

Dr Titumir calls for UN-led debt relief to keep SDGs on track

Prime Minister's Adviser on Finance and Planning Dr Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir has called on the United Nations system to establish an international mechanism for debt restructuring, debt relief, debt suspension and sustainable debt solutions to help developing countries address mounting fiscal pressures arising from the Middle East crisis and other global shocks.

He said such measures are essential to enable developing countries to sustain investment in children, women, education, health and social protection, while keeping progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on track.

Speaking during a meeting with UNICEF Deputy Executive Director for Humanitarian Action and Supply Operations Ted Chaiban at UNICEF House in New York, Dr Titumir said rising energy prices, supply chain disruptions and increasing debt burdens had significantly narrowed Bangladesh's fiscal space, said a press release.

Despite these challenges, he said the government remains committed to protecting vulnerable populations and advancing its vision of a democratic human welfare state under the 'Bangladesh First' philosophy.

State Minister for Planning Zonayed Abdur Rahim Saki also attended the meeting.

The adviser highlighted the government's commitment to a universal life-cycle-based social security system placing women at the centre of development. He said the Family Card initiative would support women-led households and provide assistance across different stages of life, including

pregnancy, childhood, education, disability and old age.

State Minister for Planning Zonayed Saki stressed the importance of reliable and integrated data systems and outlined the government's proposed 'One Child, One Card, One Number and One Wallet' strategy to improve birth registration, school enrolment and access to public services.

He also sought UNICEF's cooperation in strengthening teachers' capacity through digital training and learning tools to improve the quality of education.

The state minister highlighted initiatives promoting multilingual learning, sports, culture, museum visits and extracurricular activities as essential components of children's holistic development.

Deputy Executive Director Ted Chaiban congratulated Bangladesh's newly elected Government and also welcomed the country's election to the presidency of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

He commended the government's ambitious initiatives to protect vulnerable populations, particularly children and women, despite significant fiscal constraints.

Welcoming the priorities outlined during the meeting, he reaffirmed UNICEF's commitment to strengthening its partnership with Bangladesh in education, early childhood development, nutrition, social protection, teacher capacity-building and child-focused data systems.