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Govt turning to all partners for budget support

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is expecting \$2.5-3 billion by June next year from multilateral lenders other than the International Monetary Fund to help the Bangladesh economy weather the storm caused by the Ukraine war.

The estimate was made by the Economic Relations Division, which manages foreign debt repayment activities, in the last week of June -- before Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal wrote to the IMF for a support package, expected to be about \$4.5 billion.

Of the \$2.5-3 billion, about \$1 billion is expected from the Asian Development Bank.

Earlier this week, the government opened talks with the Manila-based multilateral lender for the fresh loan, The Daily Star has learnt from officials involved with the proceedings.

The loan, which was officially sought towards the end of June, would come as a balance of payment and budget support as well as for mitigating the effects of climate change on Bangladesh.

As per the discussions so far, Bangladesh would be asked to introduce a carbon tax, bring down its use of polythene and implement measures to increase the

government's revenue.

The carbon tax is a fee levied on firms that produce carbon dioxide through their operations, which many economists argue is the most efficient way to tackle climate change.

Bangladesh is scheduled to receive \$250 million in December from the World Bank and is in discussions for another \$400-450 million to support the government's green growth agenda.

A fresh \$1 billion has been sought from the Washington-based multilateral lender to mitigate the effects of the Ukraine war: a cost of living crisis and a fast-widening current account deficit.

In June, inflation raced to a nine-year high of 7.56 percent amid sharp rises in food prices.

The current account deficit -- which is the shortfall between the money received by selling products to other countries and the money spent to buy goods and services from other nations -- widened more than six times to \$17.2 billion in the first 11 months of the fiscal year that ended on June 30.

"The loan conditions that we are expecting from the WB would not be hard to implement as many of the measures are already mentioned in the budget,"

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GRACE IN THE FACE OF DESPAIR

The sunny smile on tiny Abdullah's face belies the dark reality of his existence. Bonna, the four-year-old's mother, lies motionless in the background on this foot overbridge in the capital's Farmgate. They have been spotted spending days and nights here for at least the last three months, surviving on the sporadic offers of food and water from pedestrians. Abdullah has been by his mother's side throughout, even as she lay nearly lifeless for much of the last month. Md Sohel, the man seen offering him water in the photo, has a shop on the bridge and regularly checks up on the little boy, who often urges Sohel to give his mother some water too. Having witnessed the destitution of the small child and his mother, locals sent Bonna to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for treatment yesterday evening. Abdullah went with his mother and, according to locals, is currently under the care of a woman they appointed to look after him.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

It's beneficial only for arms producers: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Terming the Ukraine-Russia war meaningless, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said only arms producers were profiting from the conflict.

"This war is meaningless. Because we are witnessing that only the arms producers are making profits and the lives of general people are being jeopardised," she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the inauguration of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Centennial Technical Training Centre in Tungipara, Gopalganj, and 23 other technical training centres in different upazilas across the country.

The event was held at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium, with the premier joining virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

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ROAD SAFETY MOVEMENT

Four years on, road fatalities keep rising

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Four years ago today, two students were killed when a bus, competing with another to get passengers, ploughed into a crowd.

The senseless deaths of Dia Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib, of Shaheed Ramiz Uddin Cantonment College, sparked unprecedented protests in the capital and across the country as students of schools, colleges and universities took to the streets, some attempting to enforce traffic laws that were routinely violated in the presence of police.

The protests moved the authorities into some action. A Road Transport Act was hastily passed in parliament that provided for more stringent punishments for traffic law violations, the PMO issued 17 directives. The following year, a high-powered taskforce headed by the home minister was

formed to curb road crashes and deaths.

But as friends and families observe the fourth death anniversary of Dia and Rajib today, their deaths, those protests which also saw law enforcers take action on students, and the authorities' subsequent promises and recommendations, appear to have come to little avail.

In the intervening years, road safety has only worsened as, according to police records, the number of deaths from road crashes in 2021 was nearly twice that of 2018. According to road safety organisations, the numbers could be much higher than reported.

"Road accidents remain a problem," Jahangir Fakir, father of Dia, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Thousands of students took to the street after the death of my

daughter. they staged movements, faced cases. I want the number of road crashes to come down," he said.

Prof Hadiuzzaman, the director of Accident Research Institute (ARI) of Buet, said authorities have placed more emphasis on infrastructure development for increasing speed without eliminating factors that make roads risky.

He mentioned unfit and illegal vehicles and unlicensed drivers as the risk factors, and that the numbers of such vehicles and drivers have increased in the last few years. Instead of the Road Transport Act which was passed in September 2018 and partially came into effect in November 2019, more emphasis was given on the 111 recommendations made by a committee led by former minister and transport leader

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CAUSE OF INFANT'S DEATH

Bullet or some other object

Says doctor; grieving father says the baby was killed in police firing

STAR REPORT

Officials yesterday said either a bullet or a different object hit the head of the infant who got killed amid Wednesday's polls-time violence in Thakurgaon.

The baby died because of serious injuries to the left side of her head, said Prof Habibur Rahman, who conducted an autopsy on the body at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur yesterday morning.

A report on the postmortem will be sent to police, he added.

After burying his seven-month-old daughter Suraiya yesterday afternoon, a grieving Mohammad Badsha said, "Police opened fire to disperse the agitated people. The bullet hit my daughter who was in her mother's lap."

"We want justice," he told reporters at Mirdangi village of Ranishankail upazila.

Several locals present at the scene have also told The Daily Star that Suraiya was killed by a stray bullet fired by police. No case was filed as of 10:40pm yesterday.

Officials in Thakurgaon formed a committee to investigate the incident. Additional District Magistrate Ramkrishna Barman, who is heading the committee, was asked to come up with the findings in seven work days.

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SCHOOL JOBS SCAM

West Bengal minister gets sacked from the cabinet
Loses all TMC posts



PARTHA CHATTERJEE

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Six days after his arrest, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee yesterday sacked Partha Chatterjee from her cabinet and suspended him from all party posts.

The decision of 70-year-old Partha's removal came after another Rs 29 crore in cash and five kg of gold

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BRIDGE OF BOATS... Locals crossing a part of the canal in the capital's Rampura by stepping across four boats lined together. As the adjacent bamboo bridge is broken, locals have managed for boats to be moored there so that they can cross the canal. The toll for passage is Tk 2 per person. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'It was an accident'

CEC says about death of infant in polls violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said the infant's death during polls violence in Thakurgaon was an accident.

Post-poll violence happens when there is "tough competition", he added.

"One of my colleagues says that we have a psychological problem... No one wants to accept that they might be defeated. Until we change this mentality, the problem will stay," Awal said while meeting delegates from the Gono Forum at the Election Commission.

The EC has been holding talks to seek recommendations on how to conduct the next national polls in a free and fair manner.

As of yesterday, the EC has met delegates from 26 parties.

The Communist Party of Bangladesh skipped the dialogue yesterday.

The BNP, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD Rab), Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Muslim League, Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal, Liberal Democratic Party, Islami Andolan Bangladesh and Bangladesh Jatiya Party had earlier shunned the talks that began on July 17.

The EC also sat with the Bangladesh National Awami Party (Bangladesh NAP) and the Bangladesh Tarikat

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