

Revenue rise

FROM PAGE 1
Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh.

The scope for whitening money did not however get good response from investment sector.

VAT collection in power sector this FY fell by 8.81 percent from 31.11 percent during the corresponding period of last FY.

In gas sector, VAT collection however increased by seven percent this FY from that last year.

About 30 percent of the total amount of VAT comes from this sector. Collection from this sector shot up by 23.11 this FY.

Due to expansion of cell phone companies, VAT collection from them increased by 22 percent in the first three months of this FY.

NBR sources said Akteel offered a special package that contributed to the increase in VAT collection but the trend might or might not continue.

Though VAT collection in edible oil sector increased by 23 percent this FY, collection from hotels and restaurants sector fell.

About 70 percent of income tax comes from tax-cut at sources. Income tax collection at sources from contractors and suppliers increased by only three percent this FY, which shot up by 50 percent in the first three months of last FY.

Implementation of ADP

was slow both in this FY and last FY.

A major portion of tax at import level comes from supplementary duty on cars. A major feature of this year's fiscal policy is to discourage import of luxury items by increasing tax on it.

The policy appears to have worked well. Growth of import duty on motor vehicles shot up by 10 percent during the first three months of this FY whereas during the corresponding period of last FY, growth was 23 percent.

Growth of overall revenue collection in the first three months of this FY was nine percent while the government's target for the whole year is 16.13 percent.

Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrim dies in Saudi Arabia

DU CORRESPONDENT

A female Bangladeshi Hajj pilgrim was killed while 11 others were injured as a bus fell into a roadside ditch at Ararat in Saudi Arabia.

The deceased was identified as Pakiza Khatun of Chittagong, satellite television Channel-t reported yesterday.

Of the injured, the condition of six pilgrims was stated to be critical.

The injured were admitted to the local Al-Noor hospital.

Govt focuses

FROM PAGE 1
Fahmida Khatun made a presentation on "Policy Agenda for Addressing Climate Change in Bangladesh: Copenhagen and Beyond".

In her concluding remarks she said the country should develop adequate human and organisational capacity in terms of adequate technical, business, management and regulatory skills.

She also emphasised establishing effective mechanism for improving transparency of project approvals and public procurement procedures to reduce corruption.

M Asaduzzaman, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and Ainun Nishat, senior adviser on climate change, IUCN Asia spoke there as designated speakers.

Ainun Nishat said Bangladesh has a strong voice at the climate change negotiations as it leads the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) forum. It has already prepared a climate change strategy, which is now a model to other countries, he added.

Sohrab Ali Sana, MP of Koiria in Satkhira, said a total of seven unions in his constituency are still under saline water.

It is important to deal with the climate change impact locally rather than waiting for what developed countries would do for us, he said.

Mirza Azizul Islam, former adviser to the last caretaker government, Parvin Talukder MP, Atik Rahman, executive director of Bangladesh Centre of Advanced Studies (BCAS), Mizan Rahman of North South University, Z Karim and Taufik Ali, former ambassador to Geneva also spoke at the dialogue.

M Syeduzzaman, member of CPD Board of Trustees, chaired the session.

Tifa deal

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The two countries about Tifa is moving in the positive direction. Our counterpart the USA is now showing more positive attitude in comparison to their earlier stance, especially on the sensitive issue of child labour," Lutful Hai, chairman of the parliamentary body, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

"We, on behalf of the committee, asked the commerce ministry to uphold country's interest and evaluate pros and cons of different sections of the proposed Tifa deal," Hai, also a ruling Awami League lawmaker, added.

The commerce ministry has informed the committee that both the government and the USA are positive about the Tifa deal. He also assured the committee members of Bangladesh's interest in the deal.

Tifa became a topic of debate after Assistant US Trade Representative (USTR) for Central and South Asia Michael J Delaney visited Bangladesh last month.

The USA has been saying for long that Tifa is a non-binding agreement, which only commits both the parties to hold regular annual meetings although many Bangladesh stakeholders are still unaware of the matter.

The US government originally proposed the Tifa to Bangladesh in 2002. An inter-ministerial meeting in January 2003 assigned the commerce ministry to begin negotiations with the USA on it. Since then, the two sides have held several rounds of talks and also worked to prepare a draft of the agreement.

According to the draft prepared by the USA, the areas Tifa is to cover include removal of non-tariff barriers, implementation of intellectual property rights, promotion of trade and private investment, improvement of workers' rights and pursuing WTO talks on the basis of Doha Development Agenda.

