

DOWN TO EARTH

Controlling Price Hike in City

By A S M Nurunnabi

Lately prices of daily necessities have been on the rise in a competitive manner. It is not clear if it signals a general rise in the price level in the entire country. The only exceptions are in the cases of rice and paddy. In many places the sale price of one maund of rice is lower than its production cost. It is open to question whether this unnatural situation is good for the farmers, the economy of the country. However, the fact remains that besides rice and paddy, the price of no other commodity is stable.

Baby food is leading the race. Than comes fish and then vegetables. Rickshaw and autorickshaw fares have also increased twenty to twenty-five per cent. The shopkeepers have their usual explanation for this: they blame the government budget. But this explanation has no basis as is clear to anyone having some information about the government budget. In fact, import duties on some varieties of milk powder was reduced from 37 to 30 per cent. Inspite of this, there has been a substantial price rise of this commodity.

Normally price rise takes place when there is a dearth in supply. None can say that such a situation has arisen causing the price to rise. In fact, this development seems to be more due to the whims of the retailers than for any sound economic reason. The absence of any mechanism to control the retailers goes to the advantage of the retailers to manipulate the price at their will.

There are signs of economic recession world-wide, which bodes ill for our economic life.

There will be less incentive for investment in industries if a high price level of imports makes trade more profitable. This will consequently lead to restriction in the field of employment. In this situation of economic doldrums, inflationary trend becomes noticeable in the urban areas on account of the price hike. In this situation all our efforts need be directed towards an increase of manufacturing activity which alone can alleviate the widespread unemployment.

The economic situation has other ramifications. The surplus financial resources lying idle with our banks are simultaneously a cause and consequence of the low level of economic activity. Even our agriculture sector does not present a wholly satisfying picture. The production and transportation of vegetables which are important in this sector also appear to be suffering.

There are, however, some redeeming aspects. Thanks to a favourable weather and the commendable efforts of our farmers, the production of rice has been satisfactory in the last couple of years. This has contributed to the lowering of the price of rice, bringing welcome relief to the large majority of our population. However, as already indicated, some of our farmers suffered loss, the cost of production being higher than the sale price. This justifies a case for input subsidies to our impoverished farm population.

To counter the trend towards price hike, it is urgent that promotion of economic activities in both manufacturing and agriculture sectors be encouraged.

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A number of passenger sheds have been erected at important bus stands to protect passengers from sun and rain. It has been observed that these sheds are not serving the purpose for which they were set up. Most of these sheds have been leased out to the owners of various shops. These have also become haunts of beggars, destitutes and stray cattle. This leaves very small space for passengers waiting for shelter from sun and rain. Some of the beggars and destitutes have set up impromptu family establishments at these places where they are seen cooking, bathing and lounging.

The passenger sheds were constructed for the convenience of the waiting passengers. Now these are being used for commercial purpose. The leasing out of the sheds has in many cases led to the growth of roadside shop-keepers on the nearby sidewalks. The crowding of the passenger sheds often force the waiting passengers to remain outside the protection of the sheds, thereby enhancing the possibilities of accidents from the main traffic flow.

The bus passengers, by and large, feel that for the sake of presenting a cleaner urban look and for meeting the needs of passengers these waiting sheds should be cleared of shops and encroachments.



A mild mahfil was held yesterday at the Awami League Central Office in the city for early recovery of the party chief Sheikh Hasina. — Star photo

Experts tell seminar

Private sector fails to respond to govt measures

Speakers at a seminar here yesterday said the private sector had failed to respond favourably to the government measures toward industrialisation, reports UNB.

They observed that large-scale privatisation and liberal incentive provisions could not prop up the private sector.

The seminar on 'Industrialisation in Bangladesh: Looking for a breakthrough' was organised by the Carl Duisberg Samity Bangladesh (CDS), an association of German-trained personnel, at the German Cultural Centre yesterday afternoon.

