

## Businesses ask for Tk 6,000cr bailout

### Govt mulls 'special package' to help fight recession fallout

**STAR REPORT**

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) yesterday sought a Tk 6,000 crore rescue package to cope with the global financial meltdown.

"We proposed a Tk 6,000 crore bailout package to deal with the economic recession. We have also asked the government to take initiatives to help boost the country's economy," FBCCI President Annisul Haq told reporters after a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The premier said the government would offer "special package" to save country's business sectors from any possible negative impact of the current global economic recession, reported UNB.

The leaders of the country's apex business body mentioned 17 points at the meeting and

said the rescue fund could be raised by issuing bonds, if necessary.

The delegation led by Annisul said they were facing difficulty in paying bank loan instalments because of the financial meltdown that might cause further problems and lead to closure of sick industries.

"If necessary, the prime minister should make overseas trips to protect the interests of expatriate Bangladeshi workers," they said.

Their points include maintaining good relation with neighbouring countries, announcing Sunday as weekly holiday, checking tender manipulation, making Better Business Forum and Regulatory Reforms Commission active and formation of a council for food security.

"We also proposed giving waiver for a year or two for the industries that fail to repay loans as

## Govt plans to overhaul KL mission

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The government is going to replace officials at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur to ease labour problems in Malaysia.

The high commissioner and the labour counsellor at the Bangladesh mission have been called back. Labour and Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain told reporters at his office yesterday.

"We are sending a full set of officials to the mission in Kuala Lumpur to deal with the problems," he said.

Malaysia recently cancelled 55,000 work visas to Bangladeshis. Thousands of unemployed workers are also returning home from different countries.

Around 60 more workers

## Manpower sector looks down the barrel

### Recruitment slips to half for global meltdown, unscrupulous middlemen

**PORIMOL PALMA**

Poor labour recruitment arrangements coupled with ongoing financial meltdown have dealt a double blow to overseas employment, which is moving towards a precarious state.

On an average, monthly 46,288 jobseekers left the country in the last three months, while the same rate was 75,516 in the first eleven months of 2008, according to the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET).

Malaysia, home to around 4 lakh Bangladeshis, has recently cancelled work visas of 55,000 jobseekers, adding to the woes due to a shrinking job market.

Besides, workers who paid high cost for overseas jobs are returning home empty-handed in increased numbers.

They complain that they were not provided jobs and given only what was necessary for survival in Malaysia or Singapore.

Thousands of workers in these two countries are also unemployed as the agents had hired them in higher numbers than the actual requirement to squeeze money out of them.

Employers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bangladesh's second largest labour market with around 9 lakh workforce, are either sending back workers on long-term vacation or cutting salary due to slowdown in construction projects.

Businesses and experts say overseas employment might come down to 4 lakh this year against 8.75 lakh last year. Remittance sent by expatriates stood to

around \$9 billion, the highest foreign exchange earning in real term.

"This will surely be affected if employment declines and retrenchment of migrant workers continues. Besides, no new employment opportunities are being created at home. Things will be worse if the crisis lingers," says Bangladesh Economic Association President Prof QK Ahmad.

Experts concerned say the situation would not be so bad had the successive governments handled the manpower sector properly and regulated the multi-layered middlemen, who hike the cost of migration but help make the labourers cheap to the employers.

"Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain now have full or partial bans on recruiting

## Malaysia cuts 70pc foreign work permits

**AFP, Kuala Lumpur**

Malaysia has slashed its work permit approvals for foreign workers by almost 70 percent so far this year, faced with the twin threat of layoffs and recession, according to a report Sunday.

In January and February, an average of 250 permits were approved daily compared to 800 last year, following a more



Unscrupulous traders have created an artificial char with piled up sands and stones in the Turag River near the Gabtoli-Aminbazar bridge, clogging the city's circular waterway. PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

## SEPARATION OF JUDICIARY More time sought to examine bill

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The bill designed to continue separation of the judiciary will have to wait for at least another week to be passed in parliament.

