

Employment

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conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

The report said wage rate in agriculture was up by 27 percent while the rate saw a 19 percent increase in non-agriculture sector. Earnings from wage, however, did not increase proportionately as each worker's daily work opportunity has declined. "Real wage in agriculture during this period has gone up, but real wage in non-agriculture [sector] did not rise — one of the reasons behind unemployment," said Rushidhan Islam Rahman, research director of BIDS, while disclosing the report at a seminar titled "Pro-poor growth and food security: Recent experience in Bangladesh".

BIDS organised the seminar at Brac Centre Inn in Dhaka to mark its 50-year anniversary. Chaired by Mahabub Hossain, executive director of Brac, M Asaduzzaman and KAS Murshid, research directors of BIDS, also presented their reports on regional dimensions of several indicators for quality of life based on MDG (Millennium Development Goal) and globalisation, food security and bio-security.

In her presentation, Rushidhan Islam Rahman said one of the major reasons for the worsening unemployment situation in the country is substantial decline in total employment in non-farm enterprises.

According to the report, employment per enterprise declined by 30 percent during the period.

The employment generation in the non-farm sector has declined due to substantial increase of enterprises expenditures, Rahman added.

"A pro-poor growth process must

be initiated to accelerate income growth among the poor. The features of non-farm sectors, which are currently not pro-poor, should be reversed through appropriate incentive policies," she observed.

On average, expenditure per enterprise to meet current costs in rent, transport and other utilities has risen from Tk 2.12 lakh in 2000 to Tk3.47 lakh in 2005, the report said.

The overall underemployment rate among male and female workers in 2005 reached 35.3 percent — up from 31.1 percent in 2000. Rise in underemployment rate is higher among men compared to women, the study found.

According to the report, underemployment rate of male workers was 28.8 percent in 2000. The rate increased to 34.2 percent in 2005. On the other hand, female workers' underemployment rate reached 44.9 percent in 2005, which was 48.6 percent in 2000.

Persons who work less than 266 days a year are defined as underemployed by the study.

Tremors

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observatory in Chittagong and 81-km from Sylhet seismic observatory.

The magnitude of the second tremor, which shook the country at about 5 hours 50 minutes 41 seconds (BST), was 4.1 on the Richter scale.

The distance of the epicentre was about 648-km from Agargaon seismic observatory, about 485-km from Ambagan seismic observatory and 552-km from Sylhet seismic observatory.

Nat'l security

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and ensuring social stability in the country," said the foreign adviser.

"These reforms must enhance both state and human security and be subordinate to the goals of good governance and consistent with democratic principles," he added.

"The role of the security forces in a democracy is defined and delineated by the cardinal principle of civilian supremacy in the affairs of the state. However, in a violent and crime-inflicted society with trans-border links, they may assume a more robust role."

Pasi told the audience, "Bangladeshis have entrusted the caretaker government with a great responsibility, including to put into place a foundation for a free and fair election by the end of 2008 and a healthy, functioning democratic system that Bangladeshis deeply desire."

"The people of Bangladesh have fought hard and sacrificed their lives for democracy. They deserve no less," she said.

Former US Lt Gen Ed Smith, Director of APCSS, said that there are three main considerations for the effective reforms: to have popular recognition that change is needed, a well-planned roadmap of how to go ahead, and continuing the

initiative to ensure that the reforms do not lag.

The workshop's recommendations were split into two streams: governance reforms and security reforms.

As part of governance reforms, the workshop participants identified effective parliament, political party reforms, rule of law, combating corruption, accountability, devolution of power, stronger institutions and separation of powers.

These included steps, such as enacting a Political Parties Act and have an effective parliament through functioning committees while security sector reforms include operationalising and expanding the National Security Council for better civilian control of security forces and also the appointment of a full-time defence minister.

The speakers also stressed the need for a national security strategy to integrate defence needs and civilian concerns, enact appropriate public order laws, enhance the professionalism of the security forces, creation of a joint forces headquarters and a joint intelligence apex body.

