

# Bangladesh

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ICCAD of Independent University in Dhaka; RE Foundation of Munich, Germany; and United Nations University, Institute of Environment and Human Security (UN-EHS) have jointly organised the Resilience Academy.

Beginning on September 15, the first session of the academy ends today. The academy is being implemented under a five-year project called 'Gibika', which is to conclude in 2017.

Asked whether it was possible to use the adaptation knowledge of one region in another given the differences of culture, geography and economy, David Lewis, professor of Social Policy and Development at London School of Economics and Political Science, replied in the positive.

He said, "Microcredit of Bangladesh is now being practised in other countries. But it had to be adopted in local context."

The Resilience Academy would highlight its practical experiences and brief policymakers at the coming climate change summit. It would seek political actions based on that experience, said Prof Koko Warner of United Nations University.

She said despite environmental challenges, Bangladesh was making good progress.

Many countries would face what Bangladesh was facing now and Bangladesh could show them how to deal with those environmental challenges, she added.

Participants from this year's session would meet again in Munich in next year and present their research findings. In 2015, a fresh group of researchers will attend a session in Dhaka for the third Resilience Academy, which will again meet in Munich in 2016, said organisers.

Under the academy, two new research schemes -- on migration pattern of the climate-distress people and determinants of alternative livelihood, and social resilience across old and new places -- will be conducted.

Bangladeshi researchers Nadiruzzaman of ICCAD and David Wrathall of UN-EHS will jointly conduct the researches.

They have selected six areas in Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Kurigram, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur and Noagaon districts that are exposed to cyclones, river erosions and drought for their study on vulnerable people.

Once a certain area is hit by a natural disaster, the affected people move from there and it is hard to track them if the pattern of their migration is not precisely known, said Nadiruzzaman.

French organisation Flowminder is providing technical support to the researchers and the academy will initially use Gamephone call data to conduct a pilot research on migration of affected people in two coastal regions hit by cyclone Mohasen.

A Letter of Intent has already been signed in this regard.

## 3 drown

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In another incident, shop employee Robin drowned while playing with friends on a trawler anchored in the river near Kamrangirchar. As the owner of the trawler tried to chase them away around 11:00am, the boy jumped into the river. He did not know how to swim either.

His body was later recovered from the river.

## Lower courts

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The commission needs to make new appointments to cope with the shortage of judges, since more than 24 lakh cases are pending with lower courts across the country, said sources in the Supreme Court.

On December 4, 2010, the then chief justice ABM Khairul Haque told a function in the presence of Law Minister Shafique Ahmed that the number of judges should be doubled to reduce the backlog of cases and the sufferings of litigants.

The present government has so far recruited 308 judges to lower courts through the commission. Earlier in May 2008, the past caretaker government appointed 394 assistant judges through the commission, following the separation of the judiciary from the executive in November 2007.

# India's new central bank chief orders surprise rate hike

AFP, Mumbai

India's new central bank governor yesterday surprised markets with a bold decision to hike interest rates on fears of rising inflation, triggering sharp falls on the stock market.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) chief Raghuram Rajan, who had earlier warned he was prepared to be unpopular, increased the benchmark interest lending rate to 7.50 percent from 7.25 at his first policy review meeting since taking the reins.

The Bombay Stock Exchange's index of leading shares fell by 2.88 percent to a day's low of 20,051.43 points, led by a tumble in banking stocks. The Sensex recovered slightly in early afternoon to 20,183.60 points.

"Bringing down inflation to more tolerable levels warrants raising the repo rate by 25 basis points immediately," Rajan said.

He had been widely

forecast by economists to keep rates on hold despite annual inflation hitting an unexpected six-month high of 6.1 percent this week.

While businesses and the government would like a rate cut to help revive sluggish growth, this would risk pushing inflation higher and further weakening the rupee, which hit record lows in the weeks before Rajan took charge on September 4.

Rajan did, however, relax some exceptional liquidity tightening measures introduced by the RBI in July to try and help stem the rupee's freefall.

The cash reserve ratio, the amount banks must set aside with the central bank as reserves, was reduced to 9.5 percent from 10.25 percent while the marginal standing facility -- used to lend to commercial banks when there is a shortage of funds in the market -- was cut by 75 basis points.

"Now things are back to normal, he is using the policy

rate to target inflation and that will allow the rupee to do what it likes," Daniel Martin, Asia Economist at Capital Economics, told AFP.

Nicknamed "The Guv", Rajan stepped up to the post faced with the unenviable task of propping up a weak rupee, reviving slowing economic growth and curbing rising inflation.

"Absolutely we want to fight inflation and we will bring inflation down, but it is not a 'take no prisoners' kind of stance," he told reporters in India's financial hub Mumbai after Friday's meeting.

"The priorities of the central bank have always been inflation and growth. The emphasis on each varies with conditions."

Huge expectations have been riding on the former International Monetary Fund chief economist, who famously predicted the 2008 global financial crisis and has been lionised by India's media.

# Several injured in clashes in Indian Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Several people, including an AFP photographer, were injured yesterday in Indian Kashmir when government forces thwarted a procession to a southern town reeling under curfew, police and witnesses said.

A top separatist leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had called for a mass march to Shopian, around 45 kilometres (nearly 30 miles) from the state capital Srinagar, to protest the 12-day curfew in the town.

Police and paramilitaries fired tear gas and pellet guns to prevent hundreds of rock throwing protestors in the Nowhatta area of the old town Srinagar from marching ahead.