In the draft, the USA side proposed that the two governments establish 'US-Bangladesh Council on Trade and Investment' under the Tifa. The council is envisaged to meet at least once a year to discuss bilateral trade issues.

The committee chief Lutful Hai at a briefing at the Jatiya Sangsad Media Centre told reporters that they had asked the commerce ministry to take all steps to bring the prices of essentials within people's purchase capability.

He expected that prices of essentials will not go up before Eid-ul-Azha as stocks of sugar, oil and other essentials are at a satisfactory level.

The committee, however, asked the ministry concerned to import those food items stock of which is less in the warehouses.

Justice order

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His wife, three sons, two daughters in law, his brother, his brother in law Abdur Rab Serniabat, his nephew Sheikh Fazlul Haq Moni and Moni's wife Arzoo were all murdered in what would be a macabre demonstration of ferocity.

The assassins would not be prosecuted for a long period of twenty-one years. An infamous indemnity ordinance, put in place by the usurper president Khondokar Moshtaq Ahmed and subsequently incorporated in the nation's sacred constitution by General Ziaur Rahman, Bangladesh's first military ruler, ensured that Bangabandhu's killers (who had also murdered the four national leaders in prison in November 1975) would remain beyond the pale of the law. The killers were indeed rewarded, through being appointed to the nation's diplomatic missions abroad.

After Zia's assassination in an abortive coup in May 1981, successive governments until 1996 made no effort to overturn the indemnity ordinance and bring Bangabandhu's killers to justice. During the Ershad period between 1982 and 1990, the assassins were permitted to form political parties and take part in elections. When a popular uprising forced General Ershad from power in December 1990 and democracy was restored through the general elections of February 1991, the nation looked forward to a time of healing of the old gaping wound. Regrettably, the government led by Khaleda Zia, widow of Ziaur Rahman, pursued the old policy of keeping the killers safe from prosecution.

Twenty-one years after August 1975, the Awami League was voted back to power in June 1996. The government it formed moved briskly to annul the indemnity ordinance and bring Bangabandhu's killers to justice. Those among the assassins who were inside the country were arrested; the others were on the run, outside Bangladesh. That in no way obviated the requirements of justice. Parliament annulled the indemnity ordinance, clearing the way for the perpetrators of the August 1975 tragedy to be brought before the law. In what it considered to be the need for transparency and for justice to be done and to be seen to be done, the government of Sheikh Hasina initiated proceedings against the killers of 1975. In November 1998, the men

accused of killing the Father of the Nation and his family were found guilty and sentenced to death.

And then everything stalled with the return to power of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party in 2001. The new government of Begum Zia appeared reluctant to pursue the case. In more than one instance, judges felt embarrassed about presiding over the appeals hearings in the case. Conditions came to a pass where soon an inadequacy of judges on the bench led to a stultification of the proceedings of the case. It was a situation that would permeate the entire period of the BNP-Jamaat alliance government between 2001 and 2006.

The return of the Awami League to office through its victory at the general elections of December 2008 marked the beginning of a new phase in the Bangabandhu murder trial. Over the last many months, review petitions filed by the convicts have been heard and both prosecution and defence have argued the case in detail.

This morning is, in light of all the twists and turns of the last three and a half decades, or nearly, a moment of reckoning. On a bigger scale, it ought to be a new dawn where a restoration of values should come to underpin Bengali collective life once more. It should be a day where the people of Bangladesh can rise in unison and proclaim to the world that crime does not pay, that rule of law eventually is triumphant, that through a legal condemnation of murder and mayhem we as a nation are finally ready to expiate our collective sin of witnessing Bangabandhu die and staying quiet for years on end.

The judicial judgement today, we believe in the core of our beings, will give us back our self-esteem as a nation — the dignity we caused to flower in ourselves under the inspiring leadership of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in our armed struggle for liberty back in 1971.

Eid-ul-Azha
FROM PAGE 1
Information Officer AKM Shamim Chowdhury, Joint Secretary of Cabinet Division Atwar Rahman and Dhaka Deputy Commissioner M Zillur Rahman, among others, were present.

Khaleda's decision

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find out the reasons behind the incident and resolve the factional crisis without any delay.

Delwar yesterday summoned four top leaders of Chittagong—central Joint Secretary General Abdullah Al Noman, Chittagong city Convener Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, central International Affairs Secretary Mir Nasir Uddin, and former foreign minister M Morshed Khan—at the meeting. Morshed Khan, however, did not attend the meeting.

