Public funds must serve people

PM vows to curb money laundering

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday announced his government's firm stance against money laundering, stressing that public funds belong to the people and should be used to improve their lives and change their fortunes.

"We will take a tough position from today against those who have laundered money from this country and those who want to siphon off people's money abroad," he said while addressing an event marking the inauguration of the third phase of the Family Card distribution programme at the Victoria High School ground in Sreemangal.

Addressing opposition questions over funding for government welfare

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Prime Minister Tarique Rahman addresses a rally organised for distributing cards under the Family Card programme's third phase at Victoria High School in Sreemangal, Moulvibazar, yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

Ukraine drone hit bus carrying Belarus children

Says Russia; one killed, six hurt

AFP, *Moscow*

A Ukrainian drone hit a bus carrying a children's football team from Belarus in Russia's border Bryansk region, local authorities said yesterday.

The strike killed a woman who accompanied the team and wounded six people, among them four children, said Bryansk region acting governor Yegor Kovalchuk.

Russian authorities did not say how old the minors were.

Ukraine has in recent months stepped up drone strikes on Russia in retaliation for Moscow's almost daily air raids since the beginning of the four-year war.

"The Armed Forces of Ukraine, using airplane-type drones, attacked the bus of the Gomel children's football team, which was going on holiday to Gelendzhik (on Russia's Black Sea coast)," Kovalchuk said on social media.

He added that all wounded were taken to a local hospital and the rest of the passengers would return home soon.

Fiscal reforms needed for LDC graduation

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It also called for prioritising expenditures that build resilience and contribute to transforming the economy.

"Without significantly advancing on such reforms, it is difficult to see how an extension of the preparatory period requested by Bangladesh would contribute to a more sustainable graduation and a smooth transition. Hence, the extension should not be viewed as a pause or justification for delaying reforms."

The committee advised that an extension should serve as a catalyst for accelerating reforms and implementing smooth transition measures, particularly those aimed at strengthening productive capacities, promoting economic diversification and preparing the private sector for graduation.

These measures require careful sequencing and will require continued attention throughout both the preparatory and the post-graduation transition period.

Bangladesh requested the extension of the preparatory period preceding graduation from the LDC status based on the argument that a series of external and domestic shocks over the past five years had constrained the country's ability to prepare effectively for graduation.

"While Bangladesh meets the graduation thresholds in all three established LDC criteria by wide margins and faces a very low risk of falling below the thresholds in any of the criteria in the near- or medium-term," the report said.

However, the committee also acknowledged the severity of challenges faced by Bangladesh amidst heightened risk of an uncertain magnitude stemming from the Middle East conflict and associated disruptions in international energy and supply flows, lingering effects of shocks that occurred in the recent past, uncertainties concerning global trade, as well as longstanding, persistent vulnerabilities of a domestic nature.

"Bangladesh is highly exposed to impacts from the current conflict in the Middle East."

Even though these impacts are unlikely to reverse Bangladesh's development progress to a point where it no longer meets the graduation criteria, they are likely to have negative repercussions on the country's ability to effectively implement the smooth transition strategy (STS).

An extension would ensure time to better assess the impacts of the current crisis and to make changes to the STS that go beyond prioritising actions within the STS or making smaller adjustments.

It would also allow Bangladesh to adjust plans concerning post-graduation market access, the report said, acknowledging that several international support measures in this regard already contain multi-year transitional periods so that graduation does not lead to an immediate withdrawal of support.

"The Committee welcomes that Bangladesh is committed to advancing the implementation of its STS in a sequenced manner based on a clear prioritisation."

Although the current graduation framework does not recognise domestic political transitions as grounds for extending preparatory periods, the complexity and specific nature of the recent political transition, including the change of government and the resulting disruptions to governance and policy continuity, may merit considering such factors within a broader interpretation of the graduation procedures, the report said.

The UN body emphasised that domestic factors exacerbate the impacts of external shocks and the capacity of the government to react to them.

"The overlapping and interrelated nature of the shocks, the current high degree of uncertainty and the lack of adequate resilience metrics do not allow for isolating impacts of individual shocks on the ability to prepare for graduation."

The committee also reiterated its previous call for support to the country during the preparatory and the post-graduation transition period, independent of a decision on an extension of the preparatory period.

