

Brexit turmoil drives UK towards recession

AFF, London

Britain's economy unexpectedly shrank in the second quarter of the year on Brexit turmoil, official data showed yesterday, placing the country on the verge of recession and sending the pound tumbling to a 2.5-year low.

Gross domestic product (GDP) fell 0.2 percent in the April-June period, the first time the economy has contracted in almost seven years, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement, blaming a dramatic slump in the construction and manufacturing sectors.

The data, which was worse than market expectations for zero growth and also reflects global economic strains, sent the pound diving to \$1.2056 -- the lowest level since early 2017.

Another contraction in the current third quarter would put Britain in an official recession, ahead of the nation's expected withdrawal from the EU at the end of October.

"The latest data reveal an economy in decline and skirting with recession as headwinds from slower global economic growth are exacerbated by Brexit-related paralysis," said IHS Markit economist Chris Williamson.

The result contrasted with 0.5-percent expansion in the first quarter, when activity was boosted by companies stockpiling ahead of Brexit.

Output was buoyed in the first

three months of 2019 because Britain had initially been scheduled to leave the European Union at the end of March.

"GDP contracted in the second quarter for the first time since 2012 after robust growth in the first quarter," said Rob Kent Smith, ONS head of GDP.

"Manufacturing output fell back after a strong start to the year, with production brought forward ahead of the UK's original departure date from the EU.

"The construction sector also weakened after a buoyant beginning to the year, while the often-dominant service sector delivered virtually no growth at all," he added.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson replaced Theresa May in July after winning the governing Conservatives' leadership contest on a pledge to take Britain out of the bloc on October 31 with or without a divorce deal.

Brexititeer Johnson, a pivotal 'Leave' campaigner in the 2016 EU exit referendum, has repeatedly insisted that Britain can make an economic success of Brexit.

New finance minister Sajid Javid yesterday said that the global economy was slowing, but highlighted other recent positive data for the UK.

"This is a challenging period across the global economy, with growth slowing in many countries," said Javid.



Members of Santal community stage demonstrations on Gobindaganj-Dinajpur highway yesterday demanding filing of a fresh charge sheet in the case filed over the killing of three Santals and torching of their homes in the upazila in 2016. The protest was organised on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples. PHOTO: STAR

Fugitive killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A suspected criminal was killed in a "gunfight" with police in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila early yesterday.

The dead -- Chinu Mia, 28, of the upazila's Bishwanath village -- was accused in 18 cases filed over illegal arms dealing, attempt to murder, arson, fraud, extortion, violence and other criminal offences, said police.

AKM Mehdi Hasan, officer-in-charge of Gobindaganj Police Station, claimed they conducted a raid on the banks of the Karatoa on information of Chinu and his gang's whereabouts.

Sensing police presence, the criminals opened fire, forcing the law enforcers to retaliate, he added.

During the "gunfight", Chinu sustained bullet injuries and died on the spot, he claimed.

The body was sent to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Later, police handed it over to family members in the evening.

Police filed two cases regarding the "gunfight".

Airfare shoots up amid mad rush home

FROM PAGE 16

8,800 to go to Rajshahi on tomorrow, up from Tk 2,600 to Tk 2,700.

Dhaka-Sylhet and Dhaka-Cox's Bazar tickets have shot up by two to three times. But Dhaka-Chattogram air travel has not risen that much as people are preferring to travel by road.

All three private airlines have increased the number of flights on different routes.

Holidaymakers started leaving the capital on Wednesday.

Different airlines say holidaymakers now prefer traveling by air to avoid hassles on the road.

"People's financial capacity has increased over the last four to five years. Many middle-class people now opt for air travels to have a hassle-free journey," Mesbahul Islam, head of marketing and sales at Novo Air, told this correspondent.

Ashish Rai Choudhury, chief operating officer of Regent Airways, said more people were choosing to travel by air as airfare had become reasonable in recent years. Besides,

saving time was also a big factor for many holidaymakers.

Ariful Islam, a banker living in the capital's Jhigatola, said he would go to Jashore during Eid vacation by air as it might take a long time to travel by road due to tailbacks at ferry terminals.

Biman, US-Bangla and Novo Air operate on domestic routes from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Sylhet, Saidpur, Jashore, Rajshahi and Barishal. Regent Airways operates only on Cox's Bazar and Chattogram routes.

Biman operates 25 flights (to and from Dhaka) every day on seven routes with two 74-seater Dash-8s and one 162-seater Boeing 737-800, officials said.

US-Bangla operates over 36 flights on the routes with four 164-seater Boeing 737-800 aircraft and three 74-seater Dash-8 aircraft, said Shekh Saadi, head of media and communications.

Novo Air operates 48 flights on the routes with five ATR 72-500 having 68 seats, Mahfuzul Alam, senior manager,

Anger builds in Kashmir

FROM PAGE 16

concerned about the situation in Kashmir, the cause of two of three wars between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan.