Chittagong city joint convener Dastagir Chowdhury, Shahadat Hossain, Shamsul Alam and Syed Wahidul Alam were also present at the meeting that started at 12:40pm at the party's central office at Naya Paltan.

Meeting sources said Delwar first collected statements of all the leaders to submit them to the chairperson at night for making the final decision. Later, he separately talked with Noman, Khasru and Mir Nasir.

Sources said Noman and Nasir blamed the failure of the current city committee leadership for the intra-party clash that took place during the inaugural session of the council.

Delwar asked Noman and Nasir, who had been rivals in the politics of Chittagong for a long time, how they became so close suddenly. The two leaders told Delwar that they have been working together for the last couple of months, a city leaders said.

"The chairperson will form the city committee in line with the party constitution as we all have failed to make the council successful. But it would be investigated whether any third party was involved in foiling the council session," Noman told reporters after the meeting.

He said, "I am engaged with national politics, not the Chittagong city committee. But I want to see dedicated leaders in the committee."

Amir Khasru said they got indication that some outsiders were involved with the incident. He said there is no scope to hold the council again and now the central leadership will take necessary steps to form

Pakistan has more nukes than India

Says US report

ANI, Washington

A new report has revealed that Pakistan enjoys a substantial lead over India when it comes to nuclear weapons.

According to the report compiled by Robert S Norris and Hans M Kristensen in the latest edition of the Bulletin of the Atomic Science, Pakistan is estimated to possess 70 to 90 nuclear arsenals, way ahead of what India boasts.

India is said to have about 60 to 80 nuclear weapons currently, the report said.

The report also said that all the major Asian powers India, China and Pakistan were 'quantitatively' and 'qualitatively' adding on to their nuclear stockpile, however, it said it was tough to identify the locations of the deployment of the those nukes.

"Beijing, Islamabad and New Delhi are quantitatively and qualitatively increasing their arsenals and deploying weapons at more sites, yet the locations are difficult to pinpoint," the report said.

"Whereas many of the Chinese bases are known, this is not the case in Pakistan and India, where we have found no credible information that identifies permanent nuclear weapons storage locations," it said.

The two nuclear experts highlighted that it is believed that Pakistan's nuclear weapons were not fully operational in normal circumstances, but India is thought to store its warheads in central storage locations rather than on bases with operational forces.

The report comes months after the US raised alarms over Pakistan's expansion of its nuclear capabilities.

US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen, in a confidential briefing, had told members of Congress that there are certain reports, which confirms that Islamabad is rapidly adding to its nuclear arsenal.

When enquired whether he had seen evidence of an increase in the size of the Pakistani nuclear arsenal, Admiral Mullen just said: "Yes".

This certainly raises questions over the proposed billions of dollars of US military assistance to Pakistan that might be sidetracked to expand its nuclear capability rather than utilizing it to counter insurgency.

Officials of the Obama administration have said that they had communicated to Congress that their intent was to assure that military aid to Pakistan was directed toward counterterrorism and not diverted.

Shakib

FROM PAGE 16
the first Bangladeshi cricketer to sign for an English county side.

Worcestershire, the county side that have had great success as Ian Botham, Imran Khan, Kapil Dev in their ranks over the years, have captured the signature of Bangladesh's stand-in skipper as their overseas player for 2010.

However the 22-year-old left-hander will not be available until mid-July for the county because of his commitment with the Bangladesh team.

"I have been following his progress for some time. It is clear he is a very good player," told Worcestershire coach Steve Rhodes to BBC Sport.

"His current ICC rankings prove this and I know he is hungry for success."

"His all-round skills will be a great boost to our young team for the business end of the season," added the county's director of cricket.

Shakib was also excited with the opportunity to participate in county cricket.

"I am delighted to be joining Worcestershire in 2010," he said. "I followed county cricket as a young player growing up and the opportunity to fulfil one of my ambitions by playing as an overseas player in England is one that excites me greatly."

"I consider it a huge honour to be the first Bangladeshi overseas player in county cricket and can't wait to give my all for the club on the field."

Making his one-day international debut for his country in August 2006 at the age of 19, Shakib has played 75 games, making 2047 runs at 35.91, while taking 83 wickets.

He has also played 14 Tests, making 715 runs and taking 48 wickets.

