



Hospital beds up, doctors still missing

Govt echoes past govts, puts staffing on the back seat

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is increasing hospital bed capacity without adequately addressing staffing gaps, raising questions of whether any meaningful improvements in patient care would come from the initiative.

Within three months of taking office, the current administration has also embarked on hospital expansion initiatives, as the previous two governments did, approving the addition of another 1,100 beds in public hospitals.

The expansion comes even though 9,407 doctor posts -- around 23 percent of the sanctioned physician positions in public hospitals -- remain vacant.

The challenge is set to grow further as the government has decided to upgrade all Upazila Health Complexes (UHCs) to 101-bed hospitals. More than 400 facilities with 50 beds or fewer will need to be upgraded.

The wholesale plan will require a substantial increase in the health workforce, but the country's pipeline for recruiting doctors remains inadequate to meet the growing demand.

GOVT HOSPITALS

- Total posts **1,17,851**
- Vacant **23,223 (20%)**

The government is currently processing four Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations through which 4,113 doctors are expected to join government service. Besides, the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) proposed recruiting 5,000 more doctors.

However, that number is insufficient

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'No one will benefit from me taking revenge'

Says Tarique in KL; scheduled to meet Malaysian PM today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has said he would not use state power to take revenge over what he and his family went through during and after the 1/11 changeover.

At a views-exchange meeting in Kuala Lumpur, he said he and his family members had suffered,

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Lionel Messi, with a smiling Rodrigo De Paul just behind him, appears focused and ready for Argentina's next World Cup assignment as the defending champions prepare to face Austria in Dallas tonight. Having scored his first World Cup hat-trick against Algeria in their opener last week, Messi will hope to continue his scintillating form and help the Albiceleste secure their place in the Round of 32 -- making his 39th birthday, just two days away, all the more special.

PHOTO: AFP

'Ziaul Ahsan orchestrated killings of over 150 people'

Army warrant officer testifies before ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladesh Army warrant officer, who once served as the bodyguard of Maj Gen (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday that he witnessed the former Rab intelligence chief orchestrating and carrying out the killings of 150 to 200 people during the period he worked under him.

Testifying in a case against Ziaul, Imrul Kayes narrated before the tribunal several incidents in which he accompanied Ziaul. He added that Ziaul carried out some operations without his presence.

The earliest incident took place about three weeks after he began working as Ziaul's bodyguard, the witness testified. He said he received a midnight call instructing him to report in front of Rab-1 headquarters, where two black Toyota HiAce minibuses were waiting.

Ziaul, then Rab-1 commanding officer Rashed, and Captain Kawsar were inside one vehicle.

Ziaul told him that a "sack" in the vehicle's trunk needed to be disposed of, the witness said.

The convoy then drove through

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Bangladesh to get \$1.5b from WB this month

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The World Bank's board is set to approve \$1.5 billion in budget support under three loan programmes for Bangladesh this month, a development that will bring much relief to the strained government finances amid the Middle East war.

Of this, about \$800 million will be repurposed from existing project loans under the Rapid Response Option (RRO) window, \$300 million for fertiliser imports and food assistance, and \$400 million for banking sector reforms.

Bangladesh will need an additional \$2.61 billion to pay the elevated energy and fertiliser import bills for the last quarter of fiscal 2025-26 because of the Iran war that began on February 28, according to a finance ministry impact analysis.

The breakthrough came after multiple rounds of talks in both Washington DC and Dhaka, The Daily Star has learnt from officials involved with the negotiations.

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Subsequently, in April, the finance ministry sought urgent budget support from the WB and other donor agencies due to rising expenses for LNG, fuel and fertiliser imports following the Iran war, and the Washington-based multilateral lender is providing support as part of that request.

Any member state of the WB can restructure or repurpose up to 10

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THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



Messi: Unburdened and in full flight

NABID YEASIN

Lionel Messi is now a free man. He has been ever since he inspired Argentina to lift their third World Cup four years back in Qatar in 2022, completing the one missing piece of a career that already stood at the summit of football.

