

Thousands say goodbye to Pope Francis lying in state

AFP, Vatican City

Tens of thousands of mourners began saying their last goodbyes to Pope Francis at St Peter's Basilica yesterday, as the body of the late Argentine pontiff began three days of lying in state.

A long line of pilgrims and tourists stretched across the sprawling St Peter's Square before the doors opened at 11:00 am (0900 GMT), when the public were allowed inside to file past the open coffin.

"I came to say a last goodbye to a great man. He stood for the people," Simonetta Marini, 67, a Roman pensioner, told AFP.

For the next three days, it will rest on a low bier before the Altar of the Confession underneath the soaring dome painted by Michelangelo, before being closed at 8:00 pm (1800 GMT) on Friday evening ahead of Saturday's funeral.

Strike a deal or US will 'walk away'

VP Vance tells Russia, Ukraine

AGENCIES

US Vice President JD Vance warned yesterday that Moscow and Kyiv must strike a deal or Washington will end its efforts to reach a ceasefire.

"We've issued a very explicit proposal to both the Russians and the Ukrainians, and it's time for them to either say yes, or for the United States to walk away from this process," Vance told reporters in India.

Vance spoke as envoys from Washington, Kyiv and European nations gathered for talks in Britain amid a new US push to end Russia's war in Ukraine, reports AFP.

"It's now time, I think, to take, if not the final step, one of the final steps, which is, at a broad level, the party saying we're going to stop the killing, we're going to freeze the territorial lines at some level close to where they are today," Vance added. "Now, of course, that means the Ukrainians and the Russians are both going to have to give up some of the territory they currently own," he added.

Meanwhile, A Russian drone hit a bus carrying workers in the Ukrainian city of Marhanets yesterday, killing 9 people, reports Reuters.



Local residents wait in a park in Istanbul, Turkey, yesterday, following an initial earthquake of 6.2 magnitude at 12:49 pm, which was followed by three others with magnitudes ranging from 4.4 to 4.9. A total of 151 people were hurt and received hospital treatment after leaping from buildings in panic during the tremor but none were in a critical condition, the Istanbul governor's office said.

PHOTO: AFP

Israeli airstrikes hit Gaza school, hospital

20 Palestinians killed; President Abbas calls on Hamas to hand over arms to his authority

REUTERS, Gaza

An Israeli airstrike on a school sheltering displaced families in northern Gaza killed at least 10 people, while another hit a children's hospital, local health authorities said, taking yesterday's death toll to 20.

Medics said the airstrike on the Yaffa School in the Tuffah area of Gaza City set fire to tents and classrooms. There has been no Israeli comment on the school attack.

Some furniture was still in flames several hours after the strike as people sifted through blackened classrooms and the schoolyard in search of their belongings.

"We were sleeping and suddenly something exploded, we started looking and found the whole school on fire, the tents here and there were on fire, everything was on fire," said eyewitness, Um Mohammed Al-Hwaiti.

"People were shouting and men were carrying people, charred (people), charred children, and were walking and saying: 'Dear God, dear God, we have no one but you.' What can we say? Dear God, only," she told Reuters.

Medics said at least 10 other people were killed in separate Israeli strikes across the enclave.

Since a January ceasefire collapsed on March 18, Israeli attacks have killed more than 1,600 Palestinians, according to the Gaza health authorities.



Meanwhile, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, in a televised speech yesterday, called on Hamas to cede its responsibility over the Gaza Strip, hand over its arms to the Palestinian Authority and turn itself into a political party.

Yesterday, the Gaza health ministry said an Israeli missile also hit the upper building of the Durra Children's Hospital in Gaza City, damaging the intensive care unit and destroying the solar panel system that feeds the facility with power. No one was killed in the hospital strike.

Gaza's healthcare system is close to collapse due to an Israeli blockade on all supplies to Gaza, including fuel and electricity, since

the beginning of March, when it relaunched military operations.

The health ministry said many Palestinian victims of Israeli military strikes remained trapped under rubble and on the roads, as rescue teams are unable to reach them because of ongoing bombardments.

The attacks have also hit dozens of bulldozers and machinery used to clear roads, remove debris and to carry out rescue operations.

The Israeli military said on Tuesday it had hit 40 "engineering vehicles" that were used for "terrorist actions. Some of those heavy vehicles were parked on the road and others inside the garages of municipalities.



"The European Union is not giving up on our closest, deepest and most important partnership with the United States."

EU Economy Commissioner VALDIS DOMBROVSKIS

Beijing ready to work with Dhaka to advance economic globalisation

FROM PAGE 2

"The Chinese government strongly condemns and resolutely opposes such a move," Wen said while addressing the Government Training Programmes Inauguration Ceremony at the Chinese embassy in Dhaka yesterday.

