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**BUSINESS**

**Growth may slow to 5.6pc in FY24: WB**

Bangladesh will clock the sixth highest economic growth in Asia in the current financial year although it will be much lower than its average in recent times and the target set by the government. According to the World Bank's Global Economic Prospects report released yesterday, the country's gross domestic product expansion is forecast to slow to 5.6 percent in 2023-24, unchanged from its October update.

STORY ON BI



Char residents in Hatsherpur area in Bogra's Shariakandi upazila have to walk across the Jamuna in the dry season, due to a lack of transport with the exception of horse carts, as the water level goes down almost entirely. During monsoon, the river widens up to 10-14km and the locals can use boats to move across. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHOBUJ

**ARSON ATTACK ON BENAPOLE EXPRESS**  
**2 leaders of BNP, Jubo Dal placed on remand**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed BNP's Dhaka South City unit Joint Convener Nabi Ullah Nabi and Jubo Dal leader Mansur Alam on a three-day remand in a case filed over their alleged involvement in setting fire to the Benapole Express train in Dhaka on January 5.

Dhaka Judicial Magistrate Md Julhas Uddin passed the order after case investigating officer Ferdous Ahmed Biswas, inspector of Dhaka Railway Police Station, produced the two men before the court with a 10-day remand prayer, said a police official at the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court.

Earlier in the day, Nabi and Mansur were shown arrested in the sabotage case, following two separate petitions filed with the court by the investigator.

At least four people were killed and several

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**The three Awami League-aligned independent candidates who won comfortably against ruling party nominees plan to speak up against corruption, and for justice**



**'I say what I believe is right'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Latif Siddiqui, expelled Awami League presidium member and a former minister who has been elected MP from Tangail-4 (Kalihati), said he will continue to say what he feels is right in parliament.

The 87-year-old ran as an independent and beat his former protégé Mojaharul Islam Talukdar, the president of AL's Kalihati upazila, by a big margin.

"I say what I believe is right, even if it seems wrong to others. I don't say anything beyond that. I don't mean to just turn up the heat," he told reporters after taking oath as an MP yesterday.

The four-time lawmaker said his target is to achieve his goals.

"It is a matter of judgement who is against independence and who is in favour of independence. So I don't want to comment on this."



**'Fighting extortion is the plan'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

AK Azad, an Awami League leader who won in the January 7 national election as an independent candidate, said he will speak against extortion and criminal activities.

He won from Faridpur-3 against AL candidate Shamim Haque by 59,009 votes in a contest that was marred by allegations of intimidation and violence.

Azad, a well-known industrialist, owns 26 garment factories, a sweater factory, a poly bag industry, a label factory, a jute mill, a chemical formulation plant, tea estates, a transport company and media houses Channel 24 and daily Samakal.

As an MP, he wants to create employment in the country.

Asked whether the

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**'Will raise voice for the oppressed'**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Sayedul Haque Sumon, popularly known as Barrister Sumon, said he will continue to speak up against corruption as he has been doing.

He was elected as an independent MP from Habiganj-4 after convincingly beating Awami League candidate Md Mahub Ali, also the incumbent state minister for civil aviation and tourism, by nearly one lakh votes.

A practising lawyer at the Supreme Court, Sumon faced expulsion from his position in the Jubo League central committee in 2021. He gained popularity on social media for speaking animatedly about financial crime, corruption and other social issues.

"My role will remain

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**Despair in Gaza as fighting intensifies**

AGENCIES

Israeli strikes in southern and central Gaza intensified yesterday despite a pledge by Israel that it would pull out some troops and shift to a more targeted campaign, and pleading from its ally Washington to kill fewer civilians.

Israel has said this week it is planning to begin drawing down troops, at least from the northern part of Gaza, after weeks of US pressure to scale down its operations and shift to what Washington says should be a more targeted campaign.

But the fighting appears to be as intense as ever, especially in the southern and central areas where Israeli forces launched ground advances last month.

