



Largest budget in the works

Outlay to focus on economic recovery, jobs and electoral pledges amid high inflation

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The BNP-led government, which swept into power with a two-thirds majority in February, is set to unveil the country's largest budget yet, hinging on an ambitious revenue target and a bold plan to draw on foreign assistance.

Tomorrow, Finance Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury will deliver his first budget, whose theme will be "Economic democratisation and decentralisation, Bangladesh in the trillion-dollar economic march". The budget will cross the Tk 9 lakh crore mark for the first time in history.

Although the finance minister has not mentioned specific figures in budget discussions, he has said the upcoming budget will be quite large to support economic recovery.

Broadly, three main objectives will be set: reviving the economy, implementation of the government's electoral pledges and turning towards a high growth trajectory to expand employment.

For three consecutive years, GDP growth has been on a downward trend.

In the last fiscal year, growth fell below 4 percent, the first time since the global coronavirus pandemic in fiscal 2019-20.

SOME KEY FIGURES

Expenditure Tk 9,38,000 crore	GDP growth target 6.5 %	Deficit Tk 2,43,000 crore
Total Revenue Tk 6,95,000 crore		Deficit as % of GDP 3.55%
NBR Revenue Tk 6,04,000 crore	Inflation target 7.5 %	GDP (Current Price) Tk 68,31,633 crore
GDP in USD 538 billion	Partial Implementation of New Pay Scale Tk 35,000 crore	Creative Economy Allocation Tk 500 crore

Development partners have forecast that growth will remain below 4 percent this fiscal year as well. Meanwhile, since 2023, inflation has stayed above 9 percent.

In the upcoming fiscal year, the GDP growth target is expected to be 6.5 percent growth and the inflation target 7.5 percent.

To achieve this, the revenue target will be set at Tk 695,000 crore, 90 percent of which will have to be borne by the National Board of Revenue.

Last fiscal year, the NBR collected Tk 369,528 crore. Based on current trends, officials estimate that the NBR revenue may reach Tk 400,000 crore this year.

That means next year's collection will have to increase by Tk 200,000 crore to hit the target.

Meeting this revenue target will be the biggest challenge for the finance minister in managing large expenditure expectations.

Beyond revenue collection, deficit financing will rely on about \$11 billion in foreign assistance, including roughly \$3 billion in budget support. This target is being set without any loan from the International Monetary Fund.

In the first 10 months of the fiscal year, \$4 billion in foreign assistance has been utilised. By June, including budget support, \$7 billion is expected to be used.

Therefore, removing obstacles to project implementation funded by foreign aid and securing budget support through reforms will be another major challenge in the upcoming budget.

The budget deficit is expected to be set at Tk 243,000 crore, or 3.55 percent of GDP, which is below the globally accepted level of 5 percent of GDP.

Under the previous Awami League-led government, budget deficits were proposed between 4 and 5 percent, though during COVID it exceeded 6 percent in one year.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Bangladesh pacer Nahid Rana celebrates with teammates after taking a wicket against Australia during the first ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Rana's four wickets for 41 runs helped the hosts win the match by 86 runs (DLS method) – their first victory over the Aussies in 21 years.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh hammer Australia to historic win

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh made history yesterday, clinching their first-ever One-Day International win against the mighty Australia on home turf with an 86-run DLS victory in Mirpur.

The manner of the win at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium reasserts the momentous occasion as one of Bangladesh cricket's greatest. The momentum carried on from three series wins on the trot at home had been building like a gathering storm, and this time the win came with pace prowess and an attacking mentality more akin to Australia themselves.

Pace had never been Bangladesh's key strength, but they have unearthed a reservoir of it of late, made more complete with the introduction of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Govt, opposition MPs trade barbs over Islami Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday saw fiery exchanges as treasury and opposition lawmakers sparred over the controversy surrounding Islami Bank.

Opposition lawmakers called on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman to intervene and "save" the bank, while the treasury bench alleged links

used for partisan electioneering.

Referring to political reactions surrounding the bank, he added, "Now it is being said that Jamaat-e-Islami is not the owner of the bank. At the same time, they say, 'Do not touch Islam'.

"The Islami Bank is not Islam. Our Mr Fakhru Islam is not Islam, the Jamaat-e-Islami is not Islam."

