Govt, EIB plan €250m women's health initiative

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the European Investment Bank (EIB) plan to invest €250 million in women's health and strengthen the country's healthcare system under a proposed initiative expected to benefit around 47 million women and girls between 2027 and 2031.

The proposed Women's Health Initiative will use funds from an existing EIB sovereign loan approved in 2021 to support Bangladesh's Covid-19 immunisation programme, pandemic preparedness and health system resilience, according to a press release yesterday.

The programme aims to improve maternal and newborn care, as well as cervical and breast cancer services.

It also seeks to strengthen primary healthcare, referral services, district hospitals and critical care to improve service quality and preparedness for future health emergencies.

"The health and well-being of women and girls are fundamental to Bangladesh's future," said Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Hussain while announcing the initiative.

He said the partnership with the EIB and the UNFPA will help build a stronger and more equitable healthcare system.

EIB Vice-President Marek Mora said the initiative would combine long-term financing with technical expertise to improve people's lives.

UNFPA Executive Director Diene Keita said UNFPA is committed to bringing its expertise to this partnership so that the investment delivers measurable, equitable and lasting improvements in the health of millions of women and girls.

PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 11

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-40	12-45	4-15	5-45	7-15
JAMAAT	5-20	1-15	4-30	5-50	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Workers extract meat from snails at Bill Pabla village in Khulna yesterday. Traders bring the snails from different areas, and the meat is used as fish feed while the shells are crushed to make feed for poultry farms. Workers earn Tk 100 for processing each 60kg sack and can handle two to three sacks a day.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Six months on, culvert work still unfinished

Thousands in Patiya suffer as vital road remains cut off

ARUN BIKASH DEY, *Chattogram*

Thousands of residents in several villages of Patiya have been suffering for months as construction of a new culvert on the Bhatikhine-Dhaur Denga rural road remains unfinished, leaving the road impassable to vehicles.

The old culvert was demolished six months ago, leaving a large crater that has since filled with rainwater.

About a month ago, local rickshaw pullers built a makeshift wooden bridge to allow rickshaws and bicycles to cross.

"We sat idle for a long time after the old culvert was demolished, but we have to feed our families," said rickshaw puller Mohammad Nabi.

Local resident Rajib Dey said people from Bhatikhine, Guatali, Alamdar Para, Dhaur Denga and Chanahara use the road daily.

"The delay has caused immense suffering. If an ambulance is needed for a critical patient, it has to take a detour of nearly four kilometres," he said.

Chanahara Union Parishad Chairman Abdur Rashid Doulati alleged that the contractor had abandoned the site despite repeated requests to resume work.

"I have spoken to the UNO several times to expedite the work, but nothing has happened," he said.

Patiya UNO Farhanur Rahman said the project was being implemented by the Upazila Project Implementation Officer's office and that he would take necessary measures.

Project Implementation Officer Mahbub Alam Shawon Bhuiyan said the 9.5-metre-long, 14-foot-wide box culvert was tendered in the 2024-25 fiscal year for Tk 32 lakh, with a June 30 completion deadline.



He said an extension had been sought from the ministry as flooding in June and July halted construction. Temporary dams required for the work could have obstructed drainage, he added.

Contractor Abed Ameri said he had completed four other culverts under the same tender and blamed flooding and rain for the delay.

"Once the rain stops, I will resume work and finish it within 15 to 20 days," he said.

You have not failed. We have failed

FROM PAGE 5

seed funding for students with business ideas. Three- to six-month technical and language courses, including Japanese, Korean and Chinese, could help students find jobs abroad, he said.

State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Bobby Hajjaj said the government would work on a "360-degree" teacher assessment system, incorporating feedback from headteachers, students and guardians alongside results.

"Whenever a student fails, I personally see it as a failure of the teacher," he said, acknowledging that teachers could face difficulties beyond their control.

Bobby also promised there would be no abrupt curriculum changes, saying revisions should follow research and consultation.

Zakia Sultana, a domestic worker, said her daughter had failed chemistry despite doing well in other subjects. With her husband ill, she feared financial hardship could prevent her daughter from studying nursing.

A participant from a tea worker's family said children in his community travelled six kilometres to school, while some families struggled to pay even a Tk 70 monthly fee.