This includes maintaining access to non-LDC specific support such as concessional and non-concessional finance, extensions of LDC-specific international support measures for an appropriate time, and technical assistance.

The link between graduation and reform also highlights the importance of a robust monitoring mechanism, and the committee expects to receive, in upcoming national reports, detailed information on the progress in further preparing and implementing the STS, including progress towards measurable targets, financing of activities and any corrective actions undertaken in case progress is lacking.

India unlawfully forcing

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infiltrators" and forced nearly 5,000 people "to go back".

"Indian authorities are cruelly dumping families into Bangladesh or leaving them stranded at the border, ignoring their basic human rights," said Meenakshi Ganguly, HRW's deputy Asia director.

She urged India to stop unlawful expulsions, ensure procedural safeguards, verify citizenship with Bangladeshi authorities, and end what she described as "this dismaying animosity toward Muslims".

HRW said it interviewed nine witnesses who saw BSF personnel bring groups to the border at night and push them through breaches in the barbed-wire fence into Bangladeshi territory. In several cases, they were later allowed to return after BGB refused entry.

Witnesses in Panchagarh described a 75-hour standoff after the BSF attempted to push 10 people, including children, into Bangladesh on June 5.

"The group had advanced about 50 feet into Bangladeshi territory," said local Rubel Hossen. "Locals alerted the BGB, and after the forces arrived, the group retreated to an embankment in no man's land."

He said the group endured lightning and heavy rain on the first night and received limited food assistance from the BSF on the second day.

"What I witnessed appeared to be a war-like standoff with large deployments of BSF and BGB," Rubel told HRW. "Repeated flag meetings between the two forces failed, until the BSF finally escorted the group back to the Indian side."

HRW cited other recent incidents, including an alleged attempt on June 6 to push six members of two Bengali Muslim families -- three men, two women and a child -- through the Tetulbaria border.

According to the rights group, they were stranded overnight after BGB blocked their entry and BSF personnel allegedly prevented them from returning.

On June 8, BGB said the BSF took back 11 people, including a pregnant woman and her child, after they had remained stranded for nearly 48 hours at the zero line in Thakurgaon.

HRW also said a controversial voter list revision ahead of the West Bengal elections removed more than nine million names, fuelling fears of detention and deportation.

It noted that a citizenship verification process in Assam in 2019 left more than 1.9 million people stateless, while thousands of Bangla-speaking residents have since been detained and some have been unlawfully expelled.

The rights group noted that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has repeatedly described Bangla-speaking Muslims as "illegal immigrants" and recently said, "We take them to a convenient location near the border, and literally push them across the border...."

Hasibur Islam, a union parishad member in Panchagarh Sadar, said he met a family from Siliguri in West Bengal who possessed Aadhaar cards, India's biometric identity document.

The family told him police detained them after their names were removed from voter rolls and later handed them over to border security personnel who attempted to push them into Bangladesh. They were eventually allowed to return to India after spending three days stranded at the border.

HRW said Indian authorities maintain that many Bangladeshis are living in India illegally and have offered assistance for voluntary return. While voluntary repatriation can comply with international human rights standards, the organisation said authorities should neither coerce people into leaving nor forcibly expel them.

The group also cited allegations that some people were stripped of identity documents, money and personal belongings before being removed.

According to HRW, authorities in West Bengal have arbitrarily detained hundreds of alleged irregular Bangladeshi migrants in holding centres. An Indian activist told the rights group that around 400 people are being held in facilities near the border, many after being excluded from voter rolls.

Bangladesh has repeatedly said it will not accept people pushed across the border outside legal channels and that any return must follow established verification and repatriation procedures.

HRW said India is obligated under international human rights law to protect individuals from discrimination and arbitrary deprivation of citizenship. It warned that detention and expulsion without due process violate fundamental rights, while leaving people without food, water, shelter or medical care could amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The organisation called on India to ensure access to legal representation, inform people of the grounds for deportation and allow appeals against expulsion decisions. It also said expelling or stranding children violates the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which protects their right to nationality and freedom from arbitrary detention.

"India should end these brutal expulsions, and both governments should ensure that border management never again comes at the cost of basic human dignity," said Meenakshi Ganguly.

6 months on, probe at a standstill

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Following months without new arrests, the investigator in The Daily Star case on March 26 executed "shown arrested" orders for three individuals already behind bars in the Prothom Alo case.

