

Freedoms slide, prosperity better than neighbours

Says US-based organisation's report on Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Although Bangladesh has ranked in 2023 as one of the more prosperous nations among neighbouring countries, its freedoms have seen a gradual decline over the past 22 years, according to a US think tank report.

The report "Freedom and Prosperity in Bangladesh" prepared by Atlantic Council's Freedom and Prosperity Center, categorises Bangladesh as "mostly unprosperous" in the Prosperity Index and "mostly unfree" in the Freedom Index.

The report was presented at a conference jointly organised by the US Agency for International Development and The Asia Foundation in Dhaka yesterday.

The Freedom and Prosperity Indexes are two lists that rank 164 countries around the world according to their levels of freedom and prosperity.

Thanks to a broad definition of prosperity, Bangladesh outperforms some of its neighbours on the overall prosperity score, including India and Pakistan, although the country remains behind India in terms of GDP per capita when adjusted for purchasing power parity.

The Prosperity Index considers factors like health, inequality, environment, minority rights, and education, while the Freedom Index measures political, economic, and legal components.

Bangladesh has been ranked 141st among 164 countries on the Freedom Index under the "mostly unfree" category.

In the Freedom Index, the country achieved its highest ranking of 116th place in 2000 outperforming its neighbours scoring four points more than the average for South and Central Asia.

"However, the trajectory has been less favourable since then, with a steady decline in freedom. Presently, Bangladesh finds itself trailing behind... This decline highlights a concerning trend that warrants attention and analysis," says the report.

According to the report, in 2022, Bangladesh was positioned eighth

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Family members mourn holding the body of a Palestinian killed in Israeli strikes in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

PM may cancel trips to KSA, The Gambia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina may cancel her scheduled visits to Saudi Arabia and The Gambia as tensions rise in the Middle East, said an official.



She was scheduled to visit Thailand from April 23-27, Saudi Arabia from April 28-29, and The Gambia from May 3-6.

Schedule for the Thailand trip may remain unchanged, said the official, requesting anonymity.

The PM will attend the 18th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and hold a bilateral meeting with her Thai counterpart Srettha Thavasin to sign agreements on energy, trade and investment.

No one should be in a state of insecurity

Says Prof Yunus; his bail extended till May 23

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday said no one should be in a state of insecurity and apprehension.

Talking to reporters after his bail was extended until May 23 at the Labour Appellate Tribunal of Dhaka, he said, "We live under the rule of law."

Replying to a question, he said he went to the court because he was ordered to.

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Israel still imposing curbs on Gaza aid

Says UN rights office; 46 more Palestinians killed in air strikes

REUTERS, Geneva

Israel is still imposing "unlawful" restrictions on humanitarian relief for Gaza, the UN human rights office said yesterday, despite assertions from Israel and others that barriers have eased.

The amount of aid now entering Gaza is disputed, with Israel and Washington saying aid flows have risen in recent days but UN agencies say it is still far below bare minimum levels.

"Israel continues to impose unlawful restrictions on the entry and distribution of humanitarian

- Israeli forces taking part in settler attacks: UN
- Death toll in enclave rises to 33,843

assistance, and to carry out widespread destruction of civilian infrastructure," said Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the UN human rights office, at a press briefing in Geneva, reiterating calls for unfettered access.

Israel, which denies hindering humanitarian relief to Gaza, has faced increased international pressure to let more supplies into the Gaza Strip since it hit an aid convoy on April 1, killing international relief workers.

"Those delivering or trying to access humanitarian assistance must never be attacked," added Shamdasani.

The UN children's agency (Unicef) called for an increase in medical evacuations from Gaza, saying less than half of applications had been successful.

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A sudden shower yesterday afternoon offered some relief to city dwellers amid the ongoing heat wave. While rain may often seem like an inconvenience in a congested city like Dhaka, yesterday's one brought a smile to many faces. The photo was taken at the Moghbazar rail tracks.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

INDIA'S CHHATTISGARH 29 Maoist rebels killed in clash with Indian security forces

REUTERS, Bhubaneswar

Indian security forces killed at least 29 Maoist rebels in a gunbattle in the central state of Chhattisgarh yesterday, police said, days before the start of elections in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third straight term.

Kanker district, where the clash occurred, will vote in the second of seven phases in the elections on April 26 while neighbouring Bastar, a Maoist stronghold, votes in the first phase on Friday.

The rebels, who ascribe to a form of communism propagated by late Chinese leader Mao Zedong, have waged a guerrilla-style struggle against the government, especially in central and eastern India, for decades, leading to periodic clashes and casualties on both sides.

Police officials said they received a tip-off about the presence of Maoists in the area yesterday and launched a raid that led to the gunbattle, which also injured three members of the security forces.

"After the encounter, during the search of the area, bodies of 29 Maoists were recovered," police said in a statement, adding that several weapons and ammunition were also seized from the location.

Maoists say they are fighting to give poor Indian farmers and landless labourers more control over their land and a greater claim to its minerals currently exploited by major mining companies.

Astronomers find largest black hole in Milky Way



AFP, Paris

Astronomers identified the largest stellar black hole yet discovered in the Milky Way, with a mass 33 times that of the Sun, according to a study published yesterday.

The black hole, named Gaia BH3, was discovered "by chance" from data collected by the European Space Agency's Gaia mission, an astronomer from the National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) at the Observatoire de Paris, Pasquale Panuzzo, told AFP.

Gaia, which is dedicated to SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

প্রতিবার বিশেষ অফারে কাশা নেওয়া যাবে ৫,০০০ তালার বা সমমূল্যের বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা

অ্যাকাউন্টে জমা থাকা সম্পূর্ণ বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা (ডলার, ইউরো, পাউন্ড, ইত্যাদি) বিশেষ কমেআফের সুযোগ

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নির্দিষ্ট প্রকল্পের বিপরীতে ১০,০০০ তালার বা সমমূল্যের বৈদেশিক মুদ্রা জমা দেওয়ার সুযোগ

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হিসাবখারিজির নামে ই-টীকন্যাশনাল কার্ড এর পাশাপাশি ২টি স্যান্ডবোর্ড কার্ড

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