Security tightened

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entrances to the apex court, security personnel are keeping a close watch on the movement of the people.

A five-member special bench that has heard for 29 days the appeals by five death-row convicts in Bangabandhu murder case is scheduled to start reading out the long-awaited judgment at 11:00am at Court No.1.

Some 600 law enforcers were already guarding the court area to ward off potential subversive acts.

Earlier on November 12, the bench comprising Justice Md Tafazzul Islam, Justice Md Abdul Aziz, Justice BK Das, Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Justice SK Sinha announced the date for delivery of the judgment.

COUNSELS' EXPECTATIONS
Counsels on both sides were passing tense hours on the eve of the judgment pronouncement.

Attorney General Mahbub Alam yesterday told The Daily Star he was feeling under stress ahead of the big day.

"This is a case dealing with the assassination of the father of the nation. For over three decades, people have waited for this day to come," he said.

He urged everyone to remain alert so subversives cannot dare to create anarchy. He also asked all to report anything suspicious to the authorities concerned.

The chief state counsel for this case, Anisul Huq, told newsmen that the state has prayed to the bench to uphold the High Court verdict.

"I don't know what it will be," he added.

Supreme Court Bar Association President AFM Mesbahuddin said he hopes the verdict will help the nation make amends for putting up with an injustice of enormous proportions for so long.

Khan Saifur Rahman, the lawyer defending convicts Syed Farooq Rahman and Muhiuddin Ahmed, said the losing side can file a review petition with the SC against the verdict within 30 days since receipt of the judgment's certified copy.

Abdullah-al Mamun, the counsel for convicts Bazul Huda and AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, said the SC can pass

Interference

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the affairs of the upazila parishads, which is regretful, said ABM Abdus Sattar, chairman of Raiganj upazila in Sirajganj.

"We want such interference stop immediately," he said adding the development of the local government bodies is not possible unless the interference of the MPs is restricted.

Manzurul Alam, chairman of Mohadebpur upazila in Naogaon said all the successive governments have weakened them though they spoke for strengthening the parishads.

"Even 10 months after the oath, we are not sure about our duties yet," he said.

A state of confrontation between the lawmakers and upazila representatives has been created after the MPs are made advisers of the upazila parishad, said Rasheda Akter, a vice chairman of Chaudhagram upazila in Comilla.

Echoing her words, Aminul Islam Shihab, vice chairman of Rayganj upazila in Sirajganj, said "It is not possible to make the upazila parishad effective as long as the lawmakers are the advisers of union parishads," he added.

He added the people are losing their faith in the parishad chairmen and vice chairmen who have no contribution in the local development.

Mohibur Rahman, chairman of Biswanath upazila in Sylhet said, they would, if necessary, take to the street to materialise their demands.

In the keynote paper, Shujan Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder proposed that the government should excluded the lawmakers from the parishads, hold Zila Parishad election after amending the Zila Parishad Act and take a decentralisation initiative for giving the local government bodies more authority, responsibility and assets.

Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad in his speech said it is necessary to frame an "umbrella act" under which duties, responsibilities, financing and accountability in the local government sector will be defined.

Stressing the financial empowerment, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said the local government, if not strengthened financially, will have to depend on the central government.

Moderated by former adviser to the caretaker government ASM Shahjahan, the roundtable was addressed, among others, by columnist, Syed Abul Maksud, former chairman of privatisation commission Inam Ahmed Chowdhury and Democracy Watch Executive Director Taleya Rahman.

four kinds of verdict in this case.

It can acquit the convicts by scrapping the High Court verdict, or commute their death sentences to life imprisonment, or uphold the HC verdict in its entirety or direct the authorities to arrange for re-trial of the case, he explained.

Li Col (sacked) Syed Farooq Rahman, Li Col (retired) Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Li Col (retired) Muhiuddin Ahmed, Li Col (retired) AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, and Major (retired) Bazul Huda, who are behind bars, filed the appeals in October 2007 against their convictions and death sentences.

SECURITY
The government has put the law enforcement and intelligence agencies across the country on the alert to avert anything untoward before and after the final judgment.

Over 40,000 additional forces from the police and Rapid Action Battalion have been deployed, 200 check posts set up and 300 special teams assigned to patrol.

Around 11,000 law enforcers remain stationed in the capital alone.

Tight security measures have been in place around the Dhaka Central Jail where the five convicted killers of Bangabandhu are kept.

