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LEARNING A THIRD LANGUAGE

WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

**SHOUT**

## HOPES FADING

Chances of finding survivors of China cruise capsized with hundreds still missing

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## SHAB-E-BARAT

Muslims offer special prayers seeking fortune and forgiveness

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# 'Slow' trouble

Muhith needs to inject dynamism; address unemployment, non-investment issues while he places jumbo budget today

INAM AHMED

Banker Rafiqul Islam saw off his wife at Shahjalal International Airport and was still on his way back home to Dhanmondi when he got the call from Kolkata. I have arrived safely, his wife said. But Rafiqul was nowhere near his home.

A few weeks back, he had taken a bus ride to Chittagong for an official meeting. The journey seemed an endless ordeal as it took him about ten hours to cross those 286 kilometres.

Rafiqul's story sums up what Finance Minister AMA Muhith faces as his tasks in the budget that he would present today and in the years to come.

Bangladesh today is stuck in many ways. Its growth is stuck in the six percent band marked by low investment; its roads are stuck in the quagmire of traffic jams, its infrastructure in slow progressing works, its productivity in a low band, and its decisions are stuck in snailing bureaucracy.

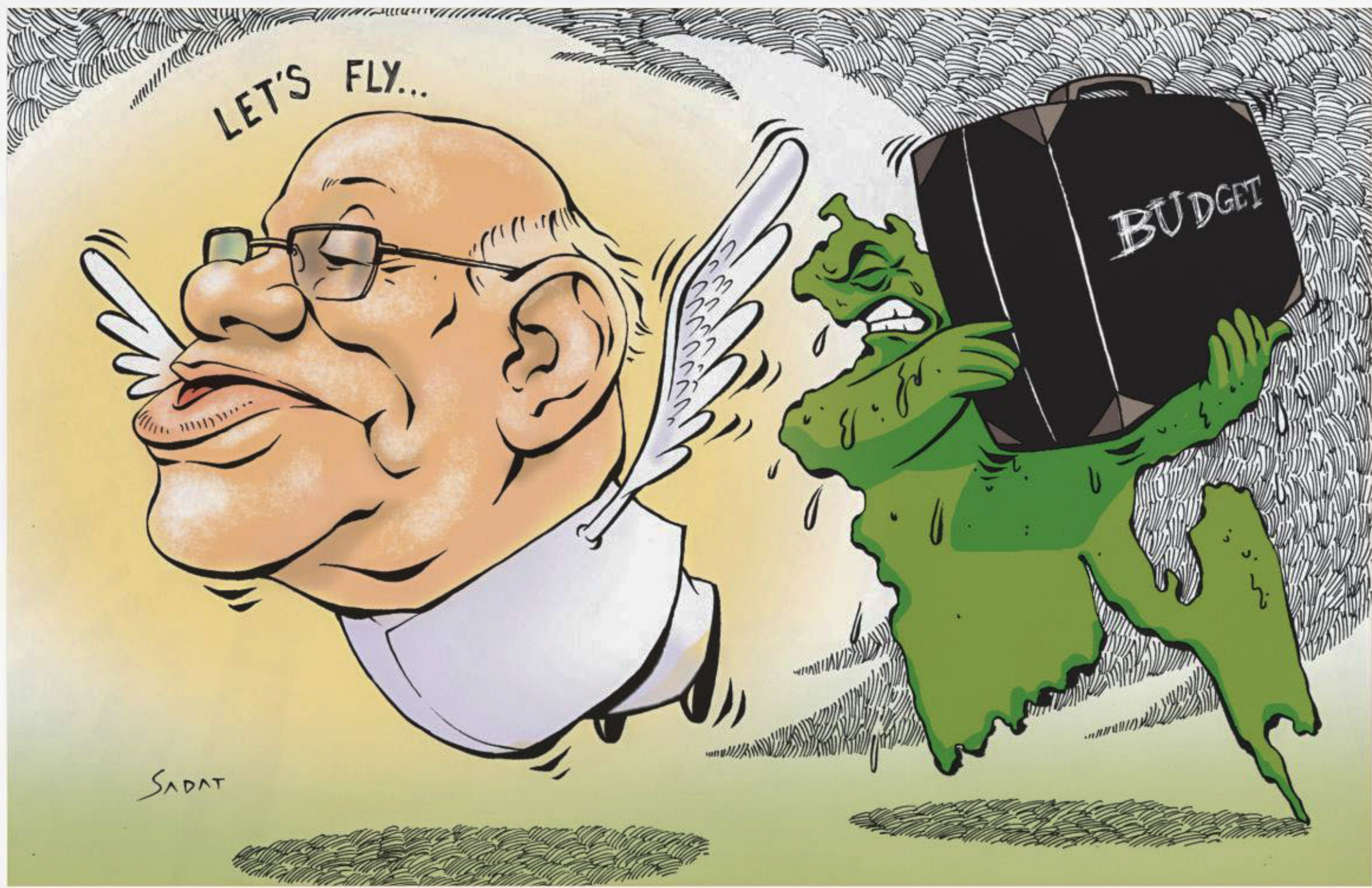
In short, Bangladesh needs to break out from this inertia if it wants to cross the barrier to growth and development; but its non-economic factors are holding it down more than the economic intricacies.

