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COMMODITIES

IMF's decision on loans may come today

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

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The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reviewed Bangladesh's proposal for raising its ceiling on hard-term loans from international sources by \$1.5 billion to support the government spending on power projects and arms purchase from Russia.

The final decision from the IMF board may come today.

The government had earlier told the IMF that Bangladesh would borrow \$2.25 billion on hard terms from various sources in 2013. Now the government has sought a waiver on its hard-term borrowing as it plans to borrow \$3.75 billion this year.

The government signed a \$1-billion loan agreement with Russia for setting a nuclear power plant and buying arms from Moscow in January.

The loans will not deepen the country's risks of external debt, as they are expected to be disbursed over the next four years, officials said.

Last night, the IMF board was due to approve \$141 million in second instalment under its three-year extended credit facility of \$1 billion for Bangladesh.



ASIAN MARKETS

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CURRENCIES

Third from right, Abdul Latif Biswas, fisheries and livestock minister, and William Hanna, head of EU delegation to Bangladesh, pose with copies of a booklet on fisheries at a seminar at Sonargaon Hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

KINIA ZIIOAIA IOIIOM fishery's lead EU diplomat impressed with steps in fishery

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's fisheries sector can serve as an example for the garment sector facing threats of export ban from the US and the European Union (EU), a top diplomat said yesterday.

"The government and the private sector have worked together to promptly resolve the problems in the fisheries sector since issues of safety and quality of products were raised by European importers," said William Hanna, head of the EU delegation to Bangladesh.

Better food safety in production and processing of shrimps and improved testing have led to the lifting of the mandatory testing of the exported

products in Europe, he said.

"The compliance in this sector could be a model for the readymade garment industries."

Hanna's comments came at a discussion on ways to better promote Bangladesh's fishery products in the global market, organised by the Department of Fisheries and United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO).

Hanna, however, urged all stakeholders in the fisheries sector to remain on guard over safety issues.

"The risk is not over. Things can change in a week. The audit team of the Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the European Commission can visit anytime."

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Garment makers urge BB to ease conditions of inland bill purchase

STANDARD CHARTERED BANK

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Star Business Report

Garment makers yesterday urged the central bank to ease the conditions of inland bill purchase (IBP) by commercial banks to help exporters meet the immediate demand for cash in their business operations.

The commercial banks now show reluctance in accepting the IBPs after the Hall-Mark loan scam last year. The Hall-Mark Group embezzled Tk 2,686 crore from a branch of stateowned Sonali Bank through forged documents.

IBP is a credit facility that takes place when a bank gives guarantee to its clients for purchase of goods and services from the local market.

The banks are required to check whether the physical exchange of goods took place between the parties concerned, according to Bangladesh Bank rules.

"We are facing difficulties in export as the commercial banks are not accepting the IBPs," said Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

Bangla, Bangladesh

READ MORE ON B3

Better days for rural artisans soon



A woman embellishes a sari in Narayanganj. The government is working on a draft policy for the handicrafts sector to give a lifeline to the field's artists.

Anja Burri

क्रामावं हाया, क्रामावं अविष्टिं

...... Millions of artisans in rural Bangladesh will soon get a massive lift, thanks to the impending handicraft policy.

"A draft of the handicraft policy is being prepared as we speak. In fact, it is in the final stages," said Maleka Khan, chairperson of the handicrafts policy formulation standing committee.

The draft, which essentially insists on making the handicrafts sector a thrust sector, is due to be handed in to the industries ministry in March.

Although the sector accounts for a good share of rural employment, second only to agriculture, it has been neglected by policy makers for years.

Rural artisans face difficulties every

step of the way, starting from sourcing raw materials to getting access to markets to sell their products.

Furthermore, they rarely get access to

credit, which holds them back for growing their businesses on a scale their skills deserve. "The handicraft business is a good

complementary work during agricultural lean times," said Khan, a founding member of Bangla Craft, an association of the country's handicrafts manufacturers and exporters association.

The draft includes tax-breaks, land grants for handicrafts entrepreneurs, ease of access to credit, skills development, creating "cluster villages", promotion of women entrepreneurship, especially among women of indigenous groups.

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Commerce Minister GM Quader and FBCCI President Kazi Akram Uddin Ahmed hand over a formalin detector to the authorities of Uttara Cooperative Market at Azampur in Dhaka yesterday.

Govt plans to ban formalin import by private firms

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The government is likely to impose restrictions on formalin imports by private companies in a bid to rein in ing death penalty." food adulteration, Commerce Minister GM Quader said yesterday.

"It has been suggested that the state manages the import and distribution of formalin. So the government is seriously examining the matter," Quader said.

The minister went on to say the government is serious in checking the misuse of formalin.

"We will not pardon anybody if formalin in food items. formalin is found on any food items," he said, while suggesting that no new food adulteration has become ram-fiscal 2009-10, the minister said.

law needs to enacted for that.

"The existing laws are sufficient to wipe out food adulteration. They provide stern punishment, includ-

Quader's comments came as he handed a formalin detector over to the authorities of a kitchen market in Uttara.

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, with financial assistance from Dhaka Bank Ltd, has taken the initiative to equip the city's kitchen markets with the device to detect

pant in the country. Many sellers spray their fish with formalin -- used for preservation of tissues -- to make them look fresh for long.

Almost everything -- from vegetables, milk, beverages, sweetmeats, ice cream to spices -- is adulterated now.

Imports of the health-hazardous substance have declined significantly in recent times thanks to the government's strict monitoring,

Quader said. Around 87.20 tonnes of formalin was imported in the first six months of current fiscal year, a vast improvement The move comes at a time when from the 544.85 tonnes imported in

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একুশে সমুন্নত হোক সবার মাতৃভাষা

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Bengal Fine Ceramics summoned to hearing

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) has summoned all directors of Bengal Fine Ceramics Ltd to a hearing on March 11 for failure to submit financial statement in time. The company was supposed to submit its audited report on November 11, 2012 to the regulator for the financial year to June 30, 2012, but it is yet to hand in the report.

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