Check posts have been set up at all entrances to the capital, in the diplomatic enclave and at other strategic points. Anybody carrying bags will have to go through security checks.

Rab Director General Hasan Mahmud Khandaker said deployment of the elite crime-busters began on November 15.

"The verdict will be followed by a number of important events including Eid-ul Azha, Christmas, BDR mutiny trial and the New Year. So, the enhanced security measures will be in place for an extended period of time," he told The Daily Star.

Expressway

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Transport Sector Management Reform of the planning commission, said the initiative for mass rapid transit is a broad step but embarking on such a mega project without feasibility study will be seriously risky.

"An independent feasibility study by a credible organisation should have been in place before embarking on such a mega project," he said.

"A study [report] would be the government's strength, reference and basis for negotiation with the bidders," he added.

The government cannot evaluate the bidder's proposal and ascertain the actual costs of building the infrastructure without a feasibility study, said Rahmatullah.

Absence of the study may bring a disaster with giving scope for an irregular deal in favour of the contractor to make the project faulty leaving many liabilities on the government, he said.

Prof Alamgir Mojibul Hoque of Buet, who led the counterpart consulting team on making STP said, "The mega projects without feasibility study will not only increase construction costs but also may fail to meet people's requirement. It may even put an undesirable structure in place unable to serve the purpose."

The government should have first put in place bus rapid transit (BRT), proper traffic and parking management, optimum use of the existing road spaces, and removal of bottlenecks and small-scale improvement of traffic network.

Replying to a query, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain told this correspondent at a seminar on November 3 that the strategic transport plan stands as a feasibility report for such projects.

Strategic transport plan has many things to provide every detail on each recommended project, he said.

"It will take a long time if we follow the existing rules," said Hossain adding, "We need waiver of rules to complete the mega projects within tenure of the incumbent government."

A party's popularity in Dhaka decides the party's fate in the elections, Hossain said, so their political commitment is to make the project happen within their tenure.

On November 8, the minister told The Daily Star that the tender documents include a provision that the bidders will have to conduct their own feasibility study for the elevated way project.

Rahmatullah said, "Strategic transport plan is not a feasibility study. It is a set of strategic and policy recommendations. It itself calls for feasibility study for such projects."

The contractors in their feasibility study will naturally press for an extended concession period, as the government will not have scope to assess the concessions demanded by the contractors, he said.

The Strategic Transport Plan, framed in 2005 by The Louis Berger Group, USA and Bangladesh Consultants Ltd and approved in March 2008 is just a strategic plan, said Mojibul Hoque.

Hasina talks

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Pope Benedict also offered gifts to Hasina.

After the half an hour meeting, Sheikh Hasina introduced the Bangladesh delegation to Pope Benedict.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad and Ambassador Ziauddin were included in the delegation.

The premier later met Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of state of the Vatican City and head of the government.

During the meeting, Hasina also discussed various matters of bilateral interests, Abul Kalam Azad said.

Earlier in the morning, six honorary Consuls General for Bangladesh in Italy paid a courtesy call on the prime minister at her Grand Hotel Parco dei Principi suite.

The consuls general are - Cesare Mozzi of Milan, Ugo Pellegrino of Naples, Giovanni Vanadia of Catania, Raffaele Fasano of Bari, Giorgia Granata of Florence and Vincenzo Di Tanto of Palermo.

Hasina advised them to carry out their responsibility more effectively for the development of Bangladesh and its people especially, the expatriate Bangladeshis in Italy.

She hoped that relations between Bangladesh and Italy would develop further through benefiting works of the consuls general.

She also advised the consuls general appointed by Bangladesh government to work with an aim to increase Italian investment in Bangladesh.

The consuls general apprised the prime minister of the contributions of expatriate Bangladeshis in Italy in

BENAZIR KILLING

Musharraf grilled by UN investigators

AFP, Islamabad

A UN commission investigating the assassination of Pakistan's ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto has questioned former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, the United Nations said yesterday.

The team arrived in Pakistan in July to investigate the circumstances surrounding the 2007 attack that left the two-time prime minister dead and met "dozens" of individuals.

"The Commission of Inquiry had a frank, open and cordial conversation with former president Musharraf, having been able to pose to him many queries on issues central to its mandate," a statement from the world body said.

Benazir, the first woman to become prime minister of a Muslim country, was killed on December 27, 2007 in a gun and suicide attack after addressing an election rally in Rawalpindi, a garrison city near the capital Islamabad.