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6.2cr people one shock away from poverty: WB

Prolonged economic slowdown, inflation, energy shortages leave them on the brink

REJAUL KARIM BYRON *and* **REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA**

Nearly 6.2 crore people in Bangladesh are currently living just one economic shock away from falling below the poverty line, the World Bank has warned, as persistently high inflation and severe energy shortages reverse years of hard-won economic gains.

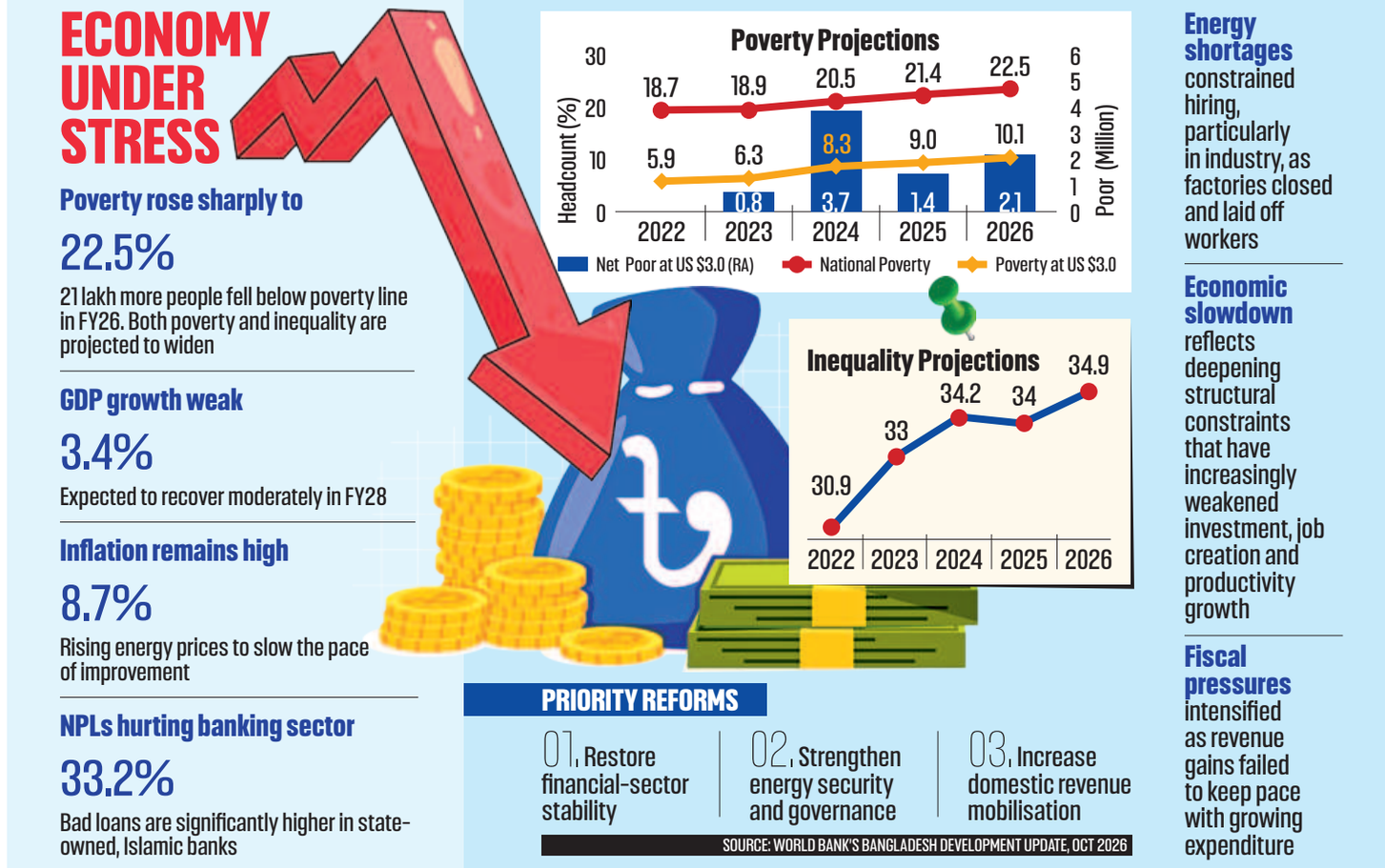
A prolonged slowdown is eroding household welfare through weak labour demand and persistent inflation, pushing national poverty to an estimated 22.5 percent in 2026 from 18.7 percent in 2022, according to the World Bank's latest Bangladesh Development Update, released yesterday. Extreme poverty, measured at the $3-a-day international line, rose from 5.9 percent to an estimated 10.1 percent over the same period.

The economic strain is largely driven by a four-year inflationary surge that has systematically squeezed household purchasing power. This is compounded by acute energy shortages that have curtailed business operating hours, forced factory closures, and stalled job creation, particularly within the country's industrial sectors.

These dual pressures are unravelling decades of poverty reduction. Poverty is estimated to have increased by 1.1 percentage points in the 2026 fiscal year alone, adding an estimated 21 lakh people to the poverty rolls since FY25. Job creation has stalled broadly, with women absorbing a disproportionate share of recent job losses.

However, the absence of Labour Force Survey data since 2025 has limited a full assessment of labour market conditions and their scale, the World Bank said, even as pressures fall on a population with little capacity to absorb them.

