

Half a billion people unemployed or lack decent jobs: UN

AFP, Geneva

More than 470 million people worldwide are currently unemployed or underemployed, the UN said on Monday, warning that a lack of access to decent jobs was contributing to social unrest.

The global unemployment rate has remained relatively stable over much of the past decade, according to the UN's International Labour Organization.

But while the rate -- which stood at 5.4 percent last year -- is not expected to change much, overall jobless numbers are likely to inch up as slowing economies reduce the number of jobs available to a growing population.

This year, the number of people registered as unemployed is expected to rise to 190.5 million up from 188 million in 2019, ILO said in its annual World Employment and Social Outlook report.

At the same time, the UN body stressed that some 285 million people worldwide are considered underemployed, meaning they either work less than they want to, have given up searching for work or otherwise lack access to the labour market.

That amounts to nearly half a billion people and represents a full 13 percent of the global labour force, the ILO pointed out.

"For millions of working people, it is becoming increasingly difficult I think to build better lives through work," ILO chief Guy Ryder told reporters in Geneva.

He warned that "persisting and substantial work-related inequalities and exclusion" were preventing many from finding decent work and thereby also creating better futures.

"I think that this is an extremely worrying finding," he said, adding that lacking access to decent work appeared to be part of what was spurring growing

protest movements and unrest around the world.

"Labour market conditions are contributing to... this erosion of social cohesion in many of our societies," he said, referring to mass demonstrations in places like Lebanon and Chile.

According to the ILO's "social unrest index", measuring the frequency of things like demonstrations and strikes, there was an increase both at the global level and in seven out of 11 subregions between 2009 and 2019.

The ILO report highlighted that more than 60 percent of the global workforce currently work in the informal economy, often toiling for substandard wages and lacking basic social protections.

And in 2019, more than 630 million people -- a fifth of the global working population -- lived in so-called working poverty, meaning they made less than \$3.20 per day in purchasing power.

At the same time, the ILO report warned of significant income and job access inequality, driven by things like gender, age and geographic location.

In particular, it warned that a staggering 267 million young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are not in employment, education or training, while many more in this group endure substandard working conditions.

The study showed that the average share of national income going to pay wages and other labour costs shrank from 54 percent to 51 percent between 2004 and 2017.

And within the waged population, the gap between the highest earners and those at the bottom is "extremely unequal", Ryder said.

The ILO report found that it took 11 years for the bottom 20 percent of wage earners to make the same amount as the top 20 percent make in a year.

"The situation is worse than we previously thought," Ryder said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina places a wreath at the coffin of Awami League lawmaker Ismat Ara Sadique at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan yesterday. The 78-year-old lawmaker passed away at a city hospital earlier in the day.

PHOTO: PTI

Tussle over metro line-6 extension

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meeting minutes to the DMTCL expressing their concern. "It would frustrate our plan centring on the Kamalapur station. This is not acceptable," he told The Daily Star on January 12.

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, a BR official said they were yet to get any response from the DMTCL authorities. "A letter would be sent to them soon," the official said.

While detailing the multimodal hub plan, another railway official said the project will accommodate the connectivity of conventional railway, high-speed railway, MRT line-1, 2 and 4, elevated expressway, bus stoppage, and a subway and MRT line-6 with skywalk.

"Any change and deviation will upset the whole plan," Monirul Islam Firozi, who is overseeing MmTH on behalf of the BR, told this newspaper recently.

The government aims to build six metro lines in the capital and its adjacent areas by 2030. One of the tracks will be elevated, one underground and four will be both elevated and underground.

The underground MRT line-1 will connect Kamalapur with Shahjalal International Airport. MRT line-2, which will be both elevated and underground, will link Gabtoli to Chattogram Road via Kamalapur. Kamalapur will be connected with Narayanganj by the underground MRT line-4.

MRT line-6 is under-construction at a cost of Tk 22,000 crore. It will carry 60,000 passengers per hour.

The DMTCL is working to extend the line up to Kamalapur so that people using metro rail can directly go to the country's largest railway station.

It has completed a topography survey and selected an alignment for the additional 1.16km line. There are 31 permanent structures on the route to be demolished, a DMTCL official said.

DMTCL had earlier planned to connect Motijheel with Kamalapur with a skywalk -- a suspended road only

for walk.

DMTCL abandoned the plan as a walk for more than one kilometre may not be helpful for commuters, said the DMTCL official.

EXPRESSWAY ANOTHER CONCERN
The railway authorities have sent Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) the same meeting minutes, which also said, "The proposed alignment of FDEE [First Dhaka Elevated Express] has to be shifted to Atish Dipankar Road, and best engineering solution should be found out to connect it with MmTH."

