

Food security

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indicators -- the proportion of undernourished as a percentage of the population, the prevalence of underweight in children under the age of five, and the under-five mortality rate.

During the period 1990 to 2009, proportion of undernourished as a percentage of the population in Bangladesh dropped from 36 percent to 27 percent, prevalence of underweight in children under the age of five dropped from over 56 percent to 41 percent and the under-five mortality rate dropped from a little over 15 percent to 6 percent.

The report said along with India, East Timor and Yemen, Bangladesh has the highest prevalence of underweight in children under five -- more than 40 percent in all four countries.

The GHI varies between the best possible score of 0 and the worst possible score of 100. Higher scores indicate greater hunger, and the lower the score, the better the country's situation. GHI scores above 10 are considered serious, scores higher than 20 are alarming, and scores exceeding 30 are extremely alarming.

Hunger situation in six countries -- Ethiopia, Chad, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo -- is found 'extremely alarming' as these are the only countries which scored above 30 in GHI.

As many as 23 countries fall in the category of 'alarming' situation scoring between 20 and 30 in GHI. The countries include Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Cambodia, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Liberia, Angola, Mozambique, Rwanda, Timor-Leste, Zambia, Comoros, Republic of Yemen, Central African Republic, Haiti, Madagascar, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Some of Bangladesh's neighbours -- Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar -- have made it through to a bigger group of 31 countries whose hunger situation is better than in the

countries categorised as 'extremely alarming' and 'alarming'. Hunger situation in these 31 countries which scored between 10 and 20 in GHI has been stated as 'serious' but not alarming.

The calculation of GHI scores is restricted to 121 developing countries, and countries in a state of transition where measuring hunger is considered most relevant. Some higher income countries are not taken into consideration because hunger has been largely overcome there, and over nutrition is a greater problem for them than a lack of food.

As the nations across the globe observe the World Food Day tomorrow with this year's theme -- Achieving Food Security in Times of Crisis -- the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that the number of hungry people could increase by 100 million this year and pass the one billion mark.

Against this backdrop, FAO Director General Jacques Diouf has proposed a World Summit on Food Security to agree on key actions to tackle this crisis in November. He said, "The silent hunger crisis -- affecting one sixth of all of humanity -- poses a serious risk for world peace and security. We urgently need to forge a broad consensus on the total and rapid eradication of hunger in the world."

Talking to this correspondent yesterday, the food minister said all steps are underway to augment domestic food output as dependency on food import or food aid is no more an option.

Food aid is now dwindling to an all time low while volatility of food prices in international market has also made it difficult for any developing country to depend on import option, Abdur Razzaque noted.

The minister referred to the government initiatives for widening the food-supported social safety net programmes which, he said, would provide some relief to people in abject poverty.

5 bullet-hit as B'baria BCL factions clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Five activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) received bullet wounds during a factional clash at Commercial Mour in the town yesterday.

The injured were identified as Sajal Mumin Talukder, 30, Mubarak, 50, Jakir, 43, Sohel, 27, and Ashique, 25.

Two factions led by Mahmudul Haque Bhuiyan, president of district BCL and Sajal Mumin Talukder, district cultural secretary of BCL, started fighting at about 3:00pm over establishing supremacy in the area, locals said.

At one stage of the clash, an activist of Mahmud group opened fire at Sajal that ensued the gunbattle.

Hamidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Thana, said, each of the student groups sought to establish supremacy in the area.

The injured were admitted to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital. Later, Sajal was shifted to the capital as his condition deteriorated.

Police arrested one Sani in this connection.

Ship-breaking

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Rangpur, was a worker of Habib Steel Ship Breaking Yard.

Police said the accident occurred around 12:30pm when Jahangir was resting beside an iron plate kept against a wall, which fell on him leaving the man seriously injured.

Jahangir was rushed to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital around 2:00pm where the doctors declared him dead.

Officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station Md Nazrul Islam confirmed the incident and said police were sent to the spot.

With yesterday's death, seven workers met tragic death at three ship-breaking yards in Sitakunda since Thursday (October 8).

Meanwhile, the death toll of ship breaking workers rose to 16 in the last ten months.

Arguments

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at 9:30 am.

The lawyers concerned said arguments will be held on five points based on which the SC on September 23, 2007 granted leave-to-appeal petitions of the five convicts.

The points include -- whether Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was killed along with most of his family members as a result of a mutiny in the army and whether the evidence adduced by several witnesses are contradictory.

