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## Real income dips in a year

### Savings decline as people spend more on food

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The real income of people working in the agriculture, manufacturing and construction sectors decreased by 2.5 percent last year, a recent study conducted by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) revealed.

People belonging to the low and middle income groups told The Daily Star that they have been forced to cut budgets for other purposes as a major chunk of their daily or monthly income is spent for purchasing food.

After such expenditure, little is left for saving, they said.

Former adviser to the caretaker government Akbar Ali Khan said the real situation is even worse than the study's findings since the income of the lower and middle class people has decreased more in

the last three months compared to the increased inflation rate.

"The prices of items used by the poor, especially food items, have increased more than those used by rich people," he told The Daily Star.

The BIDS study shows that the real wages of people at the national level decreased by 3.95 percent in December 2007 compared to the wages of January that year. The wages of farmers also reduced by 4.6 percent during the period.

The study found that the real wages of people working in the manufacturing sector decreased by 2.37 percent and construction sector by 4.40 percent.

According to a 2005-06 survey on national labour force conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), only 13.90 percent employed people in the country are paid regularly. The survey said 21.70 percent people are unpaid

family workers and 42 percent are self-employed.

The BBS survey showed that the number of unemployed people increased by 5 percent in 2006, reaching 21 lakh, compared to the number in 2003.

Another BBS survey titled "Wage Rate and Earnings of Non-farm Workers 2007" found that the range of monthly income of employees is as low as Tk 1,000-6,000.

According to information of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), the prices of food products have increased by 50-85 percent in the last one year.

The TCB report said the prices of coarse rice was Tk 18-19 per kg in December 2006 and as per yesterday's market rate the same variety of rice sold at Tk 30-32, which means the price increased 67 percent.

The price of flour increased 83 percent per kg during the same period. In December 2006, its price was Tk 24-25 per kg but it reached Tk 44-45 yesterday.

The price of soya bean oil reached Tk 112-116 per litre yesterday, which was Tk 61-63 in December 2006.

Khaled Mohammad Shafiqullah, a private company employee, said he was forced to cut his family's monthly budget due to the huge expenditure for food.

He said the house rent and expenditures of education, transport and medical have also increased. "I am worried because the landlord gave hints that he will increase the house rent shortly," he added.

"Now I have no budget for my family's recreation," said Khaled who earns Tk 13,000 a month.

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## Tentative date for polls after June: CEC

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the commission (EC) is considering announcement of a tentative date for national elections after June as the final draft of voter list will be in their hands by then.

"The date will be announced after June. We'll try and see if something can be done at that time," the CEC told reporters as he was asked when the EC would announce the date for holding the stalled polls.

The final draft of voter list will be completed by the end of June, and at that time the EC will see whether a date can be announced or not, he added.

The CEC was talking to the reporters after an hour-long meeting with a five-member UNDP delegation headed by visiting

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## Row over control of Nam apartments

### Ministry, JS Secretariat at odds over increased rents

SHAMIM ASHRAF

The housing and public works ministry is at loggerheads with the Parliament Secretariat over the control of the Nam apartments and realising their increased rent from resident former lawmakers.

The Parliament Secretariat has not yet responded to the several letters the ministry has sent since December last year asking it to cancel the allotments first and then issue fresh ones so that the increased rents could be realised.

The secretariat, which formed a committee that recommended increasing the rents for the Nam flats in December, said the ministry does not have the authority to

impose higher rent on the former MPs.

"MPs of the eighth parliament received allotments of the flats from the House Committee to live there in between the elections, and parliament is the proper authority to decide how much the rent would be," Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddiqui told The Daily Star yesterday.

Housing ministry officials, meanwhile, said the former lawmakers have "little right" to live in the Nam flats.

"There has been no parliament for a long time. Do the former lawmakers have any ethical right to live in the flats for just Tk 400-500 a month and not pay any electricity

bill although parliament expired 17 months ago?" a high official of the ministry said, requesting anonymity.

But the deputy speaker argued, "The former lawmakers are still living in the Nam flats as the parliamentary elections did not take place timely."

Three hundred and twenty-four flats were constructed in 2001 for the Non-Aligned Movement (Nam) summit that was supposed to be held in Dhaka. After getting charge of 304 flats the Parliament Secretariat allotted those to the members of the eighth parliament in June 2005.

The lawmakers pay a monthly

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## Five more docs join board to treat Hasina

### Says Square Hospitals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the Square Hospitals and the jail authorities yesterday denied exclusion of five physicians from the seven-member medical panel and said five more doctors have rather been included to treat Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina.

"No-one has been excluded. Rather five more doctors have joined the panel of physicians," said Prof Sanwar Hossain, director of medical services and consultant surgery of Square Hospitals.

The detained AL chief has been undergoing treatment at the hospital.

IG (Prisons) Brig Gen Zakir Hassan and Prof Sanwar met the former premier and told reporters the AL chief was quite well yesterday.

