



No let-up in dengue deaths



When photos speak against dictatorship



Environmental and livelihood crisis in Lama



The scent of the motherland

IMF's \$4.5b loan coming

Govt agrees terms for the loan package

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government yesterday reached a preliminary agreement with the International Monetary Fund over a \$4.5 billion loan programme, putting to bed all suspense on whether a deal would be struck with the multilateral lender at all.

The amount would be disbursed over a 42-month period, with the first instalment expected in February next year, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told reporters after wrapping up his engagements with the visiting IMF staff mission.

The first instalment would be \$447.8 million, followed by six equal instalments of \$659.18 million.

The interest rate would be about 2.2 percent. Of the \$4.5 billion, \$1.3 billion can be repaid over a 20-year horizon with a grace period of ten years. The remaining amount must be paid back within ten years; the grace period for a portion of the sum is 3.5 years and for another portion 5.5 years.

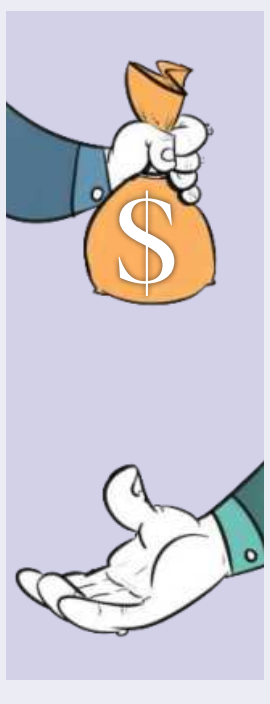
This would be Bangladesh's 13th loan from the Washington-based multilateral lender, with the last package taken in 2012.

In exchange for its loan, the IMF typically insists governments do what they find most difficult: reduce public spending, raise taxes and implement reforms designed to lower their debt-to-GDP ratios, such as cutting subsidies for fuel or food.



A woman squeezing her way through a gap in the central reservation at the Mohakhali intersection in the capital. To do so she has to duck beneath a DMP sign urging people to use the nearby footbridge. Inset, a young man is also seen doing the same. Pedestrians taking risks while crossing this busy thoroughfare, as well as others in the city, ignoring the safe option is a common sight. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



MODALITIES OF THE LOAN

- Seven instalments every six months
- Disbursement to start from Feb 2023
- \$447.48m in 1st instalment
- \$659.18m in the successive instalments
- Floating interest rate of about 2.2%
- Three different repayment schedules
- No IMF-set conditionalities per se
- Commitment to completing gov't's existing reforms

GOVT'S EXISTING REFORMS

- Creating additional fiscal space
- Containing inflation and modernising monetary policy framework
- Strengthening financial sector
- Boosting growth potential
- Building climate resilience

Govt bans foreign travel of employees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday banned foreign travels of all public employees until further notice, a development that comes amid the country's falling foreign exchange reserves.

The decision will also be applicable to officials of state-owned enterprises, and autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, said a notice issued by the finance ministry.

However, government officials can go abroad for education, training and workshops if the expenses are borne by development partners, universities and governments of other countries, it added.

The officials intending to travel abroad will have to take prior approval from the government, which imposed restrictions on officials travelling abroad in May this year.

Another notice, issued by the finance ministry in September, said the government employees could make foreign trips on taxpayers' money only in some specific cases.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

An exam question to ignite bigotry

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

The bizarre and clearly communally inspired section in this year's HSC Bangla question paper is a dangerous occurrence that could easily have been overlooked had it not been doing the rounds on social media. The questions were based on a part of the Bangla paper's creative section. The prose goes like this: Two Hindu brothers Nepal and Gopal have a dispute over land and take the issue to court. In order to teach his older brother a lesson, Nepal sells a portion of the land to a Muslim who, during Eid-ul-Azha, sacrifices a cow in front of Nepal's house. And when Nepal sees this, he is so traumatised that he decides to leave the country and move to India with his family.

The storyline is incendiary, to say the least. It is bound to hurt the Hindu community's religious sentiments, which seems to be the aim. The subsequent questions placed in relation to the passage proves the point. They try to compare the actions of Nepal with Mir Zafar, the infamous military general who betrayed Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah, joining hands with the British leading to his defeat and death of the nawab. Comparing a Hindu character gone astray with one of the most reviled Muslim characters in our history can only be described as motivated. This particular segment of the question paper has been used with the intention of fanning communal sentiments, portraying Bangladesh as a country where Hindus must leave their homeland because of bigotry. Why would such a controversial theme be part of a board exam? Why should such communal ideas be presented to

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CREATIVE QUESTION PAPER Over one in 3 teachers out of their depth

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and DIPAN NANDY

The government introduced a creative question system for public exams in 2008 but it has still not been able to train 55 percent of the teachers on preparing questions under this method.

About 38 percent of secondary and higher secondary school teachers cannot set question papers under the method, said officials citing a government survey.

Many officials of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) believe that there is a direct link between inadequate training of teachers and controversial questions being prepared for public exams.

The DSHE's latest Academic Supervision Report shows that 62 percent of teachers prepare questions using the creative method.

The report was based on a survey of teachers of 6,784 out of 18,874 secondary and high schools countrywide.

The survey conducted in May found

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Pakistan roll over NZ to reach final

AFP, Sydney

Mohammad Rizwan and Babar Azam slammed half centuries as Pakistan powered past New Zealand by seven wickets and into the Twenty20 World Cup final Wednesday, moving within one win of a second title.

They will meet either England or India -- who play today in Adelaide -- in the November 13 decider at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Pakistan set the tone at the Sydney Cricket Ground with some razor sharp fielding and disciplined bowling, led by paceman Shaheen Shah Afridi's 2-24, that restricted New Zealand to just 152-4.

In front of 36,443 strongly pro-Pakistan spectators, Rizwan (57) and Azam (53) took apart the Black Caps' renowned bowling attack in a 105-run opening stand.

Despite a slightly nervy finish after both fell, Mohammad Harris's 30 off 26 balls helped complete a deserved victory with five balls to spare.

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It was Pakistan pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi who gave his side the early momentum, trapping in front New Zealand's explosive opener Finn Allen in the opening over in yesterday's T20 World Cup semifinal in Sydney.

PHOTO: TWITTER

OPERATION OF JAMA'ATUL ANSAR

Officials trace transaction of over Tk 1.5cr

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A new militant outfit has received funds from donors in the country and at least five Bangladeshi expatriates, said Rab and counterterrorism officers.

Investigators so far have information about transactions ranging from Tk 1.5 crore to Tk 2 crore by the militant outfit, "Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya", through mobile banking services.

The officers suspect that the militants get funds from abroad through hundi, an illegal channel of cross border transactions.

"We have got the names of donors who provided a significant amount to the militant outfit," Khandaker Al Moin, director, legal and media wing of Rapid Action Battalion, told The Daily Star recently.

Rab officers are investigating whether all the individuals gave the money knowing that it will be used for militancy or they were led to believe that the money would be used for some other purposes.

However, officers of Rab and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police have come to know that many of the donors, at home and abroad, provided funds knowing those were for training and other organisational activities of Jama'atul Ansar.

But some of them were convinced by the militants that their money would be spent to spread Islam and build madrasas in the Chattogram Hill Tracts or invested in farms.

The militants so far converted 26 underprivileged indigenous people of the remote hills in Bandarban to

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