"History has repeatedly proved that there are no winners in trade or tariff wars. Protectionism is a dead end," he said, stressing the need for a safe and stable international environment.

Referring to Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' visit to China last month and his meeting with President Xi Jinping, Wen said the visit marked a new phase of development in China-Bangladesh relations and elevated the Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership to an unprecedented height.

"This visit injected new momentum into the high-quality Belt and Road cooperation between the two countries. It has become a broad consensus in Bangladeshi society that China is the most trustworthy and reliable development partner."

Wen said China will accelerate the construction of the Mongla Port Project and Chinese Economic and Industrial Zone in

Chittagong, and stands ready to participate in the Teesta River Comprehensive Management and Restoration Project.

China will continue to facilitate medical access for Bangladeshi citizens seeking treatment in China, expand scholarship opportunities, and encourage greater engagement of Bangladeshi nationals in business, education, and cultural exchanges in China, he added.

About the training programme, he said as Bangladesh and China celebrates 50 years of diplomatic relations this year, China will organise 23 bilateral seminars and 30 multilateral seminars, trainings for over 500 Bangladeshis.

These seminars will cover areas such as smart governance and information technology, new energy, finance, transportation, agriculture, tourism, and education, he added.

Mirana Mahrukh, additional secretary and wing chief at the Economic Relations Division and Mohammed Nore-Alam, director general at the East Asia & Pacific Wing of the Foreign Ministry also spoke, among others.

Chief adviser

FROM PAGE 2

statement, also strongly condemned the attack that claimed the lives of 26 people.

"Bangladesh strongly condemns the terror attack in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in India, resulting in the tragic loss of innocent lives," it said.

The Government of

Bangladesh extended condolences to the families of the victims, expressing "heartfelt sympathy to all those affected by this mindless act of violence."

"Bangladesh reiterates its unwavering commitment to the global fight against terrorism," the press release added.

Poverty may worsen: World Bank

FROM PAGE 1

Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank in Dhaka, said the poverty surge is primarily being driven by food inflation and prolonged wage stagnation.

"All research on poverty shows that the poverty rate is inversely related to food inflation," Hussain said. "The higher the food inflation, the higher the poverty rate, because the share of the budget that poor people spend on food is very high."

Hussain said real wages have been declining for over 40 months as nominal wage growth fails to keep pace with soaring prices. "Income has not grown at the same rate as expenditure due to inflation. That also increases the number of people below the poverty line," he said.

Inflation is expected to remain around 10 percent this fiscal year, with a gradual easing projected in the following year.

Three in five households are likely to have faced increased financial stress by depleting their savings, driven largely by deteriorating labour market conditions between 2023 and 2024, the World Bank said. "Vulnerable populations are likely to be disproportionately affected."

However, with over a million people leaving the country annually, remittance-receiving households are expected to remain more resilient amid the economic challenge.

The Gini index, a measure of inequality where 0 represents perfect equality and 100 indicates maximum inequality, is projected to rise to 36.1 in 2025 from 33.4 in 2022, according to the World Bank. Inequality is expected to ease slightly in 2026.

"The main reason for inequality lies in the labour market," Hussain said. "A vast number of workers are in low-productivity, self-employed occupations. Most are entrepreneurs by necessity, not by opportunity."

While the formal sector remains small, most of the 65-66 million working Bangladeshis are engaged in informal jobs with limited earnings potential, Hussain said. "The low productivity of self-employed young people in rural and urban areas means low average income," he said.

ECONOMIC GROWTH TO SLOW

The World Bank forecasts GDP growth at 3.3 percent

in FY2025, down from 4.2 percent last year and 5.8 percent in FY2023. The slowdown has been driven by falling investment, policy uncertainty, high borrowing costs, and political unrest that disrupted activity in the first quarter.

Private sector credit growth hit a 30-year low of 7.3 percent in December 2024, and ADP spending declined 24.1 percent in the first half of the fiscal year. Imports of capital goods fell by 12 percent, reflecting weak investment sentiment.

Despite this, strong remittances and a rebound in garment exports helped narrow the current account deficit to \$1.1 billion, and reserves have stabilised around \$20 billion.

The World Bank projects a gradual recovery, though. GDP growth is expected to rebound to 4.9 percent in FY2026, assuming the successful implementation of financial sector reforms, improved domestic revenue mobilisation, and a more stable business environment.

The medium-term outlook hinges on restoring investor confidence, addressing macroeconomic imbalances, and delivering long promised structural

reforms across the banking, fiscal and regulatory landscape.

