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ENERGY, ECONOMIC CRISES

They may drag on beyond a year

Says CPD; ‘govt measures on right path but inadequate’

STAR REPORT

The economic and energy crises that Bangladesh is facing may extend beyond a year, the Centre for Policy Dialogue said yesterday.

The measures the government has taken to ride out these crises – dollar crunch, energy shortfall, food insecurity, and soaring inflation – are mostly on the right path. But they are inadequate and short-term in nature while the problems are likely to persist for the medium term, it noted.

To overcome the crises, the independent think-tank recommended cost-effective production and employment-oriented measures, and also called for focusing on spending in areas that will benefit the poor.

It suggested the government form a committee to monitor the key economic indicators and come up with policy advice and actions to tackle the growing crises.

The committee will be comprised of representatives from the Prime Minister’s Office, the ministries of finance, planning, commerce, power and energy, food, and agriculture as well as

civil society members. The CPD yesterday unveiled its review on the challenges the country’s economy is facing amid a global economic slowdown.

“We are not going to get rid of the problems even in 2023. One cannot expect we will be free from these crises within the next one year,” CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun told a press briefing at its office in the city.

The nature of the current crises is global, and the world economy is adversely impacted by the challenges stemming from inflation, the Russia-Ukraine war and the Covid pandemic.

Mentioning that some domestic problems aggravated the crises in Bangladesh, she noted that the country’s internal policies and plans should be strong, corruption removed and good governance ensured.

All countries are facing the heat of the current global crisis but the ones whose internal policies are strong will fare better, she said.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the CPD, said, “The government has taken

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SEVEN CRISES

- Dollar shortage
- Continued effect of pandemic
- Food prices
- Effect of Russia-Ukraine war
- Climate change impact
- Inflation
- Energy shortage, high price

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Form a high-powered committee to monitor situation
- Remove import taxes on essential food items
- Check further depletion of forex reserve
- Take cost effective and production oriented measures
- Pursue floating exchange rate policy
- Increase minimum wages of workers
- Increase sale of essential commodities through OMS
- Reduce fuel prices
- Build adequate food stock

“The government has taken some steps to overcome the crises, considering them as short-term. We, however, are facing medium and long-term crises...”

Khondaker Golam Moazzem
Research director at the CPD

Prices of basic food items beyond the grasp of ordinary citizens

High non-food prices putting huge burden on households

Average monthly cost of 19 food items for a 4-member family in Dhaka now Tk 22,421

Balance of payments slides into further uncomfortable position

Depleting forex reserve a grave concern

FAILED ECONOMIC PLAN

Truss quits after 6 weeks as UK PM

Tories vow new leader next week; Labour demands general election

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Liz Truss yesterday announced her resignation just six crisis-filled weeks after taking office, becoming the shortest-lived premier in UK history.

Her Conservative party detailed a rapid process to elect a new leader on October 28, setting a high bar of 100 nominations among its MPs for candidates – which might block any comeback by former premier Boris Johnson.

The race will be effectively limited to three candidates at the start, before the 357 Tory MPs vote on their preferred candidate on Monday.

Party members will then get an online vote, in an accelerated timetable that avoids the drawn-out contest in which Truss defeated Rishi Sunak over the summer following Johnson’s resignation.

Truss admitted she “cannot deliver the mandate” on which she was elected by the members, after her right-wing platform of tax cuts disintegrated and as many Conservative MPs revolted.

Labour leader Keir Starmer, whose opposition party has surged in opinion polls on the back of Truss’s short, eventful tenure, demanded a general election “now”.

“This is not just a soap opera at the top of the Tory party,” he said,

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Liz Truss

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

Naypyidaw will honour deals inked so far

Says Momen

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Myanmar’s military government has conveyed that they would honour all the previous deals signed between Dhaka and Naypyidaw to commence Rohingya repatriation.

“That’s good news,” he told reporters while disclosing the outcome of his meeting with Chinese Ambassador in Dhaka Li Jiming.

On November 23, 2017, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation agreement, but not a single Rohingya went back to their land of origin in Rakhine state from Bangladesh so far.

Momen said the Myanmar military authority informed Beijing that they are willing to take back the displaced Rohingyas after verification.

However, the foreign minister said, the Myanmar side did not mention any specific date for commencing the repatriation of the Rohingyas from Bangladesh.

Momen said China assured that Beijing would be continuing its efforts to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

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BNP’S KHULNA RALLY

Owners take buses off the streets

Some allege pressure from AL; BNP asks leaders, activists to reach venue by any means

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Bus owners are suspending bus services in Khulna for two days from today ahead of the BNP’s protest rally in the city tomorrow.

