

GDP growth may hit 5% in 2026

Govt report forecasts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Bangladesh's economic outlook for 2026 points to a potential growth of around 5 percent, with expectations of easing inflation, as per a recent government report. However, structural challenges remain, which will require strong governance and policy consistency.

The report by the General Economics Division (GED) of the Bangladesh Planning Commission -- titled Economic Update & Outlook January 2026 -- notes that macroeconomic stability is expected to improve.

Despite that, sustaining growth will require investment in skills and technology to diversify the economy beyond garments. This step is particularly significant as the country approaches graduation from the least developed country (LDC) category and navigates an

ongoing democratic transition.

Recent data show signs of recovery. Provisional quarterly national accounts estimates released by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics indicate that economic activity strengthened in the first quarter of FY2025/26.

On a point-to-point basis, real growth rose to 4.50 percent, up from 2.58 percent in the same quarter a year earlier. Provisional estimates also suggest overall GDP growth at constant prices reached 3.72 percent in FY2024/25, with final figures to be benchmarked against annual GDP using internationally accepted methods.

The GED report underscores the importance of a stable and reformed political environment, alongside effective integration of technology, to shift the economy from low-cost labour dependence to higher-value activities.

No excuse

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alongside the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection during Ramadan to prevent price manipulation.

Addressing questions on a range of economic issues, the adviser also criticised the Sheikh Hasina-led government's spending practices.

He noted that during her rule from 2008, the country's foreign debt rose from Tk 2.20 lakh crore to over Tk 23 lakh crore at present. The taka saw a 46 percent devaluation over the last few years against the US dollar.

Due to the devaluation of the local currency, costly projects became even costlier, he noted. For instance, the project cost of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant went up by Tk 26,000 crore.

The adviser said huge money was spent on implementing the projects, which contributed to high expenditure without generating expected returns. "At one stage, Sheikh Hasina's government went to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and borrowed more than \$4.0 billion to meet the expenditure."

He added that money

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Walton Hi-Tech Industries saw its profits decline in the October-December quarter (Q2) of the current fiscal year, hit by lower sales amid high inflationary pressure.

Despite the setback, Walton posted growth in the first half (H1) of the fiscal year, driven by strong first-quarter sales.

The electronics and electrical products maker posted an 8

percent fall in profits to Tk 155 crore in the second quarter, while sales dipped 1.5 percent to Tk 1,311 crore, according to the company's financial report.

A senior official at a leading investment bank said inflation typically affects sales of luxury or deferrable products.

He added that Walton's offerings fall into this category, and its customers are highly sensitive to price changes, which explains the decline in sales.

Inflation rose to 8.49 percent in December from 8.29 percent in November and 8.17 percent in October, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data.

Meanwhile, the company's profit in the first six months of the fiscal year rose 1.7 percent to Tk 363 crore, while revenue increased 8 percent to Tk 2,762 crore.

In a disclosure published yesterday at the Dhaka Stock Exchange, Walton attributed

the improvement to higher sales revenue, a relatively stable foreign exchange rate, and optimised inventory procurement.

Earnings per share (EPS) increased to Tk 10.90 for the period ended 31 December 2025, up from Tk 9.14 a year earlier.

Walton's stock rose slightly to Tk 385 yesterday. The company provided a 175 percent cash dividend last year, down from 350 percent the previous year.

Walton's Q2 earnings slide

First half remains positive

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He said there have been no major difficulties in opening letters of credit, although higher dollar-related costs continue to affect the import bills.

Sohail said prices of dates are expected to fall by an average of Tk 30 to Tk 35 per kilogramme across different varieties. Prices of other high-demand Ramadan fruits, like oranges, are likely to remain stable.

A visit to major retail markets in Chattogram city, including Khutanganj, Reazuddin Bazar and

Chawkbazar, showed loose soybean oil selling at Tk 175 to Tk 180 per litre, up by Tk 5 to Tk 8 over the past week.

According to the breakdown of the revenue board data during the first six months of FY26, imports of lentils stood at 1.3 lakh tonnes, down from 2.42 lakh tonnes a year earlier.

