

Economy to grow 4.1% in FY25: WB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank has kept its forecast for Bangladesh's economic growth almost unchanged for the current fiscal year (FY) 2024-25, citing subdued investment and industrial activity amid heightened political uncertainty.

Bangladesh's economy may grow 4.1 percent in FY25, the WB said in its latest Global Economic Prospects released Thursday.

The growth projection is slightly higher than its October forecast of 4 percent for FY25.

Growth is projected to pick up to 5.4 percent in FY26, assuming broad political stability, successful reforms in the financial sector, an improved business climate, and increased trade, the WB report said.

"Easing inflation is expected to boost private consumption," said the multilateral lender.

The WB's latest forecast is also higher than the 3.8 percent growth projection made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in December last year, which cited output losses caused by the July uprising, floods, and tighter policies.

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CLASS-9,10 TEXTBOOKS

TIB worried over exclusion of the word 'indigenous'

CHT Commission slams attacks on students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has expressed concern over the National Curriculum and Textbook Board's (NCTB) removal of the word "indigenous" from the graffiti on the back cover of textbooks for grades 9 and 10.

In a statement issued yesterday, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said that this decision, along with subsequent attacks on peacefully protesting indigenous groups, betrays the ideals and aspirations of an equitable and discrimination-free Bangladesh, which was born from the bloodshed and sacrifices of student and public movements.

"Through this decision, NCTB has shown that despite the fall of 15 years of authoritarian rule, the practice of authoritarianism within this institution persists. Legitimate questions arise as to whether NCTB is actively conspiring to uphold the agenda of fallen authoritarianism," TIB executive director said.

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4 journos jailed for being seen as supporters of Hasina: CPJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least four journalists were jailed in Bangladesh last year as they were seen as supporters of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, according to a Committee to Protect Journalists report.

CPJ's 2024 prison census published yesterday found that the primary drivers of journalist imprisonment in 2024 were ongoing authoritarian repression (China, Myanmar, Vietnam, Belarus, Russia), war (Israel, Russia), and political or economic instability (Egypt, Nicaragua, Bangladesh).

"Dozens of journalists whose reporting was considered favourable toward Hasina's government were subsequently targeted in criminal investigations," said the report, referring to the regime that was toppled in August last year.

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"Aggrieved Students-Masses" brings out a torch procession at Dhaka University yesterday evening to protest against the attacks on indigenous people and their supporters on Wednesday and Thursday. The indigenous people were demonstrating against the removal of the term "adivasi" (indigenous) from textbooks.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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Israeli security cabinet okays Gaza truce deal

Hamas set to release first hostages tomorrow

REUTERS, Jerusalem

The Israeli security cabinet has ratified the Gaza ceasefire and hostage return deal, ahead of a full cabinet meeting expected later yesterday, a statement from the prime minister's office said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the deal is expected to take effect on Sunday (tomorrow), with the release of the first hostages by Hamas.

If successful, the ceasefire would halt fighting between Hamas and Israeli forces that has razed much of heavily urbanised Gaza, killed at least 46,876 people, and displaced most of the enclave's pre-war population of 2.3 million several times over, according to local authorities.

It could also ease hostilities in the Middle East, where the Gaza war spread to include Iran and its proxies - Lebanon's Hezbollah, Yemen's Houthis and armed groups in Iraq as well as the occupied West Bank.

In Gaza itself yesterday, Israeli warplanes kept up heavy strikes, and the Civil Emergency Service said that at least 101 Palestinians, including 58 women and children, had been killed since the deal was announced on Wednesday.

Under the six-week first phase of the three-stage deal, Hamas will release 33 Israeli hostages, including all women (soldiers and civilians),

children, and men over 50.

Israel will release all Palestinian women and children under 19 detained in Israeli jails by the end of the first phase. The total number of Palestinians released will depend on hostages released, and could be between 990 and 1,650 Palestinians, including men, women and children.

Hamas said in a statement yesterday that obstacles that arose in relation to the terms of the Gaza ceasefire agreement have been resolved.

