

ADB projects lower growth for Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank has revised down Bangladesh's growth projection for this fiscal year from its earlier forecast of 6.5 percent made in September.

The new forecast was made as part of the ADB's flagship Asian Development Outlook December 2023. The report did not give the exact figure, but an official of the Manila-based multilateral lender told The Daily Star that the latest growth forecast is 6.2 percent.

The forecast of 6.2 percent sits between the government's revised growth target of 6.5 percent for this fiscal year and the International Monetary Fund's projection of 6 percent. The World Bank though has said the Bangladesh economy would grow at 5.6 percent this fiscal year.

The ADB revised down Bangladesh's growth forecast due to the moderate growth in exports and manufacturing amid an economic slowdown in major export markets, power and energy shortages and continued high inflation.

"Upside risks to the forecast include receding uncertainties over next January's elections," said the report, which was unveiled on December 13.



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A man mourns as he holds the wrapped body of a Palestinian child who was killed overnight during Israeli bombardment, at a hospital in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

SC lets AL picks Shamim, Enamul contest election Shammi, Sadiq Abdulla lose legal battle for getting back candidacy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday restored the candidacies of Shamim Haque and Enamul Haque Babul, the ruling Awami League's nominees for Faridpur-3 and Jashore-4.

However, another AL candidate Shammi Ahmed and independent aspirant Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah, a former mayor of Barishal city, cannot contest the January 7 polls as they failed to get the go-ahead from the apex court.

Yesterday, Justice M Enayetur Rahim, chamber judge of the Appellate Division, stayed the High Court orders that upheld the Election Commission's decisions scrapping the candidacies of Shamim and Enamul on the ground of having dual citizenship.

The chamber judge also ordered the EC to allow them to run.

There is no legal bar on Shamim and Enamul contesting the polls following the

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382 independents vie for 221 seats Over half of them from AL

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A total of 382 independents are contesting 221 seats in the January 7 parliamentary polls, meaning more independents are running this time than in the last three national elections.

Awami League insiders said more than half of the independents are leaders of the ruling party and that they would become "a headache" for party ticket holders.

Independent aspirants may emerge as main competitors of the AL nominees in at least 125 constituencies. At least 28 incumbent AL MPs are among the independents.

Earlier this month, AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said the party was allowing its leaders to run as independents to make the election more competitive.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar said the AL has adopted the strategy to allow its leaders to run as independents and dummy candidates so that the number of candidates is increased and the contest can be held among themselves.

A total of 128 independents took part in the 2018 national election, according to EC data. As many as 39 political parties participated in that election.

Some 104 aspirants ran as independents in the 2014 parliamentary polls. Only 12 political parties joined the race amid a boycott by the BNP and many other opposition parties, leading to 153 lawmakers getting elected unopposed.

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Gaza crisis 'moral failure' of world

Says Red Cross as UN agencies voice anger over situation; UNSC to vote again for ceasefire as Israeli strikes kill dozens more

AGENCIES

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a "moral failure" of the international community, the president of the International Committee of the Red Cross said yesterday, as the UN Security Council was due to vote on another ceasefire demand.

Israel kept pounding the shattered Gaza Strip yesterday killing dozens, a day after its defence minister promised to gradually wind down the intensity of operations in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Yemen's pro-Palestinian Houthi movement vowed to defy a US-led naval mission and keep hitting Israeli targets in the Red Sea as concern mounted over the conflict's impact on global shipping.

"I have been speaking of moral failure because every day this continues is a day more where the international community hasn't proven capable of ending such high levels of suffering and this will have an impact on generations not only in Gaza," ICRC president Mirjana Spoljaric told journalists in Geneva following trips to Gaza and Israel.

UN officials also voiced anger and disbelief yesterday about the situation in Gaza hospitals, where injured people do not have basic supplies and children recovering from amputations are being.

Since the start of the conflict October 7, Israeli strikes have killed nearly 20,000 Gazans and wounded more than 50,000 and left the coastal enclave in ruins.

Most of Gaza's hospitals are no longer operating due to damage in attacks, Israeli raids and lack of fuel and staff. Those still open are under growing pressure due to both strikes and growing numbers of sick and injured patients arriving.

"I'm furious that children who are recovering from amputations in hospitals are then killed in those hospitals," said James Elder, spokesperson for the UN children's agency.