The bridge authority is constructing the 19.73km elevated expressway from Shahjalal International Airport to Kutubkhali on Dhaka-Chattogram highway.

The total plan involves about a 47km-stretch including approach roads and ramps at different points. There will be a ramp and toll plaza near Kamalapur for this scheme.

AHMS Aktar, project director of the elevated expressway project, said they have received the BR letter.

As per the decision of a recent inter-ministerial meeting, a joint survey would be conducted in Kamalapur area as several authorities are implementing different projects in this area.

"If the railway has any problem with our plan, we, upon discussion will shift the ramp or toll plaza a little," he told The Daily Star on January 12.

The joint survey would be conducted to solve these problems and find out an "engineering solution", he added.

A BR official yesterday said they too would send a letter to the DMTCL as they were yet to get any response from it.

WOULD HINDER BR PLANS

According to railway officials, the latest proposals regarding MRT line-6 and elevated expressway will hinder the BR plan to build multi-modal transport hub centring on the Kamalapur station.

The government has already signed a memorandum of cooperation with Japan to implement it under a G2G public-private partnership project, and the basic concept was approved in the

third Bangladesh-Japan joint platform meeting in March last year, reads BR documents.

Buet has been engaged as advisor for conducting feasibility study.

Monirul Islam Firozi, also PPP focal point official of BR, said more than 80 meetings were held over the planned hub and the issue was discussed at three platform meetings with Japan government representatives.

DMCL officials were present at the meeting and they are very much aware of the plan from the beginning.

"We are working to integrate all possible modes including MRT-6 but the current proposal for expansion of MRT-6 up to Kamalapur is not acceptable because it would hinder our plan," he said.

Kajima Corporation has already informed the BR that they would withdraw their proposal if the MRT-6 extension route is accepted, he said.

Against this backdrop, the BR requested Kajima to find out an alternative route for MRT-6 without upsetting the plan for the hub and it has already been done, he said.

The BR has no problem with the proposed skywalk as the multimodal transport hub was planned keeping it into consideration. It has already prepared a draft plan for use of Kamalapur station's land as several important and mega projects will be connected to the station.

THREE OPTIONS

MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL, said they were aware of BR's concern over their extension plan of MRT-6 and were working with three options for the extension.

Option one is to build a station of MRT-6 over the underground station of MRT-1 at Kamalapur while the second option is to build the station outside BR land and third option is to build the station taking some land from the BR.

"We will hold meetings with the consultants of both MRT-6 and 1 and later talk with the BR soon to find out a solution," he told The Daily Star also on January 12.

Man beaten up for escorting rape witnesses

Victim says police did not take action during attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police yesterday arrested two people for beating up a man who was escorting witnesses of a rape incident on Friday in Pabna Sadar upazila.

The incident came to light on Monday after a video of the attack went viral on social media.

Around 7:00pm on Friday, a group of attackers allegedly led by Md Arif, brother of Maligasa Union Parishad Chairman Md Sariful Islam Sarif, attacked the victim Md Abdul Alim at the Gaspara Bazar.

Alim had gone there with the witnesses of a rape incident who were to give statements to the investigation officer of the rape case. Sarif is an accused in the case.

Police said Alim was told to bring the witnesses to the bazar to talk and gather information from them unofficially.

After the attack, Alim, 36, a local businessman, was rushed to Pabna General Hospital by passers-by in critical condition, with fractures in both his arms and legs.

When CCTV footage of the attack went viral, the victim's wife Ruma Khatun filed a case with Pabna Police Station on Monday night accusing 10 named and around 15 unnamed people.

Police arrested two of the accused -- Ashraf Hossain and Tofazzal Hossain, both around 40-years old -- yesterday morning. A three-member probe committee has also been formed by police to investigate the incident.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Alim said when the witnesses gave their statements to the police official, Arif and his men came to the spot and swooped on him with sticks and iron rods, adding that the policemen present did nothing to help him.

He claimed he was asked to help police during investigation because the witnesses were not giving their statements fearing harassment by the union parishad chairman.

"I am well-known in the locality, so I was asked to convince the witnesses to give their statements.

"Officer-in-charge [investigation] of Pabna police station Md Khairul Islam asked me to bring them [the witnesses of the rape incident]. Following his instructions, I brought them to a shop in the Gaspara bazar on Friday night, when the Sarifs attacked me in front of police. The law enforcers did not take action when I was being attacked," Alim alleged.

Contacted, OC Khairul Islam denied the allegation, saying he and a constable, both in plainclothes, were leaving the spot before the attack took place.

"I was with a constable. We were in plainclothes and without arms and were leaving the spot when we saw a rush of people... When I come to know that there was an attack, a police team was sent to the spot immediately but the attackers had fled the scene by then," he said.

