

18.1.12

World Bank warns developing world to prepare for shocks

18 January 12 04:16 GMT



The World Bank has warned developing countries they need to be prepared for shocks as global economic growth slows.

The organisation has slashed its growth forecasts, and is now predicting a 0.3% contraction for the eurozone in 2012.

"Developing countries need to evaluate their vulnerabilities and prepare for further shocks, while there is still time," said World Bank chief economist Justin Yifu Lin.

Russia threatens Syria resolution at UN

18 January 12 12:26 GMT



Russia will block any move at the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Syria or authorise the use of force, its foreign minister has said.

Israel in air and ground attack on Gaza 'militants'

18 January 12 11:54 GMT



The Israeli military says it has carried out a ground and air attack near the border fence in northern Gaza.

At least one person was killed and three injured, Palestinian medical sources said.

Goldman Sachs cuts pay and bonuses as profits halve

18 January 12 13:53 GMT



US banking giant Goldman Sachs has cut its pay and bonus payments during 2011 - to \$12.2bn (£7.4bn).

It said its total compensation - including staff bonuses - was down 21% from 2010.

The bank also said that its quarterly profits had more than halved from the previous year, but still beat analysts' forecasts.

Sopa: Sites go dark as part of anti-piracy law protests

18 January 12 13:55 GMT



By Leo Kelion
Technology reporter

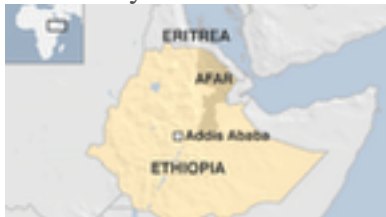
Thousands of internet sites are taking part in a "blackout" protest against anti-piracy laws being discussed by US lawmakers. The Wikipedia encyclopedia and blogging service WordPress are among the highest profile pages to remove material.

Iran nuclear: Russia's Lavrov warns against attack
18 January 12 13:30 GMT



The Russian foreign minister has warned that a Western military strike against Iran would be "a catastrophe". Sergei Lavrov said an attack would lead to "large flows" of refugees from Iran and would "fan the flames" of sectarian tension in the Middle East.

Ethiopia: Tourists kidnapped after deadly Afar attack
18 January 12 12:35 GMT



At least four people have been kidnapped and five foreign tourists killed in an attack near the Eritrean border, the Ethiopian government says.

16.1.12

London 2012: Mass gathering risks disease spreading
16 January 12 02:17 GMT



Mass gatherings, such as the London 2012 Olympics, can be a hotbed of diseases from across the world, public health experts have warned.

15.1.12

Syria crisis: Assad 'gives amnesty for uprising crimes'
15 January 12 10:15 GMT



Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has granted a general amnesty for all crimes committed during the 10-month uprising, state-run media report. It would apply to army deserters who turned themselves in before the end of January, peaceful protesters and those who handed in unlicensed weapons, Sana state news agency is quoted as saying.

Iraq city of Ramadi hit by attacks on police station
15 January 12 11:14 GMT



Insurgents detonated bombs around a police building in the Iraqi city of Ramadi before storming it wearing explosive-belts, police say. The number of casualties is unknown, but one report said five people had died and six were wounded.

Pakistan blast: Shias killed in Khanpur procession
15 January 12 11:33 GMT



An explosion has killed at least 16 people at a Shia religious procession in the central Pakistani city of Khanpur, officials say. It is not known whether the blast was deliberately set off.

Nigeria fuel prices: Talks fail to reach agreement
14 January 12 23:52 GMT



Talks between the Nigerian government and trade union leaders have failed to reach a compromise over the removal of fuel subsidies. However, the chief union negotiator said a threatened oil workers' strike would not go ahead at once. The government removed a fuel subsidy two weeks ago, which led to a doubling of fuel prices, widespread protests and a week-long strike.

Tunisia uprising: Country marks year since Ben Ali fled
14 January 12 18:17 GMT



Tunisians have marked the first anniversary of the ousting of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali, an event that triggered the Arab Spring. Crowds filled Bourguiba Avenue in the capital, Tunis, where weeks of mass protests forced Mr Ben Ali to step down and flee the country.