Wang met Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Beijing and assured him that China would continue to support Pakistan to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the Indian Foreign Ministry yesterday urged Pakistan to accept reality and stop meddling in India's internal affairs.

Addressing a press briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar claimed that India's decision on Jammu and Kashmir has made Pakistan "nervous".

"They feel that development activities and overall welfare of the people of Jammu and Kashmir will nullify their justification for cross-border terrorism. They will not be able to incite separatist activities. They will not be able to support terrorism. They will not be able to mislead people," news agency ANI quoted him as saying.

He also condemned Pakistan's move to downgrade diplomatic and trade ties, which included expelling the Indian envoy and halting cross-border railway services.

The United States yesterday called on India and Pakistan to maintain calm and restraint.

"It's something that we've called for calm and restraint by all parties. We want to maintain peace and stability, and we, of course, support direct dialogue between India and Pakistan on Kashmir and other issues of concern," the State Department Spokesperson Morgan Ortogus said.

There have been no major protests in Kashmir so far, barring sporadic instances of stone-throwing in the last few days, but several residents and a police official told Reuters resentment against the decision was building.

"There is a lull right now...the situation can go out of control," said the police official, who declined to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

Police in riot gear were posted every few metres around the Jama Masjid mosque in Srinagar's old quarter. One officer said he faced regular attack from young people throwing stones.

India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, met the governor of Jammu and Kashmir and "expressed satisfaction regarding the overall situation, which is, by and large, peaceful," the state government said in a statement.

Thousands of additional paramilitary troops flooded into Kashmir, already one of the world's most militarised regions, ahead of Monday's announcement of the change in constitutional status.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government also broke up the state into two federal territories, a step regional leaders decried as a further humiliation.

In a narrow alley behind the Srinagar mosque, 32-year-old Tariq Ahmed warned of a backlash against the Indian government once it relaxed the curbs on movement in the city.

"If they (authorities) have used force on unarmed Kashmiris, we will also react with force," said Ahmed, a university worker.

"We have no faith in the Indian government. They should let us protest. Otherwise, the only option is armed struggle."

Modi's decision will benefit Kashmiris and the government would move to create more economic opportunities, he said in a speech on Thursday.

Some in Kashmir did not agree.

"They are thinking that they will be able to keep people suppressed," said Owais, 29, a government employee who gave only his first name. "This strategy will backfire."

Woman tied

FROM PAGE 16

The two families had several altercations in the following days and during the time, the girl's family members blamed the victim woman for the situation.

On Wednesday morning, the elder brother of the woman's husband along with his wife, daughter and brother tortured the victim near their home for hours, said locals who witnessed the incident.

Hearing about it, Zahangir Alam, a ward member of Betgari Union Parishad, rescued the woman and sent her to Gangachara Upazila Health Complex.

Later, the husband filed the case against six people and police arrested the woman's brother-in-law and his brother on Thursday night, said Sushanta Kumar Sarkar, inspector (Investigation) of the police station.

Police were trying to arrest the other accused, the inspector said.

The woman was released from the hospital and is now in her home, said her husband.

Tripura seeks land

FROM PAGE 16

at the BJP headquarters on Tuesday evening.

"If we can build a long runway and facilitate bigger aircrafts, Bangladesh will also be benefited," he said, adding that Bangladesh and India are close friends and they have been working together for trade and tourism for a long time.

He said India's Ministry of External Affairs was requested to take up the matter with Bangladesh.

"It would allow the airport to operate large aircrafts in accordance with international standards," Biplab said.

Earlier on August 1, Zandra Nath Sarker, joint secretary at the Bangladesh's civil aviation and tourism ministry, told The Daily Star that India made a verbal proposal to Bangladesh's foreign ministry regarding the issue. The Indian authorities were then asked to send a detailed technical proposal in written form.

Asked about the matter, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen last week told reporters that he was not aware of any such proposal from India.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan had said he knew about one such proposal from India. He said there was no question of giving land to India.

Earlier, Imtiaz Ahmed, a Dhaka University prof at International Relations, said there were some airports that fell on the borders of two or even three countries, including that in Europe.

However, the context of South Asia is not comparable to that of Europe because of the structures of immigration, currency and politics.

He said if Bangladesh was to provide the land for the airport, its government must address the issues of security, sovereignty and commercial viability. Also, there should be a scope for joint handling of the airport by the two countries.

No bail for accused

FROM PAGE 16

with non-bailable offence," it said.

The SC said the HC must be extremely cautious since such bail to some extent intrudes in the sphere of investigation of crime.

A seven-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, had delivered the verdict following 31 leave to appeal petitions filed by the government challenging the HC orders granting anticipatory bail to several BNP leaders and high-profile persons, including its Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Moudud Ahmed, Khandker Mahbub Hossain and Mainul Hossain, in different criminal cases.