Govt guns for giant projects

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The government is paying millions of dollars for gas purchase.

But the situation is pushing the country towards spending more of its foreign exchange on gas purchase in the near future, sources said.

The 12 major new power projects alone demand that Petrobangla increase gas supply by at least 550 mcmd in the next three years.

Power generation is already consuming about 650 mcmd of gas. Petrobangla projects that gas supply will start falling from 2011 unless major new gas deposits are discovered.

Even if gas is available to meet the increased requirement, the government will have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to install new distribution and transmission lines to supply this additional gas. Sources said, even right now the country needs at least two projects for installing pipelines from Kailastila to Ashuganj and Ashuganj to Chittagong to augment present supply and gas supply pressure.

Executives and representatives of a number of power companies told The Daily Star that they were concerned about future gas supply. They are also concerned whether the government would be able to handle the tender process for these power projects.

A senior energy ministry official however said there is no option but to pursue the projects because power crisis is seriously hurting the country's development. "We will ensure gas supply one way or another."

According to the Bangladesh Power Sector Development Plan and Strategies of 2004, the country in 2012 should aim at an installed power generation capacity of 9,840 MW against a power demand for up to 7,687 MW.

The present power generation capacity is about 3,800 MW against the demand for a maximum of about 5,200 MW. The highest demand for power officially recorded in June was however 4,800 MW.

"Even if the new major schemes can be properly implemented, that would leave power supply shortfall of around 500 to 1,000 MW," the energy official said.

"Power distribution system is presently covering only 42 percent of the people of the country, and per capita power consumption is only 165 kilowatt hour... We aim at ensuring power for all by 2020."

The official further said though a number of power projects were approved by the government long ago, these could not be implemented due to several reasons.

"The first reason is unnecessary time killing during a project's tender floating and evaluation phase. The second reason is lack of efficiency of the project directors about project financing, official processing, management and implementation," he said.

While handling a donor aided power project, the government wastes a lot of time in fulfilling the donors' conditions, which delays release of the funds.

"There is also a tendency of the implementing authorities like Power

Development Board to enhance project costs without authorisation after its approval. This creates deep complications," he noted.

The latest example of this is the cancelled Chandpur power project budget increase by about \$20 million.

Besides, there is a serious lack of coordination among various authorities involved with various aspects of a power project. There are instances of frequent replacement of project directors and also of delay in ensuring gas supply for gas-based projects.

Presently, five 450 MW power projects with a total capacity of 2,250 MW are in the pipeline. These are Meghnaghat-2, Meghnaghat-3, Sirajganj, Bibiyana and Bheramara projects.

Of them, the fate of the Bheramara project remains uncertain though the Ecneec had approved it back in 2000. It was initially planned that the scheme would be funded by the government. Later, it was decided that it would be a private sector project. In recent years, there had been no activity over this project.

Besides, a 150 MW project in Bhola also hangs without any decision on it for years.

Meghnaghat-2 project has been cancelled recently at its final stage as its contractor — BON Consortium — failed to announce the project's financial closure and then failed to reciprocate the government's offers.

Inexperienced BON Consortium is scamster Obaidul Karim's shell company and it was awarded the contract for the project during the tenure of the previous government through violation of rules. But that was subsequently given legal coverage.

The second lowest bidder of Meghnaghat-2 tender, Malakoff of Malaysia, has meanwhile informed the government that it is ready to pursue the project according to its old proposal. The government is yet to take a decision on this.

Another project that is facing cancellation at an advanced stage is the controversial Chandpur 150 MW power project contact for which was awarded to inefficient Chinese company Harbin. After generating a lot of controversy, Harbin recently asked for a project cost hike by \$20 million. As the government refused to do so, the project is now being cancelled.

The other projects include a 360 MW one in Haripur. This project was approved with 150 MW capacity a decade back. Recently, it has been revised and it would soon go for tender.

With the Asian Development Bank's financing, the government is preparing two 150 MW power projects in Khulna and Sirajganj. Tenders for these will be floated by the end of this year.