14.1.12

EU criticises Standard & Poor's ratings downgrade

14 January 12 07:44 GMT



The EU's top economic official has criticised a decision by Standard and Poor's to downgrade the credit ratings of nine eurozone countries. Economic affairs commissioner Olli Rehn said the move was "inconsistent" as the eurozone was taking "decisive action" to end the debt crisis.

Iraq suicide bomb kills 15 in Basra pilgrims attack

14 January 12 07:41 GMT



At least 15 people have been killed in a suicide bomb attack on Shia pilgrims in the southern Iraqi city of Basra, Iraqi police and security sources say. The attack was aimed at pilgrims marking the festival of Arbain, one of the main holy days of the Shia calendar, reports say.

Italy cruise ship Costa Concordia aground near Giglio

14 January 12 10:55 GMT



Three people are confirmed dead after a cruise ship carrying more than 4,000 people ran aground off Italy. There were scenes of panic as the Costa Concordia hit a sandbar on Friday evening near the island of Giglio and listed about 20 degrees. People reached land by lifeboats but some swam ashore.

13.1.12

US to exchange ambassadors with Burma

13 January 12 16:38 GMT



US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has announced that Washington will start the process of exchanging ambassadors with Burma. The announcement came hours after most of the country's political prominent dissidents were released from jail.

Markets fall on eurozone downgrade reports
13 January 12 16:48 GMT



World stock markets have fallen on reports that ratings agency Standard & Poor's is about to downgrade some eurozone countries. Rumours that France and Austria were set to lose their top AAA ratings sent London's FTSE 100 and Frankfurt's Dax down 0.7%, while the Dow Jones in New York fell 0.8%.

Pakistan PM Gilani seeks parliament's support in crisis
13 January 12 14:45 GMT



Pakistan's PM Yousuf Raza Gilani has said parliament must choose between "democracy and dictatorship", in a critical vote of confidence.

Burma frees high-profile dissidents in amnesty
13 January 12 08:44 GMT



Several high-profile dissidents have been set free in Burma in the latest in a series of prisoner amnesties.

Apple ends China iPhone store sales after launch issues
13 January 12 06:06 GMT



Apple has said it will halt the sale of all iPhone models from its stores in China, after large crowds disrupted the launch of the iPhone 4S. An Apple store, in the Sanlitun area of Beijing, did not open on Friday after a large crowd gathered outside in anticipation of the launch.

The crowd became unruly, throwing eggs. Scuffles broke out with police.
China is the world's largest mobile phone market, and Apple's second-biggest market.

Iran nuclear: Ali Larijani accepts Turkey talks offer

12 January 12 22:18 GMT



Iran has said it has agreed to talks with six world powers on its controversial nuclear programme, days after the UN confirmed Tehran was producing 20% enriched uranium.

Wikileaks suspect Bradley Manning 'should be tried'

12 January 12 23:47 GMT



The US Army analyst suspected of passing classified information to Wikileaks should face a court martial, a military tribunal has recommended.
Intelligence analyst Bradley Manning is alleged to have leaked US government cables to the whistle-blowing website.

12.1.12

Burma government signs ceasefire with Karen rebels

12 January 12 09:24 GMT



Burma's government has signed a ceasefire deal with Karen rebels, a government official told the BBC.

The agreement came at talks between officials and the Karen National Union (KNU) in Hpa-an, the capital of eastern Karen state.

US Marine Corps probes 'Taliban desecration' video

12 January 12 07:36 GMT



The US military has said it is investigating a video that appears to show a group of Marines urinating on dead Taliban fighters.

Japan 'to reduce Iran oil imports'

12 January 12 07:54 GMT



Japan will take "concrete steps" to reduce its oil dependency on Iran, its finance minister has announced.
The comments from Jun Azumi came after he met US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner in Tokyo.

RBS to cut 3,500 jobs in investment bank shake-up

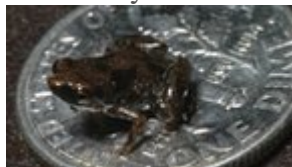
12 January 12 08:38 GMT



The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has said it is planning to cut 3,500 jobs, with most of them to happen this year.
The cuts are part of a reorganisation and shrinkage of its investment bank.

