



PM'S VISIT TO CHINA

Dhaka to seek \$20b fresh loans from Beijing

PORIMOL PALMA, REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAGARAN CHAKMA

Bangladesh will seek fresh loans amounting to \$20 billion during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to China, which Beijing hopes would be a "game changer" in the bilateral relationship.

Of the sum, \$15 billion would be for infrastructure projects and \$5 billion -- which would be disbursed in yuan -- would be to facilitate payments for imports from China, according to the officials involved in preparing the proposals.

"We have reached consensus on several aspects but are yet to finalise it -- we will finalise it by July 7," one of the officials told The Daily Star yesterday.

The foreign ministry yesterday held an inter-ministerial meeting for finalising the joint statement that will be adopted by Bangladesh and China during the PM's visit from July 8 to July 11.

The visit comes just two weeks after Hasina's first state visit to India after she was sworn in as the PM for a fourth straight term.

The trip to China, Bangladesh's largest trading partner, is viewed as a balancing act by Hasina, who hopes to be in the good books of two competing regional powers.

Bangladesh will seek Chinese support for the Southern Integrated Development Initiative (SIDI) centring the Payra Port in Patuakhali, say finance ministry officials.

This will be an integrated development plan for the southern region involving projects on transport and communication, ICT, power and energy, logistics and a special economic zone.

SIDI will see the establishment of an electric vehicle plant, a hi-tech park and a logistic hub at a strategic location, said a finance ministry official. Japan is supporting the Moheshkhali-Matarbari Integrated Infrastructure Development Initiative (MIDI) and the BIG-B Initiative (The Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt).

"Similarly, Dhaka wants Beijing to support SIDI," said a foreign ministry official.

Bangladesh earlier sought a loan in Yuan worth \$5 billion to facilitate importers to make payments for goods and services procured from China amid Bangladesh's strained dollar stockpile.

Bilateral trade between Bangladesh and China stands at \$23 billion, SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Bangladesh will seek Chinese support for the Southern Integrated Development Initiative (SIDI) centring the Payra Port in Patuakhali, say finance ministry officials.



Thousands of university students yesterday thronged the Shahbagh intersection in the capital for the second consecutive day, protesting the reinstatement of the quota system in government jobs. Story on page 12. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

S Alam Group's rejoinder and our reply

S Alam Group has sent a rejoinder to our story headlined "Two S Alam firms evaded Tk 3,500 crore in VAT, says NBR" published in The Daily Star's online version on June 30, 2024, and print version on July 1, 2024.

We received the rejoinder on July 2, 2024, a day after the Group sent an identical protest note to various newspapers, and about a dozen national and local dailies ran the rejoinder as adverts on July 2, 2024. Below we are running the full, unedited rejoinder (paragraph numbering is ours) along with our response.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Ensure same pension scheme for all

Say experts about equal-contribution plan; 'thrusting it on certain section discriminatory'

AHSAN HABIB

A pension scheme in which the employee and employer make equal contributions is welcome in this economy, but it has to apply to all, be they public university teachers, bureaucrats or other government employees, economists say.

But imposing this scheme on certain types of entities is discriminatory, they

add.

Faculty and staff at 35 public universities have been on strike since Monday, protesting a pension scheme which will require those joining on or after July 1 to make contributions to the pension funds.

Experts say public university teachers and government officials should all be under the same pension scheme.

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SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Palestinians go past buildings destroyed during Israeli bombardment in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: AFP

Univ teachers likely to sit with govt

Vow to carry on abstention until pension demands met

STAR REPORT

The government is likely to hold a meeting today with the representatives of the public university teachers over pension benefits amid their strike.

Teachers, however, said they will continue their indefinite work abstention and negotiate simultaneously until their demands are met.

They criticised Finance Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali for terming their protest "unreasonable". They also challenged the minister to sit down for talks.

Teachers of 35 public universities SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

ACC sues Rajuk official, his wife over illegal assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed two cases against Rajuk Director Mobarok Hossain on charges of acquiring assets through illegal means.

In one case, filed under section 109 of the penal code, his wife Shahana Parveen is the main accused and he is the second accused. The other case, under the Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004, was filed only against Mobarok.

Asif Al Mahmud, the commission's assistant director at the Dhaka Integrated District Office-1, filed the cases, ACC Public Relations Officer Aktarul Islam told The Daily Star.

In the wealth statements submitted by Mobarok, the ACC found evidence of acquisition of assets inconsistent with his income of Tk 41.46 lakh, according to a case statement.

It said Mobarok declared that he has movable and immovable assets worth Tk 1.86 crore in the wealth statement he submitted to the ACC. By reviewing the records obtained during the verification, the ACC found authenticity in the wealth statement submitted.

Against this wealth, the total SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Mobarok Hossain

AFP, London

Britain's political leaders made a final push for votes yesterday on the last day of an election campaign expected to return a Labour government after 14 years of Conservative rule.

Ex-premier Boris Johnson staged an 11th-hour rallying call for the flagging Tories but an ally of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak conceded their party was staring at an "extraordinary landslide" defeat.

Voters will cast ballots from 7:00am (0600 GMT) today, with polls predicting that Labour will win its first general election since 2005 -- making its leader Keir Starmer prime minister.

That outcome would see Britain swing leftwards back to the centre ground after almost a decade and a half of right-wing Conservative governments.

Starmer was crisscrossing the UK on Wednesday with visits in England, Scotland and Wales in a bid to shore up Labour support and warn against complacency in the campaign's final hours.

"If you want change, you have to vote for it," the 61-year-old told reporters, adding that he was "not taking anything for granted".



Labour majority expected after 14 years of Conservative rule

A party needs 326 seats of the 650-seat parliament to secure a majority

Economy, healthcare, immigration are among the most important issues

Final results are expected in the early hours of Friday

The Tories have been going all out to play upon people's fears, warning of tax rises and weaker national security if they are voted out, in what Labour sees as a desperate last stand to cling on to power.

They have also increasingly urged voters in recent weeks to stop the prospect of Labour winning a "supermajority" -- a claim Labour fears is intended to hit turnout.

Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride, one of Sunak's closest allies, said Wednesday the electorate would "regret" handing Labour "untrammelled" power without an effective Tory opposition.

"If you look at the polls, it is pretty clear that Labour at this stage are heading for an extraordinary landslide on a scale that has probably never, ever been seen in this country before," he told right-wing broadcaster GB News.

Labour has enjoyed a consistent 20-point lead in the polls over the past two years with many voters dissatisfied with the Conservatives' handling of a range of issues including the cost of living, public services, immigration and the economy.

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আমি বাংলায় কথা বলি



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