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## Join hands to build a discrimination-free country

**Yunus urges people on Pahela Baishakh**

AGENCIES

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammed Yunus has called upon the people of the country to join hands in building a new Bangladesh which is "happy, peaceful and prosperous" without any discrimination.

"Let building a Bangladesh without discrimination be our commitment in this Bangla New Year," he said in a message marking the Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla New Year, on Monday.

Prof Yunus said the mass uprising of '24 has provided them with the opportunity to build a Bangladesh that is happy, prosperous, peaceful and joyful.

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Mourners pray next to the bodies of Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes at Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Govt settling for lower GDP growth target

Next fiscal's budget size would be Tk 790,000cr

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The interim government may backtrack from its initial plan to set an ambitious GDP growth target of 6 percent for the next fiscal year amid the new economic reality and settle for 5.5 percent.

The development comes following lower projections by multilateral lenders. For instance, last week the Asian Development Bank forecasted next fiscal year's growth would be 5.1 percent.

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

The new GDP growth target, inflation and the size of next budget were discussed at yesterday's fiscal coordination council meeting, led by finance adviser Salehuddin Ahmed.

The government's main target is to bring down inflation in the next budget. The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials with knowledge of the discussions in the meeting.

"We are keeping the low GDP rate aiming to reduce the inflation," said one of the officials.

The inflation target will be set at 6.5 percent by the government in the upcoming budget while the ADB has projected that inflation would be hovering around the 8 percent mark next fiscal year.

This fiscal year, the government set the inflation target at 8 percent while the ADB's projection was 10.2 percent.

The country's overall inflation stood at 9.35 percent in March, up from 9.32 percent the month prior, according to the latest data released by the Bangladesh Bureau of

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Jamaat ameer meets Khaleda in London

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The top leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami, including its Amir Shafiqur Rahman, recently held a meeting with BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia at her son's home in London.

After concluding their European tour, Shafiqur Rahman and Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Syed Abdullab Abu Taher recently returned to Bangladesh following a meeting with former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia in London," wrote Maruf Kamal Khan Sohel, former press secretary to Khaleda Zia, on social media.

"Tarique Rahman was also present during the extended meeting. It remains unclear what specific issues were discussed during the meeting between the two top Jamaat leaders and Begum Zia," he also wrote.

Khaleda is receiving treatment under the supervision of doctors from the London Clinic.

Prothom Alo spoke to the Jamaat ameer. He told the paper, "I met with Begum Zia. We worked

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## 'Tearing down walls' to expand trade alliances

Says China amid US standoff; Beijing, Hanoi sign 45 co-op deals

AGENCIES

China is "tearing down walls" and expanding its circle of trading partners, "shaking hands" instead of "shaking fists", its foreign ministry said yesterday, as Beijing works on diversifying ties amid a escalating trade war with the US.

President Donald Trump has added an eye-watering 145 percent of tariffs on Chinese goods this year as part of broader reciprocal duties on all US trading partners. That prompted ridicule and criticism from Beijing, which retaliated by jacking up levies on US goods by 125 percent.

"In the face of external uncertainties, China will insist on shaking hands rather than shaking fists, tearing down walls instead of building barriers, connecting instead of decoupling," Lin Jian, a foreign ministry spokesperson, told a press briefing yesterday.

The World Trade Organization has warned the high stakes Sino-US trade row could cut the shipment of goods between two economies by as much as 80 percent and severely hurt global growth.

Beijing has called US President Donald Trump's tariffs strategy "a joke", irritating US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. "These are not a joke. I mean these are big numbers," Bessent said in a Bloomberg Television interview.

Xi on Monday kicked off a three-nation tour of Southeast Asia, which President Donald

Trump said was aiming to "screw" the United States.

"I don't blame China. I don't blame Vietnam. I don't. I see they're meeting today, and that's wonderful," he said. "That's a lovely meeting... like trying to figure out, how do we screw the United States of America."

In Vietnam, which is facing potential US tariffs of 46 percent, Xi called for the two countries to oppose "unilateral bullying" and to strengthen cooperation in production and supply chains, reports Reuters.

Chinese and Vietnamese officials also signed 45 cooperation deals during Xi's visit, including on production and supply chains as well as railway cooperation.

After a two-day stop in Hanoi, Xi will continue his Southeast Asian trip by visiting Malaysia and Cambodia, which could be slapped by additional US

tariffs of 24 percent and 49 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, China has told its airlines to stop taking deliveries of jets from American aviation giant Boeing, reports AFP.

Bloomberg News reported yesterday that Beijing has also told its carriers to suspend purchases of aircraft-related equipment and parts from US companies.

Bloomberg said the Chinese government is mulling helping carriers that lease Boeing jets and face higher costs.

- Xi's Vietnam trip aiming to 'screw' US: Trump
- China tells airlines to suspend Boeing jet deliveries

## PURBACHAL PLOT GRAFT Arrest warrant issued against Joy too

Tulip sued over Gulshan flat, claims she's innocent

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her son Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and 16 others in two more cases filed over irregularities in plot allocation in Purbachal New Town.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after accepting the charges brought against them.

The court has now accepted charges against Hasina and her family in all six cases filed over the plot allocation irregularities, said an official of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The judge directed the officers in charge of over a dozen police stations in Dhaka and other parts of the country to submit progress reports on the execution of the arrest warrants by April 29.

The ACC officials showed all the 18 accused as fugitives in the two cases, as they did not secure bail from any courts in the country.

According to ACC documents, Hasina, in collusion with senior

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## Shares worth Tk 17,000cr frozen

Joint taskforce assess its activities in meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint taskforce, formed by the interim government, has had frozen Tk 17,000 crore worth of shares, around Tk 4,000 crore held in different bank accounts, and imposed travel bans on 84 individuals from 10 major industrial groups and the Sheikh family through courts.

These developments were shared at the 7th meeting of the taskforce, which was formed to investigate alleged money laundering and other misdeeds carried out by 10 major industrial groups and the Sheikh family.

The meeting was held at the Bangladesh Bank yesterday, with Ahsan H Mansur, BB governor and chairperson of the taskforce, presiding over the meeting.

A meeting source said suggestions were made to take initiatives to recover the money laundered abroad.

The taskforce teams are investigating alleged money laundering and other irregularities by S Alam Group, Beximco Group, Summit Group, Bashundhara Group, Gemcon Group, Orion Group, Nabil Group, Nassa Group, Sikder Group, and Aramit Group.

In addition, ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her family members are also under investigation.

The meeting source added that among the 10 major business groups and the Sheikh family, nine groups have been found to possess assets abroad. The assets have been made with the laundered money, the meeting participants claimed.



A pigeon quenches its thirst from a dripping pipeline at Sylhet Rail Station, seeking relief from the scorching summer heat. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## 'There is nothing illegal about it' Says CA's special assistant about Meghna Alam detention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The steps taken against model Meghna Alam were in line with the existing laws and did not involve any unlawful conduct, Khuda Baksh Chowdhury, special assistant to the chief adviser for home affairs, said yesterday.

"The law is in use. It's not like this law has not been used before. This is not the only instance where it has been applied. There is nothing illegal about it," he said, referring to the Special Powers Act.

Khuda Baksh was talking to reporters at a home ministry press conference at the Secretariat after a core committee meeting on law and order.

The special assistant said that an incident occurred, a complaint was filed, and the matter is now under legal proceedings.

The case has gone to the High Court. Since it's now a sub judice matter, it wouldn't be appropriate to comment further. Let's see what comes out of it," he further said.

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