The government meanwhile floated the fourth round of tender for a 150 MW power plant in Sylhet on July 30. Though six or seven bidders purchased bid documents, only Indian Bhel submitted the bid.

The government also held the bid for 210 MW Khulna power project on July 19. This project, to be

implemented under Suppliers' Credit from China, had remained shelved for about seven years. Sources said two companies — Skoda and CMEC — participated in it.

The PDB floated a tender for 150 MW Sikabaha power plant three months ago. Only Chinese companies participated in the bid and sources said the bid is now at an advanced stage.

"Only two power projects are now being implemented — 90 MW Fenchuganj power project by Harbin and the ADB-funded 240 MW Siddhirganj power project by Bhel. We are hoping these will be successful," said a senior official.

Patuakhali

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from Shahidul's house in Baufal upazila town. A case was filed the next day under arms act with Baufal Police Station by Mizanur Rahman, officer in charge of the police station.

Investigation Officer of the case, Sub Inspector Rafiqul Islam, submitted charge sheet to the court on April 17. Trial began on June 17 in absence of Shahidul as he went into hiding since January 11 after state of emergency was imposed in the country.

The court recorded statements from 14 prosecution witnesses out of 24.

On July 29, Shahidul surrendered to the court and submitted a bail petition along with a plea to recall all witnesses.

The court sent Shahidul to jail custody after rejecting his bail petition and plea to recall the witnesses.

Voter list

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to eight weeks of signing the contracts.

According to the new tender schedule, if the bidders are awarded contracts by the end of September, it will take them up to October-November to complete supplying the equipment to the EC.

Referring to the EC's previous tender, Sohul said purchasing of 8,000 laptops is now at the final stage. "The process for purchasing rest of the equipment will be completed soon," he said.

He said the delay in completing the procurement of equipment will not affect the implementation of the EC roadmap, which announced to complete the task of voter listing by October 2008 and hold the parliamentary elections in December.

On holding reform dialogue with political parties, Sohul said the EC will definitely hold talks with the parties from September.

Asked if the government will lift the ban on indoor politics to allow the EC to hold the dialogue, he said, "We hope an atmosphere for holding talks with the political parties will prevail."

CRIMINAL CHARGE

12 municipal chairmen suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday suspended 12 pourasabha (municipal) chairmen as they are accused in criminal cases, LGRD ministry said.

The action was taken under the Pourashava Ordinance 1977.

The suspended chairmen are Faizul Karim Moyun of Moulvibazar, Sahabuddin Sabu of Laxmipur, GK Gaus of Habigonj, Hasmat Ali Sikder Chhunu of Gopalganj, Jamilur Rahman Miron of Tangail, TRM Nur-e-Alam Helal of Sirajganj, Jane Alam Khoka of Sherpur, Jahangir Alam of Dupchachia, Mir

Mohiuddin of Alamdanga, Shamim Kabir Helim of Shibganj, Saiful Haq Khan Chowdhury of Mirpur in Kushtia and Abdul Halim Gazi of Jhalakathi.

Earlier, the caretaker government suspended/removed 19 union parishad (UP) chairmen and 11 UP members on charges of corruption, misuse of power, women repression and going abroad illegally, said the ministry.

Meanwhile, the LGRD ministry in a letter yesterday asked the Election Commission (EC) to hold elections to Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi City Corporations as soon as the task of voterlist in these areas completes.

The tenure of the chairmen and ward commissioners of the three city corporations has already been expired.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) election was held on April 24, 2002, while Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and Khulna City Corporation (KCC) elections were held on April 25, 2002.

According to the existing election rules, the EC is obliged to hold elections to the three city corporations between January and June this year as the tenure of the chairman and ward commissioners of the DCC expired on May 14, RCC on June 16 and KCC on June 26.

The five-year tenure is counted from the day the newly elected body holds its first meeting and elections to such bodies are supposed to be held within 180 days before the expiry of the tenure.

The first meeting of the DCC was held on May 15, KCC on June 27 and RCC on June 17, 2002.

