

# All quiet

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jobs for thousands across the country, grew 7.6 percent in 2011-12 fiscal year on top of 7.55 percent growth the year before, according to Bangladesh Economic Review.

"We are seriously affected by hartals. We have to buy everything from ingredients to vegetables at higher prices and then we fail to sell the food we prepare," said Khandaker Ruhul Amin, founder president of the association.

Amin, who runs seven outlets of Khandaker Restaurants, said sales at his Nababpur restaurant fall by two-thirds on a hartal day; proceeds drop to Tk 20,000 from Tk 60,000.

"It is a double-edged sword. We have to prepare meals for our staff and pay salaries, even when the business is not doing well."

MS Alam Shahjahan, who operates a restaurant called Raj in Gulistan, said he incurs losses on hartal days and that it was becoming more and more difficult to recover the losses as the strikes have become frequent.

"At the least, we have to keep the lights on even when there are no customers, and this costs money," he said.

"During hartals in the past, sales did not drop to the extent we are seeing now. The number of customers drop even the day before a hartal as people fear violence," said Shahjahan, who is also a co-owner of The Rajdhani and The New Rajdhani restaurants in Gulistan.

Some food unsold at the end of the day is normal in the eatery business but most restaurants make Biryani and Teheri, which have a short shelflife.

Sakawat Hossain, manager of a Nanna Biryani outlet in Mohakhali, said they prepared fewer meals expecting the drop in demand but they still had 20-odd dishes of Biryani left.

Jahangir Alam, a small traditional snacks maker at Farmgate, said the hartals were affecting his business severely. "We have not been able to pay the shop rent for the last three months as our sales have significantly dropped."



Following 10 days of rain in Barguna, the surging waters of the river Payra flows through the breach of the dam and sweeps the locality. Inset, River water enters a house in Nishanbaria village of the district.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

# Mir Quasem

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framing order while the other asked for accepting the statements of eight witnesses before the investigation officer as testimony.

Meanwhile, Nurul Islam, the investigation officer of the case, began testifying in the case before the tribunal.

The defence also filed two petitions, seeking cross-examination of two prosecution witnesses once again and also the tribunal's observation on Salauddin's discharge petition order which was passed on January 23, 2012.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until today.

**TRIBUNAL-2**  
The International Crimes

Tribunal-2 yesterday adjourned the proceedings of war crimes case against Abdul Alim till June 5 as the prosecution failed to produce any witness.

The prosecution prayed to the tribunal to allow them to include another witness in Alim's case.

Meanwhile, the same tribunal yesterday adjourned the proceedings of accused Jamaat-e-Islami leader Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid's case till today as senior defence lawyers did not show up to place their argument due to "personal problem".

The BNP-led 18 party opposition alliance observed a day long nationwide hartal yesterday.

## At 'a critical point'

FROM PAGE 1  
Plaza collapse left at least 1,127 workers dead last month.

He said bilateral trade between the two countries had doubled to \$5.4 billion over the last decade. In the last three years, two-way trade grew 11 percent a year,

indicating that good commercial relations exist between the two nations.

There are investment opportunities in Bangladesh in areas of pharmaceuticals and energy. But the issues of workers' rights and safety must be addressed, said Fernandez.

"We have an issue of whatever is called the Bangladesh brand. Because

of the recent tragedy in this country, we need to look at how the business community can help deal with some of those issues.

"The private sector has to be part of the solution. The private sector has to come with us as we work with you to upgrade conditions for workers in this country.

"I hope all of you will start thinking about how we can all work together to make sure that the Bangladesh brand remains a top brand and it does not become a tainted brand," he said.

The US wants to be Bangladesh's partner in helping it attain a higher level of economic growth,

he said.

"There is no reason why Bangladesh should be the winner in the race to the bottom. The US will look for ways to work with Bangladesh to try to move up the production chain," he said.

Earlier, in another discussion organised by the American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh, Fernandez said his country was keen to see more investments in water, electricity and infrastructure in Bangladesh.

"Our [US-Bangladesh] future is bright, but that future will not come easily. We have to make it ourselves," Fernandez said at the discussion at Ruposhi

Bangla Hotel.

"The private sector will be critical as we move forward," he said.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque noted that US-Bangladesh relations had reached a new trajectory with the partnership dialogue.

He said Bangladesh was going through a difficult time, and hoped the US would help Bangladesh as it had done in the last four decades.

AmCham President Aftab ul Islam said Bangladesh had enormous potential to grow further, but slow implementation of government policies and confrontational politics were slicing away at that

potential.

Islam said the private sector forum between the two countries would discuss trade and economic issues and make recommendations to the two governments.

Fernandez also held talks with leaders of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association at the BGMEA office in the capital.

Emerging from the meeting, he said the US would work closely with Bangladesh to prevent industrial accidents.

"We look forward to working with the government and the business community in Bangladesh," he said.

## Allies back

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Moniruzzaman Moni in Khulna will be advantaged by their opponents' support in the battle of the ballot.

The main opposition BNP has come up with the directives as it has taken the local government elections as a test. If any irregularities take place at the polls, it will contribute to justifying opposition demands for the restoration of the non-partisan election-time government.