Additional Superintendent of Police Goutam Kumar Biswas said, "Yesterday morning, we arrested two of the accused and a drive is going on to nab the others. A three-member probe committee, headed by Additional Superintendent of Police Shamima Parvin, has been formed to investigate the incident."

Earlier on December 22, a rape case was filed with Pabna police station accusing eight people, including the chairman of Maligasa union parishad Md Sariful Islam Sarif.

This correspondent tried reaching Sarif over phone for comments but he did not pick up.

Police claimed the investigation of the rape case was being delayed due to the lack of witnesses.

'Drug peddler' killed in 'gunfight'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight" with the Rapid Action Battalion in the city's Khilkhet area early yesterday.

Deceased Anwar Hossain, 34, a resident of Khilkhet, was accused in 18 drug-related cases and a rape case, said Md Kamruzzaman, assistant director of Rab-1.

He said a team of Rab-1 carried out a raid in Khilkhet's Barura around 2:00am after receiving information that a group of drug peddlers was gathering there for trading drugs.

Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the criminals opened fire at them. The Rab members fired back, triggering the "gunfight", Kamruzzaman added.

At one stage, Anwar was hit by bullets. However, his accomplices managed to flee, said the Rab official.

Anwar was taken to Kurmitola General Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Kamruzzaman claimed that a Rab man sustained minor injuries in the incident. The elite force recovered four arms, 34 bullets, and 1,950 yaba pills from the spot.

The Rab official said Anwar used to supply drugs to Khilkhet and its adjacent areas.

Virus alarm

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screening passengers of a flight that arrived at 7:30am from China, AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director of the airport, told The Daily Star.

At 3:30pm, the team also screened the passengers of the second flight, out of three, coming from China.

No suspected cases were found during the screening, confirmed the officials.

The third flight is scheduled to arrive at 11:00pm, airport sources said.

The flights carrying the passengers from China are of US Bangla airlines, China Eastern airlines and the China Southern airlines, who operate one flight each day.

Although there are no direct flights from China, authorities of Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram issued an alert in this regard, our Chattogram correspondent reports.

"Some passengers have to stop in China for transit to come Chattogram. As per the directives of the Directorate General of Health Services, we will screen them," said Wing Commander ABM Sarwar-e-Jaman, manager of the airport.

The move comes following the breakout of a new SARS-like virus

in China's Yuhuan province with rising fears of a bigger outbreak after China's National Health Commission confirmed on Monday that the virus can be passed between people, according to AFP.

As per the alert, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) would be notified, if symptoms are found in any passenger.

The IEDCR would then test the passenger further in their laboratory in Kurmitola General Hospital, according to officials.

"They would work as per procedure," Dr ASM Alamgir, principal scientific officer at the Department of Medical Entomology at IEDCR, told The Daily Star.

Earlier on Monday, a team of IEDCR briefed the physicians working in HSIA for the detection of probable cases.

The symptoms the airport authorities would look for among passengers are fever, cough, cold, breathing difficulties and sore throat.

The new coronavirus strain has caused alarm because of its connection to Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), which killed nearly 650 people across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

BNP's Tabith attacked

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While continuing the campaign in nearby Kalyanpur area, Tabith told reporters that some 25-30 ruling party men, equipped with arms, iron rods and sticks, swooped on his men. The attackers were chanting "Joy Bangla" slogan, he alleged.

He said the attackers also threw bricks and eggs at them.

"Like cowards, they attacked us from behind. I was their target. It is a matter of serious concern that the attack was carried out right in front of some police personnel," he said.

Tabith said he was hit on the head while many of his supporters were beaten up by the attackers.

"We did not launch a counterattack as we believe in peace. We are still going to the voters as they will give a befitting reply on the election day by voting for 'Sheaf of Paddy'," he said.

"Sheaf of Paddy" is Tabith's polls symbol for the city corporation election, which is scheduled to take place on February 1.

Contacted, Tofayal Ahamed, officer-in-charge of Darussalam Police Station, said the incident happened when mayor candidates from both the AL and the BNP were electioneering in the area.

"As they came face to face, they engaged in a scuffle. Police later dispersed them," he said, adding that he was yet to receive any complaint over the matter.

BNP's Publicity Affairs Secretary Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anne, who was present during the incident, alleged that his party men were attacked twice by the ruling party men in Gabtoli area. He said at least 15 BNP men, including Tabith, were injured.

The party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir condemned the attack and urged the Election Commission to hold the city polls in a free, fair and credible manner.

"It's a pre-planned attack and an act of cowardice. As the voting day approaches, the criminal group of the ruling party is becoming more violent,"

he said in a press release.

Fakhrul described the EC as loyal to the prime minister and alleged that the commission took a rigid stance on using electronic voting machines in the polls to fulfil the "evil desire" of the ruling quarters.