Otherwise things look pretty comforting on papers. The country has accumulated a huge foreign exchange reserve, enough to support more than six months' import. Inflation has moderated to a single digit. Imports are increasing although exports have dipped. Yet investment is badly missing. And that makes one feel uneasy because unless the non-economic factors are fixed, private investment will remain uncertain.

Private investment has been stuck in the band of 22 percent over the last few years. To compensate for that, the government has increased its own share of investment so that GDP growth does not fall.

This has created a paradox. Increased public investment was supposed to bring in more private investment, which actually has

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Everything seems normal in the country these days. The political heat, which was created centring on the BNP-led 20-party alliance's indefinite blockade, appears to have cooled down. And the elections to three city corporations added a new dimension to the political landscape. The prevailing atmosphere hardly gives any hint of the horrific time the nation experienced in January-March when numerous petrol and crude bombs went off, public transports came under attacks and innocent citizens got killed. It was all during the 20-party's countrywide blockade, coupled with 43 days of hartal. At least 95 people died in violence since January 5, the day the alliance announced the blockade. Several thousand people suffered injuries. Another 45 people got killed in "shootouts" with law enforcement agencies. Half the shootout victims were allegedly involved in arson attacks. The political scenario has changed, but the ordeals of those injured and the families of those killed have not. We have laws in the country. We can understand who're behind these crimes. So, will there be any justice? Precedent says 'No'.

## HORRIBLE CRIMES forgotten quickly

Will the arson victims get justice?

WASIM BIN HABIB and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital looks different now: patients receiving treatment, whim-

pering now and then in pain, as is the usual picture there.

However, the unit's first and third floors used to be crammed until mid-March with burn victims,

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Sanjid Hossain Ovi

## Loss, pain only for families

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

Bought nine months ago, the textbooks still look new. Noor Jahan stowed them in a polythene bag. Her son Sanjid Hossain Ovi used to read the books mostly in the bed that is now folded up in a corner of the tiny room.

Close to the bed stands a showcase wherein a crest lies. Ovi had received the crest in a cricket match. A little away from the showcase, a trophy stands on the shelf on the wall. He won the trophy in a football game.

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## Reliance seeks to relocate old plant

Modi's visit to see deals for 3,000MW LNG power plant with Reliance, 1,600MW coal-fired plant with Adani Group

SHARIER KHAN

Indian Reliance Group is lobbying hard with the government to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit next Saturday to let it relocate a three-year-old massive power plant from South India to Bangladesh.

But for now, the government might sign an MoU with Reliance to set up a 3,000 megawatt (MW) power plant to be fuelled by imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) at an unspecified location. The MoU would not be about relocating the old South

Indian plant, which Reliance had been asking for since last year.

"We are not interested in any old power plant. Thus the MoU with Reliance will not mention where the LNG-based power plant would be built," said Chairman of Power Development Board Shahinul Islam Khan.

The government would also sign another MoU with Indian Adani group to install a 1,600MW coal power plant in Maheshkhali.

Two other MoUs which were earlier planned for signing with these two companies have been

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## Myanmar brings 727 to shore

Identities of the migrants still unknown; BGB on alert

STAR REPORT

Frontier guards have been put on high alert on the Myanmar border as 727 migrants, found adrift on a Malaysia-bound fishing boat six days ago, disembarked at bordering Maungdaw on Tuesday night.

The Myanmar authorities brought the boatpeople ashore in the western state of Rakhine, as the United States yesterday said it was monitoring their fate "very closely", agencies report.

Sources in the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and locals in Maungdaw said Myanmar Navy took the boatpeople to Maungdaw police station and

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**TOP QUOTE**

"Rohingyas need to be treated as citizens of Burma ... They need to have identity cards and passports that make clear they are as much citizens of Burma as anyone else"

US ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE  
**ANNE RICHARD**  
AT A PRESS BRIEFING IN JAKARTA, INDONESIA

## Petrol bomb on bus again

8 suffer burns in Comilla



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eight people were burned, two of them badly, in Comilla yesterday in a mindless petrol bomb attack on a running bus, bringing to mind the disturbing images of such attacks during the BNP-led opposition's countrywide blockade early this year.

The attack near Bangladesh Jute Research Centre on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Chandina happened around midnight, when most of the people were offering Shab-e-Barat prayers.

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## Top Thai general surrenders

Denies trafficking charges; US calls on Myanmar to issue passports for Rohingyas

AGENCIES

A three-star Thai army general wanted on human trafficking charges handed himself into police yesterday, as the United States called on Myanmar to treat minority Rohingya Muslims as citizens to solve the root cause of the migrant crisis in Southeast Asia.

Lieutenant General Manas Kongpan voluntarily attended police headquarters in Bangkok yesterday morning.

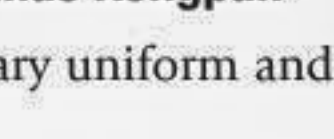
Manas, a long-serving army officer in Thailand's south, arrived at police headquarters dressed in his military uniform and made no statement to a waiting press pack.

But the country's top police officer said the 58-year-old denied the charges against him.

"(He) contacted me to surrender and to fight the case," national police chief Somyot Poompanmoung told reporters.

"He said he has no involvement in the case -- in other words he denied the charges," Somyot added.

Manas Kongpan



Manas Kongpan

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Boatpeople found at sea on a boat sit near Kanyin Chaung jetty in Rakhine state of Myanmar yesterday. They were found drifting at sea on Friday in an overloaded fishing boat that was taking on water. More photos on page 2.