

GDP expands at faster pace in FY24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's economy has grown at a faster pace, albeit marginally, in the current fiscal year than the previous one although the production of industrial goods and agricultural commodities recorded reduced growth.

The country registered a 5.82 percent growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2023-24, up from 5.78 percent in 2022-23, according to provisional data released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

The service sector, which encompasses trade, transport, hotel, IT, and financial activities, drove the overall growth of the GDP, a measure of the final value of goods and services produced within an economy during a period.

The service sector, which accounts for more than half of the economy, grew 5.8 percent in FY24 compared to 5.37 percent last fiscal year.

In contrast, the industrial sector, which makes up more than a third of the economy, expanded by 6.66 percent in FY24, which ends in June. However, the growth of industrial production was the lowest since FY2019-20 when the Covid-19 pandemic-induced slowdown wreaked havoc on the economy.

In FY24, agricultural production rose 3.21 percent year-on-year from FY23, according to the provisional estimate.

The national statistical agency's estimate of GDP growth is almost close to the projections made by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) last month.

In April, the IMF revised down GDP growth forecast to SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Houses built by illegally cutting a hill in the Baluchar area of Sylhet city. The hillside, scarred by unauthorised excavation, poses the danger of mudslides that can even crush the dwellings during heavy rains. PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

MOB ATTACKS Bangladeshi students start leaving Kyrgyzstan

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi students began flying home earlier than planned due to a persistent sense of insecurity following mob attacks on foreign medical students in Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek on May 17.

"On Sunday, two students flew and today [Monday] 16 more are flying back to Bangladesh," Dr Jerit Islam, a Bangladeshi student representative in Bishkek, told The Daily Star yesterday.

There are some 1,000 Bangladeshi medical students in Kyrgyzstan and they were scheduled to fly home after their semester finals in a week or two.

"But due to the ongoing sense of insecurity, they are returning earlier," he said.

Similarly, Indian and Pakistani students were also flying to their countries.

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'MISSING' AL MP

Indian agencies keep looking for reliable info

STAR REPORT

Not much headway has been made in tracing missing Awami League MP Anwarul Azim Anar, said officials of the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata yesterday.



Anwarul Azim

"The Indian intelligence agencies said they were getting bits and pieces of information about the possible locations of the lawmaker but said that the information could not be confirmed," an official of the deputy high commission told our New Delhi correspondent.

Quoting the agencies, the official said Azim's phone, which has an Indian SIM, has not connected to the network since May 17.

The MP of Jhenaidah-4 (Kaliganj upazila) went to India for medical treatment on May 12, Mumtaz Ferdous Doreen, daughter of Azim told The Daily Star.

THE GD

On May 18, one Gopal Biswas filed a general diary (GD) with the Baranagar Police Station in North Kolkata, SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

ALLEGED WAR CRIMES IN GAZA

ICC arrest warrants sought for Netanyahu, Hamas leaders

106 more Palestinians killed as Israel bombs central Gaza

AGENCIES

The International Criminal Court's prosecutor said yesterday he had requested arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his defence chief and three Hamas leaders over alleged war crimes.

ICC prosecutor Karim Khan said in a statement issued after over seven months of offensive in Gaza that he had reasonable grounds to believe that all "bear criminal responsibility" for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

He said he had applied for an arrest warrant for Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant as well as for Netanyahu.

He has also sought arrest warrants for Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar; Mohammed Al-Masri, the commander-in-chief of the military wing of Hamas who is widely known as Deif; and Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas' Political Bureau.

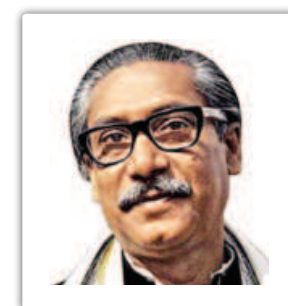
It will be up to a panel of pre-trial judges to determine whether the evidence supports the issuing of arrest warrants. The court, however, has no means to enforce arrest warrants and its investigation into the Gaza offensive has long been opposed by the United States and Israel.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu said the ICC decision was absurd and that the move was meant to target all of Israel. "I reject with disgust the comparison of the prosecutor in the Hague between democratic Israel and the mass murderers of Hamas," he said.

"With what audacity do you compare Hamas that murdered, burned, butchered, decapitated, raped and kidnapped our brothers and sisters, and the IDF soldiers fighting a just war."

US President Joe Biden said, "Let me be clear: Whatever this prosecutor might imply, there is SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

- Israeli ministers, Palestinian representatives denounce the ICC prosecutor's moves
- 8,10,000 fled Rafah in two weeks: UNRWA
- Death toll in enclave rises to 35,562



Govt to launch Bangabandhu Peace Award next year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh government is set to introduce an international peace award named after the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Cabinet yesterday approved the draft of the "Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Peace Award Policy, 2024".

The Cabinet Secretary Mahub Hossain said that this award will be given every two years under one category. It will consist of \$100,000 and a gold medal weighing 50g of 18-carat gold.

Under this policy, the SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

2ND PHASE OF UZ POLLS

Voter turnout could be low this time too

Say election experts as 156 upazilas go to polls today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

A total of 156 upazilas will go to polls today in the second phase of the upazila parishad elections amid concerns over a low voter turnout.

Election experts attribute fears of another potential low turnout to a general apathy towards the electoral process, as evidenced by the 36 percent voter turnout in the first phase of upazila polls on May 8, the lowest since 2009, when it was 70.57 percent.

The battle of ballots will take place among the independents, mostly from the ruling Awami League, as other political parties have not fielded any candidates.

The BNP, among other parties, is staying away from the polls, as it did in the January 7 election, saying that the incumbent Election Commission is not capable of holding the elections for local government bodies in a free and fair manner.

Speaking on the matter, Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), said low voter turnout is a matter of concern, as people have lost faith in the electoral system that has nearly collapsed.

"A game is being played in the name of the election." He also said that low turnouts of voters and political parties boycotting the elections are symptoms of people's SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Assange can now appeal extradition

REUTERS, London

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was given permission yesterday to appeal against extradition to the United States after arguing at London's High Court that he might not be able to rely on his right to free speech in a US court.



The Australian-born Assange, 52, is wanted in the US on 18 charges, nearly all under the Espionage Act, relating to WikiLeaks' mass release of secret US documents - the largest security breaches of their kind in US military history.

The High Court had in March granted him provisional permission to appeal on grounds that he might be discriminated against as a foreign national, but invited the US to submit assurances.



Buses are parked inside Gulistan Shaheed Matur Rahman Park, meant to provide locals with a green space in this concrete jungle. Locals say the bus owners bribe the park authorities to park there. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Over 57pc votes cast in 5th phase

Sporadic incidents of violence reported in West Bengal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indians voted yesterday in the fifth phase of the general elections, with thousands queuing at polling stations, ignoring the searing heat in the financial capital of Mumbai and the sprawling states of Uttar Pradesh and Odisha.

The world's largest election lasting for 44 days began on April 19, amid high summer temperatures, with the weather office predicting more days of heatwaves than usual through the season.

Votes will be counted on June 4, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to win a rare third consecutive term.

Yesterday's phase had the fewest constituencies going to the polls, with 89.5 million voters set to pick representatives for 49 seats spread across six states and union territories.

Scattered incidents of violence marred the fifth phase of polls in seven parliamentary constituencies in West Bengal as TMC and BJP workers clashed in various parts of Barrackpore, Bongaon, Arambagh and Howrah seats.

Although the polls panel has claimed that the polling has been peaceful so far, it said it has received 1,036 complaints from different political parties alleging EVM malfunctioning and agents being stopped from entering booths.

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