For a player widely regarded as one of the most humble personalities in a sport defined by ego and intensity, the phrase "free man" might at first sound misleading. But its true meaning reveals itself only when one understands the weight he once carried.

For much of his career, Messi played with an invisible burden -- that of having won almost everything possible in football, except the biggest prize: the World Cup. He had already redefined greatness itself, yet the World Cup always stood just beyond reach. Heartbreaks in the 2014 World Cup final, the 2015 and 2016 Copa America finals -- the latter even pushing him briefly toward international retirement -- only deepened that sense of an unfinished destiny.

He eventually returned to national colours and went on to win the 2021 Copa America, his first major international trophy that marked the initial release of that pressure. Yet, to his native Argentines, Messi -- already

regarded as the greatest of the game by most, especially in Barcelona -- still remained a figure measured against Diego Maradona. And the reason was the golden trophy that is the most revered in football.

It was in 2022, in Qatar, that everything finally fell into place. With that World Cup victory, Messi didn't just win football's biggest prize -- he completed it. There was nothing left to chase, nothing left to prove. Once Messi lifted the World Cup, the long-standing comparisons and debates about whether he stood on the same level as Maradona quietly faded away with it.

Since then, something has changed -- not in his ability, but in his state of being. Messi still plays with the same impossible touch, the same magnetic control, the same effortless magic that has defined him for over two decades. He still makes football look like something simpler than it is.

But now, he plays without weight.

He plays like a man unshackled from expectation, operating in a space where joy seems to guide every movement. And that version of Messi is not less dangerous -- if anything, it is more unsettling for opponents. It is freedom sharpened into brilliance.

That was on full display in Argentina's

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Japan's statement of intent

BISHWAJIT ROY

Some victories are worth more than just three points. Japan's emphatic 4-0 demolition of Tunisia yesterday in the 1,000th match of the FIFA World Cup history felt like one of those moments.

For decades, Japan have been regarded as Asia's standard-bearers --



technically gifted, tactically disciplined and capable of springing surprises against football's elite. Yet they have also carried an unwanted reputation: a team that shine in the group stage but repeatedly fall short when the knockout rounds begin.

This performance in Monterrey suggested

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Infantino's frequent flights spark backlash

AFP, Lausanne

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has been a busy man at this World Cup but his unquenchable thirst to pack in as many matches as possible is causing unrest among environmentalists who are questioning his indifference to climate change.

Mexico City, Guadalajara, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver, Seattle, Kansas City, Houston: the Italo-Swiss boss has already powered up his private jet to appear in the stands 10 times in seven days.

His insatiable use of a Qatar Airways private jet is nothing new: in September 2024, the investigative outlet Josimar revealed that he had used the plane to clock up 600,000 kilometers (372,822 miles) over the previous three years.

But the expanded 2026 World Cup, staged for the first time with 48 teams across the United States, Canada, and Mexico --

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Vehicles struggle to navigate the flooded Dhanmondi-27 intersection yesterday, as heavy traffic was forced into a single lane due to waterlogging. An hour-long downpour in the afternoon left many city neighbourhoods submerged.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

PM'S TRIP ABROAD

Diplomatic flurry fuels speculations

Experts say putting KL first a pragmatic approach

PORIMOL PALMA

By choosing Malaysia for Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's first foreign visit after assuming office, the BNP government is signalling a pragmatic foreign policy approach rather than being drawn into equations involving India, China and the West, analysts say.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The decision has drawn attention in diplomatic circles, as India had earlier invited Tarique for an official visit, while speculation persisted over which country he would choose first after taking office in February.

Many initially expected Saudi Arabia to be the first destination after its ambassador Abdullah bin Abiyah became the first envoy to meet him on February 22.

Attention later shifted to Bhutan following Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay's attendance at Tarique's oath-taking ceremony.

Analysts say the eventual choice of Malaysia reflects a calculated approach

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