Moenen says

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simultaneously in collaboration with the army, can be used for various useful purposes.

The army chief sought cooperation of all in making a flawless voter list for holding a free and fair election that was stalled amid a grave political crisis over some poll-related issues, including the voterlist, in January last.

About floods, he said this is the time of helping out the distressed people. "We all have the responsibilities to stand beside the flood-affected people. Otherwise, history will not forgive anyone."

He urged the people who are not affected by the current floods to extend their helping hands to the flood victims. "Relief works are going well across the country. I've seen new enthusiasm among the affected people after the floods. They are now preparing seedbeds with fresh initiative," he said.

He said the army is working with the civil administration to face the floods and aftermath.

In this context, General Moenen criticised the malpractice in relief operations in the past. "In the past, only 30-32 percent of the allocated money had been spent and the rest looted," he said.

Court to hear

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Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana and their cousin Sheikh Selim in connection with Tk 2.99 crore extortion case

Metropolitan Magistrate KM Ruhul Amin will give the decision on the scheduled date after scrutinizing the case docket and other relevant documents.

Hasina and Selim were not produced before the court.

Meanwhile, Hasina's lawyers yesterday submitted a petition requesting adjournment of acceptance of the charge sheet.

On July 24, Officer in Charge Obaidul Haq of Gulshan Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) against Hasina, Rehana and Selim. A total of 24 people were shown as prosecution witnesses in the charge sheet.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case against Hasina and Sheikh Selim on June 13 for extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him.

Rehana's name was included in the charge sheet as her involvement with the extortion was found during the investigation.

The joint forces arrested the AL chief in connection with the case on July 16 and produced her in a magistrate's court that sent her to a sub-jail.

NOORALI'S CASE

Another Dhaka court yesterday did not give any decision for accepting the bail bond of Hasina in the case filed for extorting Tk 5 crore from AL leader Noor Ali.

Earlier, on August 7, a High Court (HC) bench had granted bail to Hasina and directed Hasina's lawyers to furnish the bail bond to the CMM's Court, Dhaka.

Following receipt of the HC bail order, CMM Jalal Ahmed assigned Third Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Matur Rahman to take necessary steps for furnishing it.

Rivers swell again

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Reports received in Dhaka said the Indian meteorological department has forecast heavy rainfall in northeastern states, Sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Bihar and East Uttar Pradesh (which finally drains rainwater through Bangladesh) and a fresh low pressure is likely to form over North Bay of Bengal around August 18

FFWC Assistant Engineer Ariful Islam said the Jamuna rose by 36cm at Noonkhawa point in 24 hours till 6:00am yesterday and then remained static for the next 12 hours. The river was flowing below danger level at all points.

The Jamuna is likely to rise by 12cm at Sirajganj and by 6cm at Aricha in 24 hours while the Padma is likely to start rising again from today, the FFWC said yesterday.

The Padma at Goalundo is likely to rise by 4cm and flow 15 cm above danger level, while at Bhagyakul it might rise by 2cm and flow 14cm above red mark in 24 hours.

The Meghna at Bhairab Bazar is likely to continue rising, and the flood situation in Narayanganj, Narshingdi, Brahmanbaria and Kishoreganj may remain unchanged.

The rivers Surma, Kushiyara, Manu, Khowai and Gumbi in the Meghna basin and Sangu, Halda and Muhuri in the Southeastern hill basins also rose sharply in 24 hours, the FFWC said.

On the diarrhoea situation,

Shahadat Hossain, head of Longer Stay Unit of ICDDR, B, said more children are now getting admitted there as their immunity has now developed much.

Almost 30 percent of diarrhoea patients at ICDDR, B now are children as against below 10 percent even a week ago, he added.

Though the government has set up diarrhoea units at different medical colleges and hospitals to ease the pressure on ICDDR, B, a large number of patients were thronging it. Most of the patients were from the capital and its outskirts.

