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BUSINESS

DHAKA TUESDAY JANUARY 22, 2013, e-mail:business@thedailystar.net

# Bangladesh, a model for MDGs

## UN official praises efforts

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The world looks to Bangladesh for its inputs beyond 2015, thanks to the country's strong performance in achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a top official said yesterday.

"The world really needs an articulate Bangladeshi voice, a strong but concise statement on what is relevant for the nation and consequently, for the world's least developed countries," said Neal Walker, United Nations resident coordinator in Bangladesh.

The UN secretary general in November 2011 highlighted that Bangladesh has a critical voice in the run-up to the decision making process, he said.

The reason is, Bangladesh is the largest LDC in the world, with a long history of intellectual achievement and engagement in global debate, and a strong, explicit political will to make a meaningful, strategic contribution to the global debate.

"We are deeply committed to helping the country produce the best-quality input, both in terms of process and substance, for the global debate," Walker said.

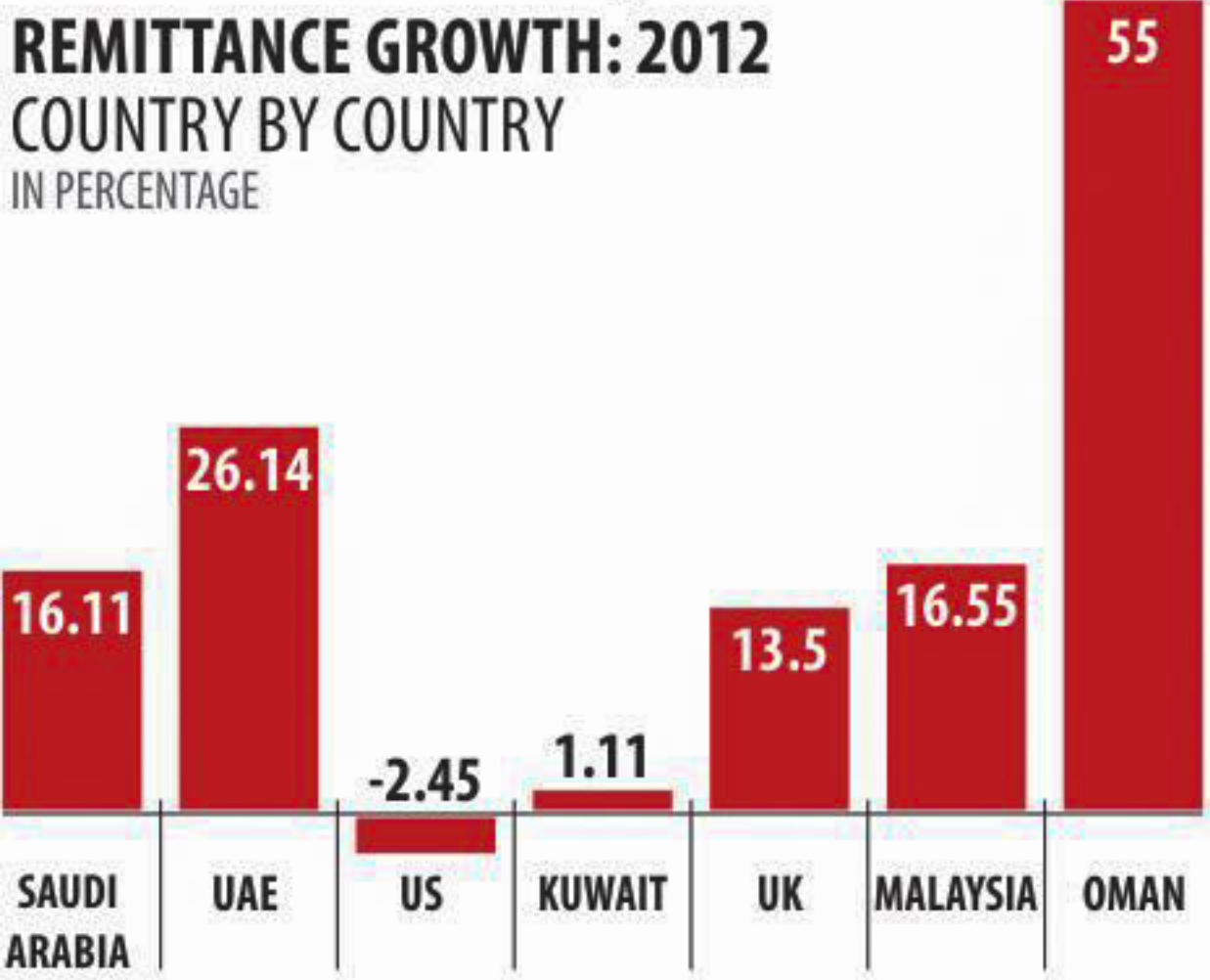
The UN official said he was confident that Bangladesh would set an example for other nations. "In fact, the co-ordinated national efforts towards the global debate will help Bangladesh to define its own development goals as it begins its seventh five-year planning process."

Walker's observations came at a high-level meeting at the planning ministry in Dhaka, where a number of ministers, secretaries and UN officials gathered to discuss the goals to be drafted into Bangladesh's position paper, due for submission to the UN in March.

Walker also said the involvement of national governments is crucial.

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# Remittance from major countries shoots up



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Remittance from major countries except the US shot up by 16-55 percent year-on-year in 2012, due to an increase in Bangladeshi wage earners abroad and their incomes.

Inflows from the US have dropped 2.5 percent to \$1.67 billion in 2012 from the previous year, due to the sluggish economy.

Bangladesh typically receives the third highest amount of remittance from the US.

"Many of the Bangladeshis working in the US are on a temporary payroll. They are saving for the rainy weather instead of sending money back home," said an official of the ministry of expatriate welfare and overseas employment.

