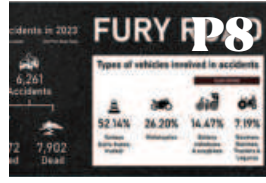




P11 ICC bans Nasir Hossain for two years



P8 FURY FP8 Structural killings, not road 'accidents'



P6 Iran Guards attack Israel's 'spy HQ' in Iraq's Erbil



P5 Reserve forest or a village?

BANGLADESH'S FOREIGN LOANS Repayment to rise 63pc in three years

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government's foreign debt repayment is expected to increase as much as 63 percent by fiscal year 2025-2026 from the last financial year, indicating renewed pressure on the country's coffers.

The surge in disbursement of foreign loans and interest payments against them is pushing up the debt servicing requirement.

Foreign debt repayments, including interests, will reach \$4.5 billion in 2025-2026, according to a finance ministry projection. In the last fiscal year, the government repaid \$2.76 billion.

In the current fiscal year of 2023-24, repayments are likely to cross the budget target of \$2.79 billion and will jump by 33.52 percent to \$3.57 billion.

Bangladesh has repaid \$1.33 billion in the first five months of FY 23-24, up 51.36 percent year-on-year. Of the sum, interest payments surged 136.70 percent to \$562 million.

According to the projection, the government is expected to repay \$4.18 billion in external loans in 2024-2025.

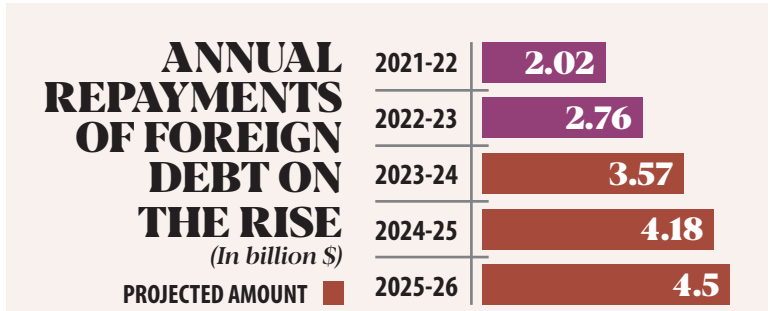
Bangladesh's outstanding foreign debt totalled \$62.31 billion as of the last fiscal year.

Bangladesh owes 59 percent of the loans to multilateral creditors such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. The rest are owed to bilateral lenders.

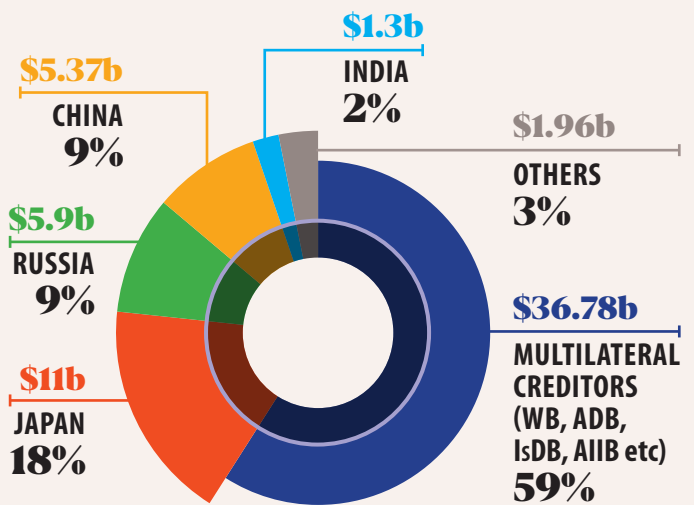
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The once 300-metre-wide Hari river in Khulna has now turned into a canal due to land grabbing and accumulation of silt on the bed over the years. The water of 27 beels in Jashore's Bhabadaha area used to flow through this river. Farmers find it very difficult to irrigate their land along the river. Brick kilns have also sprung up encroaching on the river. The photo was taken in the Sholgotia Bridge area of Khulna's Dumuria upazila last week. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



BANGLADESH'S TOTAL OUTSTANDING LOAN \$62.31 BILLION



Bangladesh's foreign debt is still in a comfortable situation but there are some risks which are also mentioned in the IMF's latest debt sustainability report.

