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Your Right to Know

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## Borrowing to send economy roaring

Total debt to GDP hit a 13-year high at the end of fiscal 2020-21

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and DWAIPIYAN BARUA

Bangladesh is taking on increasingly higher levels of debt to fund its infrastructure spending, crucial for the economy to level up to a middle-income one by 2041.

After the Awami League government came to power in 2009, it took up several monumental development projects with the view to transforming the country's communication, transport and power infrastructure.

Eight mega projects are in implementation, whose completion is expected to raise Bangladesh's GDP by as much as 4 percent.

Every year, thousands of crores are being diverted to them, along with the other infrastructural projects, which is raising Bangladesh's debt level in the face of stubbornly low revenue growth.

At the end of last fiscal year, Bangladesh's total debt to GDP ratio hit a 13-year-high of 38 percent -- way below the 70 percent threshold recommended by the International Monetary Fund, according to a recent report of the finance ministry.

As of June 30, the total outstanding debt stood at Tk 11,44,297 crore, 36.7 percent of which is attributed to foreign sources.

At the end of last fiscal year, Bangladesh's total external debt stood at Tk 420,358 crore, which is the lowest in the last six years. It is equivalent to 13 percent of GDP, meaning comfortably below the IMF's recommended threshold of 55 percent.

"At the current level, Bangladesh's total debt is sustainable," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

In other words, the country is at low risk of debt distress even if the current growth and financing conditions change in unfavourable ways but within foreseeable bounds.

"There is a significant cushion between what is considered a sustainable threshold and the current debt to GDP ratio."

The effective nominal interest rate on the total debt is about 6 percent, which compares favourably with the nominal GDP growth of more than 10 percent, Hussain said, adding that the effective real interest rate is below 1 percent.

"We will not overborrow," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, adding that the government has a set maxim for borrowing.

The government would not borrow

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Underage driver Siyam is at the wheel of a human hauler, locally known as 'Laguna', in the capital's Gulistan yesterday. More worrying is that the vehicle, which plies Gulistan-Kadamtali route, is now used by Ansar on patrol duty for Durga Puja in the afternoon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Inoculation of school students starts this week

Says DGHS boss

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The campaign to vaccinate school students -- aged between 12 and 17 -- will start this week, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, said yesterday.

"Pfizer vaccine will be used to vaccinate the schoolchildren," he said while talking to reporters following an event at his office, reports UNB.

"The school authorities will provide us with lists of their students. We'll pass that on to the Suroksha app server afterwards," he said.

He added that 21 centres have been selected at the district and city corporation levels across the country for this purpose.

"We will run trials

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## Khaleda Zia hospitalised

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was again admitted to Evercare Hospital yesterday for treatment and medical tests.

The BNP chief reached the hospital around 4:15pm, said her media wing member Sayrul Kabir Khan.

Later, she was admitted to the hospital as per doctors' advice, said Khaleda's medical team member Dr AZM Zahid Hossain.

He said the BNP chief has been undergoing multiple health check-ups at the hospital. "The medical board formed earlier, led by Dr Shahabuddin Talukder, will continue her treatment."

On April 27, Khaleda was admitted to Evercare

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## Highwaymen now a headache

Theft of garment items rising on Dhaka-Ctg road

SHARIFUL ISLAM and REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

Highway theft is becoming a growing concern for garment exporters.

Organised gangs have long been stealing garment items from lorries on Dhaka- Chattogram highway, but garment exporters now face significant financial loss and run the risk of losing trust of foreign buyers as such thefts are on the rise.

RMG industry leaders have for years demanded highway vigilance to prevent the theft that compromises the credibility of the country's biggest export earners.

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## COMBATING COVID Bangladesh fared better than Sweden, India