The other three points are whether delay in filing the First Information Report is reasonable as held by lower court, whether any conspiracy was there behind the murders and whether the 3rd HC judge's disposal of the death references of six out of 15 accused was correct and legal.

The then three HC judges Md Ruhul Amin, ABM Khairul Haque and Mohammad Fazlul Karim had delivered split verdicts in the case.

Justice Amin (now retired) affirmed the convictions and death sentences of 10 convicts and acquitted five out of 15, who had earlier been convicted and sentenced to death by trial court.

But Justice Haque upheld the convictions and death sentences of all 15 while Justice Karim affirmed the convictions and death sentences of 12 and acquitted three.

Justices Amin and Haque delivered the split verdicts on December 14, 2000 while Justice Karim on April 30, 2001.

Justices Haque and Karim are now judges of the Appellate Division.

Quoting the HC verdict, Mamun told the SC that Khondker Moshtaq Ahmed, who was sworn in as president of the republic a few hours after the killings of Bangabandhu and most of his family members, had congratulated the then army chief Maj Gen (ret) Shafiullah at a radio station.

Shafiullah stated that Moshtaq congratulated him saying, "Your troops have done excellent job, now do the rest," to which Shafiullah asked, "What rest?" When Moshtaq commented, "You should know better," Shafiullah said "In that case, leave it to me," Mamun mentioned quoting the verdict.

Mamun also read out the SC order that granted the leave-to-appeal petitions of the five convicts against the HC verdict delivered by Justice Karim.

Convicts Syed Faruque Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Mohiuddin Ahmed, AKM Mohiuddin, and Bazul Huda, who are now behind bars, filed the appeals with the SC on October 2007.

Govt, not JS

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yesterday that he will take necessary legal actions against any 'illegal move' to ask him to return the money, while BNP Secretary General Delwar said the ruling party arrived at the resolution to defame the three politically.

Sircar however withdrew a writ petition from the High Court yesterday, which had challenged the legality of the formation of a parliamentary body to probe the corruption allegations against the trio.

The withdrawal of the writ came hard on the heels of the parliament's decision not to strip Sircar of his parliament membership.

According to the parliamentary probe committee, the amount of money misappropriated by the trio is around Tk 2.5 crore, which they allegedly took illegally as medical bills, additional fuel allowances, and other expenses during the last parliament.

Talking to reporters yesterday in his office, Speaker Abdul Hamid said the parliament has nothing more to do regarding the issue.

"Now the government will be asked to recover the money through necessary legal steps. Cases will be filed against them if they refuse to return the money to the government exchequer," the speaker added.

He said the matter might also be sent to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) for investigation.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday over the phone, Suranjit Sengupta, chief of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry, said the government might apply the Public Demand Recovery Act to recover the money.

"Cases will be filed if they refuse to return the money to the government exchequer," Suranjit also said. He however said there is no need to send the matter to the ACC for further investigation as the parliamentary body already inquired it.

The parliament on Tuesday

held a discussion and passed resolutions for recovering the money from the BNP trio, but it rejected a recommendation of the parliamentary probe body for scrapping Sircar's membership in the House.

The BNP secretary general however questioned the legality of the discussion of the probe report in the parliament.

"There is no tradition of holding a discussion after placing a report in the parliament, but they [the ruling party] did it, which was unprecedented," Delwar claimed.

"They did that only to defame us politically," he added.

Asked about his next course of action, he said there is no hurry on his part. "Let me see where their [government] game ends. If necessary we will take legal steps."

The BNP secretary general claimed that all allegations raised against them are false and baseless. "We did everything following the rules," he said, adding that the probe committee failed to produce any document supporting its allegations.

Sircar however said he will monitor the new developing situation following the parliament's resolution, and then he will decide on his next course of action.

Rajuk drive

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Dakhin Begunbari," said Rajuk authorised officer-2 Shafiqul Islam. "The drive will go on," he added.

Around one thousand unauthorised such bamboo-made structures with tin roof were built from Dakhin Begunbari to Kulipara (Badda) within the project area, he said.

The eviction drive will continue as long as unauthorised structures are not knocked down, he said.

Rajuk will resume its next drive on October 18 and it will continue on October 21 and 22.

Executive Magistrate Rokon-Ud-Dowla led the Rajuk demolition team with the help of police.

Govt's first power

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WB is now investigating an allegation of corruption against Siemens.

As this information left EGCB baffled, it took a long time to evaluate the bids.