The apex court had pronounced the verdict on April 18 saying that the leave to appeal petitions were disposed of. The full text of the verdict was released recently.

In the full text of the judgment, the Appellate Division has directed the accused persons to appear before the lower courts concerned in two weeks from the date of receiving the copy of the lower court judgement and to approach the respective courts for their regular bail.

The lower courts concerned shall consider their prayers for regular bail in accordance with law and facts of the respective cases if those are so made, the SC said.

In the directives, the apex court said the anticipatory bail being an extraordinary privilege, should be granted only in exceptional cases.

"Such extraordinary judicial discretion conferred upon the higher court has to be properly exercised after proper application of mind to decide whether it is fit case for granting anticipatory bail not according to whim, caprice or fancy," it said.

The SC said while enlarging an accused on anticipatory bail, the court must direct the applicant to cooperate with the investigating officer in every step of holding proper investigation if the same is needed.

"The court granting anticipatory bail will be at liberty to cancel the bail if a case for cancellation of bail is otherwise made out by the state or complainant."

The Appellate Division said a condition must be imposed that the applicant shall not make any inducement or threat to the witnesses for tampering the evidence of the occurrence.

"The apprehension that the accused is in a position to influence, include or coerce witnesses to desist from furnishing relevant information to the investigating agency cannot be considered to be imaginary and the court ought to have considered that aspect seriously before granting anticipatory bail."

The apex court further said, "A balance has to be struck between two factors, namely, no prejudice should be caused to free, fair and through investigation and there should be prevention of harassment, humiliation and unjustified detention of the accused."

Oldest fossil

FROM PAGE 16

the Jianchuan and Yongchuan clay quarries have branchless trunks and leafy crowns, similar to a modern day palm tree.

The study's authors believe the trees grew in coastal environments prone to flooding.

"It might also be that the Xinhang lycopsid forest was much like the mangroves along the coast, since they occur in a similar environment and play comparable ecological roles," said Deming Wang, a professor in the School of Earth and Space Sciences at Peking University.

Scientists found the trees above and below a 4m thick sandstone bed, within the quarries.

Structures which were similar to pine cones were also discovered.

"Jianchuan quarry has been mined for several years and there were always some excavators working at the section," said Wang. "The excavations in quarries benefit our finding and research. When the excavators stop or left, we come close to the high walls and look for exposed erect lycopsid trunks."

The study's authors acknowledged that it was difficult to mark and count all the trees without missing some details.

Sales yet to pick

FROM PAGE 16

who brought 20 bulls to the cattle market at Dhupkhola playground.

At the cattle market outside Kamlapur stadium, members of the market management committee were seen spending idle time.

"We collected Hasil for 13 cows since morning," Hasan, a Hasil collector, told this correspondent in the afternoon.

Milon Reza, who has been selling sacrificial animals for the last 10 years, brought 13 bulls from Kustia on Tuesday, but all of them remained unsold.

He expected that he would be able to start the sale from night.

Some buyers said sellers were asking for quite high prices for their cattle yesterday. They were demanding over Tk 1 lakh for each bull weighing about three maunds.

Jasim Uddin, a resident of Kamlapur, said city dwellers neither have enough space nor manpower to keep cattle at their homes for more than two days.

"That's why we usually buy cattle the day before the Eid," he added.

BM Sirajul Isalm, chairman of the

cattle market managing committee, was seen supervising the activities of the market.

"Our 40 cleaners are working to keep the market area clean and free from dengue," said Sirajul, also a councillor of Dhaka South City Corporation.

He said there was no sign of supply shortage and more trucks carrying animals were on the way to the capital from different districts.

Traders said several lakhs of sacrificial animals have been put on sale at 24 temporary cattle markets this year.

According to statistics of the Department of Livestock (DLS), there are more than 1.17 crore cattle, including cows, bulls, buffaloes, goats and sheep, which can be slaughtered during this Eid.

Last year, there were 1.15 crore cattle and about 1.05 crore of those were slaughtered.

To assess the demand for sacrificial animals in a particular year, the DLS usually adds five lakh to the number of cattle slaughtered in the previous year. It estimated that the demand this year is 1.10 crore.

Ensure our land

FROM PAGE 16

In Gaibandha, the members of Santal and other indigenous communities brought out a procession marking the day and blocked Gobindaganj-Dinajpur highway at Cross Road Point to press home their demand.

They demanded a fresh charge-sheet on murder of three Santal men.

Meanwhile, people of different indigenous communities brought out a rally in Mymensingh marking the day.

In Rangamati, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum organised a programme on the district municipality premises on Thursday.

The United Nations' International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed on August 9 each year to promote and protect the rights of the world's indigenous population.

The theme for the year 2019 was "Indigenous Languages".