

2009 'very dangerous' for economy: WB

AFP, London

World Bank president Robert Zoellick said Friday that 2009 was turning into "a very dangerous year" for the economy but warned G20 members against protectionist policies to fight the downturn.

"2009 is shaping up to be a very dangerous year," he told reporters ahead of Saturday's G20 finance ministers meeting on how best to tackle the worst economic slowdown in decades.

"I believe it will be a positive sign if the G20 supports extended IMF resources, condemns protectionism and supports practical solutions," Zoellick said.

The G20 includes the Group of Seven industrialised countries -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States -- the European Union and leading developing nations including Brazil, China and India.

Finance ministers and central bank leaders from the United States and Europe go into Saturday's meeting deeply divided on whether stimulus packages or tighter regulation of the finance sector should be the way forward.

Saturday's gathering in Horsham, near London, is expected to lay the groundwork for a G20 heads of state summit on April 2.

"If the leaders feel they are running out of constructive tools, they might start to point fingers and take protectionist and isolationist actions and those are the negative spiral of events you saw in the (19)30s," Zoellick added on Friday.

He was speaking a day after warning in an interview that growth in the world economy would likely fall by up to 2.0 percent this year.

Zoellick believes the outlook is worse than the International Monetary Fund (IMF) analysis of 0.5 percent

growth for 2009, reported the Daily Mail newspaper, which carried an interview with him.

While the United States, the world's biggest economy, wants a coordinated international stimulus to fight the slowdown, some in Europe are suspicious of such a move and favour tightening regulation of markets and institutions.

In a boost for the United States -- Japan and China, the world's second and third largest economic powerhouses -- also embraced stimulus on Friday.

There have been public clashes in the last week on the best way forward, suggesting progress at the G20 finance ministers' talks on Saturday could be hampered by disagreement.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel reiterated Friday that she did not favour a new package of economic stimulus measures.

"We do not think much of the idea of a new package of measures" to underpin the economy, Merkel told a press conference in southern Munich after a meeting with employers.

Meanwhile a US proposal to substantially raise the IMF's resources signals a strong move in Washington toward multilateralism by the Obama administration in the face of the global economic crisis.

US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner on Wednesday said he would recommend to the Group of 20 leading nations that they support "substantially increasing emergency IMF resources" and called for them to lend to countries hit hard by the crisis.

According to his proposal, the New Arrangements to Borrow (NAB) of the International Monetary Fund "could be increased by up to 500 billion dollars and membership could be enlarged to include more G20 countries."

MEGA-MALL

FROM PAGE 1
Parking facilities for over 1,000 vehicles
► The vast central atrium is lit by a glass dome in the roof 60 metres across
► Bashundhara took six years to build
► Cost: \$100 million (Tk 882 crore)
► Launched in 2004

Jubo League

FROM PAGE 16
Abdullah Al Mamun and Paltu. Police said criminals hurled two bombs on them at railway crossing in Chudanga at about 12.00 noon as they were returning home on a motorcycle.

The injured are the organisers of the trade fair that is being held in the district. They were returning home after supervising the activities at the fair.

They received splinter injuries and their motorcycle was partly damaged. They were taken to the Chudanga Sadar Hospital.

Baharul said outlaws might have been behind the attack, as they had been demanding toll from him since the trade fair began.

A case was filed with the Sadar Police Station in this connection. Police said they were investigating the matter.

Incidents of bomb attacks have recently been on the rise in the southwestern region. At least 24 bombing incidents took place in 10 districts under the region over the last two and a half months leaving one person killed and around 40 including seven policemen injured.

BNP activist Buro Mollah was killed in Jhenaidah when a gang of criminals threw a bomb on him on February 27.

Rejoinder

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12. Unless the case records are placed before the chief justice along with the dissenting judgments, the chief justice can take no action in the matter, he added.

Quoting sources The Daily Star report said on February 23 a division bench of the HC delivered split orders on whether these people can directly come to the HC for bail without surrendering to the trial court.

Following the orders, the bail petitions have been sent to the chief justice for constituting a special bench of the HC for the final decision, the sources had told The Daily Star, adding that the chief justice had not yet constituted the special bench.

RU Vice Chancellor Prof Abdus Sobhan told The Daily Star that university authorities took the decision of closing it to deal with the situation.

BCL RU unit president Ibrahim Hossain Moon alleged that Shibir attacked on his men in a preplanned way.

Shibir president Delwar Hossain Sayeedi blamed BCL for the attack and demanded exemplary punishment of those who killed its secretary.