Says UNFPA representative

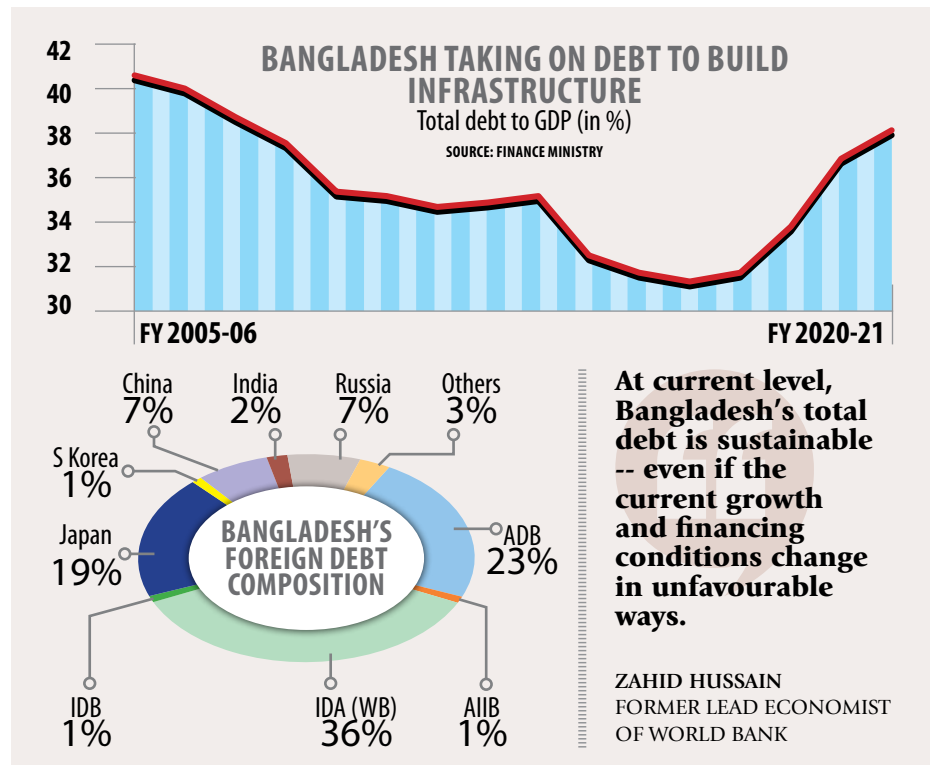
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has performed better than Sweden and India in combating Covid-19, UNFPA Country Representative Dr Asa Torkelsson yesterday said.

Asa, a Swedish citizen, said this during a farewell meeting with Planning Minister MA Mannan at his office.

She has discharged her duty as UNFPA

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BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia gets off a vehicle at Evercare Hospital in the capital yesterday. The ailing former prime minister was admitted to the medical facility for treatment and medical tests.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## SHERPUR GANG RAPE Family under pressure to withdraw case

MOKAMMEL SHUVO from Nalitabari, Sherpur

After raping both a mother and her daughter in Sherpur's Nalitabari on Sunday, the perpetrators are now threatening the victim family for filing a case.

The woman's elder sister said, "They are putting pressure on us after we filed a case against them, saying we will later 'regret it'. They even offered us money to settle the case out of court."

"They [the criminals] gang raped my sister and niece thinking they could get away with it... If I were not here at the village when it happened, maybe this

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## HC forming board to assess Evaly liabilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday called for a four-member interim board to be formed at the earliest for assessing the liabilities of Evaly, in a development that can bring some solace to the thousands of aggrieved customers and vendors of the controversial e-commerce platform.

The board, which will most likely be formed today, will consist of a retired justice, a jurist, a secretary and a chartered accountant to make decisions and assess liabilities of the company, as per the decision of the bench of Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar.

The court sought names of three former or incumbent secretaries and one additional secretary from the commerce ministry to choose one of them as a board member, reports UNB.

The development comes after the Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies and Firms (RJSC) submitted all documents of Evaly on October 11 as per a court order following an application filed last month by a disgruntled customer named Md Farhad Hossain.

Hossain, who ordered a washing machine on Evaly but never received

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### Newly Elected REHAB Board of Directors (2021- 2023)

**Alamgir Shamsul Alam (Kajal)**  
President

<b>Enthekhabul Hamid</b> Sr. Vice President	<b>Kamal Mahmud</b> Vice President - 1	<b>Nazrul Islam (Dulal)</b> Vice President - 2	<b>Lion Sharif Ali Khan</b> Vice President - 3	<b>Engr. Mohd. Shohel Rana</b> Vice President (Finance)	<b>Md. Abdul Kalam Chowdhury</b> Vice President
<b>Naimul Hassan</b> Director	<b>Md. Ramzanul Haque Nihad</b> Director	<b>Mahir Ali Khan Ratul</b> Director	<b>Engr. Md. Al Amin</b> Director	<b>Shahid Reza</b> Director	<b>Engr. M. Ruhul Amin</b> Director
<b>Syed Md. Junaid Anwar</b> Director	<b>Masud Monowar</b> Director	<b>Engr. Md. Abul Khair Salim</b> Director	<b>Dr. Engr. Masud Siddique Rony</b> Director	<b>Alhaj Engr. Mohd. Omidul Haque Chy.</b> Director	<b>Engr. Ratan Kumar Dutta</b> Director
<b>Dr. A.F.M. Kamal Uddin</b> Director	<b>Md. Kamrul Islam (Islam)</b> Director	<b>Md. Kamrul Islam</b> Director	<b>Hameed Ahmed Chowdhury Tuhin</b> Director	<b>Salim Raja Pintu</b> Director	<b>Rtr. S. M. Emdad Hossain</b> Director
<b>Md. Sultan Mahmud</b> Director	<b>Mahbub Sobhan Jalal Tanvir</b> Director	<b>Md. Ragib Ahsan</b> Director	<b>Engr. N. M. Nur-Kutubul Alam</b> Director		

**REAL ESTATE & HOUSING ASSOCIATION OF BANGLADESH**