World's smallest frog discovered

11 January 12 22:21 GMT



By Richard Black
Environment correspondent, BBC News

A frog species that appears to be the world's smallest has been discovered in Papua New Guinea by a US-based team.
At 7mm (0.27 inches) long, *Paedophryne amauensis* may be the world's smallest vertebrate - the group that includes mammals, fish, birds and amphibians

North Korea to display Kim Jong-il's body permanently

12 January 12 06:56 GMT



North Korea has announced that the body of late leader Kim Jong-il will lie in state permanently at a palace in the capital, Pyongyang.
Exoplanets are around every star, study suggests

11 January 12 19:06 GMT



By Jason Palmer
Science and technology reporter, BBC News, Austin, Texas

Every star twinkling in the night sky plays host to at least one planet, a new study suggests.
That implies there are some 10 billion Earth-sized planets in our galaxy.

11.1.12

Italy austerity: PM Monti warns of angry response
11 January 12 13:02 GMT



Italian PM Mario Monti has warned of protests against the EU and Germany if his country's painful economic and labour law reforms go unrecognised.

German GDP 'likely to have shrunk' in fourth quarter
11 January 12 10:11 GMT



The German economy is likely to have shrunk by 0.25% in the final quarter of 2011, an official from the Federal Statistics Office has said. For the whole of 2011, the economy grew by 3%, official figures from the Statistics Office showed, driven by strong growth in the first half.

Iran car explosion 'kills nuclear scientist' in Tehran
11 January 12 08:19 GMT



A university lecturer and nuclear scientist has been killed in a car explosion in north Tehran, reports say.

New Hampshire primary: Romney claims victory
11 January 12 05:44 GMT



US Republican presidential hopeful Mitt Romney has taken another stride towards his party's nomination after a solid victory in New Hampshire's primary. The former Massachusetts governor was home and dry on nearly 40% of the vote, with most results counted.

Nigeria violence: Deadly gun attack on bar in Yobe
11 January 12 00:00 GMT



Gunmen in Nigeria have opened fire in a bar in the north of the country, killing eight people including several police officers.

The attack in Yobe state is the latest in a series that officials blame on the Islamist militant group, Boko Haram.

Skyscrapers 'linked with impending financial crashes'

11 January 12 04:46 GMT



There is an "unhealthy correlation" between the building of skyscrapers and subsequent financial crashes, according to Barclays Capital.

Three killed in Pakistan by 'US drone attack'

11 January 12 04:30 GMT



A US drone attack has killed at least three militants in Pakistan's tribal area, local intelligence officials say. They say missiles hit a house just outside the town of Miranshah in North Waziristan, near the Afghan border.

Alex Salmond insists on independence referendum mandate

11 January 12 08:47 GMT



Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond has said his government has a mandate to hold a referendum on independence in the autumn of 2014. The UK government says Holyrood cannot legally go ahead without its authority.

10.1.12

Syria's Assad blames 'foreign conspiracy'

10 January 12 09:41 GMT



Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has blamed a foreign conspiracy for trying to destabilise Syria. He said the "external conspiracy is clear to everybody", as protests continue against his rule. In his first public remarks for months, he said: "Regional and international sides have tried to destabilise the country."

North Korea announces prisoner amnesty

10 January 12 08:21 GMT



North Korea says it will grant an amnesty for prisoners to mark the birthdays of two late leaders.

State news agency KCNA said that the amnesty would begin from 1 February, in honour of Kim Jong-il, who died last month, and his father Kim Il-sung.

Iran's uranium enrichment is escalation, says US

10 January 12 09:29 GMT



The US has said Iran's enrichment of uranium at an underground site is "a further escalation" of its ongoing violation of UN resolutions.

The warning comes after the UN's nuclear watchdog confirmed that Tehran had begun enriching uranium up to 20% at its northern Fordo plant.

Deadly blast hits bus terminal in Khyber, Pakistan

10 January 12 08:17 GMT



At least 23 people have been killed after a bomb exploded near a bus terminal in a tribal region of north-west Pakistan, officials say. The blast took place in the town of Jamrud in the Khyber tribal region, an area where militants have previously launched deadly attacks

Olympus shares soar as it sues executives for fraud

10 January 12 09:16 GMT



Olympus shares have soared by close to 20% after the firm confirmed it would sue current and former executives over a cover-up of losses.

It told the BBC it was suing 19 current and former executives after a \$1.7bn (£1bn) accounting cover-up.