An assistant headteacher from Nachole in Chapainawabganj said 13 students at his school had failed the SSC. Financial hardship kept some pupils away despite teachers visiting their homes, he said.

CAMPE Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury, who chaired the programme, told the students: "You have not failed. We have failed as a society, as a nation."

Participants demanded supplementary examinations within three months, college admission for candidates who failed two subjects, free education up to class X and priority access to government skills training.

They also sought better teacher recruitment and assessment, improved school infrastructure, stronger monitoring and alternative subject options for students with intellectual disabilities.

Question leak derails exam

FROM PAGE 5

Another examinee, Naima Afroz, said most candidates had travelled from outside Dhaka. "We came here only to hear about the leak. We demand the exam be held within a day or two."

In a press release, the department acknowledged that question papers had been leaked on social media and said the preliminary exam had been tentatively rescheduled for 3:00pm on October 16.

Earlier, Md Mazharul Haque, assistant director of the department, said the exam was scheduled at 95 centres across Dhaka but was postponed due to "unavoidable reasons".

The protests left commuters stranded for hours.

Prabir Roy said it took him nearly an hour to reach Shahbagh from Dhanmondi by motorcycle.

Rubel Karim, a private service holder, said his journey from Dhanmondi to Farmgate took an hour and a half. "After being stuck in traffic for an hour, I decided to get off the rickshaw and walk."

Around 1:00pm, police were seen at Shahbagh and Manik Mia Avenue persuading protesters to move aside to ease congestion.

Md Masud, an operator at the Dhaka Metropolitan Police control room, said traffic began returning to normal around 1:00pm after disruptions since 11:00am.

Rafiqul Islam, deputy commissioner of the DMP's Tejgaon Traffic Division, said vehicular movement resumed after protesters left Manik Mia Avenue around 1:00pm.

Abul Hashim's politics

FROM PAGE 5

book "Theorizing a Bengali Nation: Abul Hashim and the United Bengal Movement, 1937-1947", Faruk said Hashim's concept of Bangalee nationhood continued to influence political aspirations after Partition.

Hashim viewed the Lahore Resolution as a framework for autonomous regions rather than a state based on a uniform religious identity. This distinguished him from both the Congress's vision of a unified Indian nation and Muhammad Ali Jinnah's two-nation theory, Faruk said.

Faruk credited Hashim -- who became general secretary of the Bengal Muslim League in 1943 -- with broadening the party's appeal beyond aristocratic elites by mobilising young people, rural peasants and educated Muslims around economic inequality.

However, conservative elites eventually captured the movement's political gains, leaving Hashim's reformist agenda unfulfilled, he said.

Drawing parallels with later political movements, including the July uprising, Faruk said resistance to entrenched power, rather than disputes over cultural symbols, lay at the heart of such movements.

Joining virtually, researcher and editor Ahmad Mazhar said Hashim's lasting contribution was bringing politics out of drawing rooms and aristocratic circles and closer to ordinary people.

He highlighted Hashim's emphasis on transparency in party organisation and financing, contrasting it with the lack of clarity surrounding political funding today.

Hashim's political work was closely linked to his intellectual pursuits. He studied Islam alongside economics, history and Marxist thought to relate religious ideas to modern social and political life, Mazhar said.

Describing Hashim as deeply non-communal, Mazhar said he sought to develop an inclusive vision rooted in Islamic principles that accommodated people of different faiths and cultures.

Recalling Hashim's defence of Rabindranath Tagore, Mazhar said he had criticised attempts to reject the poet in the name of Islam and Pakistani ideals in a statement in 1957.

Mazhar called for more research into Hashim's writings, speeches, and political decisions.

"I am not talking about going back. We need to learn from those failures to move forward," he said, referring to the failed United Bengal proposal.

Writer, researcher and linguist Muhammad Tanim Nowshad said Hashim did not fit conventional ideological categories.

"You cannot call him a traditional Marxist, nor was he a traditional Islamist," he said, noting that Hashim drew on different intellectual traditions to address the challenges of his time.

Tanim discussed Hashim's philosophy of "Rububiyyat", which he described as the gradual development of human beings towards fuller existence through material wellbeing, intellectual freedom, and spiritual growth.