On the other hand, if the candidates the opposition supports win, it will demonstrate that the government has lost popularity, BNP leaders observe.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who is leader of the opposition, recently directed standing committee member Khanda Mosharraf Hossain and three other senior leaders to supervise election affairs, said a standing committee member.

Insiders say the designated leaders have already held several meetings and are chalkling out a plan for electioneering.

The party did not support any candidates in the last polls to the four city corporations held in August 2007 during emergency rule. Four AL-backed candidates won the mayoral polls.

The party has already formed committees in the four city corporations to work for its supported candidates to ensure their victory.

"Since it is a local government election, we cannot give official candidates, but some local party leaders are contesting the polls as people want them to do so," said BNP standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman.

He said when the AL-backed candidates go to the voters, they will face questions about the ruling party's corruption, which will go in favour of the pro-opposition candidates.

"Corruption by the ruling Awami League must be reflected in the minds of the people during the elections," added the BNP leader.

BNP lawmaker Mujibar Rahman Sarwar, former mayor of Barisal City Corporation, told The Daily Star that the election results would boost the opposition movement.

Meanwhile, the 14-party alliance has extended its support to Talukder Abdul Khaleque of Khulna, Shawkat Hossain Hiron of Barisal, AHM Khairuzzaman Liton of Rajshahi and Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran of Sylhet for contesting the mayoral polls in four city corporations.



Cops seized Tk 3.31 lakh from businessman Raju Ahmed while body-searching him at Zindabazar in the city yesterday. They took him to Kotwali Police Station around 2:45pm for questioning though he told them he had withdrawn the money from a bank. Later, Raju's father, owner of Atlantic Travels, and a number of traders went to the police station. After three hours, police freed Raju and returned the money. Raju alleged police misbehaved with him and tried to take away the money forcibly. His father, however, said, "It was a misunderstanding."

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

# Curses of social investment

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that Brac made social investments on a small scale in collaboration with Japan, in which the main target is channelling commodities or service in public interest; profit comes next.

Prof Yunus is also making social investments like selling yoghurt for improving public health status but these are mainly non-profit ventures.

"I told them [the delegation members] 'I have serious reservations about this type of social invest-

ments,'" he told reporters. Social investments are meant to be charitable but if there was no profit, none would come forward to make such investments.

Prof Yunus had spent all the dividends from Grameenphone in the social business companies.

"But when Dr Yunus established Grameenphone he said all of its profits will go to Grameen Bank. But Grameen Bank did not get any benefit."

"I think in the last 20

years Grameen Bank has got at best Tk 200 crore from Grameenphone. The rest went to social investment projects," the finance minister said.

About the ownership of social investment companies, Muhith quoted Prof Yunus as saying that nobody owned these social investment companies and these would not make any profit.

The in-charges of these companies have all been hand-picked by Prof Yunus, the finance minister said.

He also dubbed as unrealistic Prof Yunus's recommendation to raise the wage of garment workers in Bangladesh in line with international standards.

After the present government assumed power, the wage of garment workers was increased by about 100 percent and it will be raised further, Muhith said.

In an interview with BBC Bangla last week, Prof Yunus called for a minimum international wage for garment factory workers around the world

to shield them from exploitation.

## 4 killed

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around 8:00pm, said Abdur Rashid, officer-in-charge of Shyampur Police Station.

The victims had gathered there to see the salvage operation. Three of them died on the spot while another died at Dhaka Medical College, said Rashid.

Two of the dead were identified as eight-year-old Tareq Hassan, a student of class-II, and Joynal, 25. The identity of the other two remained unknown.

present government came to power.

The finance minister observed that this government took a quantum leap by increasing the public servants' salaries and allowances by about 62 percent under the commission.

The next commission would also be directed to offer the employees a sizeable pay rise to reduce corruption and attract more talent to the public service, Muhith added.

# Pay commission

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reporters after a meeting of the cabinet committee on economic affairs at the Cabinet Division.

The finance minister added that the commission's terms of reference would also be set within the tenure of this government.

Although the last caretaker government announced the previous pay commission in September 2008, most of its activities were done after the commission.

The next commission would also be directed to offer the employees a sizeable pay rise to reduce corruption and attract more talent to the public service, Muhith added.

## Uniform Row

Udayan asst headmistress suspended

DU CORRESPONDENT

The governing body of Udayan School and College last night suspended a teacher for shortening full sleeves of shirts and kamizies of students at the institution, which had been severely criticised by guardians and media outlets.

On May 22, some teachers tore sleeves of some students, including a few female students, to make those in line with the dress codes.

The governing body headed by Dhaka University Vice-chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique at a meeting decided to suspend Mahabuba Akter Kalpana from the post of assistant headmistress of the institution.

Kalpana, wife of the labour minister, was on her extended tenure.

"The body took the decision after the allegation brought against her [Kalpana] was initially proved" the VC said.

"Further action against others involved in the incident will be taken after an investigation by the director general of Secondary and Higher Secondary educationation directorate," he added.

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