Transport owners’ association leaders told The Daily Star that local Awami League leaders put pressure on them to keep buses off the roads to prevent BNP men from taking part in the rally.

The ruling party leaders, however, denied involvement.

Authorities of several hotels in Khulna city alleged that they were being pressurised by AL leaders not to allow in any new guests ahead of the rally. Police were also asking them not to receive any guests from outside Khulna.

Speaking to this newspaper wishing not to be named, a top leader of Khulna District Bus, Minibus, Coach and Microbus Owners’ Association said, “The association did not take the decision on its own. Local Awami League leaders forced us to make the decision.”

Khulna Motor Sramik Union just followed the bus owners’ decision.

“As the bus owners decided not to

operate buses for two days, we have no other option but to follow the decision,” said Zakir Hossain Biplob, general secretary of the labour union.

The two organisations on Tuesday night jointly decided that no buses would operate on 18 routes from Sonadanga

“The association did not take the decision on its own. Local Awami League leaders forced us to make the decision.”

Bus Terminal in the city for those two days if the locally-made three-wheelers were not taken off roads by October 20.

The BNP will organise the rally at Khulna city’s Sonali Bank intersection tomorrow protesting price hike of essentials and fuel, recent killings of five party men in police firing in Bhola, Narayanganj, Munshiganj and Jashore, and also demanding “release” of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Md Mizanur Rahman, president of

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Govt helping BNP to hold rallies: Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said his party never creates any obstacles to BNP’s rallies; rather the AL government is providing administrative assistance for holding their programmes.

Quader said if BNP rallies see gatherings of people, they say the government has failed. On the contrary, if the rallies could not draw people, the party shifts its responsibility on the government, saying obstacles were placed in the way of holding rallies.

Neither the government nor the AL creates any barrier to BNP rallies and it would not be done in the future, he said while speaking at a press conference at the capital’s Setu Bhaban.

He added that there was no transport strike during BNP’s Chattogram rally, but it did not see much gathering and the rally venue was not filled.

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Sri Lanka, Netherlands enter Super 12

AFP, Geelong

Opener Kusal Mendis slammed a 44-ball 79 as Asian champions Sri Lanka beat the Netherlands by 16 runs to sweep into the Super 12 stage of the T20 World Cup yesterday, where they were joined by the Dutch despite their defeat.

Sri Lanka plundered 162-6 in Geelong, blasting 102 of them off the final 10 overs, to set a big target which the Netherlands were unable to reach, finishing on 146-9.

But the men in orange still went through after United Arab Emirates won their first-ever game at a T20 World Cup to upset Namibia by seven runs. The two outcomes means that Bangladesh are not set to face the Netherlands in their tournament opener in Hobart on October 24.

The Africans would have joined Sri Lanka in the next round rather than the Dutch had they won, but against the odds, the UAE restricted them to 141-8 as they chased 149 for victory.

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While successfully defending a 163-run target, Sri Lanka’s Wanindu Hasaranga (2R) celebrates the wicket of Netherlands’ Timm van der Gugten during the two sides’ Group A encounter in the T20 World Cup in Geelong yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

EC wants to spend Tk 8,711cr on EVMs

No feasibility study done for project

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Without having a feasibility study done, the Election Commission sent a proposal for a development project worth Tk 8,711 crore for purchasing two lakh electronic voting machines and their management.

The EC forwarded the development project proposal (DPP) to the Planning Commission on Wednesday.

According to the Planning Commission’s guideline on development project formulation, processing, approval and revision, feasibility study is a must for any project costing Tk 50 crore or more.

According to the DPP, an EVM machine with all its accessories would cost Tk 3.33 lakh and about Tk 6,660 crore would be needed to buy two lakh EVMs.

Another Tk 1,155 crore would be needed to build a warehouse to store them, a customisation centre, and to buy 534 pickups and four SUVs. And Tk 206 crore more would be required to carry out awareness campaigns on EVMs, on voter education, and training officials. The rest will go towards administrative costs.

“There was no feasibility test as we do not have that much time for completing all kinds of preparation for the next national election [in early 2024],” said EVM Project Director Syed Raquibul Hasan, who was involved in the process of the DPP preparation.

He said EVMs were used in six constituencies in the last parliamentary polls in December 2018. The EC has used EVMs in 900 other elections to local government bodies and several by-elections to parliamentary seats. “We have the knowledge about feasibility of EVMs in election.”

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