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Time for urgent, bold reforms

Says the World Bank, urges prioritising changes in banking revenue, energy sectors

REJAUL KARIM BYRON *and* **REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA**

Bangladesh needs urgent and bold reforms in the financial, energy and revenue sectors to arrest the economic slowdown, restore investor confidence and create jobs, said the World Bank yesterday.

Separation of tax policymaking from tax administration is a key priority to enable tax policies that are designed more strategically and implemented more effectively, the WB said.

"The time to act is now," said Jean Pesme, the WB's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, at the launch of the 'Bangladesh Development Update' report at the multilateral lender's office in Dhaka.

Addressing Bangladesh's structural growth challenges requires a focused reform agenda centred on three priorities: restoring financial sector stability, strengthening energy security and sector governance, and mobilising domestic revenues to create fiscal space for productive investment, the WB said.

Reliable energy and a sound financial system are essential to unlock private investment and improve productivity, while stronger domestic revenue mobilisation is needed to create fiscal space for productive and growth-enhancing sectors.

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Mob storms RMU VC's office, 'forces him to resign'

His PS assaulted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*



Rajshahi Medical University Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Jawadul Haque was allegedly forced to sign a resignation letter yesterday after a mob stormed his office.

The incident occurred while the VC was attending a virtual meeting with health ministry officials on ongoing construction projects, RMU Deputy Registrar Md Mofakkharul Islam said.

He said 20 to 50 people stormed the VC's office around noon and ordered him to sign the resignation letter "without reading it".

The VC's personal secretary, Nazmul Hossain, was assaulted when he intervened, Mofakkharul added.

The mob then allegedly forced Nazmul to sign a separate resignation letter despite his protests that he was a regular employee.

The deputy registrar said the mob took both resignation letters, along with the VC's mobile phone and laptop.

University officials later found that CCTV equipment had been removed and electricity, internet and other communication services had been disconnected. Several rooms had also been locked, disrupting regular activities.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM COMMITTEE

BNP focusing on its polls promises

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The special parliamentary committee on constitutional reform will prioritise implementing the BNP's agenda in line with its election manifesto alongside the July charter, ruling party members of the committee have said.

Key BNP proposals include restoring "Absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah" as a fundamental state principle, excluding the judiciary and the president from the caretaker government system, and limiting an individual's tenure as prime minister to 10 years.

The BNP also favours allowing the prime minister to simultaneously serve as the party chief and introducing the post of vice-president.

Committee members Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni and Zainul Abdin confirmed the party's position on the matter to The Daily Star, saying that constitutional matters included in the manifesto would be considered alongside the charter.

Committee Chair and Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed reiterated that the BNP would fully implement the charter exactly as it was signed.

"Under our election manifesto, we have several proposals that require constitutional amendments, and we will include them too since we secured the people's mandate on those issues," he said during a media briefing after the committee's meeting yesterday.

The BNP manifesto says the July National Charter, signed on October 17, 2025, will be implemented with the highest priority.

It also promises to restore "Absolute trust and faith in Almighty Allah" to the constitution.

"Under our election manifesto, we have several proposals that require constitutional amendments, and we will include them too since we secured the people's mandate on those issues."

Salahuddin Ahmed, committee chair and home minister

Former attorney general Mahmudul Islam writes in his book "Constitutional Law of Bangladesh" that in 1977, then president Ziaur Rahman issued a proclamation order adding the expression "Bismillah-Ar-Rahman-

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Editors' Council condemns attacks on journalists

CPJ raises concern over probe into RU attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council yesterday expressed deep concern over and strongly condemned recent attacks, threats and harassment against journalists across Bangladesh, calling for prompt, impartial investigations and exemplary action against those responsible.

In a statement signed by President Nurul Kabir and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud, the council described the October 4 attack on journalists at Rajshahi University as "extremely concerning".

Citing media reports, it said at least 10 people, including four student journalists, were injured. The journalists were not acting on behalf of any side but were gathering information and reporting in the public interest.

The council said disagreement with any report, opinion or journalist's professional work could never justify an attack, threat or obstruction.

"An attack on a journalist is not merely an attack on a professional; it is an attack on independent journalism, freedom of expression and the people's right to know," the statement said.

Welcoming the filing of a case and an investigation into the RU incident, the council said the probe must be impartial, credible and evidence-based, and all those involved must be brought to justice regardless of their political or organisational identities.

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Photo captures a boy in the middle of a playful game of street football with friends (not in frame) at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday. The country is observing Children's Rights Day 2026 at Bangladesh Shishu Academy from October 6 to 8 under the theme 'Let every child have a secure future'. Story on Page 3. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

IN MEMORIAM

Second Death Anniversary of

LUBNA CHOUDHURY

Former Chairperson & Founder Principal
Bangladesh International Tutorial (BIT)
Date of Death: October 7, 2024



Our mother passed two years ago, but she lives on in BIT which she founded and moulded with her heart and hands.

As a dedicated educator, she led with her values, love of learning and deep caring for students because she wanted them to blossom into educated and moral adults. She knew that education not only imparts knowledge, but also builds character and ingrains principles. She was a great admirer of freedom fighter Nelson Mandela and often referred to his famous quote:

" Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world "

Our mother too tried to change the world by educating over four generations of students in Bangladesh.

We humbly request that you pray to Allah for her eternal peace.

Anika Rahman & Talita Choudhury
BIT Board Directors