The IG said Hasina is receiving treatment under the supervision of

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PHOTO: STAR

Corruption Prevention Committee of Chittagong city brings out a large anti-graft grand rally on the streets of the port city yesterday to create mass awareness about corruption.

## Going gets harder for continued price hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of rice, pulses, chicken, egg and fish are increasing every day in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country for a week now, leaving people on middle and low incomes in further distress.

The prices of other essentials, however, remained stable or came down slightly yesterday after witnessing a sharp rise last week.

Meantime, importing rice from India has run into snags again as customs officials at Petrapole land port in India are not allowing rice consignments into Bangladesh.

They are still waiting for directives from Kolkata Customs House even though the Indian commerce ministry gave the green light to exporting 3000 trucks of rice which have been stranded on the Indian side of the border, reports our Benapole correspondent.

Although edible oil and sugar prices saw a slight drop after a hefty rise in a couple of weeks, people in the lower income bracket are still

struggling to cope with the prices.

The prices of coarse rice like Indian Swarna and Ratna rose from Tk 1,120 to Tk 1,160 per maund in the wholesale market yesterday, an increase of Tk 10 per maund on the previous day, while local varieties like Gutti and Irri also shot up by Tk 10 a maund, selling yesterday at Tk 1,100 to Tk 1,140 per maund.

Prices of other varieties of rice, however, remained stable in the retail market.

Wholesalers at Babubazar and Badamtali in the capital attributed the price hike to increases in the international market, adding that rice prices are unlikely to come down until the Boro harvest.

Meantime, though last three days prices of pulses remained largely stable in the wholesale market, retail markets saw a slight rise. Different varieties of pulses were selling at Tk 75 to Tk 105 per kilogram yesterday.

A wholesaler at Karwan Bazar said he yesterday sold good quality

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## HASINA CASE VERDICT SC hears govt appeal today

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court hears today a government appeal against the High Court judgment on trial of a Tk 3-crore extortion case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

On February 6, the High Court, upon a writ petition filed by Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, declared illegal the government sanction placing the extortion case for trial under the EPR and quashed the entire trial proceedings.

On February 26, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court granted a government appeal against the High court judgment and fixed March 16 for its hearing.

The apex court at the same time had also stayed the operation of the High Court judgment and stalled the trial of the extortion case against Hasina under the EPR until the appeal is resolved.

Azam J Chowdhury, managing

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## Grand rally in Ctg to create awareness about corruption

CU CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday said if people of all walks of life become aware of the negative impact of corruption, it would help check corruption in the society.

He was speaking before a big anti-corruption rally in the port city organised by Corruption Prevention Committee (CPC) of Chittagong.

Students from more than 40 schools and colleges, and representatives from non-government organisations (NGOs), Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), shop owners' associations, ward commissioners, and socio-cultural organisations participated in the procession.

They carried banner, festoons

and placards inscribed with anti-corruption slogans like 'We want a corruption-free society.' 'We are committed to build a corruption-free society,' and 'Say no to corruption'.

The procession led by Lt Gen Mashhud was brought out from the Jamaatul Falah complex premises at 10:10am. It paraded GEC Intersection, OR Nizam Road and MM Ali Road in the city.

CPC President Monwara Hakim Ali said they want to make the next generation aware of the vitiating influence of corruption.

"The grand procession would inspire students as well as the people to take a firm stance against corruption," she said.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr Iftekharul Islam also spoke.

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## RELAXING EMERGENCY Govt yet to respond to EC request

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The government has yet to respond to the Election Commission's (EC) call for it to decide by early March whether the state of emergency would be lifted or relaxed for city corporation polls in April.

Lifting of the restrictions on indoor politics across the country has not been spelled out either.

The commission wanted the government to lift the countrywide curbs on indoor politics by the end

of March to let the political parties resume their activities and register with the commission.

Meeting the chief adviser on February 4, it asked the military-backed caretaker administration to decide by early March if the state of emergency would be lifted or relaxed to facilitate polls to four city corporations and eight municipalities.

In response, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed assured the

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## Emon says he fled to India after dispute with Babar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Notorious criminal Sanjidul Islam Emon told interrogators that he fled to India in 2004 after he lost the backing of former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar.

Detective Branch (DB) officials are currently interrogating Emon at the office of Criminal Investigation Department.

A dispute broke out between Babar and Emon as the latter

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## Newcastle Law Academy enjoys its continuing success!!!

We congratulate our 41 students who just received offers from the Bar Council of England & Wales to become Barristers!!!

- |                       |                        |                               |                               |
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Did you know!!!

1 Approximately 80% of the total number of students accepted from Bangladesh by the Bar Council in England to become Barristers are from Newcastle Law Academy from its inception!!!

Following is the statistics of the number of Barristers in the last 4 years:

Year	Total Number of Barristers	Newcastle Law Academy	Other Institutions
2005	38	31	7
2006	46	36	10
2007	50	39	11
2008	55	41	14

2 Our student Khan Khalid Adnan is the only one who obtained a 1st Class in the LLB (Hons) exam under the University of London in the last 100 years!

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