

Three hurdles for 8pc growth goal

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investment in the energy sector, while financing is required in the infrastructure sector. For arranging financing in the infrastructure, the tax-GDP ratio has to increase. To do so, the VAT laws have to be implemented," he said.

In order to improve competitiveness, the barriers outlined in the WB's latest Doing Business report have to be removed. Otherwise, foreign investors would not come, said the economist.

He was backed by Rodrigo Cubera, a senior official of the International Monetary Fund. He said in future, Bangladesh would have to generate more revenue from domestic sources.

The IMF official recommended the implementation of the new VAT laws as soon as possible.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith acknowledged the plans as ambitious. "No doubt, this is an ambitious target but the consistency of our development performance in the last six years prompts us to seriously strive for achieving this new target."

He said while much of the additional resources would need to come from the national savings, there will also be a need for drawing on foreign savings.

"The increased requirements of foreign resources, especially investment, will present a challenge for Bangladesh during the Seventh Plan and beyond.

"We hope that we will get our development partners on our side as before to overcome those challenges and to make our journey from lower to higher middle income country possible," he said at the opening ceremony.

The minister stated four major challenges: continued proliferation of standalone projects and heavy aid fragmentation; less vibrant coordination between sector-level working groups resulting in less alignment with sectoral plan; low harmonisation and low use of country systems; and capacity deficits and implementation lag.

Robert Watkins, UN resident coordinator in Bangladesh, said the economic growth achieved by Bangladesh was good, but inequality has to reduce and attention has to be given to governance and public safety.

In the same session, Prof Shamsul Alam, a member of the Planning Commission, made a presentation where he said Bangladesh's target of becoming a higher middle income country with zero hunger calls for huge investments from both internal and external sources.

It is estimated that Bangladesh needs about \$9 billion in additional investment in major infrastructure projects per year to sustain growth at a higher level, he said.

To secure the GDP growth rates projected for the Seventh Plan, the investment rate will need to expand from 28.9 percent in FY2015 to around 34.4 percent by FY 2020. And the country would require \$409 billion in investment to attain the Plan, said Prof Alam.

Of the total investment requirement, the government hopes to receive \$39 billion from external sources, which is 9.56 percent of the sum.

The Seventh Plan aims to increase the size of the public spending by about 5 percentage points to 21 percent of the gross domestic product by FY2019-20, with much of the expanded spending will be directed to expanded coverage and better quality of public service delivery.

But it would not be possible for the government to undertake such a major investment plan in infrastructure based entirely on budgetary resources, said the member, adding that the government would need to start its public-private partnership initiative in full force to leverage public resources with private investment.

Prof Alam said assistance from different development partners in the form of loan and grant was one of the major sources of the country's resource base. Though foreign assistance is declining, the volume is on steady rise in absolute terms.

"Thus, one of the key strategies of the Seventh Plan will be to ensure effective partnership with development partners to ensure better use and results of foreign assistance," he noted.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman sustained a steady spell of six-plus percent annual average real GDP growth amid global slowdown.

He, however, talked about a couple of aspects that the government will need to focus particularly in upholding and further strengthening the growth momentum over the next five years.

He said after decades of globalisation-driven growth, global trade growth had now slowed, and was actually trailing global output growth.

"This indicates that the potential for export-led growth will be weaker and harder to realise for our export sector unless we take advantage of upcoming new opportunities in markets for goods and services that are produced using environmentally sustainable green output processes and practices."

The governor touched upon a number of areas the government has taken for green transition of output processes and practices in the businesses.

"These are only small initial steps, with lots more to do in our intended

countrywide transition to environmentally sustainable output practices and lifestyles."

Secondly, the more subdued prospects of export-led growth means that the country needs to foster more in domestic demand-led growth, said the governor.

At the opening ceremony, Kingo Toyoda, deputy director-general, International Cooperation Bureau of the foreign affairs ministry of Japan, said he sincerely hoped that all the stakeholders would strengthen the partnership to address development challenges that Bangladesh faced.

He said Japan would assist Bangladesh in establishing a growth belt along the Bay of Bengal through developing economic infrastructure, improving investment environment and fostering connectivity.

As a major development partner of Bangladesh, Japan aims at accelerating sustainable economic growth with equity and bringing people out of poverty.

"In the area of governance, Japan appreciates Bangladesh's efforts under its National Integrity Strategy. Transparency and accountability are indispensable for further development of the country."