Moreover, the majority of the Bangladeshis heading to the US are skilled professionals, who prefer to build up savings instead of sending remittance, the official said.

Last year, Bangladesh received a record \$14.17 billion in inward remittances, a 16.43 percent year-on-year increase.

The nation receives the highest amount of remittances from Saudi Arabia, according to central bank statistics. Last year, remittances from the kingdom stood at \$3.97 billion, a 16 percent increase year-on-year.

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STAR Petrol pump owners went on strike countrywide to press home their nine-point demands, much to consumers' sufferings. The strike was called off yesterday after the government met the demands.

# Two-day fuel strike comes to a close

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Sales of fuel resumed yesterday evening as petrol pump and tank-lorry owners called off their strike after the government met their demands.

"We have already started selling fuel as the government has agreed to all of our demands," Harunur Rashid, secretary general of Petrol Pump Owners Association, told The Daily Star.

The withdrawal of the strike that began on Sunday came after a meeting between the Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners and Tank-Lorry Owners-Workers Unity Council and the energy ministry at the secretariat in the evening.

Nazmul Haq, convener of the council, who led the talks with the government, said the government has increased the commission on sales of diesel by 25 paisa to Tk 1.45 a litre, octane by 49 paisa to Tk 3.36, petrol by 51 paisa to Tk 3.50, kerosene by 20 paisa to 90 paisa.

The government has also hiked the fare of tank lorry: by 5 paisa to 45 paisa for each kilometre a tank-lorry travels 40 kilometres and by 11 paisa to Tk 2.22 per kilometre for trips upwards of 40 kilometres, Haq said.

Muhammad Enamul Huq, state minister for power, energy and mineral resources; Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, prime minister's adviser on energy; and Mohammad Mejbahuddin, the energy secretary, were present at the meeting.

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# Labour leaders demand arrest of Tazreen owner, Walmart compensation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Leaders of some trade unions in the garment sector yesterday threatened protests if the Tazreen Fashions owner is not arrested and Walmart does not announce compensations for the fire victims within 72 hours.

The leaders also urged Walmart that cancelled orders with Tazreen Fashions following last year's fire -- not to cancel any working order from Bangladesh during this crisis period.

"We are also urging the government to open a dialogue with Walmart so that the victims of the Tazreen fire get their just compensation," said Towhidur Rahman, a central leader of the garment workers trade unions.

Rahman brought to attention the fact that many fire victims are yet to receive compensation from the government, owners and the garment makers' trade body, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA).

Rahman also urged the government to make public the list of the dead.

Nazma Akter, president of Sammito Garment Sramik Federation, said Walmart did not act responsibly by cancelling the order in the time of crisis.

"In December last year we submitted a memorandum to the Walmart Dhaka office, demanding compensation from the retailer, but they never reverted. It is very irresponsible on Walmart's part."

"The Walmart should come forward with a compensation package as soon as possible, as many workers are yet to receive anything from any party," Akter said.

She also urged the US government not to cancel the generalised system of preferences for Bangladesh, as it will severely dent export prospects.

# 14 lakh sign up for jobs in Malaysia

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

About 14 lakh people signed up for jobs in Malaysia, as the online registration came to a close yesterday.

Registration started in Dhaka and Barisal divisions on January 13. The registration in Chittagong and Khulna divisions capped the job campaign.

On the last day, at least 206,033 people in Chittagong and at least 208,424 people in Khulna registered their names at the union parishad information service centres.

Deputy commissioners' offices will announce the names of people who would be primarily selected through a lottery today in Chittagong and Khulna.

Earlier, around 11,000 candidates were primarily selected for the jobs from Dhaka and Barisal divisions while the number was 11,399 for Rajshahi, Rangpur and Sylhet divisions. A primary database would be finalised with the names of 35,000 applicants while only 10,000 candidates would be selected finally, according to the ministry.

Nominated workers will have to face a medical check-up and attend 10-day training before leaving the country.

Malaysia will initially recruit 10,000 workers from Bangladesh for the plantation sector.

# Razzaque blames rice price spike on cold spell, dishonest traders

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The recent cold spell and manipulation of traders in big cities are the two major reasons behind the latest rice price spiral, Food Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque said yesterday.

The government is undecided over giving the green light to coarse rice exports, he said.

"Bangladesh is severely prone to natural calamities. If any flash flood occurs prior to the boro harvest, we will have a food shortage, and then we will have to go to the world market to buy food," Razzaque said.

"We are in a double bind situation."

"Let's see whether the prices become stable," Razzaque told newsmen after attending a stakeholders meeting on food security and nutrition, held at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel.

The programme was jointly organised by BRAC University's James P Grant School of Public Health and Hellen Keller International to share the findings of a study on food security and nutrition in Bangladesh in 2011.

Over the last one month, both wholesale and retail prices of rice have gone up, despite production of the staple food being higher than the annual demand, according to government data.

Retail price of coarse rice stands at Tk 30-32 a kg, up 5 percent from Tk 27-32 a kg recorded a month ago, according to data from Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

Citing his conversation with farmers, millers and government officials in the north, the main rice producing region, Razzaque said the price of coarse rose increased by Tk 1-2 per kilogram and the fine rice varieties - paizam and miniket -- by Tk 4-5 a kg.

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# UniPay 2-U's DMD sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A Jamalpur court yesterday sent MA Taher, deputy managing director of UniPay 2-U, to jail on charges of misappropriating Tk 300 crore of the multi-level marketing company.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Mustak Ahmad passed an order to send Taher to jail at 1.30pm.

Taher was accused in 30 cases filed with different police stations in several districts, including Dhaka and Kushtia, said Mustafinur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bakshiganj Police Station.

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