Among others injured are BCL RU unit president Ibrahim Hossain Moon, assistant secretary Apu, cultural secretary Joy, BCL activists Niaz, Suvro, Alamgir, Ismail, Sawpon, Anwar, Himu, Rashel, Dip, Roni, Ranju, Jewel, Arif, Komol, Hanif, Kawser, Mustofa, Obaidur, Tuhin and Mamun.

Shibir organising secretary Farhad Alam and its activists Razzak Raihan, Zinna, Asraf, Aziz, local Salim, Shafiqul and Hanif.

Local businessmen Khalek and Solaiman, Prothom Alo's photojournalist Azhar Uddin, daily Independent RU Correspondent Mamun, police constables Mohibul and Anwar, City Ward No. 30 AL general secretary Shahidul Islam, AL activists Shamim, Babu and passersby Shamim, Islam and Ruhul Amin.

No firefighting

FROM PAGE 1
kilometre city, fire service officials said.

"There is only one fire fighter for every 30,000 people in the city, and lack of water sources in it is another major problem," one official said.

And only a couple of the city's fire stations have 'chemical tender' (a fire fighting device loaded with dry powder, carbon-dioxide gas, foam, etc to fight chemical fires).

Seeking anonymity, the official said, "The number of fire stations in the city has remained the same since independence, and the number of fire fighters at the 12 stations has declined to 242 from 264 despite a phenomenal growth of the city."

According to fire service officials, fires damage property worth around Tk 725 crore a year in the country. But they could not give any estimate of losses to fire in the capital, saying they do not have any information cell.

A fire service control room source however said 70 percent of the reported fire incidents in the country took place in Dhaka and Chittagong.

Contacted, Brig Gen Abu Naim Md Shahid Ullah, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said damage to property worth around Tk 725 crore in fire is reported annually, but lot more goes unreported. "I believe that the real amount of damage due to fire is many times more," he added.

Mall all abuzz

FROM PAGE 1
complex at Panthapath spread.

The people inside the mall started running frantically to get out when the authorities asked all over loudspeakers to evacuate the complex in a disciplined way.

"When the authorities said a fire broke out on the upper floor of the mall I left the food court on level-8," panicked Abu Bakar told The Daily Star after coming out of the complex. "I saw many people trying to get down using the stairs...All, especially women and children, got extremely panicked," he said.

Omar Faruk, a salesman of outlet Affection on level-3, said he was dealing with a customer when the incident occurred. He asked the buyer to leave the mall immediately as soon as he heard the news of fire.

People were seen pouring out of Bashundhara complex in panic following the evacuation announcement. The security guards and other staff of Bashundhara Group helped them.

The guards claimed that several thousand people including customers, staff and visitors were inside the complex that has 2,700 shops, three theatres, gymnasium, swimming pools and children's park.

Shariful Islam, a security guard of Star Cineplex, told The Daily Star that moviegoers were inside the theatres when the fire broke out. "All of a sudden, the screen became dark. An announcement was made requesting the viewers to leave the complex immediately and all started coming out of the hall," he said.

The authorities requested the people to use the stairs to get down. The security guards on various floors were seen

BDR carnage

FROM PAGE 16
including six BDR members and six family members of some BDR personnel.

With this the number of total arrested rose to 248. Meanwhile, at least 20 more BDR personnel met their family members and kin and kin while several hundred families were seen waiting eagerly at the entrance of the BDR headquarters to meet their near and dear ones.

Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of CID Abdul Kahar Akand who leads the investigation told The Daily Star, "We started taking statements of witnesses and have so far taken statements of eight victims."

"We will also take statements of those who were not victims," he added.

Sources said all senior officials of the 60-member CID team engaged in the investigation held an hour-long meeting at its headquarters in the morning.

Talking to The Daily Star, ASP Akand said they discussed how they would carry out their investigation.

When asked he said the arrestees are also being interrogated.

Meanwhile, a CID team yesterday recovered around 200 more bullets from the BDR headquarters premises abandoned by the mutineers, CID sources said.

Members and relatives of a total of 57 BDR personnel have so far been able to visit them.

Govt team

FROM PAGE 16
30, no review of the decision is expected by this time. But the government is hopeful of something positive after the elections, however, it has not been decided yet who else will comprise the delegation," said a high official of the expatriates' welfare ministry.

Meanwhile, the employers are giving undertakings to the Malaysian immigration not to leave the 532 workers, reached the Kuala Lumpur International Airport on March 8 and 9, unemployed, said an official of Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia earlier decided to send these workers back to Bangladesh, but later changed the decision honouring Bangladesh's request to allow the employers to recruit them on humanitarian ground.