ZAHID HUSSAIN, economist

Schools to close if mercury drops to 10 degrees Celsius

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a cold wave sweeping over the country, the government has directed the authorities concerned to close primary and secondary schools in districts where the mercury would drop to 10 degrees Celsius or below.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and the primary and mass education ministry in separate circulars yesterday asked the district education officials to close the institutions in case of such weather conditions.

However, the DSHE had to change its circular twice due to mistakes.

The circulars said a cold wave is sweeping over different districts, causing significant disruptions to the normal academic activities of the students.

The ministry's circular mentioned that the directive will remain effective until January 31.

Yesterday, the country's lowest temperature, 9.7 degrees Celsius, was recorded in Sreemangal of Moulvibazar, according to data of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

Chilly weather across the country has been affecting people's daily life for the last few days. Labourers, children, and the elderly are most affected.

According to the weather forecast of the BMD, there could be rain at one or two places in Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka and Chattogram divisions tomorrow.

Kazi Jebunnesa, a meteorologist at the BMD, said though the current minimum temperatures in the country are not as low as those of the same period in previous years, the "feel-like" temperatures are low due to fog and lower temperatures during the day.

She said temperatures may fall further after the rain.

Asked about the reason for the sudden increase in the

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Landing at HSIA in fog now more difficult

CAAB disables Instrument Landing System for upgrade work in winter

RASHIDUL HASAN

While foggy weather disrupts flight schedules at the Dhaka airport, the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh on January 10 shut down the Instrument Landing System, the tech that makes it possible for planes to land in low visibility.

Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport authorities shut down the system because they are upgrading the current Category-1 Instrument Landing System (ILS) to Category-2 which will let pilots land when the visibility is as low as 500 metres. The current system allows landing with a visibility of 800 metres or more.

Officials of several airlines said they were already struggling to maintain flight schedules in foggy conditions, and the absence of ILS is making it worse during this winter.

Upgrading the system in winter is not the logical thing to do, say officials of Biman and several other airlines.

Because of CAAB's sudden decision, many flights are being diverted from Dhaka to other airports in and outside the country, said several airlines officials.

The diverted flights cause travellers to suffer and make the airlines lose a lot of money due to

fuel costs, landing and parking fees.

In a recent NOTAM, a notification issued to pilots, the CAAB said ILS would be down from January 10 to the end of February.

This means wide-body planes like Boeing 787s, Boeing 777s and A330s and A350s now require a visibility of at least 1,200 metres to land at the HSIA, according to several Biman pilots.

However, HSIA Executive Director Group Captain Kamrul Islam said the airport's Required Navigation Performance (RNP) system is still allowing pilots to land when the visibility is 800 metres.

But several Biman pilots begged to differ, saying RNP is a non-precision approach which requires greater visibility.

Airlines officials say Dhaka airport needs to upgrade its Category-1 ILS because pilots struggle while landing in winter. From December to February, many flights have to be diverted to different airports in and outside the country because of low visibility.

But the timing of the upgrade work has put them in more trouble, said several pilots, adding that upgrade work of ILS should be done either before or after winter. "This is not the right time," said a Biman pilot, requesting anonymity.

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Palestinian children wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen amid shortages of food supplies in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Kaikaus's plan to leave WB sparks speculation over his next move

BAHARAM KHAN

Ahmad Kaikaus, who was appointed as alternate executive director of the World Bank just over a year ago, expressed his desire to leave the position, a development that sparked speculation over his next move.

Several top bureaucrats of the public administration ministry said Kaikaus, former principal secretary to the prime minister, may soon get a key post in the government.

When contacted by The Daily Star, Kaikaus said, "My appointment [to the World Bank] is contractual. I let the government know on January 11 that I want cancellation of the contract. I have yet to receive a reply from the government."

Kaikaus, who lives in the US for his work at the World Bank,

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University of Chittagong
Chittagong

Dr. Hasan Mahmud, MP
Hon'ble Foreign Minister

Barrister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, MP
Hon'ble Education Minister

We express our immense happiness and gratitude to honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh **Sheikh Hasina, MP**, for appointing **Dr. Hasan Mahmud, MP** as Hon'ble Foreign Minister and Barrister **Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, MP** as Hon'ble Education Minister respectively.

Heartiest congratulations to Dr. Hasan Mahmud, MP and Barrister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, MP.

Your leadership and commitment will drive the country forward to achieve the vision of **'Smart Bangladesh.'**

Professor Dr. Shireen Akhtar
Vice Chancellor
University of Chittagong