Crude soybean oil imports fell to 3.03 lakh tonnes from 3.63 lakh tonnes, while palm oil imports rose to 8.23 lakh tonnes from 7.11 lakh tonnes.

Imports of chickpeas

increased to 1.96 lakh tonnes from 1.64 lakh tonnes. Onion imports dropped sharply to 0.62 lakh tonnes from 4.22 lakh tonnes. Ginger imports edged up to 0.78 lakh tonnes from 0.77 lakh tonnes. Date imports rose to 9.45 lakh tonnes from 5.32 lakh tonnes, while sugar imports increased to 26.64 lakh tonnes from 25.6 lakh tonnes.

In an observation, the commerce ministry said that a review of local production, imports and letters of credit shows rising import activity in

line with Ramadan-related demand for essential commodities.

The ministry said price movements of import-dependent essentials remain limited, pointing to overall market stability.

It added that Bangladesh Bank data shows foreign currency supply for imports and exchange rates remain stable.

As domestic production of onions and lentils will overlap with Ramadan, prices of these items are also expected to remain steady, the ministry said.

At a press conference at

the Secretariat yesterday, Commerce Adviser Sk Bashir Uddin said prices of some commodities are likely to fall during Ramadan.

Compared with last year, imports of essential goods have risen by 40 percent, making this Ramadan more affordable, he said.

He added that businesspeople assured the government at a meeting that supplies would remain normal throughout the month. Prices are expected to stay under control, with no increases, and some items may even become cheaper.

Govt raises

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Allowances for "widows and husband-deserted women" have also been raised. Of the 29 lakh beneficiaries, 28.75 lakh will receive Tk 700 per month, while 25,000 women aged over 90 will receive Tk 1,000.

For persons with disabilities, the total number of beneficiaries under the disability allowance and education stipend programme has been increased to 36 lakh from 34.5 lakh. Most will receive Tk 900 per month from FY27, while 18,100 beneficiaries will receive Tk 1,000.

The "mother and child benefit" programme under the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs will cover more than 18.95 lakh mothers, an increase of 1.24 lakh, with a monthly allowance of Tk 850.

The "food friendly programme" of the Ministry of Food will support 60 lakh families starting FY27, up to 5 lakh, providing 30 kg of subsidised rice for six months at Tk 15 per kg.

The Advisory Council committee meeting also raised the monthly allowances for Gallantry Awards-winning freedom fighters and families of martyred freedom fighters by Tk 5,000.

At the meeting, it was recommended that the monthly honorarium allowances for the families of martyrs and the injured from the July Mass Uprising, which fall under the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, and the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) programme under the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, be brought within the purview of the committee on SSNPs.

3-day election

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(Enterprise Service) of Bepza, told The Daily Star that the authority received the EPZ investors' letter yesterday and has already started discussions.

"We received the letter on Sunday. We will discuss the matter with all concerned parties, including relevant ministries, stakeholder associations, and factories inside and outside EPZs," he said. "We will try to ensure that holidays in all industrial areas are observed at the same time during the election period."

He added that Bepza cannot take a decision on its own and that discussions are ongoing, with a final decision to be made at an executive board meeting.

In the letter, EPZ investors said enterprises in the zones follow production and shipment schedules agreed upon with international buyers months in advance, leaving little room for sudden changes.

Unplanned holidays, the association warned, would disrupt production, delay shipments and could result in penalties, order cancellations and loss of buyer confidence.

Garment factory owners outside EPZs raised similar

concerns in a separate letter sent on Saturday to the secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.

They said February already has fewer working days because of Shab-e-Barat, International Mother Language Day and weekly holidays.

With the three additional holidays now declared for the election, the number of effective working days would fall to 19, which could seriously disrupt export-oriented garment production.

The letter also said global demand for garments has remained weak in recent months, with both orders and prices declining, forcing some factories to shut down. In this situation, factory owners are struggling to manage February wage payments and upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr bonuses.

Both garment manufacturers and EPZ investors have urged the government to consider declaring only election day as a mandatory general holiday in industrial areas.

As an alternative, they suggested adjusting the holidays on February 10 and 11 against weekly or annual leave through an executive order.