"We are quite hopeful that Malaysia will review its decision and accept our 55,000 workers since the country actually needs them in different sectors," said Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA) President Ghulam Mustafa.

Meanwhile, The Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMEIT) has been directed to make sure no workers whose visas had been cancelled leave for Malaysia.

Earlier, Malaysia asked the airlines not to carry workers from Bangladesh until further notification.

giving them instructions.

Watching the fire fighters' futile attempts to douse the flames, many shop owners gathered in front of the complex started weeping fearing the fire might destroy their outlets.

THE HOURS
1:30pm-1:35pm: Fire breaks out on the east side of the 17th floor of Bashundhara City Shopping Complex

1:40pm: Fire seen flaming from outside soon after two cleaners of the mall enter it after breaking its windowpane on the east side

2:00pm: Five firemen of Bashundhara Group get trapped on the top floor while trying to douse the flame

2:05pm: Fire fighters arrive

2:25pm: The four fire fighters trapped on the top floor climb down wires

2:30pm: Security guards evacuate people from the building

3:45pm: Fire spreads down to the 12th floor

4:30pm: Army men cordon off the building

4:32pm: An air force helicopter rescues another fire fighter from the top floor

4:34pm: Five floors of the building get gutted

5:33pm: The flame seems totally out of control

6:05pm: The top floor still burning

7:16pm: Fire fighters pour water on the building using hydraulic ladder

9:00pm: The flame brought under control

9:15pm: Search and rescue operation begins

10:00pm-11:00pm: Six dead bodies recovered from inside and around an elevator on the 17th floor

1:30am: Rescue operation still continues

Blaze

FROM PAGE 1
With the television channels broadcasting live the inferno leaping across the landmark structure, thousands of people crowded the Panthapath area to see first-hand how things develop. As a result, fire trucks struggled to reach the scene.

Director General (DG) of Fire Service Brig Gen Abu Naim M o h a m m a d Shahidullah said cause of the fire could not yet be known. Some of the shop-owners at the mall however said short-circuit might be responsible.

In the evening, the government formed a three-member committee to probe the incident.

Shahnoor Miah, public relations officer of the home ministry, told The Daily Star that Abdul Hanif, joint secretary (police) of the ministry, will head the committee that has been asked to submit report within seven workdays. The other two members are from the police and fire brigade.

State minister for home, local lawmakers, inspector general of police (IGP), DG of Rab, Dhaka Metropolitan police commissioner and other senior officials visited the scene immediately.

State Minister for Home Tanjim Ahmed Sohel said the fire could not be put out due to lack of proper firefighting equipment.

"The fire brigade should have at least five ladders, while they have only one," he observed.

Vehicular movement on Panthapath, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Sonargaon Road and Green Road were suspended to avert accidents and help the fire fighters and others reach the spot.

Casualties would have been much higher had all the offices not been closed on the weekend.

Baki

FROM PAGE 1
father going to office. They always lock the door and it became a routine game for them," said Baki's wife Sajeda Billah.

Baki Billah had a tough but happy life in a small residence at Agargaon. But everything was ruined, all Sajeda's dreams shattered when she received the news of her husband's death at 3:30pm.

It was evening when Baki's body was brought to the basement of Samorita Hospital.

"To whom your children will go now. Who they will call father?" the whole area resonated with the wails of Sajeda.

High risk

FROM PAGE 16
There were 26 water reservoirs in Dhaka 30 years ago but those have been filled up because of lack of awareness of the departments concerned, said fire service officials.

A source in the fire service control room said 70 percent of the reported fire incidents take place in Dhaka and Chittagong.

JMB suspect held at border

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Immigration police yesterday arrested a suspected Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) member from Benapole border in Jessore.

Moulana Munsur Alam, 45, was rounded up from the cheek post of the Benapole when he was returning from India after five months, police said.

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) is now grilling Munsur, said Rab sources.

Immigration Acting Officer Kazi Akbar Hossain said Munsur went to India on October 10 with a one-month visa and stayed at different places of India in the last five months.

An Indian mobile SIM card was seized from Munsur. He said he stayed at different madrasas in India during his five-month stay there.

Munsur is the son of Abdul Karim of south Isakhali village in Chittagong.

Architect

FROM PAGE 16
inside," he told The Daily Star, adding Bashundhara City is the only building in the country having a full-fledged integrated fire fighting system.

He said there is a control room inside the building from where Bashundhara employees are supposed to monitor all the happenings round-the-clock. "The system is automated and you will be alarmed within seconds if a fire originated from any parts of the building," he added.

The architect said when the building was constructed they had installed all the fire fighting equipment both automated and manual.

