

Mixed job

FROM PAGE 1
OMS (open market sale) rice prices by Tk 2 and yet it finds no taker. A part of the de-escalation of food prices could be attributed to the continuous global food price slump since September last year -- because in a globalised world Bangladesh alone could not keep its prices low while the rest of the world consumed pricey rice. But the story has also substances beyond that -- it is that of conscious policy decisions of the present government, and that of the caretaker one. In its last days, the caretaker government had been able to replenish its depleted stock and the AL government maintained it. In addition, the AL government has promised to keep importing rice in future. These gave the right signal to the private sector and plugged speculative behaviour. The private sector started offloading their stocks as they also sensed a good boro harvest. The new government's commitment to feed the people cheap food, also gave a positive signal to the market.

Next comes the boro story. The country is now poised for a bumper boro production, and the government's -- especially Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury and Food Minister Dr Razzaque's -- energetic and committed involvement in market monitoring, making inputs reach the farmers, and strengthening of the distribution channel -- is the key to this food success. The decision to rationalise fertilizer prices according to the international market that saw a reduction in key fertilizer prices by a half, helped farmers use a balanced nutrient. As Dr Debarpriya Bhattacharya puts it, "The confluence of global situation, policy initiatives, institutional engagement, and personal involvement of the two ministers made the food story for Bangladesh today."

The AL government can today score high because it has ensured a comfortable food security for the country, as reports predict food will be a real concern for the world soon, despite the present boom.

Beyond the food sector, the government faced the reality of the ongoing global recession in its first 100 days, and is likely to see the same global atmosphere for another year. The country's export growth has slowed, remittance from workers working abroad slumped, and domestic demand shrunk. The worst sufferer is likely to be the service sector.

It is a difficult time for the world economy, even the heavy weights are groaning and moaning under the pain of unemployment and astounding sag. The new government however seemed a bit slow to understand the reality, despite the businesses' repeated calls for attention. Finally it has formed a taskforce to chalk out measures to counter the recession impact. A bailout package is likely to be announced in a week or so. Meantime, the government has capped the lending rates of the banks at 13 percent and allowed rescheduling of loans by the export sector without down payments. But as the inflation keeps falling, this 13 percent still shows an increase in real interest rate, and a real concern here is that the market forces are not acting as they should have been.

But by any standard, these could be dubbed as slow responses. And inadequate too. While the rest of the world chalked out its stimulus package much earlier, the AL-led government just faced the inaction.

Ctg arms haul

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Commander Khorshid -- were being interrogated till filing of this report last evening.

Investigators let the other three go after recording their statements since they were on leave to sit for a departmental test for promotion at that time, said sources.

CID Chittagong Division Special Police Super (SSP) Mohammad Muslim confirmed the appearance of the six navy personnel before the investigators.

The CID served the notice to those who were on duty on the Karnaphuli River and the Bay of Bengal during the offloading of the 10-truckload of firearms and ammunition at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited jetty in the early hours of April 02, 2009, he said.

As the CID investigators, through the home ministry, sought a list of the then coast guards, the Coast Guard Chittagong Zone provided it, said sources.

The CID was interrogating the then Coast Guard men as the main accused in the case, Hafizur Rahman, in a confessional statement on March 02, 2009 implicated them in helping two engine boats with the deadly consignment berth at CUFL jetty.

Robbers kill

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Diseases Hospital in Dhaka. The injured passengers were let go after first aid.

The onslaught took place when the launch passed Muktarpur Bridge in Munshiganj Sadar Upazila. Later, near Kalagachhia in Bandar upazila of Narayanganj some more 15 to 20 robbers got aboard, said the passengers.

Robbers charged on the passengers indiscriminately with sharp weapons and plundered valuables from around 50 passengers. As Mozammel tried to restrain the robbers, they hacked him to death, witnesses said.

Mozammel's body was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Ansar Commander Abed Ali filed a robbery case with the Narayanganj Police Station. The launch finally reached its destination Muradnagar yesterday morning.

HSC exams

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The highest number of candidates 1,53,398 will appear under Dhaka Board, 75,629 under Rajshahi, 41,644 under Comilla, 74,489 under Jharkhand, 41,754 under Chittagong, 30,159 under Barisal, 18,349 under Sylhet and 59,411 under Dinajpur Education Board.

Some 59,354 students will sit for Alim exams under Bangladesh Madrasa Board, and 64,121 for the Business Management exams under Bangladesh Technical Education Board.