In August, EGCB finalised its tender evaluation qualifying Chinese companies Sinohydro Corporation, China National Machinery & Import and Export Corporation (CMEC) and Shandong Electric Power and Indo-German joint venture company Gammons-Sadalmi. The disqualified bidders are known names -- Hyundai, Bhel and Isolax.

The EGCB tender committee's report in August made no clear-cut recommendation for the tender, but it conditionally marked Sinohydro as the lowest bidder and Gammons-Sadalmi as the second lowest.

But two members of the committee gave their notes of dissent about qualifying two of the four bidders -- Sinohydro and Gammons-Sadalmi saying these clearly did not qualify.

On the other hand, the project's Canadian consultant SNC Lavalin recommended the project be awarded to CMEC.

But CMEC has proposed its plant using Siemens equipment and the WB would not finance a bid that uses Siemens machinery.

The insiders allege out of the four selected bidders, three use Siemens equipment and the tender would automatically go to Gammons-Sadalmi.

From the beginning of this tender, the industry insiders were alleging that a ruling party man, who represents most of the Chinese power companies in Bangladesh now, was trying to make EGCB award the contract to the Indo-German joint venture company Gammons-Sadalmi which is also represented by him.

Documents show that Sadalmi in recent times has become bankrupt, while Gammons lacks experience.

In recent weeks, EGCB held several meetings to prepare a recommendation for the lowest bidder. Sources say as it stands now Sinohydro has been marked as the lowest bidder, Gammons-Sadalmi second lowest, CMEC third and Shandong Electric Power as the fourth lowest.

The EGCB is likely to send this recommendation to the WB soon for its green signal.

But back in August, EGCB tender committee observed that while Sinohydro Corporation's bid of \$177

million dollars was the lowest, its evidence of experience for power project of 270 mw or higher outside China for Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) works was questionable.

If such questions are not addressed, the bid should be disqualified.

The EGCB gave Sinohydro time to fill in this gap. Sources say Sinohydro gave EGCB further documents in support of its experience.

Again, the EGCB committee in August marked Gammons-Sadalmi as the second lowest through questioning its experience and Sadalmi's financial conditions demanding an investigation.

If these questions are not addressed, its bid should be disqualified too.

The sources say more documents have been inserted with Gammons-Sadalmi bid to make it look okay now.

But the project's consultant SNC Lavalin has not yet given its nod about this recent recommendation.

Besides, according to the notes of dissent by two members of the tender committee, the bids of Sinohydro and Gammons should be disqualified and rejected as they could not prove they had experience. They also described other shortcomings in their bids.

One of them notes, "... due to a critical financial situation encountered by Sadalmi in February 2009, which forced Sadalmi to implement a company reorganisation, leading his EPC business unit to the new company whose name is Busi Power [owned by Busi Group]... So under the prevailing situation, participation of M/S Sadalmi in this bid does not bear any legal status."

These notes leave big questions about the selection of the bidders and these questions must be clearly answered to the WB to get a go-ahead.

EGCB Managing Director AMM Murtoza Ali however expressed his hopes that the cloud of uncertainty would be cleared soon.

"Otherwise it will be bad news for the country's power sector scenario. I hope that the World Bank keeps a positive decision."

He added EGCB had nothing to hide about selection of bidders. "All facts and figures about the bidders will be given for a final decision," Ali said, adding he expects a final decision on this power project within this month.

Try Blair for war crimes

Say families of soldiers killed in Iraq

ANI, London

Families of British servicemen killed in Iraq have told members of the official inquiry into the conflict that former Prime Minister Tony Blair should be held accountable for taking the nation to war.

Many blamed Blair for the deaths of their loved ones in what they termed as an "illegal" conflict. Some even called for him to be prosecuted for war crimes.

According to The Scotsman, inquiry chairman Sir John Chilcot has confirmed that Blair will give evidence and insists he and his committee will not shy away from criticising individuals.

The panel has not begun hearing from witnesses. Yesterday, it held the first in a series of meetings for bereaved families and Iraq veterans to say which areas they want it to examine.

Among those attending the session in London was Deirdre Gover, 63, whose son, Flight Lieutenant Kristian Gover, 30, died in a helicopter accident in Basra, southern Iraq, in July 2004.

Speaking afterwards, she said: "I hold Tony Blair personally responsible for the death of my son. My son as an officer was prepared to die for his Queen and country in a just conflict. This was totally unjustified and wrong, and I think that's what the inquiry will prove."

The mood at yesterday's mostly private meeting between families and Sir John and four members of his committee was described as sombre and quietly emotional.

Roger Bacon, 67, whose son, Major Matthew Bacon, 34, from the Intelligence Corps, was killed by an improvised explosive device while riding in a lightly armoured Snatch Land Rover in Basra in September 2005, said: "I cannot understand any of the so-called reasons that we went to war. Weapons of mass destruction? They don't exist. Regime change? An entirely immoral thing to do -- and if it's the sort of thing we're supposed to do, why haven't we gone into Zimbabwe?"

Bashundhara

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were not found authentic.

The other accused are Transcom Group Chairman Latifur Rahman, Shamokal Editor Golam Sarwar, Motiur Rahman's son Mahmudur Rahman Shasha, former Bashundhara officials Col (ret) Ahsanulhaq, Syed Alim Al Raji and Laskar Lutfar Rahman.

Hasnat

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Road Transport Workers Union Aftab Hossain admitted the public sufferings.

People arranged these "spontaneously" he said, adding, "We could not prevent them from expressing feelings for their beloved leader."

Hasnat's party men in hundreds of auto-rickshaws, minibuses, buses and trucks received him at the eastern side of Bhurghata in Madaripur and escorted him to Barisal city.

The motorcade passed through Bhurghata, Gournadi, Ichhladi and Rahmatpur areas in the district. A large number of AL activists on both sides of the roads waved flags welcoming Hasnat.

School children were made to stand on roadsides for hours. The reception organisers also used circus elephants to greet the AL leader.

An assistant teacher of Khanjapur Government High School in Gournadi said they had to send school children for receiving Hasnat under orders of local AL leaders.

Joyal Abedin, joint convener of AL Gournadi municipality, refuted the teacher's claim saying that the teachers and students of different educational institutions willingly did it as they had received assistance from the leader (Hasnat) in the past.

In his address to the roadside and Barisal city gatherings Abdullah, also a cousin to the prime minister, pledged not to patronise terrorism, extortion and fanaticism.

Hasnat cautioned people against conspirators, who he thought were active again to foil the trial of Bangabandhu killing. He addressed roadside gatherings at Bhurghata, Gournadi School, Rahmatpur, Ichhladi and a huge one in Barisal city.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, and AL president member Yusuf Hussain Humayun as chief and special guests attended the reception at Fazlul Huq Avenue, Barisal City Corporation Mayor Shawkat Hossain Hiron chaired the programme.

MP violates RPO

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about the RPO to sign the agreement for the construction.

Under the deal, the MP's real estate company will fund and construct the City Centre on 24 kathas of the RCC land spending around Tk 40 crore raising total space of the building to 12,220 square metres in three years.

The City Centre will be built after demolishing the old City Bhaban in the city.

When contacted Enamul Haque told The Daily Star that he was fully aware of the RPO Clause 12(1) (K) and there is no problem in signing the contract.

"We read it (RPO) and also consulted with senior lawyers in Dhaka. We found that the RPO does not affect the deal in anyway."

"The rule was for considering eligibility of participating in the election, not for barring MPs from doing business," Enamul, also chief executive officer of Ena Properties, said.

Citing the RPO provision, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik yesterday told The Daily Star that a developer firm owned by a lawmaker can not have the work for the construction of the City Centre.

The RPO provision says a person shall be disqualified for election as or for being a member of parliament if he whether by himself or by any person or body of persons in trust for him or for his benefit or on his account or as a member of a Hindu undivided family, has any share or interest in a contract, not been a contract between a co-operative society and government, for the supply of goods to, or for the execution of any contract or the performance of any services undertaken by government.

MP from Rajshahi-4 (Bagmara) constituency Enamul Haque signed the deal with RCC Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton at a function at the old City Bhaban with RCC Secretary KM Abdus Salam in the chair.

After the signing, Mayor

Liton and MP Enamul jointly laid foundation of the City Centre.

In a general meeting in September, the RCC announced that Ena Properties won the City Centre work under the Private Public Partnership (PPP) projects through a tender process.

However, no other real estate companies participated in the bidding process. This made the way for the Ena Properties that had been planning the City Centre and circulating a three-dimensional video of the proposed building since November 2008. Finally, ministries concerned approved the tender process.

Ena Properties will preserve 74.75 percent share of the building as it won the works offering 25.25 percent share to the RCC.

In first phase, the 16-storey building will be set up to house a shopping mall covering several floors, a cinema hall on one floor, a restaurant, a gymnasium and different corporate offices. A replica of the old City Bhaban will be decorated in the new building to preserve its heritage.

