DHAKA WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 21, 2026



"Zelensky doesn't know what he's talking about. To be honest, I think it's time for somebody else to negotiate on behalf of Ukraine."
President **DONALD TRUMP**

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HOSPITAL EXPANSION

Priority by POWER

93% new beds go to districts, constituencies linked to ministers; many overcrowded hospitals left waiting

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Over the past eight months, the expansion of public hospitals has been concentrated in the home districts or constituencies of a handful of ministers and state ministers, even though health facilities in other districts have a greater need for capacity expansion.

higher bed occupancy rates in 2024, show data from the Health Bulletin published by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) in April this year.

"Priority should be determined based on bed occupancy and the number of patients a hospital treats compared with its existing capacity. This should guide decisions

2,879 beds added to 19 hospitals in 14 dists from Feb 17 to Sept 22

Of the beds, 2,688 allocated to 14 hospitals in 10 dists associated with ministers

Only 191 beds approved for 5 hospitals outside ministers' home districts, constituencies



Mymensingh Medical College Hospital had highest bed occupancy rate in 2024 but received no capacity expansion

A total of 2,879 beds have been added to 19 hospitals in 14 districts since the BNP government assumed office on February 17. Of those, 2,688 -- or about 93 percent -- were allocated to 14 hospitals in 10 districts linked to several ministers, including Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.

Only 191 beds were approved for five hospitals in other districts, according to documents regarding the health ministry's decisions on hospital expansion between April 28 and September 22.

Moreover, the BNP government approved two new government medical colleges -- one in Thakurgaon, the home district of Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the then LGRD minister, on May 15; and another in Narsingdi, the home district of Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain, on June 14.

Experts said some hospitals in ministers' areas needed expansion because they were already treating more patients than their sanctioned capacity.

However, several facilities elsewhere were under even greater pressure, with

on which hospitals need to be expanded first," Prof Muzahrul Huq, a member of the erstwhile Health Sector Reform Commission, told The Daily Star.

He further said that reducing the flow of patients to Dhaka should also be a priority. To achieve this, public hospitals around Dhaka need to be expanded by adding more beds and healthcare personnel so that patients can receive treatment closer to their homes.

Prioritising hospitals based on political considerations is unfair. "If the home districts and constituencies of ministers or policymakers are given priority, it would be unjust and would not ensure proper services for people," he said.

Of the 19 hospitals, Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura, the home district of the PM, saw the largest increase in bed allocation on September 8, with the number rising from 1,200 to 1,800 beds.

Seeking anonymity, a health ministry

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The mangled remains of an RP Special Paribahan bus following a head-on collision with a sand-laden truck near the Bonpara Police Investigation Centre on the Pabna-Rajshahi Highway early yesterday. Most of the 12 people killed in the crash were passengers on the bus, which was travelling from Barguna to Chapainawabganj.
PHOTO: **AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU**

NATORE CRASH KILLS 12

'Helper drove as driver slept'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

At least 12 people were killed and 20 others injured when a bus collided head-on with a sand-laden truck on the Pabna-Rajshahi highway in Natore early yesterday.

Many of the survivors alleged that the bus helper was driving recklessly while the driver was asleep at the back. Police, however, could not confirm the allegation.

The Chapainawabganj-bound RP Special bus, which started from Barguna, collided with the truck near the Bonpara police outpost around 4:00am, when most passengers were asleep.

Rakib Hossain Fahim, who was travelling to Rajshahi for

"My father was supposed to return with onion seeds in the afternoon. Instead, he is returning home in a hearse."
Md Badsha Fakir,
son of Abdus Samad, 70, who lost his life

business, said the bus was being driven recklessly after a late-night break.

"I could sense something bad was about to happen."

"I suspect the helper was at the wheel. I sensed a collision was imminent with the truck coming from the other side. Within moments, it happened," he recounted from a hospital bed.

Fahim believed sitting at the back probably saved his life.

Md Shariful Haque, superintendent of police in Natore, said, "The bus driver may have been attempting an overtaking manoeuvre, lost control and collided head-on with the truck."

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Relief for errant bank owners?

Reforms to curb family control being rolled back

ARUN DEVNATH

Bank owners look set to win back the control the interim government tried to take from them. The new government is rewriting the Bank Company Act, and the version taking shape would undo some of the tighter rules meant to stop families from running banks as private fiefdoms.

their hands in the air and finally walking out. The trigger was a last-minute amendment to the Bank Company (Amendment) Bill 2023, slipped in by Awami League MP Ahsanul Islam and pushed through by then finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

The change was startling: bank directors could now serve twelve consecutive years, up from nine. As the then parliament

ANALYSIS

Two changes stand out. Bangladesh Bank, under the then governor Ahsan H Mansur, had proposed cutting family seats on a bank board from three to two; that ceiling is now going back to three. Its proposed six-year cap on directorships, meanwhile, will be stretched to nine.

That should worry anyone with money in a bank, and anyone who pays taxes. The last time the rules bent this far towards the owners was in 2023, under the Awami League government, and the episode is worth revisiting.

It was a chaotic Wednesday. Bangladesh's parliament had descended into uproar, with opposition lawmakers shouting, throwing

speaker, Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, cut the opposition's microphones and shut down debate, Jatiya Party lawmaker Kazi Feroz Rashid reached for satire. Had the government simply granted bank owners a lifetime appointment, he asked, adding that whenever these directors caught a cold, they flew to Singapore on depositors' money. His party colleague Mujibul Haque was blunter still. He called bank directors the "masterminds of bank looting" and warned that the state had handed its authority to private financial barons who even decided who became central bank governor.

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Ousted autocrat, opposition out to stir unrest

Says Tarique during his whirlwind puja tour

BSS, *Rajshahi*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday urged people to remain vigilant against attempts to create unrest, alleging that the ousted autocrat and a faction of the opposition had joined hands to destabilise the country.

"We've intelligence reports that the ousted autocrat is providing money from across the border to a particular political party, which is trying to create instability here," he said at a rally at Haji Muhammad Mohsin Government High School ground in Rajshahi.

He said people must remain alert to ensure that no one could create disorder or disrupt efforts to revive the economy and improve their livelihoods.

"We say: 'We will work, we will build, Bangladesh first.' Those who do not believe in this slogan and principle are now involved in conspiracies," he said, referring to recent attempts to foment labour unrest at factories in different parts of the country.

The prime minister said the government had taken initiatives to reopen closed mills

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman watches a cultural performance organised to mark Nabami of Durga Puja at the Rangpur Dharma Sabha Puja Mandap yesterday.
PHOTO: **PID**

To mourn or to wait: A family's grim dilemma

No official confirmation of daughter's execution in KSA

STAR REPORT

Fazal Mia still does not know whether to mourn his youngest daughter or wait for her to come home.

The day labourer from Tangail learned just two days ago that his daughter, Sweety Akhtar, who had been working in Saudi Arabia, had been executed.

Yet, with no official confirmation from the government, the family has neither the certainty of her death nor the comfort of knowing she is alive.

Nearly four years ago, Fazal borrowed Tk 1.5 lakh to send Sweety to Saudi Arabia, hoping to secure a better future for her.

A resident of Nagar Chhawali village in Mahera union of Tangail's Mirzapur upazila,

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