

Bangladesh's economic roadmap



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Despite moderate improvements in inflation, commodity prices have remained elevated, posing a challenge for the economy.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

And blockchains and modest additional resources could transform the PFDS into a powerful social safety net vehicle. The conversion of the National Identity Card into an open data platform like the Aadhar Card in India could make PFDS distribution far more effective and efficient, including opening up many other avenues of change, particularly in the sphere of banking, finance, and credit access.

On inequality, the task force advocates not just progressive taxation but ensuring equitable access to quality public services at reasonable cost—a seemingly simple goal that has proven maddeningly difficult. Structural constraints related to gender, rural-urban divides, asset distribution, and social class require an intergenerational approach: building human capacities in health and education while opening

markets and non-market spaces to broader participation. It would be a great step forward if all public sector appointments and transfers were based on merit and not on patronage and bribery.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Huge infrastructural gaps continue to hamstring investment. A major focus on energy and connectivity is required with a view to spur growth, especially in the economic zones and

in more remote areas. However, a major deficit in policy has been the neglect of investment in operation and management required to protect and preserve the value of infrastructural investments already made. This problem has now assumed urgency given the recent seismic activity experienced in the country, especially in Dhaka. Major initiatives need to be taken urgently to safeguard both public and private infrastructure, keeping in mind that protection will be far less expensive compared to rebuilding, should an earthquake of higher intensity strike.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT: FROM PROTEST TO PARTNERSHIP

The July uprising demonstrated youth potential as agents of change. The report proposes channelling this energy through youth councils and forums with community service mandates, linked to city councils and municipalities. Mentorship and capacity development programmes outside formal education would encourage activism promoting better public services.

Youth representatives suggested using cartoons and anime to target young people with sensitive messages on mental and sexual health—creative approaches that resonate with digital-native generations. This youth engagement framework represents a fundamental reimagining of citizenship, moving from passive recipients of services to active participants in governance.

The next government must encourage platforms that create space for youth participation and civic action to give purpose and motivation to a vast, restless section of society that has high aspirations but relatively limited avenues to meet those.

CONCLUSION: SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

The task force characterises the

current moment as crucial. If not firmly grasped and appropriately leveraged, Bangladesh risks being set back by years, if not decades. The recommendations represent not wishful thinking but pragmatic, actionable measures drawn from successful experiences in comparable economies.

Success requires shared responsibility between government officials and citizens. Strong leadership and strategic planning can transform challenges into opportunities, fostering a prosperous, equitable, and resilient nation. The alternative—returning to crony capitalism, weak governance, and the drift that characterised the previous era—would betray the hopes and aspirations of millions who will be electing a new set of leaders into power, hoping against hope that this time, finally, we will be able to move away from the catastrophic ‘business as usual’ approach of the past.

The path forward is clear. What remains uncertain is whether Bangladesh's leaders and citizens possess the will to walk it. The task force has provided the map. Now comes the harder part: the journey itself. We highly recommend the establishment of a results-oriented consultative mechanism through which stakeholders will help identify reform priorities from the report, refine some of the proposals if needed, and monitor progress in implementation.

The Task Force Report on Re-strategising the Economy and Mobilising Resources for Equitable and Sustainable Development was submitted to Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus in January 2025. The full report is available at <https://gedkp.gov.bd/task-force-report-on-re-strategising-the-economy-and-mobilizing-resources-for-equitable-and-sustainable-development/>

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