Tabith's rival Atiqul Islam, however, termed the incident an internal clash of the BNP.

While electioneering at Beraid Muslim High School ground, the AL candidate said he was yet to hear about any attack. "They [BNP men] clashed with each other."

Talking to reporters at his Secretariat office, Information Minister Hasan Mahmud said he saw a conspiracy in yesterday's incident.

A quarter is trying to create confusions centring on the election, he said. "Investigation is needed to find whether the quarter is involved here."

Hasan, also joint general secretary of the AL, alleged that from the beginning, the BNP was trying to make the polls questionable.

The Daily Star could not contact the AL-backed ward councillor whose supporters, according to BNP leaders, attacked Tabith and his followers.

The Election Commission has instructed Abul Kashem, returning officer for the DNCC polls, to investigate the attack on Tabith.

Talking to reporters at the EC Secretariat in the capital, the commission's Secretary Md Alamgir said Tabith complained to the EC right after the attack.

The returning officer was instructed to take steps following a proper investigation, he said.

In the latest development, the returning officer, in a letter, asked the OC of the Darussalam Police Station to take legal steps after investigation.

In another letter, the RO asked the executive magistrate concerned to take steps as per the rules and informed him about it.

The Daily Star obtained copies of the letters.

A big threat to environment

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temperature polythene is heated for lamination.

"When these laminated papers are heated under sunshine again, they start emitting greenhouse gas," he said.

Apart from the environmentalists, city corporations' officials were also worried about the generation of polythene waste of such a large volume.

Seeking anonymity, a DNCC official of waste management department, said, "We're already facing land crisis for dumping daily waste. These [laminated posters] will worsen the situation."

An inspector of the DSCC's waste management department said vagabonds and scavengers would collect some of these waste and throw those here and there.

"That means, pollution will be spread everywhere in the city," he said.

The elections to Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) are scheduled to be held on February 1. Ahead of the polls, the candidates are conducting door-to-door campaigns along with hanging a huge number of posters.

About 140 mayor and councillor candidates out of the 745, in their disclosure of election expenditures, mentioned that they would print nearly 50 lakh posters. Almost half of which is planned to be printed by the mayor candidates only, as per the EC's data.

In the 11th parliamentary polls, such posters were printed.

Almost a week before the start of election campaign for Dhaka city corporation polls, the High Court directed the authorities concerned

to ban single-use plastic products in coastal areas, hotels, motels and restaurants across the country in one year as those are hazardous to health and environment.

The plastic products include drinking straws, cotton buds, cigarette butts, food packaging, food containers, bottles, plates, plastic cutlery and plastic bags.

The HC bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman came up with the order following a writ petition jointly filed by 11 rights organisations, including Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), seeking necessary order.

The rights organisations submitted the writ petition as a public interest litigation on December 17 last year, mentioning the hazardous effects of plastic -- particularly single-use plastics -- on ecology, aquatic and marine life, soil fertility, agricultural production, human health and safety.

According to the Department of Environment (DoE), the country generates around 3,000 tonnes of plastic waste every day.

Contacted, barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, mayor candidate of the ruling Awami League for the DSCC, told The Daily Star that there was no bar from the Election Commission (EC) on using laminated posters for election campaigns.

"I will remove all the posters at my own expense after the election," he said.

Mollik Anwar Hossain, additional director general of the DoE, said they were also concerned about the use of plastic on the posters.

"Since the polls are being held under the EC, we are not able to take actions without permission from it," he said adding that they had prepared a letter to be sent to the EC in this regard.

Asked about the content of the letter, Anwar said, "We will seek legal cooperation from the EC. Besides we will request the authorities to give directives to the candidates to remove

the laminated posters."

Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said he personally did not encourage the use of plastic and polythene.

Regarding the laminated posters, he said, "There is no legal binding in the EC rules. The Department of Environment can take action as per its law. The EC will not interfere."

Cattle trader's body found on border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members yesterday recovered the body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader near Harihbasa border in Panchagarh Sadar upazila.

The victim was identified as Hasan Ali, 25, son of Tabibar Rahman from Khalpara area in the same upazila.

The body with an injury mark on the head was found lying near pillar no. 752 in Mominpara village inside Bangladesh territory, police said, adding that they had sent it to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital for an autopsy.

Locals claimed that the Indian Border Security Force shot Hasan dead early yesterday when he crossed the border to bring some cattle, and later, they abandoned the body inside Bangladesh territory.

However, police and BGB men said the reason behind his death could not be ascertained until the autopsy report is out.

Commanding Officer of 56th BGB Battalion Lt Colonel Mamunul Huque and Superintendent of Police in Panchagarh Mohammad Yusuf Ali visited the spot yesterday.

Mamunul said they were investigating the incident.