

## \$234b laundered under AL regime

Tarique says in his first question-answer session in JS



The 11 priority cases of money laundering involve ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family, former land minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, S Alam Group, Beximco Group, Sikder Group, Bashundhara Group, NASSA Group, Orion Group, Nabil Group, HBM Iqbal and his family, and Summit Group.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is giving top priority to recovering assets laundered abroad, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman told parliament yesterday, describing the matter as central to a broader strategy to combat corruption, money laundering and financial crimes.

He said the government's election manifesto underscores the publication of a comprehensive white paper investigating money laundering and corruption during the Awami League regime.

Citing findings of the White Paper Preparation Committee formed by the interim government, the prime minister said, "Between 2009 and 2023, a total of \$234 billion, averaging \$16 billion annually, or

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## Govt bank borrowing surges amid war, interim legacy

Annual target nearly exhausted in 9 months

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Government bank borrowing has risen sharply this fiscal year, a trend that began under the interim administration and has continued under the BNP government amid the US-Israel war on Iran, raising fresh concerns about inflation and fiscal pressures.

Between July last year and March 19 this year, the government borrowed Tk 98,526 crore from the banking system, which is 95 percent of the full-year target laid out in the budget for 2025-26 fiscal year, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

A year earlier, net borrowing stood at Tk 27,739 crore.

Of the amount borrowed this fiscal year, Tk 17,386 crore came from the BB, Tk 71,575 crore from banks and Tk 9,564 crore from non-bank sources.

Borrowing directly from the central bank carries significant risks as it has a direct impact on inflation, said M Masrur Reaz, chairman of Policy Exchange Bangladesh.

He urged the government to refrain from central bank borrowing when inflationary pressure is brewing.

Inflation has been hovering around 9 percent for more than three years, hitting a 10-month high of 9.13 percent in February, up from 8.58 percent the previous month, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Officials said borrowing needs have risen due to multiple factors, including election expenditure by the interim government.

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## Iran clears 6 tankers heading for Bangladesh

Says it's unhappy with Dhaka's statement on war

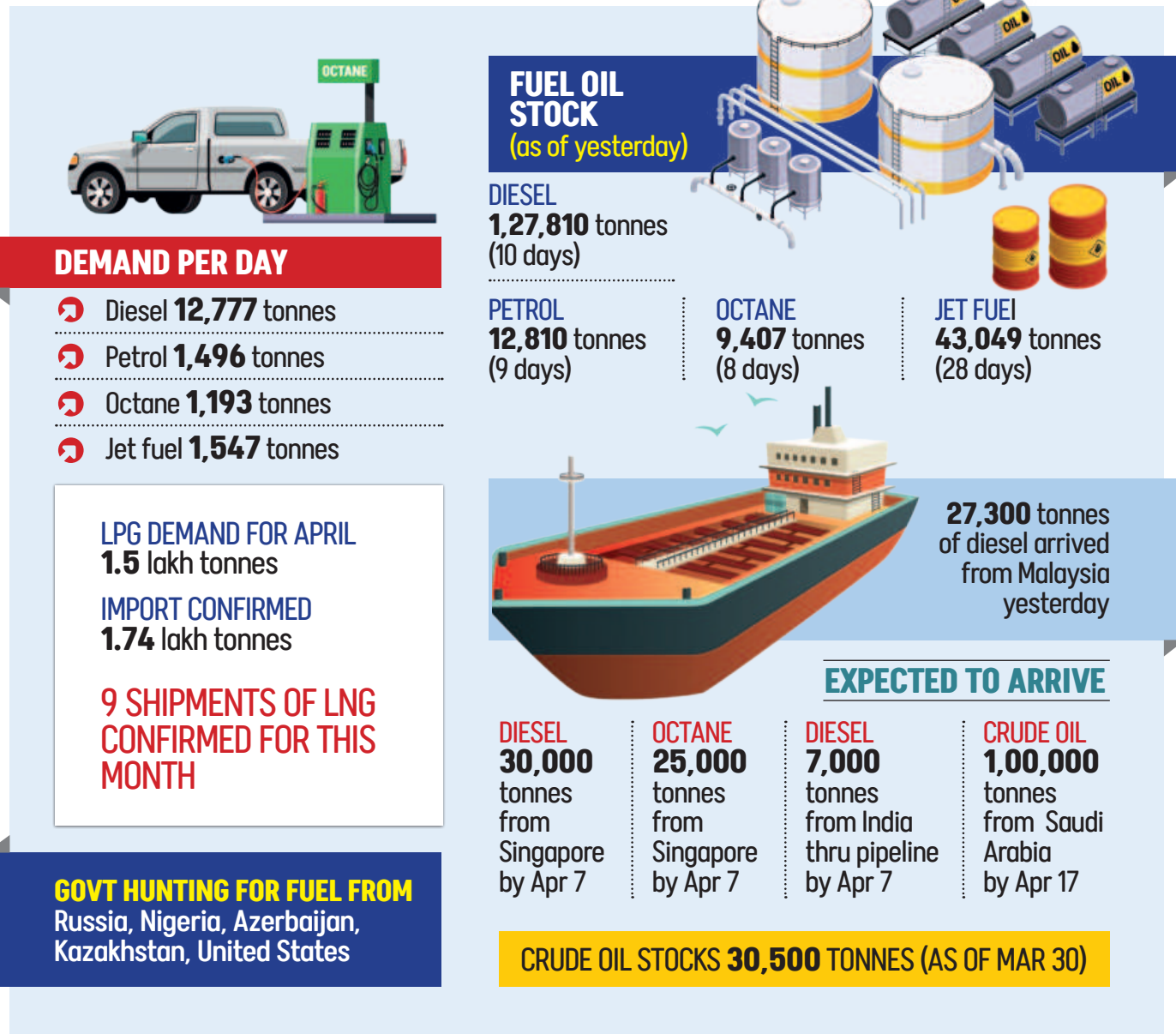
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Iran has granted the passage of six Bangladesh-bound tankers through the Strait of Hormuz, Iranian Ambassador Jalil Rahimi Jahanabadi said yesterday.