Presenting the key-note paper at the seminar, economist Debapriya Bhattacharya said the reform measures in the residual public manufacturing sector could not restore the economic and financial viability of its units. Generous incentives provided to the foreign investors did not result in any increase in foreign capital flow.

He pointed out that the drastic reduction in the level of protection and 'realistic' changes in foreign exchange regime did not lead to any efficient reallocation of resources, explosive industrial growth or significant diversification of manufactured export.

CDS President Prof Dr Anwarul Azim presided over the seminar while Director General of the IMED of the Planning Ministry Amir Ali Khan Majlish and Managing Director of ASTECH Limited Ali Ahmed participated in the discussion on the paper.

Painting a dismal picture of the industrial sector, Dr Bhattacharya, a research fellow of the BIDS, said employment estimates put industrial employment at around three million or 10 per cent of the total employment against agriculture's share of 57 per cent. The total manufacturing investment is to be around two per cent of the GDP.

He appreciated the role of non-traditional export industries, particularly the garments sub-sector which achieved a significant growth and fetched 1310 million US dollar in the last fiscal year.

The BIDS economist was critical of the labourers for their low productivity. 'With production becoming increasingly a more skill intensive, it is quality of labour which has become a

King Fahd would choose members from a list of candidates nominated by the local Emir and approved by the Minister of Interior, the decree said.

The councils should 'determine the needs of the region' and suggest ways local needs could be met through the kingdom's national development plan.

They should also 'propose projects which would benefit local people and encourage the people to participate in them,' the decree said.

The new system 'aims to enhance the level of administrative and developmental work in the regions of the kingdom as well as preserve security and order and ensure rights of citizens and freedom in the framework of the Islamic Sharia (law),' the decree said.

The telephone line and beat up the arbitrators at about 8 pm. Police later rescued the camp in charge, chairman and members of Khuniaipalong Union Parishad.

Witnesses and police said at least 15 persons including the UP Chairman were injured in the attack. Local government officials Zahir Ahmed and Md Ismail, and messenger of the camp office Sujit Barua were admitted to Rabetia Hospital in Rangamati.

Hundreds of people of the thana assembled in front of the office early today and staged demonstrations there demanding withdrawal of the Ansar battalion.

During the half-day hartal that began at 6 am today, transports were off the road, shops were shuttered and business establishments closed.

Tension was prevailing in the area.

Tk 10 cr BARC project to boost agro output

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Agriculture Research Council (BARC) is planning to start a scheme next year for gathering detailed geographic and socio-economic information of the country, officials sources said.

Once implemented, the project will provide extensive information on the country's agriculture, soil, water and climate as well as on the socio-economic condition of the people, they said.

The Tk 10 crore project, styled as Geographic Information System (GIS) and to be completed by 1999, would help planners and researchers with its updated computer database.

Chief Scientific Officer of the Soil Research Division of the BARC Anwar Iqbal, talking to The Daily Star, said, 'With the installation of the system, we will be able to assess both the production and the loss of agriculture— even of a single village—a facility which is not available at present.'

In a statement, he denounced the arrest and alleged that leaders and activists of Awami League throughout the country were being harassed and arrested under 'false cases' filed by the local BNP leaders.

He demanded immediate release of all Awami League men including Mohammad Shamim and half of repression and harassment on opposition members.

Meanwhile, in separate statement Awami League Organising Secretary and opposition Whip Mohammad Nasim protested arrest of Chhatra League General Secretary Shahidul Islam Lal of Kazipur Government Monsur Ali College unit.

In another statement, the opposition Whip also protested the 'illegal' lock-out of Ishwardi Textile Mills and demanded immediate withdrawal of the notice.

The standing committee of the party at its adjourned meeting yesterday decided to hold the news conference at the GF's central office at Segunbagicha.

Chaired by the acting President Begum Noorjahan Murshid, the meeting criticised the bill saying it had ignored the fundamental aspects of the Zila Parishad and concentrated only on the voting system.