The minister said the bank had once

Treasury bench alleges election-linked use of bank funds and questions share ownership; Jamaat rejects accusations

between the protesting depositors and those who had sought a parliamentary debate in this regard.

The debate took place under Rule 68 of the Rules of Procedure after Opposition Leader and Jamaat Ameer Shafiqur Rahman submitted a notice demanding that Islami Bank's shares be returned to what he described as their rightful owners.

Shafiqur also demanded an end to "unwarranted, illegal and unexpected" interference in the bank's management.

Opening the discussion, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed alleged that Islami Bank's schemes had been

been "seized", adding, "That control will eventually end. We understand this pain."

He also said how shareholders purchased their shares could be investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Citing comments by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Syed Abdullah Mohammed Taher, Salahuddin said allegations had been raised that Islami Bank shares had been looted and purchased.

He pointed to the sale of Islami Bank shares by Ibn Sina, alleging the trust sold its two percent stake in the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & CHILDREN

3 die after fire at house of rape-murder suspect

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three people died over the past two days from burn injuries after an alleged arson attack on the house of a man suspected of raping and murdering a teenager in Pabna.

The deceased were identified as Sumon Sheikh, 37, of Purbo Raghobpur village, and Saiful Islam Sabbir, 22, and Md Shapu, 19, both of Notunpara village in Sadar upazila.

All three were workshop labourers.

Pabna Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Tarikul Islam said the three victims died at different times on Monday and early yesterday while undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka.

Among them, Sumon succumbed to his injuries at around 2:30pm on Monday. His body was taken back to Pabna after an autopsy, and he was buried in his village yesterday afternoon.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Mother, teenage daughter raped during robbery

Six detained

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A woman and her teenage daughter were allegedly raped by armed criminals who broke into their house early yesterday in Cox's Bazar.

The attack reportedly occurred at around 2:30am in an area of the newly formed Matamuhuri upazila. The woman's husband was in Chattogram for business purposes at the time.

The woman's 5-year-old child was in the house during the attack.

Quoting members of the victims' family, Abhijit Das, assistant superintendent of police for the Chakaria Circle, said a gang of eight to 10 men cut through a window grille, looted gold jewellery and cash, raped the woman and her teenage daughter, and then fled.

The teenager's uncle told journalists that the victims were initially taken to a health complex before being transferred to another hospital as their conditions deteriorated.

Contacted, an official of the hospital said the two were admitted to the hospital's One-Stop Crisis Centre. "After diagnosis and treatment, they were discharged in the afternoon. The girl's condition was stable."

Six men have been detained so far for interrogation: Rezaul Karim, 36;

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

1 DAY TO GO



Mario Zagallo: The only four-time champion

Brazilian legend Mario Zagallo is the only person to win four World Cups.

He won as a player in 1962 and 1966, as head coach in 1970, and as assistant coach in 1994. He also led Brazil as head coach to a runners-up finish in the 1998 FIFA World Cup.

**Visit the Star website to also read: 'Messi's kiss'



Smoke and debris rise after an Israeli airstrike in Tyre, Lebanon, yesterday. Residents of Tyre, including the Christian quarter, fled after Israel's army, for the first time, warned the entire city to evacuate ahead of strikes.

PHOTO: AFP

DOWNING OF US CHOPPER Trump blames Iran, says US 'must' respond

Iran says it is ready for any situation

Israel strikes Lebanon defying warnings

New signs of rift appear in US-Israel war objectives

AGENCIES

President Donald Trump yesterday vowed to respond after he accused Iran of shooting down a US military helicopter the previous night, hours after he said negotiations to end the Middle East war were in their final stages.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's parliament speaker and its chief negotiator in talks with Washington, meanwhile warned the United States against breaking its "commitments".

The comments came a day after Iran and Israel halted attacks that threatened to reignite the regional war, which was sparked by US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

In a statement, Trump said he had been informed "that last night the Iranians shot down one of our highly sophisticated Apache Helicopters while patrolling over the Strait of Hormuz".

While the crew members were uninjured, "the United States must, of necessity, respond to this attack," he said.

Iran's Ghalibaf also issued a warning yesterday. "We prefer the language of diplomacy, but we speak other languages far more fluently. Break your

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1