"There is no problem for Bangladeshi fuel-carrying ships to use this route. We hope the ships will soon be able to arrive in Bangladesh and help address energy challenges it faces," he told a press conference at the Iranian embassy in Dhaka.

Hundreds of ships got stranded as Iran tightened its grip on the Strait of Hormuz after the US-Israel attacks on Iran on February 28, Bangladesh had requested Iran to allow the six fuel-carrying ships bound for Bangladesh to pass through the strait.

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## Emergency measles shot drive from Sunday

3 more deaths take toll to 47 this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will launch an emergency measles vaccination campaign from Sunday in response to a sharp rise in deadly cases across several districts.

It will begin in selected upazilas with high caseloads and eventually cover all children aged six months to 10 years, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference following a meeting at the Secretariat yesterday, he added that leave for all health workers involved has been cancelled.

At least 47 children have died from suspected measles and related complications so far this year, including two in the latest 24-hour count.

The toll could be higher as the government lacks a comprehensive death register.

One of the latest fatalities occurred at the

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## Eastern Refinery nears temporary shutdown

Dwindling crude stock the reason; diesel, octane inflows may relieve short-term pressure

MOHAMMAD SUMAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh's sole state-owned refinery is operating on critically low crude reserves, raising the prospect of a temporary halt in operations within days, even as shipments await movement through disrupted regional supply lines.

The Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL) held around 30,500 tonnes of usable crude till March 30 – enough to sustain operations for around six days, according to multiple officials.

Contacted by The Daily Star, a senior ERL official, requesting anonymity, said, "With the current stock, operations can continue until April 6 [with throughput at the installed capacity of 4,500 tonnes per day]. After that, adjustments may be required depending on shipment arrivals."

To stretch reserves, throughput has already been reduced to about 3,700 tonnes per day, down from the installed capacity. Officials have not yet said how long the reserves might last at the reduced throughput.

Throughput refers to the volume of

**"The ERL is unable to process anything other than Arabian Light Crude and the Murban, which is mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia and UAE. So, we don't have any alternative crude sources, but we are exploring refined oil alternatives."**

- Monir Hossain Chowdhury, spokesperson for the Energy Division

crude the refinery processes each day, which can be adjusted to extend available reserves.

While the ERL has operated with relative stability since 1968, undergoing periodic "turnarounds" every three to five years, a shutdown triggered by depleted crude stocks would be highly unusual.

The current strain follows delays in two crude shipments totalling 200,000 tonnes from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, originally scheduled for March.

Bangladesh typically imports two crude cargoes a month. However, since the escalation of the US-Israel war on Iran, three shipments have been delayed.

Officials said one cargo has since been loaded and is now in transit through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran's envoy in Bangladesh yesterday indicated that necessary measures would be taken to ensure safe passage of commercial vessels, including those carrying fuel for Bangladesh.

Although shipping through Hormuz remains constrained, limited transit has resumed under controlled conditions.

Even so, the next crude cargo is unlikely to reach the Chattogram port before mid-April, leaving a short gap in the ERL's supply schedule, according to Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) officials.

The ERL processes around 1.5 million tonnes of crude annually – roughly 125,000 tonnes a month – producing

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## REFORMS COUNCIL Opposition walks out, plans street protests

Shafiqur says people's verdict being ignored

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance would launch street protests over its demand for convening a Constitution Reform Council, Leader of the Opposition Shafiqur Rahman said yesterday after walking out of parliament.

During a briefing in the evening, following the walkout, he said the protest would be finalised in consultation with other parties in the alliance.

He blamed the move on the failure to secure any resolution on their motion to convene the council.

Around 5:40pm, following the question-answer session in the House, Shafiqur took the floor on a point of order

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## US to exit Iran war soon, may return if needed

Says Trump; Tehran denies it asked for ceasefire; global oil supply disruption may double in April

**Trump threatens to quit Nato; set to deliver nat'l address**

**Strikes hit steel complexes in Iran; Kuwait airport, tanker off Qatar coast hit**

**Israel says it will occupy part of south Lebanon**

AGENCIES

The United States would be "out of Iran pretty quickly" but could return for targeted strikes if needed, President Donald Trump said yesterday, as the International Energy Agency warned that global oil supply disruptions could double in April.

The US president also claimed he had rejected a ceasefire proposal from Iran's new leader and vowed to "blast Iran to oblivion" until it agrees to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran denied making any such request, calling the claim "false and baseless".

The conflict, which began when the US and Israel launched airstrikes across Iran that killed supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, showed no signs of abating, with

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People watch smoke rising from an oil warehouse in the Kani Qirzhal area on the outskirts of Erbil, capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, after a suspected drone strike yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP