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RECESSION TRIGGERS JOB-CUT SPREE

# Students down under look down the barrel

SYED ASHFAQU HAQUE,  
back from Australia

About 6,000 Bangladeshi students brace for bad times as recession strikes Australia and starts to bite deeper into a once solid economy of a paltry 21.7 million population.

Feeling pinch of the slowdown in November last year, Kevin Rudd's government kept on trying every tricks laid out in the capitalistic economics to thwart the impact that already brought down Australian economic activities to its lowest ebb in 27 years.

But international students, who turned the education sector into Australia's third largest export earner behind coal and iron ore, still stay out in the cold for not having permanent residency status.

Australia has come forward with a number of major initiatives for its citizens to weather the fallout of global financial crisis as well as to safeguard its economy, which is being dragged into deeper-than-expected level of recession. Even in a desperate effort, Rudd's government handed Australians envelopes full of dollars-- about 3,000 Australian dollars in 3 phases-- spurring them on to spend and keep the economy alive in return.

"When households and companies cut back on spending, the government should come forward and do the spending," Professor Sisira Jayasuriya of La Trobe University in Melbourne told this correspondent recently.

A professor of economics, the Sri Lankan-born Australian however refrained from saying that spending is the solution to slowdown. "No body has gone

through a financial crisis of this magnitude. On a global scale, nothing happened like this since (the recession in) 1930s," he said. "We must have to ensure global spending does not collapse."

But this theory of spending seemingly fell into deaf ears, as the private sector-- from catering to aviation-- has launched massive job-cut over the last few months and people are gradually withdrawing into saving mode.

The unemployment rate is at a four-year high of 5.2 percent, but the government's latest predictions show an unemployment rate of 7 percent by the June quarter of next year, leaving about 800,000 people out of work by the middle of 2010.

But that prediction is almost certainly too optimistic following a slew of bad

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Slum dwellers queue up their utensils near the embankment in Mohammadpur yesterday waiting for the Wasa water tanker. The photo was taken at 7:30 in the morning.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

# Recession to bring food crisis back

UN report urges Asia to protect poor

AP, Bangkok

The food crisis that hit many developing countries last year is likely to re-emerge following the recession and Asian countries must take measures to protect poor people from rising prices, a UN report said Friday.

The report released in Bangkok called for Asian governments to implement social programs such as cash assistance and food-for-work schemes that ensure the poor have food during a period of higher prices.

Rapid hikes in the price of rice and fears of a global shortage set off riots and protests in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean last year.

The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific report also recommended that countries in the near term boost the productivity of small-scale farmers by making it easier for them to get their crops to

market, introducing micro credit programs that allow them to buy new equipment, and land and insurance schemes to help communities cope with disasters.

"This report reminds us that, while the world's attention is very much on the economic crisis, food security remains a real threat," Noeleen Heyzer, executive secretary of the agency a statement. "Given the magnitude of the problem in the Asia-Pacific region, our response will define how food security issues are resolved globally."

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, which did not take part in the report, said in December that rising food prices had pushed the number of hungry people in the world close to 1 billion, with two-thirds of those in Asia.

Though prices have come down from their

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# UNFAITHFUL HUSBAND She goes for risky abortion, meets death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman died from illegal abortion at a clinic in the city's Pallab area early yesterday.

Salma Akhter Aduri, 19, a garment worker, went to Khan Doctor's Chamber at Rupnagar to terminate her five-and-a-half-month pregnancy on Saturday night.

But after a few hours, she expired as the doctors failed to stop bleeding during the surgical procedure, said police and the victim's family.

According to medical rules, practitioners must not perform abortion on anyone pregnant for over eight weeks.

Pallab police sent the body to the Dhaka Medical College (DMC) Morgue for an autopsy.

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# Industrial cops in 3 months

Home ministry tells RMG exporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Formation process of industrial police force would be completed within next three months to maintain peace and discipline in apparel sector for which all procedures already have been finalised.

Before introducing the new force, the government has decided to use battalion Ansars in the industrial areas to protect the sector from any untoward situation.

This was disclosed at a view-exchanging meeting between the garment manufacturers and exporters and the home minister, state minister for home affairs, lawmakers and high-ups from home ministry and law enforcing agencies at Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) office yesterday.

BGMEA organised the meeting on the pres-

ent situation of export-oriented readymade garment industries.

The industrial police force, which is a long demand of the industrialists especially the garment manufacturers would be primarily manned with 1,850 members, Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder told the meeting.

"The process of forming industrial police is now at the final stage and to be completed within two to three months. The ministries of establishment and finance have already approved the proposal and it is now awaiting for approval from the secretary committee," he said.

Speaking as the chief guest, Home Minister Sahara Khatun said global meltdown starts to affect the industries but "it is a temporary problem."

