

Procedural issues delaying Sri Lanka debt deal: IMF

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's planned foreign debt restructure after an unprecedented economic crisis has been delayed by "procedural issues" in negotiations with bilateral creditors including China, the International Monetary Fund said Friday.

The Washington-based lender of last resort this week gave Sri Lanka the latest tranche of a rescue package designed to help repair the island nation's ruined finances after a 2022 government default.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe had originally promised the restructure would be finalised before the latest \$336 million disbursement, but discussions with creditors have yet to yield a deal.

"There is agreement on the substance of the financial and legal terms," IMF Sri Lanka mission chief Peter Breuer told reporters in Colombo.

"It is procedural issues that need to be resolved, and we anticipate that this will happen very soon."

Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46 billion external debt in April 2022 after the country ran out of foreign exchange to finance even essential imports such as food, fuel and medicine.

Months of protests forced then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa to step down after being accused of mismanaging the island nation into its worst-ever economic crisis.

Prime Bank signs payroll banking agreement with ABR-MASAFI Group



Faisal Rahman, additional managing director of Prime Bank, Md Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director, and Mohammad Saiful Huda Chowdhury, managing director of ABR-MASAFI Group, are seen along with other officials of both the organisations at Prime Bank's corporate office in Dhaka.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC recently signed a payroll banking agreement with ABR-MASAFI Group.

Faisal Rahman, additional managing director of Prime Bank, Md Nazeem A Choudhury, deputy managing director, and Mohammad Saiful Huda Chowdhury, managing director of ABR-MASAFI

Group, took part in the signing ceremony at the bank's corporate office in the capital's Gulshan.

Under the agreement, employees of ABR-MASAFI Group will enjoy preferential banking services, including credit card and loan facilities from Prime Bank.

They will also enjoy PrimePay, a digital portal that allows seamless automated salary payments as well as corporate

payments round the clock, according to a press release.

Md Asif Bin Idrish, head of commercial banking of Prime Bank, Anup Kanti Das, head of payroll banking, Md Anwar Hossain, Head of Accounts, and Mohammad Obaidul Islam, Head of Commercial of ABR-MASAFI Group, and senior officials from both organisations were also present during the signing ceremony.

Gold set for first weekly gain

REUTERS

Gold prices rose over 1 percent on Friday and were on track for their first weekly gain in four, as signs of slowing inflation in the US raised hopes of a rate cut later this year and a stock selloff across Europe also lent support.

Spot gold was up about 1.3 percent at \$2,332.55 per ounce by 1:55 p.m. ET (1755 GMT). Bullion gained 1.8 percent for the week.

US gold futures settled 1.3 percent lower at \$2,349.1.

In wider financial markets, European stock indexes dropped as French assets took a beating due to the country's political turmoil. Cautious mood prevailed on Wall Street, with investors pausing after strong gains in the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq indexes.

"That combination of weaker equities, and some interest rate declines (in Fed funds futures pricing), are reigniting interest in gold, despite the fact that the Federal Reserve has moved the dots at its FOMC meeting," said Bart Melek, head of commodity strategies at TD Securities.

Traders raised their bets to price in about 52 basis points (bps) of cuts (or two quarter-point cuts) by December-end after softer inflation data this week.

That was an increase from 37 bps last Friday, when a stronger-than-expected jobs report doused early rate cut hopes, according to LSEG's interest rate probability tool, IRPR.

Lower rates tend to boost appeal for non-yielding bullion by making it a more attractive investment, compared with other assets such as Treasury bonds.

Data this week showed consumer prices were unchanged in May for the first time in nearly two years, while producer prices unexpectedly fell.

The Nasdaq eked out its fifth straight record closing high on Friday, as gains in tech-related stocks helped keep the streak alive.

However, the US Federal Reserve's median "dot plot" released after its two-day policy meeting - where it kept interest rates steady - showed the policymakers projecting just one quarter-point cut.

"It's still not a done deal here. There could be continued pull below \$2,300 in the near term as the market reassesses the dots," Melek added.

Standard Chartered holds event to encourage more trade with Korea

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Stakeholders from the private sector, think-tanks and government came together to discuss actions that can be taken to promote and drive Korean business activity in Bangladesh at a dialogue which was recently organised in Dhaka.

Standard Chartered Bangladesh (SCB), the Embassy of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (Bida), Bangladesh Bank, and Korea-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industries organised the event on the topic "Thrive in Bangladesh: Actionable insights and solutions for Korean businesses", according to a press release.

The event focused on driving collaboration and facilitating the development of infrastructure, trade, investment flow, and sustainable finance.

The dialogue addressed the concerns that Korean investors have with the goal of improving the business climate in



PHOTO: STANDARD CHARTERED BANGLADESH

Naser Ezaz Bijoy, chief executive officer of Standard Chartered Bangladesh, and Park Young-sik, ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bangladesh, pose for photographs along with other officials and businesspeople at a dialogue in Dhaka.

Bangladesh.

Naser Ezaz Bijoy, chief executive officer of SCB, said: "As the fourth largest source of foreign direct investment for Bangladesh, South Korea makes significant contributions, particularly in trade, investment, landmark infrastructure projects, and manufacturing."

Park Young-sik, ambassador of the

Republic of Korea to Bangladesh, stated: "While Bangladesh offers competitive labour costs, technology is increasingly important. To attract foreign investors, Bangladesh must improve its business climate."

