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Cut interest rate, avoid import of luxury items

JS body suggests measures to tackle meltdown fallout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday asked the finance ministry to take steps for reducing income tax rate, bank interest rate and import, and avoiding import of luxury items now to face the impact of global economic meltdown.

The parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry also asked it to give different packages including cash incentives to businessmen affected by the recession.

"Country's economy is under great

pressure due to the global recession. So, we have asked the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to reduce import, and avoid import of luxury goods for the time being," said AHM Mustafa Kamal, chairman of the committee.

Talking to journalists at the parliament building complex after a three-hour meeting of the House body, he said "The committee has asked the National Board of Revenue (NBR) to cut income tax rate and to widen the tax base so that the amount of revenue increases," Mustafa Kamal said.

"The committee asked Bangladesh Bank (BB) to reduce bank interest rate so that entrepreneurs are inspired to set up industry."

The committee chief said the country's export growth declined in the first eight months of the current fiscal year.

The House body also instructed the central bank to take steps to ensure that financial organisations set up their booths in villages so that expatriate Bangladeshis are encouraged to send remittance through banks, instead of hundi.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

KHALEDA'S HOUSE Ershad eats his own words

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad this afternoon retracted a statement hours after he made it on the Cantonment house of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

In the morning, the JP chief said Khaleda should leave her Cantonment house, but this afternoon at his Rangpur residence delivered a statement to the newsmen saying he did not make such comment, adding "Different electronic media distorted his statement."

He said, "Replying to a query, I told a journalist that it is her wish whether she will leave the house or not."

"Khaleda Zia shouldn't run political activities from her

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

No risk allowance for firemen's risky job

Poor pay, no health insurance discourage them

SHAHNAZ PARVEEN

Despite the extreme risks their job entails, firefighters and rescue workers of the country don't receive any risk allowance for their job.

The employees of the Fire Service and Civil Defence are also not entitled to benefits like health insurance or life insurance and get a meagre monthly medical allowance of Tk500.

Their pay scale also remains one of the lowest in the country.

Talking to the Daily Star, several Fire Service and Civil Defence personnel complained that even when they sustain severe injuries on duty, an injured fireman is left to pay for his own treatment from the meagre salary he receives.

The firefighters also said that while the other

service agencies like the military or police have their own dedicated hospitals, their department has none.

Firemen said that as is the nature of their job, their injuries are mostly burns which require specialised treatment and care which is expensive and also not available in most hospitals of the country.

Fazlur Rahman, a rescue worker of the department, received severe burn injuries in May 2005 when a gasoline storage unit exploded in his face while he was helping rescue a trapped family.

"The cost of my treatment went up to Tk 52,000. I could have never afforded that amount but some sympathetic senior officials

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

AUG 21 ATTACK Case hearing adjourned until April 7

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court adjourned the hearing of the August 21 grenade attack case till April 7, as 14 Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) men including its chief Mufti Abdul Hannan were not produced before it yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Masdar Hossain of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 passed the order after prosecution lawyers told the court about non-production of the accused. Nevertheless, the lawyers did not mention any reason behind it.

The grenade attack was carried out on an Awami League (AL) rally on Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21, 2004.

In the attack, 23 people including Ivy Rahman, wife of President Zillur Rahman, were killed and a large number of people were injured.

Meanwhile, 23 prosecution witnesses had given their statements before the court and they were cross-examined by defence lawyers.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Police yesterday produce before the CMM court over 800 BDR jawans and non-soldiers suspected of carrying out the massacre and arms looting at the BDR headquarters in February. Story on page 1.

PHOTO: STAR

Move to streamline NGOs under single monitoring body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will bring the country's registered, non-registered NGOs and other volunteer organisations under one authority to monitor them and prevent their illegal operations, including patronisation of militancy.

A single high-powered authority comprised of representatives from the social welfare ministry, foreign ministry, home ministry, Bangladesh Bank, Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms and the NGO Bureau will be formed for this purpose.

A proposal will be soon prepared and placed before the cabinet for its consideration, sources in the social welfare ministry said.

Meanwhile, the social welfare ministry asked elected representatives to keep watch over non-government organisations (NGOs) and the volunteer organisations in their respective areas.