He added that the Nasser Hospital, the largest operational hospital left in the enclave where he spent time earlier this month, had been shelled twice in the past 48 hours. He said one of the victims was a 13-year-old amputee named Dina who survived a strike

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- ➔ More than 60pc of Gaza infrastructure destroyed or damaged
- ➔ More than 90 percent of the population uprooted
- ➔ US launches Red Sea force as Houthis vow more attacks on ships



Work unitedly for peace in Gaza

PM to OIC members

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said yesterday that the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) should work in unison to establish peace in Gaza.

She made the remarks when the Ambassador of Qatar to Bangladesh, Seraya Ali Mahdi Saeed Al-Qahtani, paid a courtesy call on her at the Gano Bhaban, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim told reporters after the meeting.

"The OIC member countries will have to work unitedly to establish peace in Gaza," the premier was quoted as telling the envoy.

During the meeting, the Qatar envoy handed over an

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POLITICAL VIOLENCE 32 more BNP-Jamaat men jailed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Another 32 leaders and activists of BNP-Jamaat and their front organisations were sentenced to different jail terms yesterday in two cases filed in 2015 and 2018 over political violence in the capital.

With this, at least 1,065 BNP-Jamaat members have been jailed since November 7 this year in 62 cases filed between June 2011 and November 2018 on charges of illegal gathering on the streets; rioting; damaging properties; arson attacks on vehicles; vandalism; and assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

In a case filed with Hazaribagh Police Station in February 2015, 17 BNP-Jamaat members were sentenced to 25 months' imprisonment by a Dhaka court yesterday.

Of them, only BNP activist Jisan Ahmed was present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Saifur Rahman delivered the verdict. Six prosecution witnesses testified before the court during the trial.

According to the case statement, on February 19, 2015, some 40-50 leaders and activists of BNP and its alliance illegally gathered at Bhagalpur Lane in Hazaribagh and hurled around five crude bombs at police.

Sub-Inspector Aliv Mahmud filed a case in this regard with Hazaribagh police the same day.

Another Dhaka court sentenced 15 BNP-Jamaat activists to six months' imprisonment for illegal gatherings in Bhatara area in September 2018.

No convicts were present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mosharraf Hossain delivered the verdict.

The magistrate acquitted two other accused as the charges against them were not proven.

The case document said that on September 25, 2018, a group of BNP-Jamaat leaders and activists illegally gathered at the Bashundhara residential area in Bhatara and hurled crude bombs.

SI Shahin Mohammad Amanullah filed a case with Bhatara Police Station the same day.

NATIONWIDE HARTAL 28 injured in police-BNP clashes in two districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A bus was set on fire and another was vandalised during yesterday's countrywide hartal enforced by BNP and like-minded parties.

At least 28 people, including three police personnel, were injured as police and BNP activists clashed in Gaibandha and Noakhali.

In the capital's Gulistan, arsonists torched a bus of Malancha Paribahan around 1:00pm, said firefighters, adding that no one was hurt in the incident.

At a virtual press briefing in the afternoon, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi blamed the government for "arson attack" on Mohanganj Express.

"Sabotage is being carried out by the government, and our

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Carrying banners, placards, national and party flags, leaders and activists of Awami League and its front and associate bodies march in Victory Procession in Dhaka's Shahbagh yesterday. They marched through the city from in front of Suhrawardi Udyan to Dhanmondi-32 to mark the Victory Day, which was observed on December 16. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Earthquake kills 127 in China's Gansu province

Over 700 injured, 155,000 homes destroyed

REUTERS, Beijing

A magnitude-6.2 earthquake struck one of China's poorest regions just before midnight on Monday, killing at least 127 people, injuring hundreds and bringing down mud houses in remote villages that never stood a chance.

Chinese state media arriving at the sixth commune of Dahe village, one of the worst-hit areas in China's northwestern Gansu province, found many houses were either at risk of collapse, or had already crumbled to the ground, especially homes built from earth and clay.

"I've lived for more than 80 years and had never seen such a big earthquake," said an old man who was being carried out of his damaged home by rescuers.

More than 155,000 homes in Gansu were either damaged or destroyed.

At 11:59 pm (1559 GMT) on Monday, the quake rocked Gansu's Jishishan county, at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles). The epicentre was 5 km from the provincial border straddling Gansu and Qinghai, where strong tremors were also felt.

Authorities have mobilised an array of emergency responses after the quake wrecked roads and infrastructure, triggered landslides, and half buried a village in silt. But rescue work has proved challenging in sub-zero temperatures, after a powerful cold snap swept across the country.