

Garments workers demand factory based rationing

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Garments workers have demanded immediate introduction of factory based rationing to enable them to cope with the run away food price hike.

The demand for rationing of rice, lentils, oil, potato, salt, powdered milk and other essential food items was raised by the National Garments Workers Federation at a press

conference held at the Dhaka Reporters Unity in Dhaka yesterday.

The Federation also sought support of other workers' organisations on the issue.

Twenty-five lakh workers, majority of whom are women, are engaged in 45 hundred garments factories of the country, said Amurul Haque Amin, the general secretary of the Federation.

The workers said their low

wages force them to lead a miserable life. Minimum wage for the garment workers was fixed, for the first time, at Tk930 in 1994. As per the existing law, minimum wage for the garments workers is to be re-assessed in every three years, whereas the wage was not re-assessed again until October 2006. This time minimum wage was set at Tk 1662. Some of the garment factories are yet to implement this new minimum

wage rate.

With prices of essential food items skyrocketing, the garment workers questioned, "How would we and our children cope with the dramatic price hike of essential food items and have a decent life with such wage rate?"

Export earnings from garments constitute seventy six percent of the country's total export earnings.

China gives top priority to financial safety

ANN/ China Daily

China will learn from the US subprime crisis and further strengthen supervision on financial innovation to ensure the safe operation of its capital market, the head of the country's stock market regulator said on Friday.

"We need to transfer the emphasis of supervision from the institutions themselves to the businesses they are involved in, so that we can reduce the supervision areas we neglected and raise efficiency," said Shang Fulin, chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), at the Lujiazui Forum 2008 on Friday.

He said that the market

regulator should carry out in-depth research into innovative products and form an effective risk evaluation mechanism.

"The supervision should better balance the relations between safety and efficiency, and the risks of innovative products to the real economy should also be considered by each supervision institution," Shang said.

He added that the CSRC will continue work on the preparations and launch the long-awaited stock index futures and growth enterprise board in a "prudent manner".

"We will push forward construction of the financial derivatives market and complete a cross-market supervision

coordination system," he said.

Analysts said that the launch of financial innovation products, such as stock index futures, margin trading systems for stockbrokers and covered warrants, should be introduced in line with the actual development of China's capital market.

"The exact time to introduce innovative products, which will be considered by supervision sectors, should be in line with the actual market development, and certain factors, such as a sound and effective regulatory framework, must be taken into full account," said Zhu Haibin, an analyst at Essence Securities.

Shang also said that the capital market should make

full use of its function to provide capital support for innovative companies in their different development periods, which is in line with the government's strategy to promote innovation and adjustment of the economic structure.

The launch of the growth enterprise board on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange is at its final stages, which is expected to provide fund support for small and medium-sized companies.

Shang added that, at the current period of global resource re-allocation and re-structure, the build-up of a strong capital market will help China sharpen its competitive edge and attract more financial talent.

Steel product price to stay high in China

XINHUA, Beijing

China's price of steel products is predicted to maintain the growing momentum in the coming period of time.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Commerce, the average price of steel products stood at 5,909 yuan a ton in April of this year, rising 2.32 per cent over the previous month.

Of this, price of wire products went up 3.75 per cent, that of plate up 1.5 per cent, and pipe shaped materials up 3.05 per cent.

Experts of the ministry held that the price hike of coke is an important factor to stimulate the price of steel products.

The price of coke will continue to stay at a high level this year amid surging demand and rising cost, according to the China Coking Industry Association (CCIA).

Huang Jingan, CCIA chairman, said recently in Beijing that increasing demand from the steel industry will largely boost the price for the key residue used in the smelting process.

China's steel industry produced about 959.2 million tons of crude steel and iron last year, and consumed 90 per cent of the country's coke output.

"Consumption will continue to rise amid growing steel and iron output this year," Huang said.

Coke price in Shanxi, a major coke producer in China stood at 2,350 yuan a ton on April 30, rising 250 yuan over the end of March.

At the same time, the unconcluded negotiation between China and Australian iron ore suppliers has made the price of steel products unpredictable. Steel price has maintained the rising momentum on international market.

Special allocation sought for silk industry in budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Special allocation for silk industry in the next national budget was demanded at a function here yesterday.

Silk traders, labourers and development workers at the discussion also sought government assistance for the development of silk industry.

Reshom Shilpa Sartho Sangrakhan Committee, a body to protect silk industry, and Varendra Unnayan Procheta, an NGO, jointly organised the discussion.

Bangladesh Silk Industry Owners' Samity (BSIOS) President Manjur Faruk

Chowdhury, former president of the association Liaquat Ali, Rajshahi Rakkha Sangram Parishad (a body to uphold the development of Rajshahi) Convener Zamat Khan and marginal farmers spoke at the discussion.

Manjur Faruk Chowdhury said the local silk will be able to compete in the world market if the growers get proper technological support from the government.

He said the country is now producing only 50 tonnes of silk yarn against the domestic demand for 350 tonnes.

He said Bangladesh

Sericulture Board is not doing enough to attract farmers in silk cultivation.

Liaquat Ali said the silk industry people are not getting bank loans.

He demanded a separate silk policy.

Khoda Bux, a farmer, said they never get timely payment from Bangladesh Sericulture Board for their produce.

The number of people engaged in silk farming is declining, he added.

Zamat Khan attributed government apathy and lack of supervision to the poor condition of silk industry.



