



"When the two main global economies impose tariffs, it will affect everybody, not only the economies engaged in the tariff war."
UN trade chief
Rebecca Grynspan

The Daily Star

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Caught in toxic grip of a landfill

Soil, groundwater and air pollution poses serious health hazards to people around Amin Bazar landfill

HELEMUL ALAM

The villages around Amin Bazar, once known for their lush green farmlands and fresh air, now stand as stark reminders of unchecked pollution, with locals facing serious health risks from a nearby landfill.

In 2007, Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) set up a landfill in Baliarpur of Savar. Since then, Baliarpur, Konda, and Beraith villages in Bongaon union have been facing relentless pollution. The community that once thrived through farming is now grappling with the devastating impacts of water, air, and soil pollution.

According to a study carried out in 2022, leachate, a toxic liquid from decomposing waste, seeps into soil and groundwater, carrying heavy metals like arsenic, nickel, chromium, and lead. These contaminants are linked to cancer and other life-threatening diseases, experts say.

Mostafizur Rahman, a professor of

- ➔ Heavy metals found in soil, groundwater within 1.5km radius of landfill
- ➔ 50,000 directly affected; many suffer from skin diseases, respiratory problems
- ➔ Long-term consumption of crops grown on polluted soil poses risk of cancer
- ➔ Untreated leachate may be spreading up to 5km radius of landfill, say experts

environmental sciences at Jahangirnagar University, who co-led the study, said, "We found toxic metals like arsenic and nickel in both surface and groundwater near the landfill. The highest concentration of metals

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Smoke billowing from the burning waste at Amin Bazar landfill. The community living in nearby neighbourhoods grapples with the devastating impacts of water, air, and soil pollution from the landfill.
PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

'Mangal Shobhajatra' renamed to 'Anondo Shobhajatra'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The procession marking the Bangla New Year, organised by Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts, has been renamed.

Formerly known as "Mangal Shobhajatra", the procession will now be called "Borsho Boron Anondo Shobhajatra".

The decision was conveyed at a press conference yesterday at the fine arts faculty at DU.

DU Vice Chancellor Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan said, "The main theme of the Anondo Shobhajatra conveys two messages – the end of an authoritarian political system and the spontaneous protest of the people against a distorted system."

Prof Azharul Islam Chanchal, convener of the Nababarsa 1432 Celebration Committee, said, "We have not changed the name; rather, we have restored the original name of the celebration, 'Anondo Shobhajatra'."

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ESCALATING US-CHINA TRADE WAR

Turmoil rings recession alarm

China slaps 125% tariffs on US goods; Xi urges EU to resist Trump 'bullying'

REUTERS, Beijing

Beijing yesterday increased its tariffs on US imports to 125 percent, hitting back against US President Donald Trump's decision to hike duties on Chinese goods to 145 percent and raising the stakes in a trade war that threatens to upend global supply chains.

Meanwhile, the turmoil unleashed by Trump's tariffs showed few signs of easing yesterday, with markets tumbling and foreign leaders puzzling how to respond to the biggest disruption to the world trade order in decades.

A brief reprieve for battered stocks seen after Trump decided to pause duties for dozens of countries for 90 days quickly dissipated, as attention returned to his escalating trade war with China

- ➔ US says 75 countries want trade talks
- ➔ Markets fall amid Trump's escalating trade war with China
- ➔ Investors flock to safety of gold, bond rout continues

that has fuelled global recession fears.

Global stocks fell, the dollar slid and a sell-off in US government bonds picked up pace yesterday, reigniting fears of fragility in the world's biggest bond market. Gold, a safe haven for investors in times of crisis, scaled a record high.

"Recession risk is much, much higher now than it was a couple weeks ago," said Adam Hettis, global head of multi-asset at Janus Henderson.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent tried to assuage sceptics by telling a cabinet meeting on Thursday that more than 75 countries wanted to start trade negotiations. Trump himself expressed

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Model Meghna Alam's arrest sparks outcry

Court sends her to jail under Special Powers Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Model and Miss Bangladesh Foundation Chairperson Meghna Alam was detained and sent to jail for 30 days under the Special Powers Act of 1974 following a late-night court hearing on Thursday, drawing widespread criticism over the use of what many say is a draconian law.

Police said they took her in protective custody as she was spreading lies about an important individual.

A Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in

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ADB to increase lending by 67%

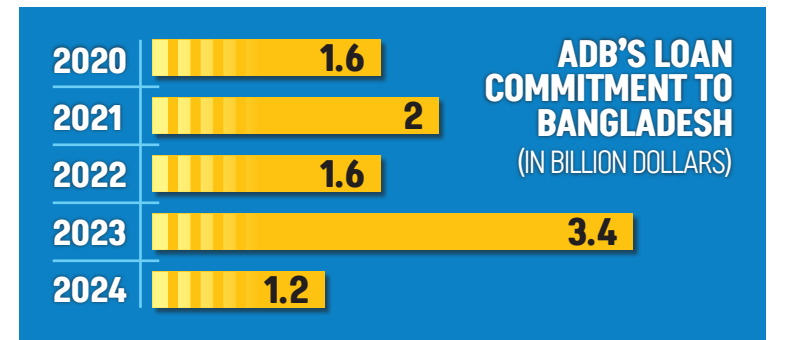
Bangladesh to get \$2b this year; ADB to lend more by repurposing funds from long-delayed projects

REJAU KARIM BYRON

The Asian Development Bank is likely to increase its loan commitment to Bangladesh by 67 percent to \$2 billion this year, up from \$1.2 billion in 2024, and offer additional financing by partially canceling funds from long delayed projects.

The partial fund cancellation is one of several measures that the ADB has been considering for Bangladesh, according to the lender's portfolio review report sent to the government in February.

The ADB's loan commitment to Bangladesh dropped to \$1.2 billion last year from \$3.4 billion the previous year. The lender informed the government this year that it would commit around \$2 billion in loans, said a finance ministry official seeking anonymity.



In its portfolio review report, the ADB said, "The year 2025 would be another challenging year considering the expectation of election and continuous shuffling of decision-makers in the government." Disbursement targets were set conservatively, considering "a possible disturbance".

Some projects and programmes faced significant delays in implementation. The situation worsened further due to additional difficulties and challenges, it pointed out.

"Taking into serious consideration the country's risk appetite and risk tolerance under the ADB exposure limits framework, more serious consideration and decisions on partial cancellation of loans with poor performance can create more headroom for new lending opportunities that can support the interim government's priorities."

Such repurposing would also help improve the portfolio management of the ADB-financed projects and programmes that would lead to more effective utilisation of public funds in Bangladesh, it noted.

The ADB usually makes loan commitments for its member countries every calendar year. Once a loan signing is approved by the ADB board, it turns into a loan commitment and becomes ready for disbursement.

At the beginning of this year, Bangladesh's loan portfolio under the ADB stood at \$11.79 billion for 52 projects.

If Bangladesh fails to implement a project after the ADB's loan commitment, the country must pay commitment charges to the lender.

According to the ADB report, a commitment charge of 0.15 percent per year is applied to all undisbursed loan balances for ordinary capital resource (OCR) loans, starting 60 days after the loan signing.

For the computation of commitment charges, undisbursed loan balances are calculated daily. Consequently, the timing of disbursements within a year affects the amount of commitment charge.

Based on the analysis of \$7.07 billion OCR loans in the present portfolio, the amount of undisbursed loan stands at \$2.39 billion, and a total of \$30.89 million was paid accumulatively in commitment charges over a decade.

Last year, Bangladesh paid ADB \$3.58 million as commitment charges.

The report said the analysis of 15 OCR loans that were closed or scheduled to be closed between January and December last year shows that \$23.54 million in commitment charges was paid cumulatively against loans of \$3.98 billion.

High commitment charges resulted from long implementation periods and low disbursements during the initial phases of the

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'March for Gaza' rally at Suhrawardy Udyan today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Activists demanding an end to Israeli atrocities in Palestine will gather at the Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka today for a rally after marching from five different points.

Several political and professional organisations, including the National Citizen Party (NCP), Jamaat-e-Islami, Hefazat-e-Islam and AB Party, will join the "March for Gaza", which had earlier been scheduled to start from Shahbagh and end at Manik Mia Avenue.

A platform called Palestine Solidarity Movement Bangladesh has created the March for Gaza event on Facebook. As of 6:00pm yesterday, 73,000 people showed interest and 6,300 said they would attend.

As per the latest decision, the rally at the

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A Palestinian man weeps while holding an injured child at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Shejaia, Gaza City. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: REUTERS