There is ambiguity in the bill regarding the autonomy of the Zila Parishad, a resolution of the meeting said.

AMA Muhit, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Saifuddin Ahmed Manik, Shahjahan Straj, MP, Shamsuddoha, MP, Nurul Islam Nahid, Enayetur Rahim, Syed Masharul Islam Iqbal and others addressed the meeting.

Pranab Mukherjee

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The trade between the two countries was held on September 12 at the Mongdaw township of Myanmar.

An eight-member Bangladesh team headed by the Sector Commander of Chittagong Col Kazi Asrafuddin Ahmed attended the flag meeting while the 12-member Myanmar side was led by its Director of Border Immigration Col Than Aye.

In the meeting, the Myanmar border guard officials apologised for the recent attack on Bangladeshi fisherman and assured to stop recurrence of such untoward incidents, officials said.

The body of the Bangladeshi fisherman was, however, not returned on grounds that it was totally decomposed, officials added.

3 Pak soldiers killed in border clash

Bangladesh imported goods worth 177.24 million US dollars from India against exports of only 0.25 million US dollars in 1990-91.

In 1991-92, the country imported commodities valued at 40.83 million US dollars from India and exported goods of 4.53 million US dollars only to that country.

Bangladesh's export to India is confined to only a few items such as newsprints, hides and skins and jute.

The country imports 60 per cent of its required engineering materials from India. Besides, it purchases a lot of items from India, including textile yarn, dyeing, tanning and colouring materials, pharmaceuticals, minerals, fruits and spices.

Urban development

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polices and act according to the council's guidelines.

Sources concerned said that there was a consensus at the workshop that the existing institutional set-up was inadequate to deal with the urban problems while there were lot of areas where overlapping and duplication occurred which caused inconvenience to urban dwellers.

The proposed national-level council will help a lot to remove lack of coordination among agencies and will promote planned development of the urban areas,' said an expert who attended the workshop.

The Daily Star

The Midnight File

Ceasefire in Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Sept 17: Muslim and Croat army chiefs agreed on a ceasefire in South and Central Bosnia today as their troops clashed in heavy fighting in the southern city of Mostar. News of the truce broke after battles between Muslims and Croats erupted in Mostar, where 55,000 Muslims are encircled by Croat troops. Muslim-controlled radio said there were heavy casualties, reports Reuter.

20 killed in Kashmir clashes

SRINAGAR, (India), Sept 17: Sporadic violence claimed 20 lives overnight in the northern Indian state of Kashmir as four Muslim separatists escaped from a Srinagar police hospital, police said here today. Officers said 17 rebels died in clashes with security troops and added that four wanted guerrillas escaped from the fortified police hospital, where they had been undergoing treatment early today, reports AFP.

UNSC threatens to reimpose sanctions on Haiti

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 17: The UN Security Council threatened today to reimpose sanctions if security forces did not halt the wave of violence sweeping the country. The United Nations last month suspended embargoes on oil and military sales after the Haitian military agreed to let ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide return to power in late October, reports AFP.

Demonstration Day

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Indian officials and Chakma refugees in Khagrachari on September 19.

The Indian team members will visit at least five thanas—namely Ramgarh, Mati Ranga, Mahalchhari, Rangamati and Dighinal to see for themselves whether congenial atmosphere was prevailing in those areas for return of the tribal refugees from Tripura (India) camps.

The members of the Bangladesh team will also travel with the Indian team during their visit to the different thanas.

Meanwhile, nine tribals, seven women and two babies, returned to Khagrachari from Tripura (India) refugee camps yesterday.

Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, MP, told BSS today that the tribals returned on their own accord to see if a peaceful and congenial atmosphere is prevailing in the hill tracts for return of the tribal refugees from India.

The seven tribal women belonged to the Marma community of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

GF views on Zila Parishad Bill tomorrow

By Staff Correspondent

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