



“There must be an independent, prompt and thorough investigation into the incident and those responsible... must be held to account.”

UN rights chief Volker Turk condemns killing of Gaza aid workers by Israeli army

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Next budget aims for 6% GDP growth

Budget size likely to be around Tk 8,00,000 crore, 7.5% higher than revised budget

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The interim government aims to balance macroeconomic stability, inflation control, and 6 percent GDP growth in the next fiscal year's budget, when the 13th parliamentary election is expected.

The 2025-26 budget is likely to be around Tk 8,00,000 crore – more or less the same as the original budget for the current year and about 7.5 percent higher than the revised budget, finance ministry officials told The Daily Star.

The development budget will likely be in the neighbourhood of Tk 2,30,000 crore to Tk 2,40,000 crore, up slightly from this fiscal year's revised allocation of Tk 2,16,000 crore.

The budget numbers will be discussed at the fiscal coordination council meeting scheduled for April 9. However, the final numbers will be locked in after consultations with the International Monetary Fund mission, which will be in Dhaka for two weeks starting April 6.

As part of the \$4.5 billion loan programme, the IMF is insisting on high revenue mobilisation and other measures to address Bangladesh's persistently low tax-to-GDP ratio.

The tax reforms to be adopted are likely to be agreed upon during the IMF mission's visit.

For now, the finance ministry is considering a revenue target of Tk 5,85,000 crore – up about 13 percent from the revised budget – which would leave a budget deficit of Tk 2,15,000 crore.

Of the revenue target, the National Board of Revenue is likely to be tasked with collecting Tk 5,21,000 crore, up 12.4 percent from this fiscal year's revised target.

This will be enough to achieve the GDP growth target and rein in inflation within a 6.5 percent mark, according to ministry estimates. Inflation averaged 10.56 percent in the first eight months of the fiscal year.

“A 6 percent GDP growth is very high in any condition and in comparison to global economic growth or the South Asian growth average,” said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

Earlier in December last year, the IMF projected Bangladesh's real GDP growth to slow to 3.8 percent this fiscal year but rebound to 6.7 percent next fiscal year.

For 6 percent growth to materialise, both investment and exports must increase significantly, Hussain said.

Letters of credit (LC) opening data for capital machinery imports indicate investment trends. This indicator dropped 30.1 percent year-on-year in the first eight months of fiscal 2024-25, while LC settlements were down 25.2 percent, according to the Bangladesh Bank.

Exports increased 10.5 percent year-on-year in the July-February period of this fiscal year to \$32.9 billion, SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

LIKELY TARGETS

INFLATION
6.5%

REVENUE
Total Tk 5,85,000cr,
NBR Tk 5,21,000cr

ADP
Tk 2,40,000cr



People return to Dhaka after celebrating Eid with their loved ones back in their hometowns or villages. The photo was taken at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Dhaka hopeful of Yunus-Modi meeting

CA flies to Bangkok today for BIMSTEC

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The much-expected meeting between Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely on the sidelines of the BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok tomorrow.

“There are enough possibilities for the meeting,” said Khalilur Rahman, chief adviser's high representative for the Rohingya issue and other priorities, at a press briefing yesterday.

Yunus will leave Dhaka this morning for the 6th BIMSTEC summit, which will be attended by the heads of the member states – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Thailand, the current chair of BIMSTEC, will hand over the chairmanship to Bangladesh tomorrow.

“As Bangladesh will be the next chair of BIMSTEC, we are expecting all leaders of member states to take the opportunity to discuss BIMSTEC activities for the future with Yunus. It is normal. So, the possibility of a meeting [with Modi] is high,” Rahman said.

The Daily Star has learnt from foreign ministry officials involved with the proceedings that the meeting has been confirmed, and the details were being worked out.

The meeting may not be structured as a bilateral one but a courtesy one, said another diplomatic source in New Delhi.

Bangladesh earlier sent a letter to India seeking a meeting between the two leaders, Rahman said.

A meeting between the two leaders could not be held in New York in September last year as the schedule did not overlap.

However, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain sat with Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar at the 79th UN General Assembly there.

In February, Hossain and Jaishankar met on the sidelines of the Indian Ocean Conference in Oman.

The two countries also held official-level meetings on bilateral relations, water sharing and border cooperation.

In response to a question on any implications of Yunus's China visit on Dhaka-SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Trump all set to unleash 'Liberation Day' tariffs

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump was poised to unveil sweeping new “Liberation Day” tariffs yesterday, but kept the world guessing until the last minute about the scope of an onslaught that could spark a global trade war.

Trump was set to roll out the measures flanked by cabinet members in the Rose Garden of the White House at 4:00 pm (2000 GMT) – after Wall Street markets close – promising that they will stop America being “ripped off” and will deliver a new “golden age” of US industry.

But while Trump insisted he had decided on the reciprocal tariffs hitting countries that have targeted the United States, the White House admitted he was still ironing out the details with less than 24 hours to go.

The Republican billionaire has had a long love affair with tariffs, insisting in SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Holiday trip turns tragic

10 of a family killed in crash on a dangerous 2km stretch of Ctg-Cox's Bazar highway where 28 died this yr

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

Lying on a hospital bed at Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), seven-year-old Araddhya was looking for her parents.

As the little girl writhed in pain due to severe head injuries, she could only manage a few inaudible mumbling sounds.

But no one, including the medical staff, had the heart to tell her that she would not see her parents again. They had died in a road accident earlier in the day.

They were among the 10 people who died in a head-on collision between a microbus and a bus on the Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway in the Jangalia area of Lohagara's Chunati union. Araddhya and another woman were seriously injured in the accident.

“All the deceased and injured were heading to Cox's Bazar for holiday on the microbus,” said Shuvo Ranjan Chakma, officer-in-charge of Dohazari Highway Police Station. “The victims were travelling from Kustia.”

The victims included Araddhya's father, Dilip Biswas, her mother, Sadhana Biswas, and her maternal uncle, Asish Mandal. The identities of the other victims had yet to be confirmed.

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ROAD CRASHES KILL 41 IN 3 DAYS (PAGE-3)

Israel seizing more of Gaza to free hostages

Says its PM; 34 more Palestinians killed in strikes

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday said that the military was “dissecting” the Gaza Strip and seizing territory to pressure Hamas into freeing hostages still held in the territory.

It came as rescuers said 34 people were killed in continued Israeli strikes on the territory, including on a UN building.

The military is “dissecting the (Gaza) Strip and increasing the pressure step by step so that (Hamas) will return our hostages”, Netanyahu said in a statement, adding that Israel “is seizing territory, striking terrorists, and destroying infrastructure”.

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People mourn over the shrouded bodies of loved ones at the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday. At least 19 people, including nine children, were killed in an Israeli strike targeting a UN clinic in the Jabalia camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza.

PHOTO: AFP

No room for extremism

Say govt advisers while responding to NYT article

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government advisers have reiterated their commitment to combatting religious extremism and insisted that militancy is not on the rise.

Their remarks came in response to an article by The New York Times titled “As Bangladesh Reinvents Itself, Islamist Hard-Liners See an Opening”.

The NYT article said Islamist extremism surged in Bangladesh following the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government, with fundamentalists imposing restrictions on women, persecuting minorities, and pushing for a more religiously conservative state.

The Times said that the interim government was reluctant to crack down on fundamentalist forces, allowing them to gain public space.

While talking to journalists after visiting the family and grave of a July martyr yesterday, Information and Broadcasting Adviser Mahfuj Alam said there would be no place for extremism on Bangladesh's soil.

“Our government maintains a strict stance on this issue and will continue to do so in the future. If discussions and warnings are not enough, tougher measures will be taken,” he said.

He further said, “The efforts to establish Bangladesh as a democratic state under the leadership of Prof Muhammad Yunus will continue. No extremist group will be allowed to take advantage of the situation.”

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NOTICE

Business pages have not come out today as economic activities have not gained momentum after Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. Star Business will be available from Friday.