Bangladesh Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed (2-L) speaks at the monthly luncheon meeting of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) in Dhaka yesterday. Ficci President Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan (2-R), Secretary General MA Matin (R) and Member Anis A Khan are also seen. (Story on B-1)

Jakarta plans scrapping subsidies for wealthy households

ANN/ The Jakarta Post

The Indonesian government plans to scrap electricity subsidies for middle and upper-income households to ease pressure on the state budget.

Should the House of Representatives clear the proposal, state power firm PT Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN) would apply the policy in July. The policy would affect households using 2,200 watts and above.

"We hope PLN will send all the data we need by next month," electricity and energy utilisation head J Purwono said Thursday. "We hope the policy can be applied in July."

A team is conducting a study to measure how effective the programme will be at shaving the budget's allocation for electricity subsidies, he said.

With oil prices skyrocketing, subsidies are estimated to soar to 60.29 trillion rupiah (US\$6.55 billion), or almost triple the

previous estimate of 29 trillion rupiah (\$3.13 billion).

Around 30 per cent of PLN's power plants are currently generated by oil-based fuels.

Efforts to cut subsidies are part of PLN's goal to save 5 trillion rupiah (\$540.21 million) in subsidies this year.

Under the proposed policy, customers whose consume electricity beyond the national benchmark will have their electricity usage charged at a nonsubsidised rate.

Big eurozone firms facing tighter credit conditions: ECB

AFP, Frankfurt

Financial market turbulence has led to a tightening of eurozone credit standards, particularly for loans to big companies, the European Central Bank said on Friday.

"Banks reported that credit standards for loans to enterprises were more affected by the turmoil than credit standards for loans to households," the ECB said in a quarterly survey of bank lending.

"In particular, the situation in financial markets had a larger impact on loans to large enterprises than on loans to small and medium-size enterprises," the central bank said. ECB President Jean-Claude

Trichet had said in Athens on Thursday that the survey showed a net 49-percent of banks had tightened standards on loans to companies in the first quarter of 2008, while a net 33 percent of banks tightened credit standards on loans for house purchases.

"We see a continued increase in the net tightening of credit standards on loans," Trichet said.

The ECB said a net 54 percent of banks said the financial market situation had prompted them to tighten credit standards for loans and credit lines to large companies, compared with a net 34 percent in the case of loans to smaller companies.

US House-approved mortgage crisis bill faces veto

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives on Thursday approved a bill that lawmakers hope could stem the tide of home foreclosures due to the subprime mortgage crisis, but it faces a presidential veto.

The Democratic-controlled chamber passed by a vote of 266 to 154 the bill which would create a 300-billion-dollar federal guarantee for new mortgages for people who

may be at risk of losing their homes.

"This legislation, in short, will expand the FHA (Federal Housing Administration) program so that borrowers in danger of losing their homes can refinance into lower-cost, government-insured mortgages that they can afford to repay," said Democratic majority leader Steny Hoyer.

However, some Republicans argue that the bail-out approach would harm the US

economy.

"House Democrats are forcing responsible homeowners and taxpayers to pick up a 300-billion-dollar tab to bail out scam artists, speculators and reckless borrowers," said Congressman John Boehner.

"Let's be clear: This is a dangerous approach and undermines the American dream of owning a home."

President George W. Bush said on Wednesday he intended to veto the measure.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার. উপজেলা নির্বাহী অফিসার কার্যালয়. মৌলো, বাগেরহাট. দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০১/২০০৭-২০০৮. Table with 2 columns: সক্রিয় নং, প্রকল্পের নাম. Includes details about public procurement regulations and dates.

Brazil warns Europe against biofuel import barriers

AFP, Brasilia

Brazil on Friday warned Europe not to "distort" trade in biofuel, saying Brasilia was ready to defend its interests before the World Trade Organization if necessary.

The director of the energy department in Brazil's foreign ministry, Andre do Lago, said his Latin American nation -- the biggest exporter of biofuel made from sugarcane -- was prepared to discuss European concerns about environmental sustainability but would brook no unfair import restrictions.

"If Brazil is looking to export ethanol to Europe, it is important that Europe considers our ethanol to be sustainable." "Now the issue is, as we all know, that all the countries in the world have a natural tendency to try to find ways to create barriers to protect their own interests and products," he said. "Every time an issue like this emerges, there are concerns to make sure they are not hidden ways of creating barriers, and to see whether they comply with the WTO," he said. Do Lago's comments came

after a study in Europe raised the possibility of limiting biofuel imports that do not respect environmental and social criteria.

The issue is important, given current fears that biofuel crops are contributing to a spike in food prices around the world that, in some cases, have sparked violence.

HP expands virtualisation capabilities

HP introduced technologies that integrate virtualisation capabilities into the HP ProLiant server platform, allowing for rapid and simple visualisation of server environments.

HP has joined the industry's largest virtualisation vendors VMware, Citrix, and Microsoft to develop these technologies, says a press release.

Called HP ProLiant iVirtualisation, the new technologies allow businesses of all size to lower costs, improve productivity, and efficiently allocate resources across their server infrastructures.

PEOPLE'S LEASING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES LIMITED. Registered Office ; City Heart (7th Floor) 67, Nayapalton, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh. Telephone : 933 1281 (Hunting). Fax : +880 2 831 8275. E-mail : plfs@bol-online.com; website : www.plfsbd.com. NOTICE OF 12TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING. NOTICE is hereby given that the 12th Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders of People's Leasing & Financial Services Ltd. will be held on Thursday June 26, 2008 at 11:00 A.M. at Bashundhara Convention Center, Pushpanjali, Bashundhara R. A., Baridhara, Dhaka - 1212 to transact the following business and adopt necessary resolution: