

Beneath THE SHINE

INAM AHMED

Bangladesh is caught in a limbo between dreamy possibilities and the nitty-gritty of reality. The possibility of moving at a much faster rate is tempered by the grim reality of the current architecture that denies that speed.

We have to be satisfied with a moderate budget - something that never crossed 13 percent of GDP - because our implementation capacity is hobbled. We have to live with the perennial tailbacks that slow down economic growth. We are stuck with an ugly urbanisation that denies any aspirations of sustainable living in the present and in the future.

Generations are growing up with an education the quality of which falls far behind global standards. The rickety health care system breeds more frustrations than cure.

Yet Bangladesh has achieved a broad-based growth that has trickled down. We have crossed 7 percent growth rate and clocked per capita income of \$1,600. Its extreme poverty has lessened significantly. Inequality declined. Life expectancy climbed up.



WHAT LURKS IN THE SHADOW

But it is only part of the story. Even the social indicators need another look as figures will tell a different story also if one reads between the figures. For example, more than 20 million people still live in extreme poverty, or consider the fact that one fifth of the primary school going children have not even been to a school. Or that our child mortality is still way too high and maternal death rate falls short of MDG goal. And half the population still does not have a system of sanitation in place.

Nevertheless, a new mindset has been created - a belief that we can fix a situation if we want to. The remedy to the power problem is a case in point.

So when Finance Minister AMA Muhith will present the new budget today, he will have to find a solution that will put Bangladesh on a high speed lane that we have been talking about for so long. And he has to sustain and strengthen many of the achievements we have made.

Not only that, he will face some new, emerging challenges this year that may

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

CYCLONE MORA Govt to rebuild all damaged homes: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday gave an assurance that all the houses and establishments damaged by Cyclone Mora would be rebuilt.

And no one affected by the cyclone that swept over the country's southeastern coast on Tuesday will suffer from food shortage. "I have already ordered to import rice, as food grains were destroyed [by flashfloods] in the haor region," Hasina said in parliament, adding that the food minister was now in Vietnam to import rice.

Besides, the government has taken steps to increase the rice production.

"Natural disasters are our regular companion. But we've [her government] the capability to tackle any natural calamity and we've already proved it."

Regarding the rescue of cyclone victims, Hasina told the House that two Navy ships had reached Kutubdia and Teknaf, badly

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



A dog running towards the devastation after a massive blast ripped through Kabul's diplomatic quarter, shattering the morning rush hour and bringing carnage to the streets of the Afghan capital yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Kabul blast kills 90

Several embassies damaged as explosives packed inside water tanker rip through diplomatic zone in Afghan capital; over 400 injured

AFP, Kabul

Kabul's diplomatic quarter, bringing carnage to the streets of the Afghan capital and blowing out windows several miles away.

Bodies littered the scene and a

huge cloud of smoke rose from the highly-fortified area which houses foreign embassies, after the rush-hour attack tore a massive crater in the

SEE PAGE 12 COL 1

Run-up to Budget FY 2017-18 AT A GLANCE

- More people to come under social safety net benefit
- Old Age Allowance coverage to expand
- VGD beneficiaries to get cash on top of food support
- A third of safety net budget is spent on pension of govt employees

Safety net set to widen

An additional 7 lakh poor will get food, financial support

REAZ AHMAD and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The number of beneficiaries, who get allowances and food from the government under various social safety net programmes (SSNPs), will be increased by nearly seven lakh in the 2017-18 financial year.

With the next general election little over a year away, the government plans to bring more people under social safety net.

Following the inclusion of new beneficiaries, the total number of people under major social safety net programmes would stand at 86 lakh. The budgetary allocation for SSNPs would also mark a rise, said finance ministry sources.

In the outgoing fiscal (2016-17), the government allocated Tk 45,230 crore in social protection and empowerment, which is 13.28 percent of the total budget and 2.31 percent of gross domestic product (GDP).

In the next national budget, the largest increase in number of beneficiaries would be made under the Old Age Allowance programme. According to finance ministry officials, some 31.50 lakh people now receive Tk 500 each a

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Tigers face uphill climb in opener

STAR SPORT DESK

The two sides squaring off today in the Champions Trophy opener at the Oval in London will be out to prove different points. Qualifying for the eight-team ICC showpiece event is in itself a minor triumph for Bangladesh, but an ambitious side that has gone from strength to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

PLEDGE HARBOR INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

ONLY IB ACCREDITED BOARDING SCHOOL IN BANGLADESH

ADMISSION OPEN

GRADE 3 TO 12

+880 176 6686 923
+880 177 0240 858
admissions@pledgeharbor.org

Scholarship Up to 80%
www.pledgeharbor.org

Admission Office: Lotus Kamal Tower One, 57 Zoarsahara, Level-2, Nikunja-2, Airport Road, Dhaka-1229.
School Campus: Singer Dighi, Mauna, Gazipur-1741, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

EID MUBARAK

MY LIFE, MY STYLE & COMFORTABLE WITH IT.

10% DISCOUNT CASHBACK

Bata

শপিং করতে আর টাকা লাগে না!

Now you can buy all Crescent products with Credit Card & 3 Cheques.

CRESCENT
We Provide 100% Leather Products

EMI Partners: Standard Bank Limited, Prime Bank, Grameen Bank, etc.

OUR SHOWROOMS:
Dhaka: Katabon • New Elephant road • Jamuna future park • Ring road - 01, Mohammadpur • Polwell carnation, Uttara • Rapa plaza, Dhamondi • level-2, Shymoli square • Tokyo square, Mohammadpur • Lalmatia (Aarong) • Tajmahal road, Mohammadpur • Gulshan avenue, Gulshan-2 • New circular road, Malitab • Shimanto square, Dhamondi • Jasimuddin road, Uttara • Mirpur shopping center, Mirpur • Ring road-2, Mohammadpur • Block-c Banasree, Rampura • New Market • Shoorapara bus stand, Mirpur • Main road, Banasree, Rampura. **Tangail:** • Main road, Tangail **Gazipur:** • Rebeya complex, chourasta, Gazipur **Sylhet:** • Ambarkhana Point, Sylhet **Narayanganj:** • 2 Number DIT market, Narayanganj **Upcoming Showrooms:** • Level-1, Shymoli square, Dhaka • Police plaza, Hatirjheel, Dhaka • Hajipara, Rampura, Dhaka • GEC, Chittagong.

0170 0744 869, 0170 0744 896 | fb.com/CrescentFW | crescent-group.com