

Recession and unemployment

The world has been experiencing a severe economic depression in the first decade of this century long after its appearance during the third decade of the last century. Most of the nations are now paying the price. From that context, Bangladesh is no exception as it is the victim of on-going global recession which, undoubtedly, is the result of western materialistic lifestyle and can be considered the major factor for unemployment problem throughout the country.

Recession has hit our economy in different ways. First of all, being a developing country, Bangladesh's economy is mostly run by remittance sent by Bangladeshi workers from different parts of the world. Due to the current crisis, host nations are sending back those workers. Moreover, Bangladeshi students obtaining foreign degrees from the UK, USA, Australia and some other western countries are in the process of coming back. They are also competing with the mainstream job seekers of this country instead of searching jobs in their host countries. This situation is not only reducing our remittance, but also adding extra burden to our current unemployment issue.

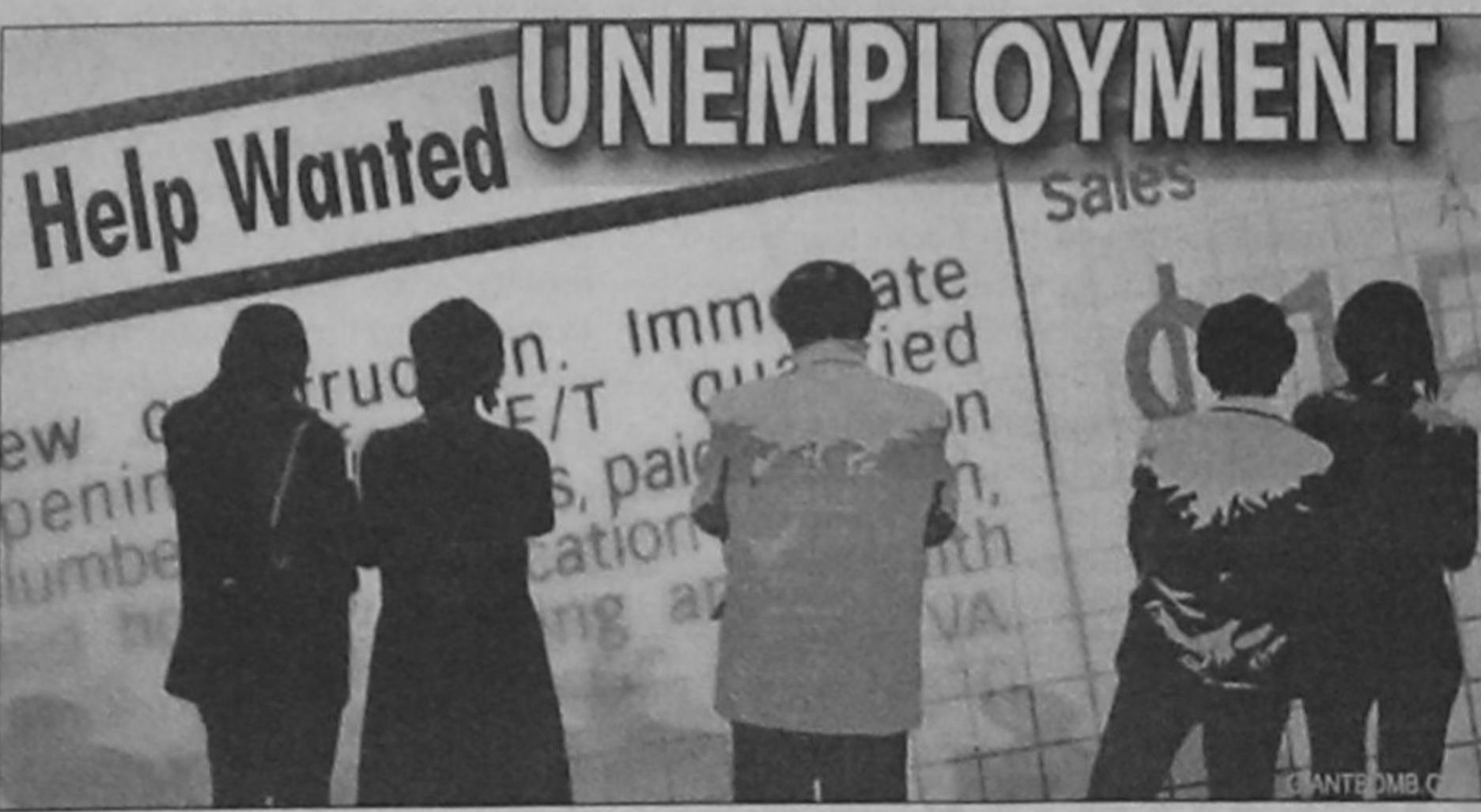
On the other hand, the RMG sector is

on the wane. It is the main export item which is earning the major portion of foreign currency. It is also a great field of employment from illiterate people to university graduates. For the moment, some garment industries are discharging a pretty good number of employees though, not in an alarming proportion as foreign orders have dropped due to the economic downturn. But this scenario sends us a strong message about the future. What will be the condition of this sector and millions of mouths living on it in the recession periods?

Now, it is time to think over the matter deeply. Why don't we develop our independent economic policy, strategy of our own setting aside the recommendations given by the IMF and the World Bank which always think about the interest of advanced nations?

I admit that in the era of globalisation the whole world looks like a village. We can make sure our prosperity by keeping warm relationship with other countries far and wide. But it doesn't mean that we will keep paying the price for the misdeeds of some developed nations.

Abu Tayub Mohammed Farhad
Chittagong



BSMRAU

Since its birth in 1983, the Institute of Post Graduate Studies in Agriculture (IPSA) flourished as one of the truly potential academic institutions with its academic excellence within the shortest possible time. However, it turned into a fully-fledged university with the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Rahman Agricultural University (BSMRAU) in 1998 with its true potential and the growing demand of higher study in agriculture. Currently, BSMRAU has been running with three faculties and twenty departments in light of some characteristic features which were missing and are still missing in many of the public universities in Bangladesh. What is very special about this university is confirmation of the superior accomplishment of the academic tenure of the student in due course of time: no session jam even for a day. The second important feature of this university is everybody appreciates that there is no campus violence here. Thirdly, the campus is totally neat and clean, there is no hand writing on the wall or anywhere else.

And, finally, the university always retains a friendly environment in which educators educate their students with intensive care and counseling. As a whole, the university is unique and might be a model for others.

Md. Mofakhrul Islam Shah

Assistant professor

Dept. of Agricultural Extension

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BSMRAU, Gazipur

Apartments and earthquake

In case of high-rise buildings not only the foundation, the ground floor must be made sufficiently strong, so that they can withstand the pressure in times of earthquake. I believe developers follow the design properly in foundation. But in ground floor maximum buildings are standing on some columns only as Rajuk does not permit building apartments on ground floor which is to be used for car parking. In engineering terms, this type of ground floor is called soft-storey. But thinking about the earthquake and other disasters, the ground floor should be made stronger and we can do it if we make apartments on ground floor. The empty ground floor is really risky.

Traffic jams are a burning question particularly in Dhaka

where people should not be encouraged to buy cars which are also a reason behind jams. We should travel by big buses before introducing underground rail lines. In our existing laws for buildings, people are encouraged to buy cars as high-rise buildings have parking facilities.

So, the laws should be changed considering the risk of earthquake.

Harun-or-Rashid
Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Defaulters and finance minister

The finance minister is reported to have declared that "whatever powerful one defaulter may be" he will catch hold of him and recover loan money. In the past we heard similar vows from his predecessors but none succeeded. The reason for all FMs' failures in the past, was not the defaulters alone, it was system of recovery, the banks' own faults and the government's faulty initiatives with absence of dynamism.

The other day, the new Governor of the Bangladesh Bank expressed some of his views on this default culture. He openly admitted that it was not the sponsors alone responsible for defaulting loan, banks and the government are also responsible in many cases.

The whole-sell blaming of the sponsors for loan defaulting is not correct. I know many were made defaulters due to banks' faulty age-old rules, bad or no after-sale services, non-payment of promised working capitals, disbursement of loans without verifying the capability of sponsors in exchange of some personal benefits of some bankers, non-checking of ability of utilisation capacity of some sponsors and many more. So, one thing is sure, not all defaulters are intentional loan takers with the ulterior motive of not paying back the loan. Also the government's policy supports the sponsors who was absent in many cases. The banks delivered loans without checking financial, technical and the sponsors' individual ability etc.

When all these anomalies will come up to initiate actions against the defaulters, I know the finance minister himself will shy away as did his predecessors. Bangladesh has marched ahead due to the initiatives of private investors. Today, it is the private sector including RMG, spinning, weaving, small industries that have generated more than 80% of jobs in the country.

Gulshan, Dhaka

Transport problem

Only a few private universities have their own campus. North South University recently shifted its own building to Bashundhara residential area. At present, there are 6,000 (six thousand) students studying in the university. The NSU campus is a few kilometres away from the main city. It takes two hours and sometimes even more to reach the campus. It's a great loss of valuable time.

So, I would request the NSU authorities to arrange their own or hired bus or mini bus to transport the students from different parts of the city.

NIKHAN
Mirpur, Dhaka

Corporate social responsibility

Quite a large number of proprietor/partnership firms, private/public limited companies earn huge amount of profit at the end of each account-year. In many cases, large chunk of these profits goes undisclosed and remains outside the tax-net.

Barring a few, these establishments have a very scanty record of contribution towards philanthropic programmes targeting the weaker section of society.

In leading countries of the world almost all big business houses have some kind of charity programme for food, health, education, shelter etc.

MD. Abdus Sabur (Hasan)
MS student
Dept. of Geography and Environmental Studies
University of Chittagong

Six months of AL rule

In the backdrop of an uneasy two-year rule of caretaker government and subsequent landslide victory, the AL has passed its first six months in power. So far there is no major failing in any sector but we can't say that they could initiate the jump start people expected. The whole administration is in sluggish hibernation and inept ministers failed to tune up the left over government machinery of the BNP-Jamaat regime. The situation is comparable to the post-liberation days. The BCL and field level AL leaders are running for petty cash in local tender and toll collections in the absence of organisational control.

Having said so, I would humbly urge all our privileged fellow countrymen to include some kind of philanthropic agenda in their yearly business-plan, whatever little it may be, at least for the sake of their own legacy if not for anything else.

In the instant case they may pick some financially challenged GPA-5 holders for assisting their higher studies up to Ph.D level in an accredited institution anywhere at home or abroad.

We must not forget that affluence may suddenly vanish any time but virtue never withers.

S.A.Samad
General Manager (Retd.)
Janata Bank, Dhaka

Defaulters are not ministers, secretaries or powerful politicians, whom the FM vowed to fight to recover defaulted loans, the overwhelming majority are not that powerful and genuinely want to get rid of long outstanding loans. I am sure the government will not be able to recover loans by court cases, intimidation or arresting them, it will have to sit with the defaulters, scrutinise the reasons of default and allow them to repay in their respective comfort.

The banks will collapse if they cannot deliver their liquidity to the loaners. I hope the finance minister, instead of issuing warning signals, will sit with them to find ways to recover loans.

Shafiqul Islam, NY

Chinese restaurants

I

was rather amused to read Mr. Kutubi's letter dated July 12, 2009 under the above-mentioned heading. My family has frequented Chinese restaurants for many, many years and in all these years we have yet to find anything even remotely resembling the writer's description! Of course I can only speak about the restaurants of Dhaka city, not those of Chittagong city. Almost all these places are well lit, not dark as pointed out in the letter. Some are expensive though, others are not so expensive, but all of them serve fairly good and tasty food combined with excellent and courteous service. The clientele are decent people belonging to the upper economic strata. One can spend a very enjoyable evening there with one's family for rest and relaxation.

The writer has tried to generalize the conditions of all Chinese restaurants of the country from his one bitter experience at a seedy place. Instead of going to places situated in areas near educational institutions, why doesn't he try some places located in the posh areas of his city, e.g. along O. R. Nizam Road near GEC corner and see for himself the difference?

Mizanur Rahman
Gulshan, Dhaka

Landslides

Landslides are a natural phenomenon, but it is accelerated by human action. It is now a great concern in southeastern parts of Bangladesh like Sylhet, Moulvi Bazar, Habiganj, Chittagong and CHT. It can be defined as the downward movement of a large mass of earth or rocks from a hill or mountain due to natural variability and human activity. Landslide is not a new theme in the context of Chittagong. During the last three decades, Chittagong suffered about 12 landslides. Death toll during the last three decades is around 200.

So, I would request the NSU authorities to arrange their own or hired bus or mini bus to transport the students from different parts of the city.

NIKHAN
Mirpur, Dhaka



No tree, no life

It is a matter of great regret that recently in our coastal area, Shitakunda, trees were destroyed unnecessarily. Without trees our existence will be threatened, and the tree is the great friend of humans. Trees control the environment to be in a balanced form by preserving humidity in the climate. Plants make the land fertile and cultivable.

Due to heavy population pressure, only 6% of Bangladesh is now covered by trees and even that is now decreasing due to the ignorance of people and lack of environmental awareness. Trees

fail to provide fuel, food for people and live-stock, building materials, soil fertility etc.

So, we should take necessary measures to preserve trees for maintaining the environment equilibrium. We all should participate in the tree plantation programme.