The House yesterday extended by seven days the time limit for scrutiny of the proposed law based on the twin ordinances that separated the judiciary from the executive in a landmark decision by the caretaker government.

The parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry was supposed to place report on the bill yesterday.

But instead, it sought more time as the government high-ups could not yet decide on jurisdiction of the executive magistrates, said sources.

Committee Chairman Suranjit Sengupta did not explain the reason for seeking extension.

In response to growing call from the administrative cadres, the committee on Thursday decided to recommend that parliament bring amendments to the bill to empower executive magistrates to take cognisance of offences in extraordinary circumstances.

After a meeting that day, Sengupta said they would turn in their report Sunday.

The same day Law Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed, who placed the bill in parliament on March 2, said the proposed new law might be passed this week.

Magistrates from the admin service lost the cognisance power in separation of the judiciary from the executive in 2007.

In line with the Supreme Court's directives, the caretaker government separated the judiciary through two ordinances amending the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Despite being recommended by the special parliamentary committee for ratification, the ordinances ceased to have effect

## Arms count begins 17 days after BDR carnage

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Authorities at the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters began to count up their arms and ammunition yesterday, 17 days into the bloodbath, to figure out exactly how many of them are still missing.

Director General (DG) of BDR Brigadier General Moinul

## Sharif defies 'arrest', leads long march

### Protests against Pak govt turn violent, leaders go underground to dodge detention

**AP, AFP, INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Lahore**

Pakistan's opposition leader Nawaz Sharif defied house arrest yesterday to join anti-government protests that quickly descended into violence and chaos, with running battles between stone-throwing protesters and police.

The power struggle between Pakistan's president and Nawaz Sharif threatens to paralyse the government and, alarmingly for the US, distract the nuclear-armed country from its fight against Taliban militants operating along the Afghan border.

Hundreds of police surrounded the Lahore residence of Sharif, a former

prime minister, before dawn on Sunday and detained him along with scores of his supporters, a party spokesman said.

Officers in the eastern Pakistani city showed party officials an order placing Sharif and his politician brother Shahbaz under house arrest for three days, spokesman Pervaiz Rasheed said.



A Pakistani riot policeman fires a teargas canister from an armoured vehicle towards opposition party activists during an anti-government rally in Lahore yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

## BASHUNDHARA CITY Why fire lift didn't work

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The committee to probe into Friday fire disaster at Bashundhara City Complex is investigating why emergency fire lift did not work and if there were any combustible materials on the floors on fire.

Meanwhile, the Bashundhara City Complex authorities claimed the fire had damaged properties worth about Tk 200 crore but their paper documents were all right.

The shopping mall will

## RTI may offer wider access

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The parliamentary standing committee on information ministry yesterday recommended that the House amend the right to information (RTI) bill to curtail some organisations' absolute authority to deny information to individuals.

The bill, placed in parliament for enactment law for continuation of people's access to information, proposed continuation of the provision for blanket immunity to some organisations from disclosing information on some specific matters.

But the parliamentary standing committee in its report on the bill placed in parliament recommended that the organisations seeking to keep information undisclosed would have to

## Sangsad talks on Hasina being in fear of attack

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

The House yesterday witnessed a brief discussion on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's statement after she said that grenades and bullets still haunt her.

The discussion followed comments by BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury regarding what the prime minister said during an interview.

"We panicked at her remarks. If the prime minister

## HC directive sought to equip fire service adequately

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

A writ petition was filed with the High Court (HC) yesterday seeking the court's order for the government to equip the fire service of the country adequately to ensure safety in high-rise buildings in case of fire incidents.

The petition also sought a direction upon the director

## Correction

In our yesterday's story headlined "A Farewell in forests", it was inadvertently mentioned Dr Anwar Hossain instead of Dr Anwarul Islam, professor of Dhaka University.

**WE DEEPLY MOURN**

The loss of personnel and material by the devastating fire at the corporate office of Bashundhara City on 13 March, 2009 has left us deeply shocked.

May The Almighty be with the grief stricken families and the institution that experienced such a terrible financial loss.

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