She assured of her ministry's all-out support

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# Govt to appoint large team for war trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to have a large body to investigate the war crimes committed in 1971.

"Since the atrocities took place throughout the country, we have decided to have a team made up of dozens of members to ensure proper investigation," Home Minister Sahara Khatun told reporters at her ministry yesterday.

Asked if the inquiry body will be set up by this month, she said, "We'll soon take a decision on appointment of its officials."

Home ministry sources said a committee comprised of representatives from home, law and Liberation War affairs ministries will meet tomorrow to determine the size of the agency for inquiry into the

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# SHAZNEEN MUDER CASE Convict Azad granted leave to appeal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday granted the leave to appeal of Syed Sajjad Mainuddin Hasan alias Azad, one of the convicts awarded death sentence in the sensational Shazneen murder case, against the High Court (HC) verdict confirming his death penalty.

The four member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin passed the order allowing Hasan to file a regular appeal with the SC for hearing against his conviction handed down by the HC.

The Appellate Division also

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This truck went into a slum breaking the guardrails of Dewanghat Bridge in Chittagong yesterday morning while trying to make an illegal turn over the central reservation of the road at high speed. Luckily there were no casualties.

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

# Govt shuts CUFL to better power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cg

The government yesterday shut down the operation of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) for an indefinite period to help increase supply of power.

The closure of the CUFL operation will now save 50 million cubic feet (MMCF) of gas and with this the government can generate an additional 200MW power to lessen the acute power crisis especially in Chittagong.

Earlier the government on March 15 shut down two fertiliser factories at Ghorasal and Polash to increase power production. With the closure of CUFL a total of three out of country's six fertiliser factories are now closed.

"The suspension of production came into effect at around 1.00pm yesterday after meetings at management level over the last two or three days," Md Shahjahan, manager (operation) of the CUFL, told this correspondent.

"The energy ministry recently in a letter to the industries ministry requested to suspend the operation of CUFL for a temporary period due to countrywide serious shortage of power and accordingly we took the decision," said Dipak Chandra Roy, director (commercial) of Bangladesh Chemical Industries

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# MEETING WITH KING Hasan rights Dipu Moni's wrong

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday admitted that former premier Khaleda Zia had met with Saudi King Abdullah in 2005, apparently correcting Foreign Minister Dipu Moni's statement that the monarch's audience with Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina was the first in seven years.

Briefing reporters on the outcome of the PM's 5-day official visit to Saudi Arabia, Mahmud said Hasina earlier had met with the Saudi King in 2000 and 2001 and the then prime minister Khaleda Zia in 2005.

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# INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE Second win for Punjab

STAR SPORT DESK

Kumar Sangakkara and Yusuf Abdulla turned in star performances as Kings XI Punjab ran to a 27-run win over Rajasthan Royals in their Indian Premier League Twenty20 match at Newlands in Cape Town yesterday.

The Sri Lankan wicketkeeper-batsman struck a half-century to guide Punjab

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Prayer Timing		
April 27		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Asia on alert after swine flu outbreak WHO declares health emergency of 'pandemic potential'

AP, Tokyo

Asian health authorities were on alert yesterday, with some checking passengers and pork products from Mexico, as the World Health Organisation declared the deadly swine flu outbreak a public health emergency of "pandemic potential."

Japan's biggest international airport stepped up health surveillance, while the Philippines said it may quarantine passengers with fevers who have been to Mexico. Health authorities in Thailand and Hong Kong said they were closely monitoring the situation.

China said anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms within two weeks of arriving in the country from swine-flu affected territories was required to report to authorities.

Malaysia and other Asian nations said they were awaiting further advice from WHO, whose Director-General Margaret Chan said Saturday the North American outbreak of a never-before-seen virus was a very serious situation with "pandemic potential."

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# Sri Lanka rejects rebel ceasefire

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday rejected a ceasefire declared by Tamil Tiger rebels, as the United Nations said the ongoing fighting was preventing essential aid from reaching thousands of trapped civilians.

Defence secretary Gotabhaya Rajapakse said there was no need for a truce as the military was on the verge of defeating the separatist forces, who have fought for 37 years for the creation of an independent Tamil homeland.

"What is the need for a ceasefire when they are running away? They should first lay down arms, surrender and let the people go," Rajapakse said.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are accused of holding thousands of civilians hostage, said its ceasefire was "in the face of an unprecedented humanitarian crisis" and in response to international appeals.

"All of LTTE's offensive military operations will cease with immediate effect," the rebels said in a statement.

A rebel spokesman, S. Puleethevan, said the Tigers would maintain their ceasefire only if the government reciprocated.

"It is purely for humanitarian purposes and the duration will

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