Comparing this vision with Karl Marx's ideas on the development of human capacities, Tanim said Hashim saw religious thought and the struggle against exploitation as compatible.

Hashim's vision of a united Bengal did not involve imposing a rigid nationalism. Instead, it envisaged everyone retaining their distinct identities within a shared political and cultural space, he said.

The event was moderated by The Daily Star's Emran Mahfuz.

Never asked the student to remove

FROM PAGE 5

When the other student raised the issue of freedom of clothing choice, Tasneem said she explained the need for teachers to be able to identify students and maintain a comfortable teaching environment.

She denied forcing the student to answer any question or instructing her to change her clothes, remove her veil, or leave the classroom.

Tasneem also said she had neither punished the student for wearing religious clothing nor barred her from attending future classes. She stressed that her comments concerned the covering of the eyes, not the hijab, burqa, or purdah.

Tasneem said her remarks had been misrepresented and that their context and intent had not been accurately conveyed.

Meanwhile, the University Teachers' Network has described Tasneem as a victim of "political propaganda, misinformation and academic subjugation" and demanded a full investigation into the incident, along with an opportunity for her to defend herself.

The network, in a press release yesterday, said the decision to relieve Tasneem of her teaching duties was contrary to university rules.

The network further demanded punitive action against those who recorded the teacher's remarks without permission and circulated them online selectively or out of context in a way that it said spread misinformation.

The network said it also opposed any classroom behaviour or remarks that could cause students physical or psychological distress or make them feel humiliated, adding that this principle might have been breached in the present case.

দি ইনস্টিটিউট অব ব্যাংকার্স, বাংলাদেশ (আইবিবি)
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পুরানা পল্টন, ঢাকা-১০০০

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GD-2459

Toufique Imrose Khalidi laid to rest amid tributes

FROM PAGE 5

News Editor Zahidul Kabir read out a tribute by acting editor-in-chief Biswadip Das.

In his tribute, Biswadip said, "Khalidi taught us to ask difficult questions, not to bow our heads under pressure, and to bring the truth before the public, however uncomfortable it may be."

"It is our collective responsibility to carry forward the ideals he left behind and the work he began."

Brig Gen Mohammad Raisul Islam, assistant military secretary, laid a wreath on behalf of President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir. Gokul Bimal Kala, first secretary (political, press and information) at the Indian High Commission, also paid tribute on behalf of the mission.

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Moyeen Khan and The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam were among those who paid their respects.

Moyeen Khan said Khalidi had gone beyond reporting news, making significant contributions through his analysis of Bangladesh's social, political and economic realities.

Mahfuz Anam said Khalidi's achievements extended beyond journalism to building and running a media organisation founded on professional ethics and independence.

"Many of us have devoted our lives to journalism. But he built an institution like bdnews24.com and ran it as well," Anam said.

He described the values of journalistic independence and ethics established at bdnews24.com as one of Khalidi's outstanding contributions to the country's media landscape.

Khalidi's friend Justice Abu Taher Mohammad Saifur Rahman remembered him as an intelligent, talented and courageous voice.

Former Jatiya Press Club president Shawkat Mahmud said the generation of journalists Khalidi had nurtured would carry forward his ideals.

Others who paid their respects included The Daily Star Consulting Editor Kamal Ahmed; BRAC Executive Director Asif Saleh; Agamir Shomoy Editor Mostafa Mamun and Executive Editor Ehsanul Haque Babu; former BFUJ president Omar Faruque; columnists Chiranranjan Sarker and Salek Khokon; BBC journalist Kadir Kallol; actors Tariq Anam Khan and Nima Rahman; Professor Sadeka Halim; and human rights activist Dipayan Khisa.

Khalidi fell ill in London on October 1 and died the following day at St Bartholomew's Hospital from a brain haemorrhage. His janaza was held at Brick Lane Mosque in east London on October 8.

His body arrived in Dhaka on a Biman flight around 11:00am yesterday. The body was later taken to the bdnews24.com office and his residence before the janaza.

Khalidi had a 37-year journalism career, working at The Daily Star, The Financial Express and the BBC before becoming editor-in-chief and managing director of bdnews24.com in July 2006.

