

Salute to three drivers

INAM AHMED

A new government, a deep-seated recession, and yet a remarkable growth -- our kudos goes to farmers, workers and migrant labourers this year. Without them, Bangladesh could face different music in the year that rolled by.

Good agricultural production supported by sufficient injection of farm credit boosted domestic demand. A surprising spurt of remittance flow by a dwindling number of migrant workers also helped the cause. And garment workers chipped in cheap labour to keep the country's apparels floating in harsh times.

All this in turn kept domestic demand and the economy buoyant. We salute these three drivers of the economy, who helped navigate us through the turbulent waters of 2009.

There were many moments of glory for the government in the last-one year. The prudent economic policies helped achieve a macroeconomic and fiscal stability in a time of the worst recession since the World War II. Inflation was relatively low. Reserves and balance of payments were good.

The stimulus package that came belatedly was channelled in the right direction. Many might say Bangladesh handled its stimulus package even better than the US. The US was criticised for its Buy American clause in the package.

"It was a prudent stimulus package and directed properly. The good point was the government did not give in to pressure groups in allocating funds," said Dr Zahid Hossain, a senior economist of The World Bank.

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Brac boss to be knighted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The founder and chairperson of Brac Fazle Hasan Abed is to be knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II for his services to alleviating poverty in Bangladesh and abroad.

Abed is the first Bangladeshi to receive the honour since 1947, though he

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Ship-breaker ignored explosive warning

PINAKI ROY

Rahim Steel and Ship-breaking Yard violated the warning of the Department of Explosives while scrapping oil tanker MT AGATE in Sitakunda on Saturday, which caused an explosion killing six workers and injuring many others.

The Department of Explosives had issued a certificate, warning that some tanks of the ship were "not free from dangerous petroleum vapour" and not safe for human entry and heat-generating work.

Rahim Steel's dismantling work was also a violation of a High Court order.

"Cleaning [petroleum and flammable substances off a tanker before dismantling it] costs money. Shipyard owners do not want to spend that amount," said Khairul Bashar, chief inspector of the Department of Explosives,

Dhaka.

The steel company's Manager Abdus Sattar Selim, however, claimed after the accident that they had cleaned the ship before dismantling.

On June 11, the High Court directed authorities to shut down all shipyards that do not have environmental clearance certificate. It also asked ship-breaking companies to clean toxic ships before bringing them into Bangladesh territory.

Later, following an appeal from the shipyard owners' association the Supreme Court stayed the High Court order on shutting down shipyards.

The apex court upheld the High Court directive for cleaning ships before dismantling them.

The Department of Explosives gave two certificates for MT AGATE, saying six tanks of

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SHIP BLAST
2 succumb to injuries
Toll rises to 6
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The death toll of the blast at Rahim Steel and Ship-breaking Yard in Sitakunda rose to six as one of the workers succumbed to injuries Wednesday night and the other one yesterday.

The dead, Nurul Islam Mintu, 35, son of Wahed Ali of Dhunat upazila, Bogra, died around 8:00pm on Wednesday and Abu Raihan, 22, son of Abdul Wahal of Bogra, around 7:15pm yesterday at the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Earlier on Tuesday, Mintu and Abu with three other injured, Saddam, 22, Lutfar

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GREETINGS

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Ministers must come out clean

Anti-graft boss says his efforts not enough

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Efforts merely from the Anti-Corruption Commission will not be able to reduce corruption in Bangladesh unless ministers prove themselves honest with their activities, ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman said yesterday.

The country will save \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion annually, if corruption can be brought down to a minimal level, he mentioned.

The ACC chief said this while he was speaking as chief guest at a certificate giving function in its auditorium with Bangladesh

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UK to donate 6m pounds to climate fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Kingdom is to provide a 60 million pound grant to Bangladesh's multi-donor trust fund for climate change.

British Acting High Commissioner Duncun Norman conveyed the news yesterday to the State Minister for Environment and Forests Dr Hasan Mahmud.

Mr Norman also commended Bangladesh's active participation during the UN

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Jubilant children run in the hallway of Chittagong Municipal Primary School yesterday with their new textbooks guarded close to their chests. The government Wednesday started distributing free textbooks to students for the next academic year.

PHOTO: ZOBAER HOSSAIN SIKDER

2010

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