yesterday and on Tuesday night.

In Jashore's Abhaynagar upazila, Riyaz Hossain, 29, of Dhalirgati village was beaten and hacked to death by unidentified assailants early yesterday.

Riyaz was an accused in multiple criminal cases, including those related to robbery, mugging and drug offences, said Md Nuruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station.

The incident occurred around 1:30am at Dhalirgati Government Primary School playground. Assailants reportedly beat Riyaz and hacked him with sharp weapons before fleeing the scene.

On information, police rushed to the spot and took Riyaz to Abhaynagar Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared him brought dead.

Dr Mohammad Sabuj, a medical officer at the hospital, said the victim had severe injuries on his head and different parts of his body. "Excessive bleeding is believed to have caused his death," he added.

OC Nuruzzaman said efforts were on to identify and arrest the assailants.

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Ensure good governance in education spending

Speakers tell press briefing

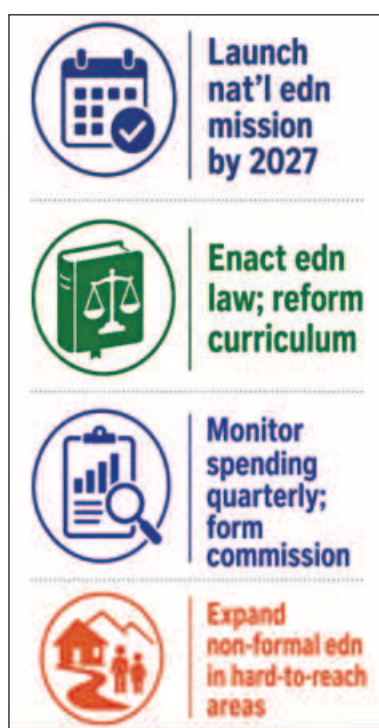
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Higher allocation for education will not improve learning unless the government ensures good governance, protects social-sector spending from cuts, and monitors expenditure throughout the year, economists said yesterday.

While welcoming the rise in education allocation in the proposed budget after years of declining financing, they warned that the money must be used to address learning loss, teacher support, research, and accountability.

They made the remarks at a press briefing titled "How Was the Education Budget: Reality and Public Expectations", organised by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), at the Jatiya Press Club.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the central issue was not only how much money had been allocated, but how it would be spent.



Higher public spending does not automatically improve education quality, she said, adding that funds must be used efficiently and transparently in areas that improve learning.

CAMPE said the education allocation for FY2026-27 stands at Tk 1,22,495 crore, or 1.79 percent of GDP and 13.06 percent of the national budget. The development allocation rose to Tk 52,597 crore from Tk 20,750 crore.

CAMPE Deputy Director Mostafizur Rahman said the budget mentioned positive steps, including free textbooks, stipends, mental health support, connectivity, teacher devices, vocational education, teacher training, and curriculum reform.

However, it lacks a clear national education vision, a financing roadmap, and adequate focus on learning recovery, foundational literacy and numeracy, regional

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