

FAILURE TO MEET REFORM CONDITIONS

IMF defers \$80m anti-poverty loan

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has deferred around \$80 million in the sixth tranche of the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) loans scheduled for July as Bangladesh failed to fulfil its energy and revenue reform conditions.

"The loan has become uncertain. The IMF executive board did not fix it on its current-month schedule," a government source said seeking anonymity.

He said the loan has become uncertain as the government failed to notify the IMF of the measures to tackle the huge loss due to subsidy in fuel prices and the ways to

achieve revenue growth in the current fiscal.

Sources said the IMF asked the government about its measures for revenue collection in the current fiscal when the budget set a target of 21 per cent growth in revenue collection compared to the previous fiscal.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has set a target of collecting revenues of Tk 41,055 crore in the current fiscal while the collection in the last fiscal was Tk 33,893 crore at 13.34 per cent growth.

Pointing to the current revenue target, the IMF inquired about the government plans regarding the increased revenue collection. It

opined that it is not possible to achieve such a growth within the existing tax measures.

Besides, the IMF asked the government to submit a report about the impact of tax exemptions and its new policy measures to broaden the tax base. The government submitted the study report at the end of April, but the IMF refused it saying it lacked "important respects" and asked for a fresh report by May.

"The NBR has failed to finalise the report yet after about two months of the deadline," a finance ministry source said. The report

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BD Foods chairman's bail plea rejected

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday rejected the bail petition of BD Foods Chairman Badruddoja Momin, an accused of smuggling 21 kg heroin to Britain.

A bench comprising Justice Asgar Ali Khan and Justice Emdadul Huq also issued a rule upon the government to explain within two weeks why Momin should not be granted bail.

Moving the bail petition, Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud submitted that Momin was not in the list of accused in the case filed by Motijheel Police Station. He had already been granted bail in another smuggling case filed by Sutrapur Police Station.

Opposing him, Deputy Attorney General ABM Waliur Rahman Khan said the accused has damaged the

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PHOTO: STAR

Traffic comes to a halt near Jatrabari in the capital yesterday afternoon as police blocked the road towards the intersection during opposition's road march.

MIDDLE EAST CRISIS Rice warns Iran, Syria about their role

AFP, Rome

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice warned Syria and Iran yesterday that it was time for those countries to "make a choice" about their role in Middle East peace, following international crisis talks on Lebanon.

The international community would work to "try to gain an understanding from other states that they have responsibilities too" in ending the violence in Lebanon, Rice told a news conference following the five-hour talks.

"Syria has a responsibility," Rice said. "And we are deeply concerned, as we have said, about the role of Iran. It is high time that people make a choice."

Further criticism of Syria came from French President Jacques Chirac, who told Le Monde newspaper Damascus was "at odds with security and peace".

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People will resist any move to foil polls

PM tells rally

UNB, Kamarkhand, Sirajganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said the next general election will be held under the caretaker government and forewarned that the people will unitedly resist those who want to create a crisis in the country by foiling and boycotting the polls.

She said the last three general elections were held under caretaker government and the upcoming election will also be held under the caretaker administration in a free and fair manner.

Addressing a public meeting at Chohibari Islamia High School ground yesterday, Khaleda, also chairperson of the ruling BNP, said the opposition has understood that people are united behind the four-party alliance and will again vote it to power, evaluating development activities being carried out across the country.

"So, getting disappointed about

their bleak future, they want to create a crisis in the country by foiling and boycotting the election," she said.

The prime minister said the people of Bangladesh have confidence in democracy and they cast their votes in election to consolidate democracy.

Sensing that people will give their verdict in favour of development, peace, and production pursued by the BNP-led alliance, she said, "The opposition has started talking nonsense and creating unrest."

Listing massive development activities in all sectors and narrating success stories, Khaleda said the key to development remains in the hands of the people and urged them to use it in proper time.

Explaining the necessity of continuity of the government, the

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Afghanistan to join next week's Saarc FMs' meet

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Afghanistan, the newest member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc), will attend forthcoming meetings of Saarc Standing Committee and Council of Ministers in Dhaka next week.