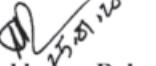
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Chief Commercial Manager (East)
Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram

No. 54.01.1500.107.05.325.26-160

Date: 25-01-2026

Invitation for Proposal for Integrated Facility Management and Operation of Cox's Bazar ICONIC Station

1. The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh with the technical and financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) constructed the Cox's Bazar Iconic Station, at a cost of Tk. 2.14 billion. The Iconic Station covers a total floor area of 238,867sqft. over 22.72 acres of land. The construction was completed by November 2023 and the station operation started in December 2023. The architectural design of Cox's Bazar Railway Station takes inspiration from the shape of an oyster, symbolizing the nearby beach. The iconic station boasts a state-of-the-art architectural design and is equipped with advanced electro-mechanical systems, offering a wide range of modern facilities across six floors. These include comprehensive Bangladesh Railway (BR) services, ticket counters, retail shops, departure and waiting lounges, secure lockers, tourist information desks, product display centers, and prayer rooms. Additional amenities feature restaurants, retail outlets, a 39-room hotel, office spaces, and a multipurpose hall, making the station a fully integrated and multifunctional transport hub. At present Bangladesh Railway is maintaining this facility. To ensure the optimal upkeep and efficient functioning of this high-end, internationally benchmarked facility in a smart, convenient, sustainable, and comprehensive manner, BR has decided to appoint a Vendor for the long-term maintenance and operation of the iconic station on a proposed fixed annual revenue which will increase annually at a fixed rate on year-on-year basis during the contract period.
2. Interested bidders/consortium are invited to submit sealed Proposal (Technical and Financial) for the agreement package as shown below:
 - a. Package No. : CCM/East/CMG/CXB-01
 - b. Location : Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh
 - c. Name of the Service : Integrated Facility Management and Operation of Cox's Bazar ICONIC Station
 - d. Bid Security : BDT 20,00,000.00 (Twenty Lac Taka) payable in the form of a Bank Draft or Pay Order or in the form of an irrevocable bank guarantee issued by a scheduled bank of Bangladesh in favour of Financial Advisor & Chief Accounts Officer, Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram.
 - e. Price of Bid Document : BDT 15,000 (Fifteen Thousand Taka) payable by 'A Chalan' in favour of Director General of Bangladesh Railway, Code No. 1422328 (non-refundable).
 - f. Location to Collect the Bid Document:
 - i. Office of the Chief Commercial Manager (East), Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram.
 - ii. Office of the Divisional Commercial Officer, Bangladesh Railway, Pahartoli, Chattogram.
 - iii. Deputy Director (TC), Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban, (Room No. 116), 16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000
 - g. Location to Submit the Proposal:
 - i. Office of the Chief Commercial Manager (East), Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram.
 - ii. Deputy Director (TC), Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban, (Room No. 116), 16 Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000
 - h. Eligibility of the Bidder : As stated in the Bid Documents.
3. Bid documents may be purchased at the location mentioned in Para 2.f, during office hours on all working days up to 04-03-2026 by submitting an application in official pad. Interested parties may obtain further information from the Office of the undersigned.
4. The Proposal will be submitted at the location mentioned in Para 2.g above up to 12:00pm on 05-03-2026.
5. Proposal shall be opened at 12:15pm on the date of submission by the Proposal Opening Committee (POC) at the location mentioned in Para 2.g above in presence of the Bidders or their representatives who would like to attend with proper authorization.
6. Proposal shall be valid for a period of 180 (One hundred and eighty) days + 28 (twenty-eight) days after proposal opening and must be accompanied by Bid Security noted in Para 2.d.
7. Bidders may submit their Proposals by hand or by courier service or by mail which must reach the location of proposal submission before the deadline for submission of proposals. Proposals received after the deadline will not be accepted and will be returned unopened.
8. A Pre-Proposal Meeting with the potential Bidders (who choose to attend) will be held on 17-02-2026 in Room No. 825, Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban, 16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000.



Md. Mahbubur Rahman
Chief Commercial Manager (East)
Bangladesh Railway, CRB, Chattogram