



Urban-rural
digital divide
widens

B1



Avian guests
flock to
Brahmaputra

P5



Russia
launches drone
attack on Kyiv

P8



No black and
white in BPL,
only grey areas

P15

Remittance hit all-time high in 2024

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Expatriate Bangladeshis sent home a record \$26.9 billion, up 23 percent year-on-year, in a development that will bring a huge sigh of relief to policymakers as they endeavour to shore up strained dollar stockpile.

The inflows saw a spike after the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, with more than \$2 billion coming in every month since, as per the latest statistics published by the Bangladesh Bank.

In December, a record \$2.63 billion came in, up 33 percent from a year earlier.

A large portion of migrant workers had declared emotionally that they would not send remittance through formal channels amid the tenure of the previous government -- they have been sending

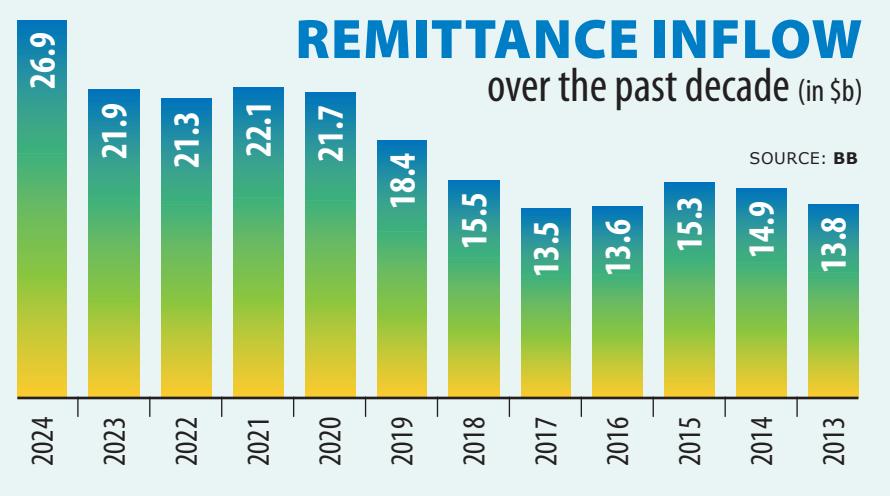
office.

The flexible exchange rate or the narrow difference of exchange rate between the formal and informal markets accounts for the spike in remittance upturn, he said, adding that the repatriation of export earnings has increased.

In 2023, the exchange rate gap between the formal and informal channels was Tk 7 to Tk 10 per dollar. Last year, the gap came down to Tk 3 to Tk 5 per US dollar, industry insiders said.

Rahman hopes that the external sector will not face huge pressure in the coming days due to the rising trend of remittance and export, the two main sources of foreign currency.

"The signs are already there that the external sector is making a turnaround," said Hussain, who was part of the



remittance after the political changeover," said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank.

Previously, there was a growing demand for hundi, an illegal cross-border transaction mechanism. Typically, the demand for hundi rises when a large volume of money is siphoned out from the country.

This stopped after the interim government took charge, said Rahman, also a former chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh, a forum of banks' MDs.

"The business people and politically influential individuals who siphoned off money from the country are now in jail, some are fugitives and some are in hiding," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka

12 member committee that prepared a white paper on the Bangladesh economy.

The repatriation of export earnings has become more frequent now, he added.

The growing trend of dollar inflows will give a breathing space to reserves, which crossed the \$21 billion-mark after several months despite making regular payments for imports.

When Ahsan H Mansur took charge of the central bank, the overdue payment for letters of credit was at more than \$2 billion. This has now come down to only \$400 million, according to BB officials.

In December, Islami Bank received the highest amount of remittance (\$366 million), followed by Agrani (\$264 million), Janata (\$147 million), BRAC Bank (\$193 million), and Trust Bank (\$184 million), central bank data showed.