Meanwhile, on June 3, the investigator sought to show Anowar Hossain, 38, of Lakshmipur's Raipur arrested in the Prothom Alo case. He was earlier arrested in a cybercrime case.

Court documents show that 17 people arrested in the Prothom Alo case secured bail by April 26, including Ataur Rahman Bikrampuri, an Islamic speaker known for provocative online activities. After being formally implicated in the case on April 2, he was granted bail on April 20. Police later booked him in The Daily Star case on April 27.

On May 23, the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court-5 in Dhaka granted Bikrampuri bail in The Daily Star case, citing that he was not named in the FIR, had made no confessional statement, and that some co-accused had already secured bail.

Court records show that 15 suspects were arrested in the case over the attack on The Daily Star. Of them, Bikrampuri, Almas Ali, and Foisal Ahmed are on bail, while Aynul Haque Kashemi and Saydur Rahman remain absconding.

Between May 6 and May 23, the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Courts granted bail to Foisal, Almas, and Bikrampuri. In each order, judges cited a lack of foundational evidence, noting that the suspects were neither arrested at the scene nor named in the FIR, and that no specific allegations had been brought against them.

Investigators have already missed the deadlines for submitting probe reports in both cases, which were due on June 7 and 8 for Prothom Alo and The Daily Star respectively, said a sub-inspector at the court.

The deadlines have since been extended to July 9 and 12.

Asked about the lack of progress, Sub-Inspector Jahirul Islam, lead investigator in The Daily Star case, said that although digital evidence and footage point to overseas influencers Pinaki Bhattacharya and Elias Hossain as instigators, rushing the process would undermine the broader investigation.

"We can submit the charge sheet now if we want. But under the guidance of senior officers, we are collecting more information to bring additional suspects to justice.... If we submit the charge sheet now, only those already arrested will be named. New information and leads are still emerging."

Asked whether investigators have identified social media accounts involved in campaigns surrounding the incident or received information about Facebook pages reportedly taken down by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, Jahirul said police had not received any such information.

"To be honest, we do not have any direct channel of communication with the BTRC. If there was any authentic information indicating the matter originated there, we could contact them."

Contacted by The Daily Star, Khaleda Begum, deputy commissioner of DB Cyber and Special Crime (North Division), declined to comment because the investigation was ongoing, saying only that those detained included both direct participants and instigators.

An analysis by Dismislab and The Daily Star suggests the attacks were premeditated.

Analysing 3,064 Facebook posts published between December 13 and 19 last year, the study found a clear link between online incitement and real-world violence.

According to the analysis, hostile narratives were amplified by influencers including Elias Hossain and Pinaki Bhattacharya, as well as right-wing activists, before escalating into direct calls by Elias to attack and burn specific locations across Dhaka.

Crowds later mobilised and carried out attacks that mirrored the calls made on Facebook in real time.

The analysis also found that law enforcement agencies and Meta failed to act on visible threats circulating on Facebook for more than 20 hours, even as the violence was being livestreamed.

Clock ticks on Beximco Pharma's

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and accounts within six months of the end of its financial year.

Under Rule 41, where securities remain suspended from trading for a continuous period of six months, the London Stock Exchange will generally cancel their admission to trading unless the underlying issues are resolved.

As the six-month period approaches, concerns have grown among investors that the suspension could ultimately result in delisting from AIM if compliance is not restored.

Cancellation of admission means the securities would no longer trade on AIM, although shareholders would continue to retain ownership of their holdings.

Any future return to the market would generally require a fresh admission process and compliance with listing requirements.

Against this backdrop, six institutional investors holding Beximco Pharmaceuticals' London-listed securities wrote to the chairman of the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC), urging steps to enable the company's board to approve the outstanding financial statements.

"Cancellation would leave us holding an unlisted, orphan security, something our fund structures are not set up to do and which would present extremely serious risks to our investment. Even the current scenario of a temporarily suspended listing is causing significant challenges for our entities," the investors said in the letter.

Beximco Pharmaceuticals currently represents Bangladesh's only international equity listing through GDRs.

Maintaining continuity of the listing is important not only for existing shareholders but also for preserving the visibility of Bangladesh's capital market among international portfolio investors, the investors said.