Besides, some 170 candidates will sit for the HSC at five centres abroad included under Dhaka Board. The centres are in Jeddah, Riyadh, Tripoli, Doha and Abu Dhabi.

Ahead of the examination, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) imposed restriction on access within 200 yards of the examination centres to ensure peaceful atmosphere.

The restrictions will remain effective till May 28, said a DMP release.

Earlier on Monday, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid said necessary steps had been taken to hold the exams in a copy-free and peaceful atmosphere.

Zero tolerance will be shown to any incident involving copying during the exams, he added.

140 more

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Workers returned homes from Malaysia while 48 from Muthihs despite having their legal documents.

The cheated workers alleged that at least 65 of them returned home after facing various jail terms.

While talking to journalists at the airport, the cheated workers alleged that neither the Embassy in Malaysia nor the recruiting agencies helped them in this regard.

Yusuf Ali of Nawabganj said he was supposed to provide with a job in a confectionery shop, but they recruited me as a construction worker," he said and added that they sent him to the country with a tourist visa instead of the work permit.

Meanwhile, among the bodies, 16 bodies, four of a family, were received here Tuesday while five others yesterday.

Four bodies of the family were identified as Paritosh Kumar of Chouhata in Satkhira district, his wife Tandrisa Ari Das and their two and four years old two children.

Among others, Sanjid Ahmed and Nurul Islam died in Malaysia while Al-Amin, Sirajul Isal, Gazi Miah, Arshed Ali, Syed Ahmed, Majibar Rahman in Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Alam, Kabil Sheikh, Nazmul Huq, Sirajul Raj, Hujbul Miah and Armin Huq in Dubai, Ahmedul in Kuwait, Sadeq Miah in Abu Dhabi and Muhsin in Qatar.

Some died of cardiac arrest while others were killed in accidents.

Bailout package

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The central bank recently told the commercial banks that they would not be allowed to charge interest higher than 13 percent.

In a related development, the World Bank (WB) last week cautioned the government about the demands for bailout. This might not benefit the WB said.

And the government does not have adequate fiscal space to finance large bailout packages, it noted.

Police rescue

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said at the briefing at Shahbagh Police Station.

He also said police handed over 26 mobile phones, out of 36, to the owners after police recovered those from the muggers.

All arrestees were sent to jail after they were produced before a Dhaka court yesterday, police said.

"We are sure of the three arrestees that they have no relations with JMB."

India goes to polls

FROM PAGE 16

Congress hit back by pointing out that the previous BJP-led government had released some dreaded terrorists in exchange for the safe release of 154 passengers on board an Indian Airlines that was hijacked from Kathmandu to Kandahar in December 1999.

The polling in the first phase in eastern Uttar Pradesh will determine the shape of things to come in the politically key state, which sends the highest number of 80 parliamentarians, as the pattern is expected to leave its mark on the next three phases in the state.

Elections are also being

simultaneously in Andhra Pradesh in the south and Orissa state in the east. In Orissa, the polls will be a litmus test for Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik whose party

Biju Janata Dal parted ways with BJP after 11 years of

alliance and switched over to a band of centrist and Left parties.

More than half of Andhra Pradesh ruled by Congress will go to the poll in the first phase which will decide 154 of the total of 294 assembly seats.

Agencies add: Thousands

of troops fanned out across parts of India on Wednesday, a day ahead of elections to determine who will lead the country as the global eco-

nomic slump threatens to overtake two decades of growth.

Thursday's voting is the

first of five phases that will span a month. Some 714

million people more than

twice the population of the United States are eligible to

cast ballots.

Opinion polls indicate that

neither the ruling Congress party nor the main opposition, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, will

win enough seats in the 543-seat lower house of Parliament to rule on its own.

Whoever gets the most

votes will likely have to cobble

together a coalition out of

dozens of smaller parties, many focused on single,

regional issues.

Thousands of police and

paramilitary troops were

deployed Wednesday across

the southern Indian state of

Andhra Pradesh, which will

vote for both national and

state-level representatives.

"We have taken every

necessary measure to ensure

peaceful, free and fair elec-

tions. Now you go out and vote," state Director General of Police A.K. Mohanty said in the state capital, Hyderabad.

Thousands of troops were

called in to patrol the northern

state of Uttar Pradesh, which

has the most seats in the

national Parliament. Sixteen

of its 80 seats are up for grabs

on Thursday, said Brij Lal, a

senior police official.

In the eastern state of Bihar,

heavily armed Maoist rebels

attacked a paramilitary camp

set up for the elections,

wounding one soldier, senior

police official Vikas Vaibhav

said in this regard.

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