Govt's failure to prioritise reforms may embolden conspirators

Says Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

If the government fails to prioritise its reform initiatives, conspirators will seize the opportunity to destroy the spirit of the 2024 mass uprising, BNP leader Tarique Rahman has warned.

Speaking at Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal's 46th founding anniversary event virtually from London yesterday, he said plotters already made repeated attempts to destabilise the country.

The BNP acting chairman urged everyone to remain vigilant so that imprudent decisions cannot destroy the hopes created by the uprising.

"The pro democratic forces do not want to see the failure of the current government, which was founded on the blood of thousands of students. This is why the BNP has continued to support this government as a pro people political party."

Tarique said the BNP considers the debate over prioritising reforms or elections as "ill-motivated and malicious".



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Wait for textbooks gets longer

Most schoolchildren return empty-handed on first day of year; authorities say books to reach all by Jan 30

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Most students did not receive new textbooks on the first day of the year mainly because of printing and shipping delays.

Only 4 crore against a need of 9.19 crore copies of primary school books, and 1.9 crore against 30.96 crore secondary books have been delivered, said officials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

Siddiq Zobair, senior secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, yesterday said secondary school students will get all of their textbooks by January 30.

Our correspondents from 15 districts report students of classes 1, 2 and 3 received all of their textbooks, classes 4 and 5 got two or three new textbooks, and no secondary school student received full sets of books.

Teachers of at least five primary schools in Cumilla gave out old books to 4th and 5th graders so that they would not feel disappointed.

In Narayanganj, no student of class 7 and upwards received any book while the 6th graders were given textbooks only on four subjects.

Education Ministry and NCTB officials say printing made almost no progress in the tumultuous months of July and August

and caused delays. The move to an older curriculum, last-minute changes, hiring of a contractor, and a shortage of paper have also led to the fiasco.

Education Adviser Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud apologised to the students and parents while announcing that PDF versions of the books were available on the NCTB website.

He also promised that the children will find

In Narayanganj, no student of class 7 and upwards received any book while the 6th graders were given textbooks only on four subjects.

the books more beautiful and durable when they receive them.

DISAPPOINTMENT

Raabsa Islam, who is in class 6 at a school in the capital's Mirpur, returned home empty-handed. Her teachers asked her to read the PDF books.

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Dhaka-Delhi ties won't get stuck on single issue

Says foreign adviser; set to visit China on Jan 20

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain today said maintaining good ties with three powers -- India, China and the United States -- and addressing the Rohingya issue are among the government's top priorities in 2025.

He also said that no single issue will hinder the Dhaka-Delhi ties.

"Resolving the Rohingya crisis, maintaining good relations with the three important countries and creating a more stable position on economic and diplomatic fronts are the priorities," he said while talking to reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Asked what will be the impact on Dhaka-Delhi ties

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Beside a wall adorned with the graffiti of the July uprising, a homeless man warms himself by a small fire on a cold winter night. The photo was taken recently near Dhaka Residential Model College in Mohammadpur.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Gap widening between BNP, interim govt

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Unresolved issues, including delays in declaring a polls roadmap and resolving politically motivated cases, are creating a distance between the BNP and the interim government.

Some comments made by government advisers and the BNP's apprehension of a new "government-backed political party" in the works are making things even worse, party insiders said.

To narrow the gap, the BNP has been calling for dialogue with the interim government since it assumed office.

The BNP has been sharpening its criticism recently. The party says it is not happy with the draft of the cyber protection ordinance. It believes the new law grants law enforcers excessive powers.

The party said the government failed to set a clear election roadmap and provide a timeline for reforms.

It has also expressed concern over the chief adviser's proposal to set the minimum voter age to 17 and said such a move could delay the polls further.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir voiced disappointment after Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus in one of his addresses to the nation did not specify, according to the BNP, when the polls would be held.

He said that there is a public perception that the interim government is intentionally delaying the election process.

"We can't delay the election for the sake of reforms. An

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