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Govt draws up list of 494 products for GI status

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Saifuddin paints Bangladesh cricket's sorry picture

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Biden back on campaign trail as pressure mounts

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People suffer amid 'Bangla Blockade'

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Dhaka, Beijing to ink 20 MoUs but loan deal unlikely

Says foreign minister; PM leaves for China today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka and Beijing will sign around 20 MoUs, including some on trade and economic cooperations, during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to China that begins today.

However, the two countries may not sign any loan agreement on reserve or budget support.

"There is no loan agreement on the list. An MoU will be signed on economic cooperation. If parameters are met under this MoU, we may go for a loan in future," Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said at a press briefing at the foreign ministry yesterday.

He said different countries make different proposals for loans, but Bangladesh does not accept all. For example, the World Bank had offered a loan after refusing fund for the Padma Bridge project, but Dhaka did not accept it.

"The reserve situation is improving in Bangladesh and the trend will continue," he said.

Dhaka and Beijing were discussing a loan of \$5 billion in Yuan for trade facilitation amid foreign currency shortage. However, the countries were yet to agree on the terms and conditions of the loan. Besides, there were also discussions on budget support from China, according to diplomatic sources.

Hasan Mahmud said the two countries will announce the inauguration of some development projects.

The MoUs expected to be signed will be on economic and banking sectors; trade and investment; digital



Thousands of anti-quota protesters took over and blocked the capital's Shahbagh intersection yesterday afternoon as part of the "Bangla Blockade" programme

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

BUSINESS

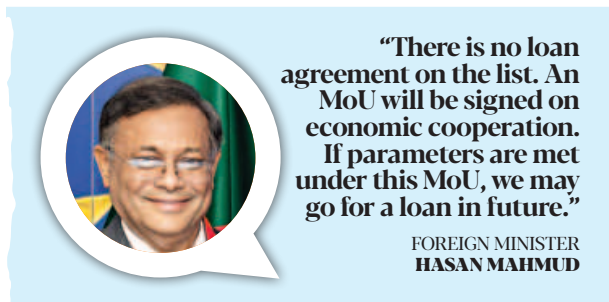
Annual inflation hits 12-year high

The annual average price spike in Bangladesh surged to its highest level in 12 years in the just-concluded fiscal year despite easing in June, reflecting the persistent erosion of real income and the deterioration of living standards of low-income groups.

Annual inflation rose to 9.73 percent in 2023-24, the highest since 2011-12 when it was 10.62 percent, overshooting the government's target of containing it to 7.5 percent, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

This is the second year the Consumer Prices Index, a measure of the increase in the prices of a basket of products and services, stood at more than 9 percent.

STORY ON B1



"There is no loan agreement on the list. An MoU will be signed on economic cooperation. If parameters are met under this MoU, we may go for a loan in future."

FOREIGN MINISTER HASAN MAHMUD

Hasina to meet Chinese president, premier on July 10

Development, economic cooperation to get priority

economy; infrastructure development; assistance in disaster management; construction of the 6th and 9th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge; export of agricultural products from Bangladesh; and people-to-people connectivity.

"Bangladesh will seek China's assistance in the areas of investment and trade; and financial assistance and repatriation of Rohingyas to their homeland. At the same time, Bangladesh will continue to provide support to China as its friend in the global context," he said.

Hasina is going to China at the invitation of Chinese Premier Li Qiang. The visit from July 8 to July 11 comes two weeks after her visit to India. This will be Hasina's first visit to China since her new term began in January and five years after her last visit in 2019.

Analysts believe the back-to-back India and China

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Quota protests bring city to a standstill

Agitating students to hold fresh programme today

STAR REPORT

Dhaka was virtually paralysed yesterday as students ramped up their protests against the quota system for government jobs on the sixth day, blocking as many as six busy intersections in the capital.

The demonstrators announced a fresh programme for blocking important intersections in the capital and highways adjacent to colleges and universities across the country from 3:30pm today.

"We have been staging protests with a four-point demand, but now we have only one demand," said Hasnat Abdullah, a student of Dhaka University and an organiser of the protests that began on July 4.

He said their lone demand now is that all illogical and discriminatory quotas in public service are scrapped through the passage of a law in parliament, keeping a minimum quota for

backward citizens in line with the constitution.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina termed the protests irrational and said the issue should be settled at the apex court.

The protests intensified after the Supreme Court on July 4 upheld a

system for children of freedom fighters.

In the wake of massive student protests for reforms, the government in 2018 issued a circular abolishing the quota system.

Until then, about 56 percent of

Our lone demand now is that all illogical and discriminatory quotas in public service are scrapped through the passage of a law in parliament, keeping a minimum quota for backward citizens in line with the constitution.

Hasnat Abdullah, DU student and organiser of the protests

High Court verdict that declared a 2018 government circular abolishing the quota system in public service illegal.

The students are demanding the reinstatement of the circular that abolished the 30 percent quota

government jobs had been reserved for candidates from various quotas. Of this, 30 percent were for the children and grandchildren of freedom fighters; 10 percent for women; 10 percent for people

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MORE STORIES ON PAGE 3

'It's for the apex court to settle'

PM says there's no logic behind ongoing anti-quota demo

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said quota issue for government jobs should be settled in the apex court.

"The High Court gave a verdict regarding the quota system and the movement is being conducted on a sub-judice issue. We can't say anything ... Since the High Court gave the verdict, solutions should come from the court," she said.

The prime minister said this while Jubo Mohila League leaders met her at the Gono Bhaban marking the organisation's 22nd founding anniversary.

She said there is no logic for such a movement against the apex court verdict regarding restoration of the quota system in the public services.

"What is now going on in the name of movement [against quota] is a waste of study time. I don't think it has any logic," she said.

Hasina reminded all that her government earlier rescinded the quota system in public services.

Questioning what benefit had come from the

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A woman walks through waist-deep water to return home after collecting drinking water from a tubewell some miles away on a higher land in Uria Char of Gaibandha's Phulchhari upazila recently. Around 65,000 families have been marooned due to floods caused by the swelling of the Brahmaputra, which is currently flowing 70cm above the danger level. Stories on page 5.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHOBUJ

The state has been captured by a select few

Says noted economist Rehman Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A class of people have evolved in Bangladesh who have not just captured the state but have become the state itself, said noted economist Rehman Sobhan.

"It is going to be very difficult to do anything about it because this class has now joined hands with the bureaucracy," he said at a seminar yesterday on "Political Economy of Banking Sector of

issue of effective interest rates.

If a loan is not repaid in 10 or 15 years, then the actual interest rate becomes much lower.

"The interest rate is widely unequal depending on whether you are actually repaying your loans."

The default culture has created a distortion in the setting of interest rates.

"Political patronage became the main criteria for lending. If you were lending to a



"What we classified at the time of Bangladesh's creation as an intermediate regime has become a fully-fledged capitalist regime fully captured by not just by the capitalists in general but by a segment of that particular class."

Bangladesh".

The virtual event was organised by Samaj Gabeshana Kendra.

"What we classified at the time of Bangladesh's creation as an intermediate regime has become a fully-fledged capitalist regime fully captured by not just by the capitalists in general but by a segment of that particular class."

Sobhan, also the chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, also touched upon the

politically patronised class that patronage would then become a political resource.

And that political resource would then be used to ensure that your loans were not effectively collected. Once that happened, that class then became more empowered."

They then acquired political capabilities and political strength.

"And you then evolved from a fabricated capitalist class into a perfectly strong and well-established capitalist class that would

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