The development and renovation of the banks of Sonadighi adjacent to the City Centre, construction of walkways, three-storey mosque replacing the existing two-storey mosque, and constructing of an information technology library, a MP theatre around the pond and rehabilitation of existing shops around the pond will be implemented under the second phase.

In the third phase, the Survey Institute building at north-western corner of the City Centre will be shifted to other place and a park will be constructed at the place.

Talking to The Daily Star, RCC Chief Engineer Sirajum Munir said the second and third phases are allocated for doing the additional works. "If these works are considered, the share of the city corporation stands at 34.50 percent from 25.25 percent proposed by Ena Properties in the bid."

ACC 'toothless'

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commission more powerless by changing its laws in the name of reform."

He blames the existing judicial system and the "lax" attitude of court to corruption for backlog of cases saying, "It's almost impossible to check corruption in the country if the judicial system is not reformed."

On the other hand, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said, "Corruption cases have been stayed in the High Court (HC) as those were filed without maintaining provisions of the law. The commission made the mistake while enforcing its laws."

The law minister said this to three rights ambassadors from Europe and the ambassadors of the Netherlands and Denmark. The ambassadors called on the minister at his office to know the government's future plans regarding ACC, the Election Commission and human rights.

The reform proposals of the government suggest the graft busters should be obliged to take its permission to bring proceedings in certain circumstances and against someone believed to have "committed the offence in good faith."

"Corruption will not reduce if the judges don't bend on punishing the corrupt. Corruptionists are encouraged and sheltered through the existing judicial process. And corruption would not reduce," Rahman told the briefing held at the ACC Headquarters.

This is the first time the ACC boss made any comprehensive comment regarding the drive against corruption since he was appointed the chief of the commission in April following resignation of former chairman Hasan Mashud Chowdhury.

"The honourable judges of the courts should take corruption cases into cognisance. If the judges delay, the corrupt find an opportunity and corruption spreads in the country. Justice delayed is justice denied," Rahman added.

He mentioned that about 1,500 cases filed by now-

Ehtesham

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introduced to many people and Shakil was one of them," said Maj Gen Ehtesham, now general officer commanding (GOC) of 66 Infantry Division in Rangpur. He said he does not know Shakil personally.

He claimed that the news on his communication with Shakil or Akash and introducing them to Dr Rifa and getting one of them a job is completely false.

The report's claim that he took a written statement on a stamp paper from Dr Rifa is also absolutely baseless, he affirmed.

defunct bureau of anti-corruption are still pending, while another 1,100 filed after the ACC was established in 2004 are yet to be disposed of by the court.

"Corruption takes place in the developed countries too. But corruptionists are punished there. But corruptionists in our country are not punished," he said.

He added corruption cannot be checked without political commitment.

While ACC's proposals for amendment to strengthen its laws continue to be on the back burner, the government in its list of draft proposals includes assigning the ACC secretary with the responsibilities of the commission's principal accountant and specifying in the law that the anti-graft body must be accountable to the president.

Currently, ACC only has to submit its annual report to the president.

Regarding the cases forwarded by the government for withdrawal on consideration of being politically motivated, the ACC boss ensured proper scrutiny and maintenance of the existing laws.

Boeing lease

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aircraft are not really the extended range version even though Euro Atlantic claimed it so.

"Besides, Biman will incur a loss of about \$76 million a year if it operates Boeing-777-200 ERs on Biman's planned routes," lawmaker Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal told reporters.

He also added that Biman would make a profit of about \$43 million a year if it operated its flights with regular Boeing-777-200s.

The standing committee said there is no need to hurry in taking out a lease on two Boeing-777 aircraft since Biman is unlikely to resume its Dhaka-New York route by the October 26 deadline.

"They (Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd) have informed us that they are uncertain about resuming the Dhaka-New York route for which two Boeing-777 aircraft were necessary," said Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal, adding, "We therefore asked Biman to go for fresh tender."

He claimed that the engines of the two Boeing-777-200 aircraft are Rolls Royce made, not by General Electric, and Biman's pilots will face difficulties when new Boeing planes, which Biman has ordered with General Electric engines, start arriving in the future.

The House watchdog body also said it would not tolerate even the slightest inconvenience to hajj pilgrims regarding hajj flights.

Aug 21 case

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Rahman, brother of Huji Chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, and Arif Hasan Sumon.

Judge Fozila Begum of the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after hearing on the prosecution petition seeking cancellation of bails from the prosecution and the defence.

On August 12 this year, Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 Judge Masdar Hossain granted the Huji men bails saying they were not directly involved