Md. Nur-e-Alam Siddique

Faculty of Agriculture
Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science & Technology University
Dinajpur

Ordinance, 1969 empowering the Director of Labour to ensure proper functioning of the Committee. Bangladesh Labour Law, 2006 has also integrated the same in Chapter- 13 (sections : 205-208).

My experience as a Former Director of Labour with more than 31 years of working knowledge in the Department of Labour, I feel I should inform the public in general and the labour-management related people in particular that no tangible action could be taken so far by the department of labour mainly due to the fact that both employers and trade unions are not keen on forming such committees for reasons of their own. While employers think it is an encroachment on their rights and prerogatives, trade unions consider such committees as a sort of parallel organisations which could undermine their effectiveness, and that the functions of such committees impose only duties, obligations and responsibilities on them without any corresponding benefits and voice in management.

Industrial Police, as proposed by the Prime Minister, is definitely a step forward, if it could be made functional towards achieving industrial peace and desired production target in the garments sector.

MAS Talukder

Former Director of Labour
GoB & Labour Advisor

Power crisis

We all have welcomed the new time introduced by the government to save electricity.

The government is trying its level best to meet the electricity demand of the country. As citizens, we also have to try from our level to help the government solve the crisis.

Teachers at schools, colleges and universities can instruct students to turn off the unwanted lights and fans; employers and employees at offices can ask each other to do the same; parents at home can teach their children and vice-versa not to waste electricity or natural gas. In short, every citizen has to make a habit of "waste not, want not".

Solving the power crisis requires the cumulative efforts of all citizens. Finally, another issue worth mentioning is that it has become our tradition to decorate our homes with strings of small light bulbs at wedding ceremonies. Even some shopping malls are decorated similarly during Ramadan. In a country like ours where even the basic demand of electricity is not met properly, is it sensible to

use such extravagant lighting just for celebrating an occasion?

Time has come to act.

Nazneen Ahmed

Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Industrial police

I listened this morning (July 09) to BBC News at 0730 hrs.

The news item that drew my attention most was the one relating to the BBC interview with Jatiyo Garments Sramik Federation General Secretary, Mr. Amirul Haque Amin, on the policy statement on Industrial Police made by the prime minister in the Jatiyo Sangsad on July 08. Mr. Amin told the interviewer that the proposal of introduction of Industrial Police in the garments sector would not improve the situation, rather he categorically emphasized the need for Participation Committee for bilateral settlement of industrial disputes at workplace and thereby maintaining a good industrial relations atmosphere in the garments sector.

For information of all concerned, I would like to point out in this context that the concept of Participation Committee was thought as a method of mediation to reduce industrial disputes at workplace employing more than 50 workers with joint participation of management and workers' leaders and accordingly the provisions were incorporated in the Industrial Relations

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MAS Talukder

Former Director of Labour
GoB & Labour Advisor

Volleying back....

Readers' instant comments on The Daily Star Online reports. Log on to thetdailystar.net to leave your comments.

BSF won't kill innocents (July 15, 2009)

The BSF has to give definition of the word 'innocent'. Did BSF kill any big terrorist or criminal? All who fell victim to BSF killing are either farmers or businessmen. If there is any unfair trade, the guilty persons can be detained and taken to the court for punishment under the existing law of the land. Why kill them?

Kazi Nasim Ahmed

BSF, please keep your promise.

Islam

It is not a simple incident now. The BSF regularly killed innocent Bangladeshis. The border people are generally very poor and survive by cultivation. If the BSF shows zero-tolerance to the Bangladeshis, how can we consider them our friends?

Please find an acceptable solution, so that poor villagers can survive without fear.

Mizanur Rahman

Good declaration on the part of the BSF that no innocent people will be killed by them. Hope the BSF will go by their commitment. The BDR should also ensure that illegal activities

come to an end, and maintain good relations with the BSF for avoiding unexpected situations in border areas.

Hasan Kamrul

All the time the BSF killed innocent Bangladeshis. They don't care about our people.

MAbedin

Bangladesh should take lessons from North Korea. When confronted it responds with force, not dialogue. The six-nation talk dissolved into understanding with the biggest bully in the world. We may not have anything to rattle with like DPRK, but we have diplomacy. When put together we can be an effective negotiating partner. We need somebody who is discreet yet firm.

Rafiq Hussain

It has not happened in one or two years. It has been happening for the last 8 years.

Israt

instead of shooting them down? Moreover, Bangladesh is a good market for Indian cattle. Why should they kill the traders?

Yamin Zakaria

Over 50 canals near death (July 9, 20