"It is our understanding that the underlying business remains fully operational and that the reporting delay is administrative, resulting from the ongoing legal dispute regarding the BSEC's proposed appointment of independent non-executive directors."

According to the letter, because the matter remains sub judice, a legally uncontested board meeting to approve the financial statements has not yet been convened.

Mohammad Asad Ullah, company secretary of Beximco Pharmaceuticals, declined to comment, saying only: "A writ petition was filed, so it is a sub judice matter."

The BSEC appointed nine independent directors to Beximco Pharmaceuticals in 2024 following a directive from the finance ministry.

Soon after the appointments, the company filed a writ petition challenging the decision. Since then, the board has not met to approve or discuss financial results and the company has not published quarterly performance reports or annual financial statements.

"While we respect the BSEC's regulatory oversight and the ongoing judicial process, the current situation inadvertently penalises international minority shareholders who are independent of this governance dispute," the investors said.

They requested that the BSEC consider granting special dispensation or facilitate a temporary mechanism allowing Beximco Pharmaceuticals to convene a limited, special-purpose board meeting.

According to the letter, the sole agenda would be to review, approve and authorise publication of the outstanding financial statements so the company could meet LSE reporting requirements and seek reinstatement of trading in London.

The proposed arrangement, the investors said, would be granted strictly "without prejudice" to the ongoing High Court proceedings.

Approving the accounts would not amount to accepting either side's position regarding the final composition of the board; rather, it would serve as an interim step to meet statutory reporting obligations and protect shareholder interests, the letter added.

Md Abul Kalam, spokesperson for the BSEC, said the commission was examining the matter in view of Bangladesh's international image and the concerns raised by foreign investors.

He said the regulator is assessing how prepared the company actually is: whether it has prepared its financial statements and whether those accounts have already been audited.

Since litigation over the board remains pending, that issue will also be considered before the regulator decides on any next steps, although the company itself would need to apply for any regulatory accommodation, Kalam said.

He added that as a board has already been appointed for the company, it may be able to approve the financial reports on its own if it chooses, potentially making regulatory intervention unnecessary.

"However, because Beximco Pharmaceuticals is currently the only Bangladeshi company listed on AIM, BSEC is reviewing the matter carefully to safeguard the country's reputation and market image," he added.

Each GDR of Beximco Pharmaceuticals last traded at £42.50 on January 2, 2026. The company's GDR programme was originally launched on September 19, 2006.

France the favourites but not flawless

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surrounding France's attack, it was only after the 66th minute that the runners-up of the last edition truly began to click. Bradley Barcola added a second in the 82nd minute with a delicate dink over the keeper, seemingly putting the game beyond reach. Senegal, however, refused to fade quietly, pulling one back in injury time to briefly unsettle the favourites and hinting at a more uncomfortable finish.

Still, Mbappe had the final word. Picking up space outside the penalty area, he unleashed a quick, decisive strike from distance that caught Mendy off guard once again. The goal not only sealed a 3-1 win but also made Mbappe France's all-time leading scorer with 58 goals, surpassing Olivier Giroud. At just 27, his World Cup record -- 14 goals in 15 matches -- continues to underline a player who seems built for football's biggest stage.

Yet the scoreline only told part of the story. Despite the victory, France did not display the kind of sustained dominance expected from outright favourites. There were moments where they rode their luck, particularly in the first half, when their front three of Desire Doue, Mbappe, and Ousmane Dembele barely combined, registering just a single touch between them before the break.

Senegal could easily have shifted the momentum. Nicolas Jackson struck the post, while Ismaila Sarr wasted a clear chance, firing over with the goal gaping. On another night, France might have found themselves chasing the game.

Deschamps' tactical setup could also be scrutinised. Olise was deployed more centrally -- a shift from his destructive club role as a right-winger at Bayern Munich, where he registered 25 goals and 28 assists in 57 appearances across competitions. While his vision and passing ultimately helped unlock Senegal's defence, France arguably lost some of his natural threat from the right flank, where his cutting runs and curling finishes are most dangerous.

This is where Didier Deschamps finds himself spoilt for choice. France's depth allows him to reshape the attack without weakening it, even if the balance is still being refined. He could, for instance, introduce Manchester City's Rayan Cherki in the number 10 role, shift Dembele to the left, restore Olise to his preferred right wing, and keep Mbappe centrally -- a configuration that could make France significantly more incisive.