Some 81 diarrhoea patients were seen admitted to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) yesterday while 87 sought treatment at Dhaka Shishu Hospital, 43 at the Ashkona Haji Camp, 17 at Mitford Hospital, two at NIDC&H, two at Infectious Diseases Hospital and one at Pongu Hospital, according to the DGHS control room.

A total of 51,317 people were attacked with diarrhoea since July 30 and some eight people died in the last two weeks.

Moreover, 1,350 people were affected with Respiratory Tract Infection (RTI), 1,379 with skin diseases and 320 with conjunctivitis while 30 drowned, the control room said yesterday.

ACC sues Abbas

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known as Lotus Kamal) and several others, including foreign nationals, in connection with not submitting service returns of their companies for years.

CASE AGAINST ABBAS
In the case statement filed with Ramna Police Station, ACC Assistant Director Shafiqul Alam said they found assets worth Tk 33,48,581, that were not mentioned in the wealth statements, submitted earlier to the ACC, of Abbas and his wife.

The case was filed under sections 26(2)/27(1) of the Anti-corruption Commission Act-2004, section 15(Gha)(5) of the Emergency Power Rules-2007 and section 109 of the Bangladesh Penal Code.

On February 25, the joint force arrested Abbas on the ACC premises at Segunbagicha in the city. **TAX CASE AGAINST AFROZA** Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court fixed August 21 for hearing on charge framing against Afroza in the cases filed for evading income tax upon her income for years.

The same court earlier issued arrest warrant and ordered attachment of all her movable and immovable properties after National Board of Revenue (NBR) filed the cases.

In the case statements filed against Afroza, Nurul Amin, deputy tax commissioner of Tax Payers Service Wing, said Afroza had evaded Tk 11,58,746 income tax as one of the directors of Dhaka Bank since 1997 to 2002.

She also evaded tax upon her income of Tk 4,67,95,634 from 2002 to 2007.

CASES AGAINST LOTUS KAMAL A Dhaka court yesterday summoned Lotus Kamal and several others in four cases filed in connection with not submitting service returns of his four companies for years.

Earlier, Bangladesh Bank and National Board of Revenue sought bank account details of the persons.

The companies have been directed to provide information about shares, debentures, dates of their purchase and total number of shares the persons own.

The SEC sought share information of Nazmul Huda, his wife Sigma Huda and their daughters Antara Selima Huda and Srabonti Amina Huda, Mirza Abbas's son Mirza Arafat Abbas Apan, Mirza Abbas's brother Mirza Khokon, his wife Masuda Islam and their children Kainat Mirza Shasha and Kasfa Mirza Bhasha.

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information of the eight persons by August 23, sources said. The direction came following a request by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which requested the information for the sake of investigation in corruption cases.

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Peru quake kills 337

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streets for hours after the first big tremor and most buildings were evacuated as a precaution.

Cut telephone lines were slowly reconnected in the capital but power and water services continued.

The quake struck just offshore at 6:41pm (23:41 GMT) and prompted evacuations along the Pacific coast because of fears of a tsunami. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Centre later lifted its warnings.

The government declared its highest state of emergency as authorities grappled with collapsed buildings and cut power and telephone lines.

Hospitals around the country were put on high alert amid predictions the death toll would rise and the health ministry made an emergency appeal for blood donations.

A strike launched Wednesday by some health workers was called off so all doctors and nurses could help with the emergency and the authorities closed schools to avoid the risk of new casualties in the quake ruins.

President Alan Garcia went on national television to appeal for calm.

"Fortunately, the number of dead is not high for a quake of this power," he said. "Thanks to God almighty, it has not been as serious as in the past."

Peru has long lived in fear of a repeat of a 1970 earthquake killed 70,000 people, many of whom perished in the mountain city of Huaraz which was buried by a mudslide.

A 2001 earthquake in the southern Peruvian state of Arequipa killed 75 people and destroyed 25,000 homes.

The quake measured 7.9 on the

moment magnitude scale, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS). Peruvian authorities said it measured 7.7 on the open-ended Richter scale.

Huda, Abbas

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