The government of Bangladesh as the current chair of Saarc has invited Afghanistan to attend the meetings as special guest to have an idea of the Saarc process, diplomatic sources told The Daily Star.

Afghanistan will not be participating in the deliberations but will attend the meetings as observer, they added. Afghan Foreign Minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta will attend the meetings on special invitation.

Afghanistan will formally join the Saarc family as a full member at its 14th summit to be held in India likely

in 2007.

The 13th Saarc Summit in Dhaka had approved Afghanistan's request for the membership of the regional grouping, and subsequently the Standing Committee in April this year evolved a mechanism to induct it as a new member without bringing any change to the Saarc Charter.

The 13th summit also granted China and Japan as observer of the Saarc. Meantime, the Standing Committee agreed to give USA and South Korea observer status of the association.

According to officials, the Saarc Standing Committee will meet on July 31-August 1 and the Programming Committee, comprising senior officials, on July 30. The deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan will attend the Standing Committee meeting.

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Robbers kill bus passenger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

One passenger of a Nilphamari-bound bus from Dhaka was killed and several others were injured when a gang of robbers stabbed them while committing robbery on the bus Tuesday night.

Passengers of the bus, Rozina Enterprise, said the robbers in guise of passengers boarded the bus at Sathmatha in Bogra. As soon as the bus left Bogra town, the armed robbers took control of the vehicle and started looting belongings of the passengers.

They stabbed the passengers indiscriminately. Of the injured, Alam Mia succumbed to his injuries after the robbers got off the bus at Gobindaganj, driver Anwar Hossain said.

After the robbery, the panicked bus driver lost control over steering and the vehicle fell into a roadside ditch at Mithapukur injuring at least 15 passengers.

Asian meet on bird flu starts today in India

Bangladesh, 10 other countries to attend

AFP, New Delhi

Officials from 11 Asian countries will meet in New Delhi for two days starting today to discuss bird flu control and worst-case scenario preparations, a World Health Organization (WHO) official said.

"The secretary-level meeting will take place tomorrow," said Harsaran Bir Kaur Pandey, spokeswoman for the WHO Southeast Asia regional office yesterday.

"The day after will be the ministerial-level meeting."

Ministers from the health or agriculture departments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka are expected to attend.

Officials representing Bhutan, Indonesia and Thailand will also be in New Delhi to take part in the

working meeting Thursday.

Senior officials from the WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the three main international bodies spearheading the efforts to control bird flu will attend as well, the WHO said.

Southeast Asia has been the region hit hardest by the bird flu virus, which can spread from infected birds to people in close proximity and provokes flu-like symptoms in humans.

The meeting in New Delhi will focus on preparing for a pandemic, animal husbandry issues and on how to improve communication with local communities.

"Communication is always an issue because you need to reach out to the community and they

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CTG TRIPLE MURDER All 25 accused acquitted

CU CORRESPONDENT

A court here yesterday acquitted all the 25 chargesheeted accused, including Shibir cadre Nasir alias Shibir Nasir, in the sensational triple murder case in Hathazari of the district.

Fifth Additional District and Sessions Judge ATM Ali Azam announced the verdict at around 3:50pm.

The judge in his judgment said: "The accused are acquitted of the murder charge as the witnesses did not make any deposition against them (accused)."

According to the prosecution, three Chhatra League leaders—Ahmed Newaj Shyamal, Jafar

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CIA chief says warrants ill-suited for al Qaeda hunt

REUTERS, Washington

CIA Director Michael Hayden told senators yesterday that the requirement of court orders to carry out electronic surveillance inside the United States was ill-suited for tracking al Qaeda and other militant groups.

In testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, the intelligence official who crafted President George W. Bush's domestic spying program also said international phone calls targeted by warrantless surveillance are the most valuable to protecting

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Prayer Timing		
July 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-50	6-55
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

From 3,000 to 300, that's how gibbons disappear

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immediate initiatives to save Hoolock gibbons, an endangered species of ape, have been urged by speakers yesterday at the inaugural ceremony of first solo photography exhibition by Sirajul Islam titled 'The Vanishing Ape' at the Noliniknatho Bhotoshali gallery of the National Museum in the capital.