It comes after an independent panel report looking into management involvement in the fraud.

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Menu

India fake doctors arrested over botched operations

10 January 12 09:31 GMT



By Amarnath Tewary
Patna, Bihar

Police in India's Bihar state have arrested three men posing as doctors, who performed botched sterilisation surgery on 53 women in two hours. The tubectomy operations were carried out in a field and without the use of anaesthesia, in Araria district.

9.1.12

The chairman of the Swiss National Bank (SNB), Philipp Hildebrand, has resigned with immediate effect.

Mr Hildebrand has faced allegations of wrongdoing after details emerged of controversial currency trades made by his wife.

A general strike in Nigeria over the elimination of a fuel subsidy has brought the country to a standstill.

Shops, offices, schools and petrol stations around the country closed on the first day of an indefinite strike.

Ice Age deferred

In the journal Nature Geoscience, they write that the next Ice Age would begin within 1,500 years - but emissions have been so high that it will not.

"At current levels of CO₂, even if emissions stopped now we'd probably have a long interglacial duration determined by whatever long-term processes could kick in and bring [atmospheric] CO₂ down," said Luke Skinner from Cambridge University.

Very tense situation.

An agreement with Greek bondholders must come soon for Greece to receive a vital second bailout, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel says.

"The second Greek aid package, including this [debt] restructuring, must be in place quickly. "Otherwise it won't be possible to pay out the next tranche for Greece," she told a news conference.

Sunday, 8.1.12

Foreign ministers from the Arab League are due to discuss in Cairo the progress of their mission in Syria and to discuss whether to ask for UN help.

An observer mission sent by the League to assess a peace plan has been criticised as toothless, as bloodshed continues despite its presence.

The President of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, has gone on TV to defend his removal of fuel subsidies in Africa's largest oil-producing nation.

"I have no intention to inflict pains on Nigerians," he said on Saturday evening, arguing that the cut was in the "best interest of all Nigerians".

North Korea has marked what is reported to be the birthday of its new leader, Kim Jong-un, with a documentary aired on state television.

The film shows him in his new role as supreme military commander - inspecting troops, saluting and sitting in a tank.

The chairman of the Swiss National Bank resigned “Mr Hildebrand has faced allegations of wrongdoing after details emerged of controversial currency trades made by his wife.”

Oil strike in Nigeria “The country faces a standstill. Shops, offices, schools and petrol stations around the country closed on the first day of an indefinite strike.”

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EU: Very tense situation “An agreement with Greek bondholders must come soon for Greece to receive a vital second bailout, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel says. The second Greek aid package, including this [debt] restructuring, must be in place quickly.” Otherwise it won't be possible to pay out the next tranche for Greece,” she told a news conference.”

Arab League and Syria “Foreign ministers from the Arab League are due to discuss in Cairo the progress of their mission in Syria and to discuss whether to ask for UN help. An observer mission sent by the League to assess a peace plan has been criticised as toothless, as bloodshed continues despite its presence.”

Birthday of Kim Jon-un “North Korea has marked what is reported to be the birthday of its new leader, Kim Jong-un, with a documentary aired on state television. The film shows him in his new role as supreme military commander - inspecting troops, saluting...”

Sudanese President in Libya “President Bashir arrived with a high-level delegation for a two-day visit, airport sources were quoted as saying.”

Orthodox church and Kremlin “The head of the Russian Orthodox Church has said the Kremlin should heed the recent mass protests over ballot-rigging and adjust its policies. In a televised message on Orthodox Christmas Day, Patriarch Kirill said it would be a “very bad sign” if the authorities ignored the protesters. He added that he could not take sides in the election dispute.”

High speed in UK “Ministers are “considering very seriously” building a controversial new high-speed rail line between London and Birmingham, the BBC understands. A source said a Network Rail review of the two main alternatives favoured by opponents concluded they could not “generate the capacity” needed”

Controversial bomb “Syria's interior ministry has vowed to “strike back with an iron fist” at what it says is a recent “escalation” of anti-government terror attacks. It comes after a bomb in the capital, Damascus, killed at least 26 civilians and members of the security forces. Opposition groups have accused the government of planting the bomb to discredit their opponents and influence Arab League monitors.”