UNCERTAIN CLIMATE

The World Bank warns that delays in banking and fiscal reforms, coupled with persistent inflation and uncertainty surrounding the upcoming national election, could undermine Bangladesh's economic recovery.

"Higher costs of borrowing, policy uncertainties, and the timing of elections are expected to weigh heavily on investment growth," the World Bank said.

Beyond the economic risks, the report also flagged political tensions as a growing source of concern.

"Safety and security concerns remain and are likely to continue until the restoration of a fully functioning police force," it said.

"Policy uncertainty is significant and compounded by ongoing discussions about the timing of the next election. Disagreements between political parties and the interim government over the election date could heighten political tensions in the future."

TRADE DISRUPTIONS

Bangladesh's export outlook faces fresh risks in FY2026 due to mounting global trade disruptions and rising policy uncertainty, the World Bank said. While the economic impact is expected to be limited in FY2025, as disruptions occurred late in the fiscal year, the fallout is likely to be more pronounced in the following year.

The World Bank projects that Bangladesh's exports and real GDP growth could decline by 1.7 percentage points and 0.5 percentage points, respectively, in FY2026 compared to previous forecasts.

"There is considerable uncertainty around this outlook due to the rapidly evolving status of trade policy discussions," the World Bank said.

Lower fuel import payments, due to falling international energy prices, are expected to provide some cushion to the current account balance. Meanwhile, the Bangladesh government has expressed its intent to reduce the trade surplus with the United States by boosting imports, a move seen as part of broader trade diplomacy amid tensions over tariffs and reciprocal access.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Environment
"Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division" Project (A component of HELP Project)
1st Floor, Room: 202, Poribesh Bhaban New Building
E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207
www.doe.gov.bd

Request for Expression of Interest (Eoi) for Selection of Individual Consultants (National)

1.	Ministry/Division	:	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change	
2.	Agency	:	Department of Environment (DoE)	
3.	Procuring Entity Name	:	Project Director	
4.	Procuring Entity District	:	Dhaka	
5.	Expression of Interest for selection of	:	Individual Consultant (National)	
6.	Eoi Ref No.	:	22.02.0000.020.14.001.25-10	
7.	Date	:	23 April 2025	
Key Information				
8.	Procuring Method	:	Selection of Individual Consultant (SIC)	
Funding Information				
9.	Source of Funds	:	World Bank through DoE	
10.	Grant No.	:	E325-BD	
Particular Information				
11.	Project ID	:	P501274	
12.	Project Code	:	224403000	
13.	Project Name	:	Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division	
14.	Eoi Closing Date and Time	:	15 May 2025, 02:00 pm	
Information for Applicants				
Package No.	Name of Positions	Number of Positions	Duration	Terms of References (ToR) including Educational Qualification
HELP/S-01	Junior Consultant (Procurement)	1 (One)	6 months (intermittently)	Master's in procurement/ economics/ statistics/ finance/ business administration/ management or other relevant subjects.
HELP/S-02	Junior Consultant (Finance)	1 (One)	24 months	Master of Commerce in Accounting/Finance or MBA with major in Accounting/Finance. Candidate having fully or partly professional accountancy degree (CA/ACCA/CMA/ equivalent) will get preference.
Procuring Entity Details				
15.	Name of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Md. Samsuzzaman Sarker	
16.	Designation of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Project Director, Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division	
17.	Address of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Department of Environment 1 st Floor, Room: 202, Poribesh Bhaban New Building E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207	
18.	Contact details of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Phone: 02-2222218378, Email: helpdoepd@gmail.com	
19.	Place of submission of Eoi	:	Project Director, Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division 1 st Floor, Room: 202, Poribesh Bhaban New Building E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207	
20.	The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all Eois without showing any reason.			

The Department of Environment is implementing the "Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division" Project. The overall objective of the project is to assess the environmental impact and damage occurred out of Rohingya influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram division.
Project Director of the "Comprehensive Environmental Impact and Damage Assessment of Rohingya Influx in Cox's Bazar and Bhasanchar of Chattogram Division" invites eligible applicants to express their interest in providing the services. Applicants are advised to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services in completed Curriculum Vitae (CV) and proven documents with a cover letter. Request for Application Form with detailed Terms of References (ToR) are available in the website of the Department of Environment (www.doe.gov.bd).
One original and two copies of Eoi must be submitted in the Project office on or before 15th May 2025, 02:00 pm in sealed envelope and be clearly marked the position for Expression of Interest.
The Procuring Entity reserves the right to accept or reject any/all Eoi. Persons who are in service should submit Eoi through the proper channel, otherwise Eoi will be rejected.

-signed-
Md. Samsuzzaman Sarker
Project Director
Email: helpdoepd@gmail.com

GD-972