The speakers asked the government as well as nature lovers to save the beautiful white-browed apes from going extinct from Bangladesh.

There were three thousand Hoolock gibbons in the country in the 80s and they are disappearing at an alarming rate, speakers said citing that only three hundred of the species are now found in the wilderness.

Sirajul Islam took photographs and studied the endangered apes' demography, social system, frugivorous diet and arboreal life habits at the Lawachhara forest for a month.

Petra Osterberg, a researcher from Finland, who has been working on Hoolock gibbons, has contributed with text for the photographs.

Hoolock gibbons live with families and gibbon mothers give birth to a single baby seven to eight months after conception every 2-3 years.

A gibbon baby's infancy period is almost as long as that of humans and the mother carries and nurses the baby for two years.

The young gibbon stays with the parents long after weaning, sometimes for up to 10 years, speakers said.

Destroying the forest and unplanned commercial tree plantation by humans are making Hoolocks vulnerable as their whole lives depend on high evergreen forest and they rarely leave the safety of treetops, added the speakers.

Dijen Sharma, eminent nature writer, inaugurated the exhibition while wildlife expert Prof Anwarul Islam, nature photographer Nowajesh Ahmed, artist Kalidas karmakar and filmmaker Moshui Shaker were present at the ceremony.

Dijen Sharma said humans are one species out of millions on earth, but thousands of species are disappearing everyday due to negligent activities by the humans.

"Humans are the ones who can save all these endangered species for their own sake of existence as all species belong to one single chain of life," added Dijen Sharma.

Professor Anwarul Islam said "We are preparing a year-long plan of activities to save them".



A Hoolock gibbon as caught by Sirajul Hossain's camera at Lawachhara.

BCL forming full central committee secretly

KAMRUL HASAN KHAN

Having failed to announce its full-fledged central committee even four months after the election of its president and general secretary, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) is now forming the committee by selecting members through "secret" letters.

BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon said as of Tuesday they sent letters to about 150 BCL men regarding their central committee posts, including 43 vice-presidents, seven joint secretaries, seven organising secretaries, 23 secretaries and 23 deputy secretaries. Letters to the rest 101 members will be sent soon, he said.

Awami League (AL) President

Sheikh Hasina in a sudden move brought radical changes in the student wing of the party in April by introducing polling system through transparent ballot box and fixing the age limit up to 29 years with regular studentship.

The president and general secretary of the new BCL committee were elected on April 4 as per the new criteria. On April 5, the AL high-ups instructed the newly elected and the immediate past leaders to form the full-fledged central committee within 15 days.

However, the formation could not take place due to lack of coordination among former BCL president Liaqat Sikder and general secretary Nazrul Islam Babu and their incumbent counterparts Ripon and BCL General

Secretary Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Ratan.

The BCL, which generally forms its committees through open conferences, has opted for forming the committee through "secret" letters this time due to unwanted interruption by some influential leaders of the previous committee, sources said.

The unusual move has frustrated hundreds of BCL leaders and activists as well as general students who welcomed Hasina's move for involving only regular students without having any criminal records in student politics, sources said.

The BCL has also failed to form its Dhaka University unit committee in more than one and a half years due to intra-party feud.

Sewage dumped on Gulshan road

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Faced with choked sewerage lines, Dhaka Wasa yesterday used a sludge dewatering pump on the Gulshan Avenue near Circle-1 to pump thousands of liters of sewage and spread it on the main road, causing instant waterlogging and pollution on the busy road.

Executive Engineer of Wasa's Gulshan zone Mushfiqur Rahman told this correspondent that they had no other option but to discharge the sludge water on the road.

"We tried to clean the sewerage by a vacuum machine but it did not work. We understand the sludge water pollutes the environment but we did not have an alternative," Rahman said.

When the pump operator talked to the executive engineer about journalists taking pictures of the sludge, the work was immediately stopped. But by then the road was inundated by four inches of sludge water and a foul odor covered the air.



PHOTO: STAR

Sewage being dumped on Gulshan Avenue as Dhaka Wasa uses a sludge pump to clean the sewerage near Gulshan Circle-1 in the capital yesterday.