Asked about the water reservoir, Foyez Ullah said, the reservoir remains filled with water all the time. Hoses/pipes had also been installed on every floor to get water in time. This is called fire hydrant system so that fire fighters can use it, he said.

"If the reservoir is out of water, there is an alternative system called Siamese connect. The building is having several such connections so that fire fighters can pump water from outside to keep the hoses/pipes workable. There is also a separate fire-proof lift for the use of fire fighters on emergency basis," said Foyez.

He said no equipment was used when the fire was spreading in different floors of the 19-storey building built in reinforced concrete. He said fire can break out any time anywhere but it should be extinguished quickly by using the interior capacity.

He said the country is yet to establish the capacity of quickly dousing fire. "We had the chance to douse the flame in the Bashundhara city using the interior system. But we failed and the fire went out of control," said the architect.

Workers

FROM PAGE 16
Empower, our manpower agency, provided us with food and lodging for two months, but thereafter they took no care of us," he said.

The employers did not pay levy for the workers. So the workers became irregular, Kalam said. Thousands of other workers would also come for the same reason, Kalam told The Daily Star.

Nasreen Jahan, labour councillor of Bangladesh High Commission in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), also said that job opportunities were declining in the UAE.

She said many construction companies have already slowed down their activities making workers uncertain about their future.

"We are conferring with the companies so that they temporarily allow our workers to go home on long vacations, instead of terminating them, so that the companies could re-employ them immediately after the recession is over," Nasreen said.

She said in some cases, on some of the workers' demand their regular visas were cancelled to allow them return home. She however said there was no record of such returnees.

Meanwhile, in the wake of the financial meltdown, overseas employment has also come down by around 50 percent since December last year.

Contacted, Expatriate and Overseas Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said they were aware of the facts and therefore decided to visit these countries so that the workers could be reassigned to other jobs or kept in the existing companies even at minimum salaries.

"We also directed our foreign missions in this regard," he said.

Zardari given

FROM PAGE 16

staying away from their homes and offices in order to evade arrest, just as they had done in other areas of Pakistan.

Those targeted included members of Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), the second largest party in the country, the main religious party Jamaat-i-Islami and followers of former cricketer turned politician Imran Khan.

"More than 100 party leaders and workers were arrested in the province and police are raiding houses of party leaders and activists," said Arshad Qureshi, PML-N spokesman in North West Frontier Province.

The turmoil could dampen Western hopes that Pakistan will stay focused on the fight against al-Qaeda and Taliban extremists along its border with Afghanistan.

Zardari was Friday "reportedly asked to go by the army and the Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani if he does not accept a new deal hatched by them in consultation with foreign powers", a Pakistan News website said.

"The new political deal, backed by Washington, London and the army establishment, has quietly been conveyed to Gilani to bring down the political temperature in Pakistan," it quoted sources as saying.

As part of the deal, the sources added, Gilani has been asked to "immediately convince Zardari to 'demonstrate the flexibility required' to break the deadlock before the lawyers' Long March reaches Islamabad."

"The ball is now firmly in the court of Zardari, who has to take a decision swiftly on endorsing the agreement brokered by powerful international actors," the report said.

Under pressure from army to defuse the political crisis in Pakistan, Premier Yousuf Raza Gilani may reach out to the opposition PML-N and withdraw controversial decisions, including Shabbaz Sharif's removal as Punjab Chief Minister, a media report claimed today. Gilani told a group of outgoing members of the Senate, the upper house of Parliament, during a private discussion that he wanted to "decisively deliver" in the crisis even if it meant having to lose his post, The News' daily reported.

"Prime Ministers come and go but what they do remains in the annals of history. I want to see a government that can do something worthwhile to break the prevailing logjam," Gilani was quoted as saying by one of the Senators.

Gilani was asked at a dinner he hosted for the outgoing Senators on Wednesday as to what army chief Gen Ashfaq Parvez Kayani had told him to do during their meeting. The Premier replied that Kayani had expressed his concern at the prevailing situation and wanted him to defuse it.

"You should play your constitutional and legal role in calming down the situation," Kayani was quoted as telling the Premier. However, the Prime Minister's office and the army spokesman could not be reached for comments on the report.

Thousands of lawyers Thursday simultaneously began their Long March from Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab and will converge here March 16 for a sit-in before parliament to demand the reinstatement of the Supreme Court and high court judges Musharraf had sacked after imposing an emergency in November 2007.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has also joined the stir to protest a court decision barring Sharif and his brother Shabbaz Sharif from contesting elections.

The decision led to the fall of Shabbaz Sharif's PML-N led government in Punjab and the imposition of Governor's Rule in the province.

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