Kingo stressed that security is a prerequisite for smooth implementation of assistance activities by the development partners.

A number of speakers identified equitable distribution of wealth as a major requisite for high and inclusive economic growth. Such inclusive economic growth can be ensured through land ownership reforms, tax reforms, public service management reforms, quality education and expansion of social safety net.

The first working session on agriculture, food security and climate change emphasised optimising the productivity of agricultural land through appropriate use of pesticides, diversification of crops and avoidance of preservatives.

The second working session, styled Strengthening the economic foundation: Strategies for development of infrastructure, stressed on the importance of better energy mix like using coal for power generation.

During the third session, the discussants underscored the importance of a sound governance system based on rule of law for fostering development.

Jin Lique, president-designate of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, Wencai Zhang, vice president of the Asian Development Bank, and Janina Jaruzelski, head of USAID Bangladesh, also spoke in the inaugural session.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates Bangladesh Development Forum 2015 Fair at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Stand beside us

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"In view of this, the present government is working with specific plans and programmes to realise sustainable development goals and we would be happy if the international community stands beside Bangladesh in her development pursuit.

"Our joint efforts are the key to making this beautiful world free from poverty and hunger," she added.

Hasina was addressing the inaugural session of the two-day Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF)-2015 at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

She told her audience that Bangladesh is now pursuing an inclusive growth strategy to become a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041.

"We have full confidence in the international community that they would continue to support our development," she said.

The BDF, a platform of the development partners, is being held since 2005 with an aim to share strategies and priorities of the government with the development partners, civil society and private sector, and discussing how to work together to realise the plan.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, President-designate of the Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank Jin Lique, Vice President of Asian Development Bank Wencai Zhang, Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan Kingo Toyoda, among others, addressed the forum.

The prime minister said she sincerely believes that BDF-2015 will be able to contribute to provide joint strategies and recommendations needed for a poverty-free Bangladesh.

Pointing to the country's Vision 2021, she said it aimed at transforming Bangladesh into a middle-income country. To achieve the goal, the government has recently adopted the 7th Five Year Plan.

Referring to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the international community, Hasina said building on the success achieved in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Bangladesh now aims to realise the SDGs.

She hoped that the BDF will reflect on how to achieve the SDGs by providing the government with prudent and effective recommendations.

Hasina stressed the need for support of the developed countries to realise the targets of the SDGs, saying the developed countries should come forward in this regard.

She also stressed that in face of cli-

mate change and other development challenges, the international community needs to revisit the current global trade system to remove the constraints.

"Trade should be considered as a means of poverty reduction and employment opportunities.

"Policies and interventions adopted by the present government proved to be effective in accelerating growth, waning budget deficit, achieving high growth in exports and ensuring foreign currency reserve at a satisfactory level," she claimed.

Hasina said Bangladesh's reliance on foreign assistance for implementing Annual Development Programme (ADP) is gradually decreasing. "However, partnership of development partners is still very crucial for Bangladesh's future prosperity," she said.

"We are of the view that regional, sub regional and bilateral cooperation in the Asia-Pacific area are essential for balanced development and ensuring a win-win situation for all," she said.

The BDF-2015 will mainly focus on goals and strategies of 7th Five Year Plan and in the meeting, Bangladesh would seek cooperation from the development partners, civil society organisations, the intelligentsia, private sector to implement the targets and programmes set out in the plan.

Dhaka to seek handover

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The criminals include: Shahadat Hossain, Khandaker Tanveer Islam Joy, Nabi Hossain Nabi, Molla Masud, Chittagong Chhatra Shibir cadre and eight murder accused Sazzad Hossain, Khan Suman, Noroultam Saha Ashiq, Jisan, Prakash Kumar Biswas, Bikash Kumar Biswas, Shamim Ahmed Aga Shamim, Haris Ahmed, Kala Chan.

Another top criminal, Subrata Bain, who had been in Nepal, has now trespassed into India, sources said.

Sources in the law enforcement agencies said those criminals, each of whom are accused in several murder cases, have been collecting toll from people, particularly businessmen, in Bangladesh through their local cohorts.

At the meeting today, India is expected to raise the issues of the influx of fake Indian currency, cattle smuggling, and illegal infiltration. It would seek Dhaka's cooperation to completely stop these.

Bangladesh would raise the issues

of border killings, human trafficking, and drugs smuggling during the two-day parley, said a top official of the ministry yesterday.

Terrorism and militancy might also be discussed following the recent events in Paris.

The meeting starts at 1:00pm at Hotel Sonargaon with the working groups of both the countries meeting on the first day. The home secretaries would sit tomorrow morning and sign deals, said a top home ministry official.

Senior Secretary to the Home Ministry Mozammel Haque Khan would lead the Bangladesh delegation while Indian Home Secretary Rajiv Mehriishi would be his counterpart.

"We'll also want to know specifically whether any killer of Bangabandhu is staying there. If anyone is there we'll request them to hand him over," a home ministry official told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

Our New Delhi correspondent adds: India's Border Security Force

has said the firings at the borders have been the result of its attempt to curb cattle smuggling on the instructions of the Indian government.

According to an official estimate, smuggling of cattle to Bangladesh has come down by more than 70 percent, resulting in a sharp increase in the price of beef in Bangladesh.

Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh had said in September that about 20-22 lakh cattle were smuggled to Bangladesh every year and it had come down to 2 to 2.5 lakh cattle this year.

Bangladesh Home Secretary might also discuss the issue of construction of border outpost near Tripura border as agreed during the last round of talks between the two home secretaries.

India has agreed to help Bangladesh build the outpost along Tripura border on their side. Bangladesh has sought permission to bring engineers, raw material and workers through Indian territory, since the area is unapproachable from Bangladesh.

One attacker identified

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France stadium, or in and around the Bataclan venue.

The sports minister said at least one of the bombers who detonated their explosives near the stadium had tried to enter the venue where France were playing Germany in an international football match at the time.

Prosecutors say they believe three groups of attackers were involved in the Paris carnage, raising the possibility that one group may still be at large.

It is now known that three of the suicide bombers were French nationals, but two of the men had lived in the Belgian capital Brussels.

Two cars used in the attacks were hired in Belgium. One was quickly found near the Bataclan venue, and one overnight on Saturday in the suburb of Montreuil east of Paris, with two AK47 rifles inside.

Witnesses said the second car, a black Seat, was used by gunmen who shot dozens of people in bars and restaurants in the hip Canal St Martin area of Paris.

ATTACKER IDENTIFIED

The first attacker to be named by investigators is Omar Ismail Mostefai, a 29-year-old father and French citizen, who was identified from a severed finger among the carnage at the Bataclan, where 89 people were killed after heavily armed men in wearing explosives vests stormed the venue.

Police detained six people close to Mostefai, including his father, brother and sister-in-law, judicial sources said.

Born in the modest Paris suburb of Courcouronnes, he had eight convictions for petty crimes but had never served a prison sentence.

"It's a crazy thing, it's madness. Yesterday I was in Paris and I saw what a mess this was," one of his brothers told AFP before he was taken into custody on Saturday night.

Belgian prosecutors said two of the attackers were Frenchmen who had lived in Brussels, at least one in the neighbourhood of Molenbeek which has been linked to Islamic radicalism.

Premier Charles Michel conceded Molenbeek, a poor immigrant neighbourhood known as a hotbed of radicalisation, was a "gigantic problem".

Meanwhile, German authorities were questioning a man from Montenegro found last week with a car-load of eight Kalashnikov rifles, three pistols and explosives.

The man, who had been heading for Paris, refused to cooperate with police.

The discovery of a Syrian passport near the body of one attacker has raised fears that some of the assailants might have entered Europe as part of the huge influx of people fleeing Syria's civil war.

Greek and Serbian authorities confirmed the passport belonged to a man who registered as a refugee in October on the island of Leros and applied for asylum in Serbia a few days later.

But European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, who has urged EU countries to take in refu-

gees, said there was no need for a complete review of the bloc's policies.

"Those who organised, who perpetrated the attacks are the very same people who the refugees are fleeing and not the opposite," he said.

PARIS IN MOURNING

Paris was plunged into three days of mourning as residents struggled to come to terms with the latest shock, 10 months after jihadists hit satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket.

Although much of the city was shut and the government had banned public demonstrations on security grounds, thousands flocked to lay flowers and lit candles at the sites of the violence.

By early evening, the Place de la Republique square was full of people standing in quiet solidarity while many more joined a solemn memorial at Notre Dame cathedral.

Meanwhile, outside the Bataclan venue, 38-year-old Herve came to pay his respects with his six-year-old son.

"We need to get out, you shouldn't stay at home," he told AFP. "You need to go out and look, get a feel for yourself of what happened."

The Islamic State group said they carried out the attacks that left a trail of destruction.

The group said they were acting in revenge for French air strikes in Syria and threatened further violence in France "as long as it continues its Crusader campaign".

Now Hasan Azizul gets death threat

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needed to talk. But the caller, in reply, said, 'So, you'll not change. Then prepare yourself for death,' he said.

Hasan cut the call after this. "I was so shocked!" he said, adding no number was seen on the mobile phone screen.

Asked about the reasons behind the threat, an outraged Hasan said he had no idea. He demanded law enforcement agencies immediately find out the caller.

Hasan Azizul Haque, a former philosophy professor at Rajshahi University, is the most revered and celebrated living fiction writer both in Bangladesh and West Bengal. In a literary career spanning over five decades, he has written several novels and short story collections. His fiction, among other things, mainly deals with

the struggle of the most marginal social groups including refugees, farmers and women. He retired in 2004.

This was the second time he was threatened with death. In 2005, Islami Chhatra Shibir activists had said they would kill Hasan by cutting him into pieces and then they'd throw the pieces away in the Padma.

Referring to the first threat that he had received for his strong criticism of violence carried out by religious extremists, Hasan's colleagues and friends believe his strong stance on the recent killings of bloggers and progressive publishers may have caused this.

"Although most of what he has written is fiction, he's been outspoken about his support for freedom of people and freethinking. He is one of the frontliners

of progressive ideology. There are reasons to believe that he would be threatened for his views on freethinking," said Prof Abul Kashem, a senior Rajshahi University professor close to Haque.

Sushanto Chandra Roy, assistant commissioner of detective branch of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said they had not yet received any complaint in this connection. "But we've sent police officials to his house to look into the matter," he said.

Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Motihar police station, who visited his home in the evening told this correspondent, "We've already begun our investigation although the professor told police that he would file a general diary tomorrow morning."

Saturday for the first time after the World War II.

Earlier, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali postponed a press briefing -- scheduled to be held at 3:00pm yesterday on the PM's visit to France and upcoming Commonwealth Head of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta -- citing "unavoidable circumstances".

PM's visit

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the General Conference of the Unesco beginning today.

The government did not cite any specific reason for cancellation of the visit.

The PM's press secretary further said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will represent Bangladesh at the Unesco event, and the official visit of

the prime minister will be rescheduled at a mutually convenient time.

The Daily Star contacted a number of education ministry officials but none could confirm if Nahid was going to Paris.

Diplomatic sources said security concerns could be the main reason for cancelling the visit. A state of emergency was declared across France on

Tutul won't stop

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Faisal Arefin Dipan of Jagriti Prokashani was killed. Both Tutul and Dipan are publishers of slain secularist writer-blogger Avijit Roy.

"My family members are reeling under fear of further attacks. Police have been doing all kinds of things to provide me with security but a sense of safety will only grow when the criminals behind the attacks are caught and brought to courts," he said.

"For me, safety means I won't have to be afraid of attacks only for expressing my opinion," said Tutul, whose publishing house promotes the motto: "awakening the mind, not pleasing it."

Books, in Tutul's opinion, can play a vital role in containing the spread of religious extremism.

"Books are the most powerful tool to change one's perceptions," he said, adding, "But first they have to make

sure the publishers can put out creative and tasteful books without fear and then develop and properly manage public libraries even at the union level."

He opined that the state should realise the importance of the publishing sector. "Education, culture and sensibility add value to people's lives. These things are mainly spread through books. Development does not only mean massive construction projects."

He could not help expressing his feeling of awkwardness as law enforcers have placed guards at his residence to ensure his security. "It is not normal to have policemen in the house or a gunman accompanying you on the road," he said.

"I want to be able to walk on the streets alone and have a cup of tea from a roadside vendor," he added.

DMP steps up vigilance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following the terror attacks in Paris, Dhaka Metropolitan Police has rearranged its security measures.

As part of this, police vigilance as well as checkpoint, patrol team and CCTV monitoring have reportedly been increased.

The security measures, which were beefed up after the murders of two foreigners, attacks on uniformed personnel and a Shia gathering recently, has been rearranged, said police.

An official said the DMP had recently asked all its personnel to remain on alert round the clock.

Muntasirul Islam, deputy commissioner (media) of the DMP, said tight security had been put in place in DMP areas following "some recent incidents".