Nigeria's religious conflict “Nigeria has been hit by a fresh wave of violence apparently targeting the country's Christian communities. At least 17 people were killed in Mubi in Adamawa state as gunmen opened fire in a town hall where members of the Christian Igbo group were meeting.”

No relax for Burma “British Foreign Secretary William Hague says he believes the momentum for change in Burma is real, but has warned against relaxing pressure too soon.”

Pacific rivalries “China's state media have warned the US against “flexing its muscles” after Washington unveiled a defence review switching focus to the Asia-Pacific.”

US economy hopeful “The US economy created 200,000 jobs in December, marking the sixth month in a row of gains, official figures show.”

Syria unrest “At least 10 people have died in a suicide attack on a district in central Damascus, Syrian state media say.”

The ban of imports from Iran “EU member states have agreed in principle to ban imports of Iranian crude oil to put pressure on the country over its nuclear programme. The move is expected to be announced formally at an EU foreign ministers' meeting at the end of January.”

China's refusal of EU tax “China's biggest airlines will not pay a new European Union tax aimed at cutting carbon emissions, their trade body has said.”

Baghdad's bombs continue “At least 24 people have died after explosions in Shia areas of Baghdad, according to Iraq's Interior Ministry. The ministry told the BBC that at least 66 people were wounded in the blasts, which occurred in the capital's Sadr City and Kadhimiya neighbourhoods.”

Burma's outlooks “Burma's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi says she believes Burma will hold democratic elections “in my lifetime”.”

Iran: sanctions efficient “The US has said threats by Iran to restrict Gulf shipping in the event of further sanctions shows international pressure is having an effect.”

China's warning of Western influence “Satellite broadcasters in China have cut entertainment TV by two-thirds following a government campaign, state news agency Xinhua has reported. An order by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (SARFT) to curb excessive entertainment came into effect on 1 January. The number of entertainment shows aired during prime time each week has dropped to 38 from 126, said the watchdog. The news came as the president warned of the influence of Western culture.”

Mitt Romney's victory “Former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney has narrowly won the first vote by US Republican party supporters in the process to choose a presidential candidate for this year's election.”

Competition of two models in US “Six Republican presidential candidates are preparing for the first official test of the US election season in the rural state of Iowa. Tuesday's ballot is the first contest in the nationwide battle to be the Republican who will challenge Barack Obama for the White House in November.”

Taliban office “The Taliban say they have reached a preliminary agreement to set up a political office, possibly in Qatar, as part of Western plans to end the war. A statement confirmed the move, which has been backed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai.”

Clashes in Tripoli “Militias clash in the centre of Libyan capital Tripoli. Clashes have erupted in the centre of the Libyan capital, Tripoli.”

Deadly vendetta in South Sudan “The United Nations has warned villagers in South Sudan to flee from advancing fighters from a rival ethnic group. Fighters from the Lou Nuer ethnic group are pursuing members of the Murle group, reports say, as a deadly vendetta over cattle raiding continues.”

NK - SK facing future “The Korean peninsula is at a “turning point” and there are opportunities for change, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak said in a new year speech. He said Seoul would “respond strongly” if provoked by North Korea, with whom it remains technically at war. But he said that the biggest goal was stability, and that aid-for-disarmament talks could resume if Pyongyang halted its nuclear activities.”

Arab Parliament and Syria “An advisory body to the Arab League has called for the organisation's observers to be withdrawn from Syria because of the ongoing crackdown on protests. The speaker of the Arab Parliament said the monitors had to leave “considering the continued killing of innocent civilians by the Syrian regime”.

Difficult year ahead “European leaders have warned of a difficult year ahead, as many economists predict recession in 2012. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Europe was experiencing its “most severe test in decades” but that Europe was growing closer in the debt crisis.”

Iran's tests “Iran has successfully test-fired a medium-range surface-to-air missile during military exercises in the Gulf, the official Irna news agency reports.”

Ethnic clashes in Nigeria “At least 50 people have been killed in eastern Nigeria in clashes between rival ethnic groups, officials said. A government spokesman said the violence in the state of Ebonyi took place between the Ezza and Ezilo peoples due to a land dispute. Dozens of riot police have been deployed to the area, officials said.”

US sanctions against Iran “US President Barack Obama has signed into law a major defence bill including tough new sanctions against Iran. The law cuts off from the US financial system foreign firms that do business with Iran's central bank.”