A World Health Organization official said yesterday it should be possible to scale up aid imports into Gaza massively to about 600 trucks a day under the terms of the deal.

The aid surge requires more than a 10-fold daily increase in lorries from the daily average of 51 that UN data shows entered the enclave in early January.

"I think the possibility is very much there and specifically when other crossings will be opened up," Rik Peepkorn, WHO representative for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, told a press briefing in Geneva. "This can be built up very rapidly."

In Gaza, the airstrikes continued. In the aftermath of one strike on tents housing displaced people, a boy picked through damaged items on the floor that was littered with canned food and coffee pots.

- Gaza health ministry says 88 killed in 24 hours
- WHO upbeat on scaling up aid under ceasefire terms
- Death toll in Gaza rises to 46,876

LAND GRAFT CASE

Imran handed 14-year jail term
His wife sentenced to 7yrs in prison

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday sentenced former prime minister Imran Khan to 14 years' imprisonment in a land corruption case, a setback to nascent talks between his party and the government aimed at cooling political instability in the south Asian nation.

The verdict in the case was delivered by an anti-graft court in a prison in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, where Khan has been jailed since August 2023.

Khan's wife Bushra Bibi was also found guilty and sentenced to 7 years in prison. She was out on bail but was taken into custody after the judgment was pronounced, Geo News reported.

Law Minister Azam Naeer Tarar told reporters that Khan's party could reach out to higher courts to appeal against the ruling, and that the former cricket star could also file a mercy petition to the president of Pakistan.

Omar Ayub, an aide of Khan, said the party will challenge the verdict in higher courts.

A post on Khan's account on social media platform X, citing his message from jail, asked his supporters not to panic and called the conviction a "joke."

"I will stay in the prison cell for as long as I have to in the struggle against this dictatorship," the post said, adding "We will not make any deals and will face all false cases."



Road crashes claim 6 lives

STAR REPORT

At least six people died in separate road collisions in Chattogram and Gopalganj yesterday.

In Chattogram, three friends were killed when an identified vehicle hit the motorcycle carrying them on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Mirsarai upazila in the early hours.

The deceased were identified as Rubel Barua, 40, Sunny Barua, 40, and Nipu Barua, 38, reports our Chattogram staff correspondent.

Borhan Uddin, sub-inspector of Zorangon Police Station, said the three were returning home from a social event on a motorcycle.

When they reached Sufia Raster Matha around 3:00am, an identified vehicle hit their motorcycle, leaving the three dead on the spot, he added.

Biplab Barua, brother of Rubel Barua, said, "My brother and two others were childhood friends. They were returning from a wedding ceremony when the accident occurred."

The police said the vehicle that hit the bike was yet to be identified.

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Durbar Rajshahi batter Ryan Burl smashed four sixes and a four in a 27-ball 41-run blitz to propel his side to 184-7 in a Bangladesh Premier League group-stage fixture against Sylhet Sixers at the Zahir Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. Left-arm spinner Sunzamul Islam starred with the ball with three wickets as Rajshahi bundled out Sylhet for 119 to clinch their fourth win of the tournament.

PHOTO: DURBAR RAJSHAH

Women led early British society 2,000 years ago

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Women were at the centre of early Iron Age British communities, a new analysis of 2,000-year-old DNA reveals.

The research, published in the journal *Nature* on Wednesday, found that British Celtic societies were matrilocal with married women staying in their ancestral communities.

Human societies have often been shaped by where married couples choose to reside culturally.

For instance, in patrilocal communities partners mainly reside with or near the families of the male, whereas in matrilocal societies, couples live near the female's parents.

Previous studies confirm that patrilocality was widely followed in the European Neolithic, Copper and Bronze ages.

However, earlier research hinted that in the case of Celtic societies, women had higher status.

Romans documented their astonishment at finding women occupying positions of power, writing about queens - Boudica and Cartimandua - who commanded armies and finding the empowerment of Celtic women remarkable.

