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'Underprepared' Mirpur reprimanded by ICC



How to make dissenters out of citizens



Zelensky makes 11th hr plea for Ukraine war funds

IMF approves \$681m in 2nd tranche of loans

Says finance minister; the decision came at IMF board meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The IMF board yesterday approved the second instalment of \$681 million for Bangladesh, putting to bed the uncertainty surrounding the loan tranche given that the country failed to meet two of the conditions needed for its release.

The development, which was confirmed to The Daily Star by Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, will go some way towards easing the jitters surrounding the Bangladesh economy in the face of depleting foreign currency reserves and elevated inflation.

The \$681 million will be disbursed soon and is expected to cover import bills of about 15 days.

One of the unmet preconditions was to maintain a minimum net international reserve (NIR) of \$24.46 billion by the end of June.

The NIR target was missed by about \$3 billion as the government had to delve into reserves to pay for essential imports of fuel, fertiliser and foodstuff.

The minimum tax revenue target was also missed: the government needed to collect at least Tk 345,630 crore in tax revenue in fiscal 2022-23.

It finally raised Tk 327,664 crore, which fell Tk 17,946 crore short of the goal, according to a finance division report.



New school textbooks are being loaded on to a pick-up at Lalmatia Government Primary School in Dhaka yesterday. The books will be sent to different schools for distribution among students for free in January when the new academic year starts.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

AL may not go for sharing seats with JP

PM hints at her party's stance after meeting with Raushan

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and RASHIDUL HASAN

The Awami League may not share any seat with the Jatiya Party in the upcoming polls, sources said.

AL President Sheikh Hasina hinted at this during her meeting with JP chief patron and Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad at the Gono Bhaban yesterday afternoon, they said.

Late last night, JP and AL delegations met to have their third round of talks on seat sharing. Leaders of the parties this correspondent reached out to for information refused to comment.

One of them only said the meeting was cordial. On Monday, the prime minister expressed doubts over the main opposition in parliament staying in the race.

According to sources present at yesterday's meeting at the Gono Bhaban, Hasina asked AL praesidium member Kazi Zafarullah, also co-chairman of the AL election steering committee, to convey her party's stance to the JP.

She expressed annoyance at JP Chairman GM Quader for not publicly saying that the JP will take part in the election.

Only JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun has been speaking while GM Quader is silent, the sources quoted Hasina as saying.

The PM said she knows with whom GM Quader consults matters.

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Another 49 BNP-Jamaat men jailed

They were sued in 2012-2018 over political violence

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Forty-nine more leaders and activists of BNP-Jamaat and their front organisations were sentenced to different jail terms yesterday in four cases filed between December 2012 and September 2018 over political violence in Dhaka.

With this, at least 723 members of BNP-Jamaat and their front bodies have been jailed since November 7 this year in 40 cases filed on charges of illegal gathering on streets, rioting, damaging properties, vandalism, and assaulting police members and obstructing them from discharging their duties.

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ONLY ELECTIONEERING FROM DEC 18 EC for not allowing any political programmes

Experts say this will curtail rights

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission yesterday asked the government to measures so that no political programmes other than for electioneering take place from December 18.

In a letter to the home ministry, the EC said people running for parliament would start campaigning on December 18.

Political parties should be stopped from holding rallies and other public events that may obstruct the election process and discourage people from casting their vote, according to the letter addressed to the senior secretary of the Public Security Division of the home ministry.

The measures should be in place until after the election on January 7.

The BNP, its allies, and several left-leaning political parties have

“As far as I recall, the EC had not made such a move in recent times.”

Former election commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain

“Today, the Election Commission has once again proved that it wants to satisfy the Awami League and wants to hold a lopsided election.”

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi

been demanding that the national election be held under a non-partisan polls-time government.

The parties have boycotted the election. The BNP and several other opposition parties have been enforcing blockades and strikes in

protest.

Besides, Hefazat-e-Islam, an Islamist organisation, recently announced a rally in Dhaka on December 29.

Several sources said the EC believes it can make the political parties participating in the election abide by the electoral code of conduct.

However, the EC itself has no direct scope to take action against parties, they said.

Besides, voters may get scared if law and order deteriorates due to the anti-election political programmes, they said, adding that such programmes can result in low turnout.

Several EC sources said the commission had not sent such letters ahead of the three previous elections.

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VICTORY DAY CELEBRATIONS BNP plans rally, procession in city

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP wants to hold a rally in Dhaka on Victory Day. It also plans to take out a procession from in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters, which remains locked since October 29, a day after the party's grand rally in Nayapaltan was foiled.

BNP sources said party's leaders and activists, who are in hiding, will join the rally.

“Like every year, we will bring out Victory Day processions this year too, and we have made this decision in the party forum,” Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, BNP standing committee member, told The Daily Star last night.

The decision came from a meeting of the standing committee, the highest policymaking body of the party, last night.

Tuku said they will write to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police seeking permission. If the permission is granted, people from all walks of life will join the rally, he added.

On December 10, the party formed human chains across the country to mark the Human Rights Day. Although a good number of mid-level leaders joined the human chain programmes, only a few senior leaders turned up.

A large number of BNP activists demonstrated in

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BUSINESS

Banks to sell insurance

Bangladesh yesterday rolled out bancassurance as the central bank allowed banks to sell insurance products, a move that could help the fledgling sector expand its reach in a country where penetration is one of the lowest in the world.

In a notice yesterday, the central bank said banks will be able to engage in the marketing and sales of insurance as the corporate agents of insurers. The directive came into effect immediately.

STORY ON B1

Independents to stay in race in shared seats

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League has said the party will not withdraw “its independent aspirants” from the constituencies that will be shared with its partners in 14-party alliance.

“We will compete and so will our partners. There is no alternative to competition. We have to bring the results through competition,” AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader said at a press briefing at the party president's Dhanmondi office in Dhaka yesterday.

He said the AL's stance on independents is very clear. “Independents are in the race; they have been asked to abide by the election code of conduct... Competitiveness is a matter of democracy. They [independents] have to compete. They have been given the opportunity. Some of our allies may have some objections to this, but I have made it clear that independents will be there.”

Asked who are they going to compete with in the January 7 national election, Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said there is no scope for anyone to be elected uncontested.

“Whoever the competitor of an aspirant may be, the competition will be with him.”

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The water in the old channel of the Buriganga in Labagh's Islambagh has turned black due to discharge of liquid waste from factories and homes. Dhaka South City Corporation is clearing the channel to restore its navigability. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Suicide attack kills 23 Pak soldiers at army base

Taliban group TJP claims responsibility

REUTERS, Dera Ismail Khan

A six-man suicide squad drove an explosive-laden truck into a military camp in northwest Pakistan yesterday, killing at least 23 soldiers, the army said, the heaviest death toll in a single attack in years, less than two months ahead of national elections.

In a statement, a Pakistani Taliban group, the Tahreek-e-Jihad Pakistan (TJP), which has emerged recently and claimed several attacks in recent months, said its militants carried out the attack.

The gun and bomb attack comes as political watchers have already voiced concerns about the holding of polls, scheduled for February 8, 2024, amid a surge in militant attacks in the northwest and southwest regions of the 241 million nation.

The attack occurred in the remote district of Dera Ismail Khan on the edge of lawless tribal regions bordering Afghanistan, the army said in a statement, adding all six attackers were killed in an ensuing battle. Two security officials had

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