In Rafah, on the southern edge of the enclave, relatives wept by the bodies of 15 members of the Nofal family laid out at a hospital morgue yesterday morning after their home was obliterated by an Israeli air strike overnight.

Most of the white shrouds were tiny, with children inside. A man partly opened one and caressed the face of a small boy with his hand. Relatives gently restrained another man who was wailing at the feet of the bodies.

At the site of the strike, where a huge crater had been blasted in the floor of a building, neighbours clambered through the ruins, strewn with blood-soaked mattresses and broken toys.

Israel has killed at least 23,357 Palestinians in Gaza since launching its campaign to eradicate the Hamas group that runs the enclave. Some

147 Palestinians were killed in the 24 hours, the Gaza health ministry said yesterday.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on his fourth trip to the region since the offensive began, went to Ramallah yesterday and met Palestinian leaders, including Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, reports Reuters.

Blinken has also met Israeli leaders and visited nearby Arab states, in search of a future settlement for the Gaza Strip, which has been laid to waste by Israeli bombardment creating a humanitarian crisis for its 2.3 million residents.

**➔ Blinken meets Israeli, Palestinian leaders to push for ceasefire**

**➔ Israeli forces, Hezbollah fighters exchange fire on Lebanon-Israel border**

Washington wants Israel to give the Ramallah-based PA a future role in governing Gaza; Israel, which says it wants control of Gaza's security indefinitely, is reluctant. Blinken said on Tuesday Israel had to make "hard choices" and must keep alive hopes of an independent Palestinian state if it wants to normalise relations with Arab neighbours.

"Israel must be a partner to Palestinian leaders who are willing to lead their people living side by side in peace with Israel and as neighbours," he said in Tel Aviv.

**Mysterious rings in space explained**



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists think they have found an explanation for vast "radio circles" that have perplexed them for years.

In 2019, astronomers found something they had never seen before. A telescope in Australia showed rings of radio waves that were so big they could easily wrap around galaxies.

Scientists did not know what they were or where they had come from. But in the years since, researchers believe they have come to understand how the vast rings got there.

The circles appear to be shells that are made by galactic winds. Those winds appear to be shot across the universe by massive exploding stars, called supernovae.

They appear to be coming from "starburst" galaxies, where star are formed at exceptional rates. That vast number of stars can lead to vast explosions: if they explode near each other at the same time, they can rip the gas out of the galaxy and it will fly out as winds, going as fast as 2,000 kilometres each second.

"These galaxies are really interesting," said Alison Coil, from the University of California San Diego. "They occur when two big galaxies collide," Coil added.

The researchers made the discovery using a set of computer simulations that replicated the size and properties of the vast radio rings, including cool gas that had been found in the centre of the galaxy at their middle.



Relatives mourn next to the bodies of Palestinians killed in an Israeli strike in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

**Maldives upgrades ties with China**  
**20 key deals signed**

REUTERS, Beijing

China and the Maldives upgraded their relationship yesterday during newly elected President Mohamed Muizzu's first state visit to Beijing, following a campaign in which he cast China's regional rival India as a threat to sovereignty.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, speaking at the Great Hall of the People, called Muizzu "an old friend" as the Asian giant set the stage for further investment in the Indian Ocean archipelago by agreeing to a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership".

"China and the Maldives' relations are facing a historic opportunity to carry forward the past and forge ahead into the By

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জাতীয় সংসদ নির্বাচনে  
টানা চতুর্থবার বিজয় অর্জন করায়  
**মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী**  
**শেখ হাসিনা**  
ও বাংলাদেশ আওয়ামী লীগ কে

প্রবাসী পত্নী গ্রুপ এর  
পক্ষ থেকে প্রাণঢালা  
**অভিনন্দন ও শুভেচ্ছা**

**প্রবাসী পত্নী গ্রুপ**  
প্রবাসী ও স্বদেশীদের জন্যে