"They have been requested to visit madrasas, orphanages and other welfare bodies in their respective areas to learn more about how they function," said Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haque Mostafa Shahid at his Bangladesh Secretariat office yesterday.

A month ago, the ministry wrote to all lawmakers and chairmen of upazila parishads across the country in a bid to increase supervision over the activities of the organisations. It will act as a deterrent to illegal activities.

The organisations would get monetary allocations based on their evaluation report, which will be sent to the ministry before the next budget.

Minister Enamul Haque Mostafa Shahid firmly believes that militancy funding can be stopped just by bringing all the organisations under the same authority and by proper monitoring.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Vigil on border to check escape of accused investigators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday issued letters to all offices of the immigration and border guards so that its three retired investigators who were made accused in the case filed for intentionally misdirecting the probe into the August 21 grenade attack case, cannot leave the country.

CID's ASP Fazlur Kabir, the present investigation officer (IO) of the grenade attack case, filed the case against the three retired officials Sunday night

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

66 Bangladeshis rescued in Libya

Delayed report on the 'illegal' migrants says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Libyan coastguards last Friday night rescued at least 66 Bangladeshis along with other nationals while being taken by a boat off Libyan coast, reported Libyan newspaper The Tripoli Post Tuesday.

The fate of the Bangladeshi nationals could not be known from the report.

Of the total 350 rescued people, 44 hail from Somalia, 18 from Eritrea, 33 from Ghana, 55 from Egypt, 25 from Tunisia, seven from Algeria, 15 from Morocco, 30 from Nigeria and 19 from Syria, five from India and two from Pakistan.

Some women, including children and one pregnant woman, are also among them, International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Tripoli said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

LAWYERS' MONEY Minister seeks Mashhud's explanation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Qamrul Islam yesterday said Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury has misused his authority at the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) over the last two years by filing false and fabricated cases against political leaders in order to harass them.

The minister sought a clarification from him (Hasan Mashhud) regarding the money spent over cases filed by the ACC.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Govt moves to recast Law Commission

Top posts of the body remain vacant for long

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The government has taken an initiative to recast the Law Commission for bringing it back from the brink of extinction following retirement of its remaining lone member and Chairman Justice Md Sirajul Islam.

Formed in 1996 to help modernise the country's law and judicial system, the commission now is a dysfunctional institution as its top-most positions--chairman and two members--remain vacant.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star the government has taken steps to fill the positions of the Law Commission to make it functional.

Former Judge of the High Court Justice MA Rashid will be appointed chairman of the commission while its two members will be appointed after consultation with the chairman, the minister said.

Shafique also mentioned that he has already signed the documents regarding the appointment of Justice MA Rashid and sent it to the Prime Minister's Office to forward it to the president for final approval of the appointment.

He hoped that the appointment of the chairman would be completed in next week.

The law commission has been inactive due to shortage of manpower and logistic supports for a long time.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



Badawi quits as Malaysian PM

Najib Razak to take over today

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

N Korea vows to attack Japan if its rocket intercepted

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's military threatened yesterday to attack "major targets" in Japan if Tokyo tries to shoot down a satellite it intends to launch as soon as this weekend.

"If Japan recklessly intercepts the DPRK's (North's) satellite for peaceful purposes, the KPA will mercilessly deal deadly blows not only at the already deployed intercepting means but at major targets," said a statement from the Korean People's Army (KPA).

Japan, South Korea and the United States see the North's plan to launch a communications satellite between April 4-8 as a disguised test of a Taepodong-2 ballistic missile, which could in theory reach Alaska or Hawaii.

Tokyo may toughen existing bilateral sanctions by halting all exports to Pyongyang and tightening restrictions on financial transactions, said government spokesman Takeo Kawamura.

The North has begun fuelling its rocket in a sign it could launch as early as this weekend, CNN quoted a senior US military official as saying. There was no immediate confirmation.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

CTG ARMS HAUL Ex-NSI man called again for quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Investigators of the sensational Chittagong arms haul case yesterday sent notice again to former assistant director of National Security Intelligence (NSI) in Chittagong for interrogation.

"We have sent notice to former NSI assistant director

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
April 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

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