Mohsina Yasmin, executive member (Investment Promotion) of Bida, said that investors were using Bida's online

one-stop service portal, which offers 124 services from 41 agencies.

Samsoo Kim, director general, Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, said: "To attract more Korean investment in manufacturing, it is crucial to simplify public laws, streamline accounting and tax processes, and ensure consistent tax regulation application."



Shams Abdullah Muhaimin, deputy managing director of Prime Bank, and M Tanvir Siddique, chief executive officer of B-Trac Solutions, pose for photographs at the bank's corporate office in the capital's Gulshan.

PHOTO: PRIME BANK

Prime Bank inks deal with B-Trac Solutions for safe transportation of working women

STAR BUSINESS DESK

Prime Bank PLC has signed a deal with B-Trac Solutions Ltd recently to ensure safe transportation of working women.

Shams Abdullah Muhaimin, deputy managing director of Prime Bank, and M Tanvir Siddique, chief executive officer of B-Trac Solutions, signed the agreement on behalf of their organisations at the bank's corporate office in Gulshan, according to a press release.

Under the agreement, B-Trac Solutions will offer a mobile application, named "NIRAPATH", which will help to ensure safe trips for women entrepreneurs and corporate women.

Shailla Abedin, head of women banking and affluent segment of Prime Bank, Siraz Uddin, head of sales of B-Trac Solutions, and other officials from both organisations were also present.

Major brands join forces

FROM PAGE B4

To help accelerate progress and bridge these gaps, the Future Supplier Initiative aims to reduce the cost for suppliers by working with fashion brands to decrease the cost of capital for loans that can accelerate decarbonisation.

Alongside financial incentives, technical support will be provided to help suppliers identify and implement low-carbon technologies and solutions.

Baselining and monitoring emission reductions will also be conducted to demonstrate the impact of projects financed and implemented by the initiative.

The initiative seeks to identifying common factory units, interventions and costs and match projects with the highest potential for impact.

"At Bestseller, we are working intensively to improve our climate footprint," said Anders Holch Povlsen, owner and CEO of Bestseller.

"We have largely managed to tackle our direct emissions, but it is clear that emissions in our value chain require ambitious efforts on a scale that calls for innovative, joint solutions," he said.

"Gap Inc is committed to bridging the climate gap by collaborating with our supply chain partners to reduce emissions," pledged Richard Dickson, president and CEO of Gap Inc.

Daniel Ervér, CEO of H&M Group, said, "At H&M Group, we want to lead the way within our industry and decarbonising our supply chain is one of the most important keys to further reducing our emissions."

"The Future Supplier Initiative shows that solutions are readily available and come with proven impact, but it requires commitments from brands and investors that are willing to invest," he said.

"We encourage others to join our efforts to tackle our industry's negative climate impact," Ervér added.

BRAC Bank signs deal with WeGro Technologies to provide financing to farmers

STAR BUSINESS DESK

BRAC Bank has signed an agreement with WeGro Technologies Ltd to facilitate financing for smallholder farmers across Bangladesh.

This deal aims to provide affordable loans to farmers, empowering them to enhance their agricultural projects and contribute to the country's agricultural development, according to a press release.

WeGro Technologies operates across 29 zones in Bangladesh. Since its inception in 2021, it has connected institutional financiers with over 5,000 farmers.

The agreement was signed at an event at BRAC Bank's head office in Dhaka recently. Syed Abdul Momen, deputy managing

director and head of SME Banking of BRAC Bank, Indrajit Sur, head of Emerging Corporate, Nazrul Islam, head of Small Business (South), and Mohammed Jakirul Islam, head of SME Strategy, Innovation and New Business, were present on the bank's behalf.

From WeGro, Mahmudur Rahman, chief executive officer, Md Alvi Rahman, chief operating officer, Monjurul Mannan, finance lead, Ilham Hasan Chowdhury, business partner, Strategy & FP&A, were present.

Syed Abdul Momen expressed optimism about the partnership, saying: "This collaboration with WeGro will help us reach more farmers, ensuring they have access to affordable financing and opportunities for growth."



Syed Abdul Momen, deputy managing director of BRAC Bank, and Mahmudur Rahman, CEO of WeGro Technologies, pose for photographs at the bank's head office in Dhaka.

PHOTO: BRAC BANK

PRICES OF KEY ESSENTIALS IN DHAKA CITY			
	PRICE (JUNE 15, 2024)	% CHANGES FROM A MONTH AGO	% CHANGE FROM A YEAR AGO
Fine rice (kg)	Tk 68-Tk 78	7.35 ↑	8.15 ↑
Coarse rice (kg)	Tk 50-Tk 54	0	6.12 ↑
Loose flour (kg)	Tk 40-Tk 45	6.25 ↑	-20.56 ↓
Lentil (kg)	Tk 105-Tk 110	0	13.16 ↑
Soybean (litre)	Tk 145-Tk 152	-1.00 ↓	-14.41 ↓
Potato (kg)	Tk 55-Tk 60	11.65 ↑	59.72 ↑
Onion (kg)	Tk 80-Tk 90	21.43 ↑	17.24 ↑
Egg (4 pcs)	Tk 53-Tk 54	9.18 ↑	15.05 ↑

SOURCE: TCB