## A record

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the minister, who can vie for a place in the Guinness.

Never mind the projects may be stillborn, but Bhargava's exploit is not every leader's cup of tea.

The minister for social justice and rural development did the impossible in a hilarious string of rituals at his pocket borough Rehli in central Madhya Pradesh. He didn't go on a whistle-stop tour of his constituency. Rather he didn't move an inch from the small stadium he hired at Rehli for his foundation-laying spree. In total, 2,551 stones and plaques were collected and piled upon a podium. He spent just 5 minutes each, anointing every stone with vermilion and flowers amidst a cloud of incense and chanting of mantras by hired priests.

And in eight hours flat, he dedicated 2,551 projects worth Rs 325 crores for the welfare of Madhya Pradesh. Villagers from 90 gram panchayats thronged the venue to attend the ceremony. And Bhargava's supporters hailed the effort as a swift, innovative way to cut cost and save time.

However, the ritual didn't end there. The stones were religiously transported by volunteers and installed at the chosen sites. And Awasthi claims the minister has been receiving congratulatory calls from his cabinet colleagues.

## Indian rights

FROM PAGE 1

Felani shooting case, said Kirity Roy, secretary of the rights group, while speaking to journalists in Kolkata yesterday.

"We are preparing to file a writ petition, seeking justice in the Felani shooting case. We have talked to her family as well as her counsel and are likely to go to the Supreme Court soon," Roy said.

On January 7, 2011, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) men shot dead Felani, 15, while she was returning home from India through Anantapur border in Kurigram of Bangladesh.

The photo of her body hanging at the top of the barbed-wire fence on the border triggered a huge outcry around the globe.

Amiya Ghosh was charged with culpable homicide, and the BSF had conducted a General Security Force Court (GSFC) trial against him.

But the special court on September 6 pronounced him "not guilty" in the murder case.

However, the higher authorities of the BSF did not agree with the court's findings and ordered a fresh trial.

Meanwhile, Roy, who wanted to visit Bangladesh to meet Felani's family for gathering information about Felani murder, did not get his visa as the deputy high commission of Bangladesh in Kolkata denied the visa to the rights activist.

"It's unfortunate. The high commission in Kolkata neither granted nor rejected my visa application. It simply returned my passport without showing any reason against it. I had applied for a tourist visa," said Roy, who visited Bangladesh a number of times.

# Gene map helps trace spread of MERS virus

AFP, Paris

Researchers in Britain and Saudi Arabia yesterday said that gene profiling of the MERS virus had provided insights, but no answer, as to how the mysterious microbe spreads.

Reporting online in The Lancet, the scientists said they had assembled a family tree of the coronavirus causing Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), using samples taken from 21 patients in Saudi Arabia.

With the exception of a cluster of cases in the eastern town of al-Hasa, the focal point of the outbreak is the Saudi capital, they said.

"These results suggest the circulating virus in Saudi Arabia is centred around Riyadh, with sporadic excursions to other centres," they said.

The probe reiterated the theory that the virus -- called MERS-CoV by scientists -- probably leapt to humans from animals.

The genetic history of the virus suggests repeat infec-

tions may have occurred since then, but what the animal source was, or is, remains unclear, it said.

Tests are being carried on mammals in Saudi Arabia ranging from camels and bats to goats.

The cluster in al-Hasa, in contrast, shows that viral strains there were closely related, which is consistent with spread from human to human.

The samples in Riyadh have a broad genetic diversity, the papers said.

This could mean that the virus is being transmitted through an animal source that is continuously being brought in from elsewhere, it said.

Alternatively, it may be down to the fact that the capital is the country's biggest population centre, which makes it more vulnerable to human-to-human transmission of the virus.

"Transmission of this virus appears to be more complicated than anticipated," Alimuddin Zumla, a professor at University

College London, who helped lead the Lancet study, said in a press release.

An "intermediary" source may also be possible, as most of the known cases have had no known direct contact with animals, he added in a phone conversation with AFP.

Asked what this source could be, he said this was unclear. Theoretical avenues to explore would include food.

Zumla said the use of gene profiling could be a vital tool for monitoring the virus.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Thursday it had been informed of 132 lab-confirmed cases of MERS, including 58 deaths.

Forty-nine fatalities have occurred in Saudi Arabia, according to official Saudi figures also issued on Thursday.

One of the world's biggest movements of people, the annual hajj pilgrimage, is to due to take place next month.

# Airlines plan big

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Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) and different airlines.

Air Vice-Marshal Mahmud Hussain, chairman of Caab, told a seminar recently that in 2020 the number of passengers will reach 10.2 million from 5.8 million now and the increased air cargo will be 3.6 lakh tonnes from 2.3 lakh tonnes.

Of the total 5.8 million passenger and cargo carriers involving a market of around \$440 million annually, Biman, United and Regent have around 18 percent market share. Biman alone has around 15 percent stake, according to airlines officials.

"The total investment will be even bigger as the airlines will have to invest on training of technical manpower like pilots and engineers," Imran Asif, former chief executive officer of Regent, told The Daily Star.

Once in operation, the new aircraft will require a huge infrastructural support, including enough parking spaces, apron and boarding bridges, said SM Nazmul Alam, Caab director of flight safety and regulations.

Keeping this in mind, he added, they planned a massive expansion of the Shahjalal International

Airport where a third terminal and 32 new boarding bridges would be built in two to three years. The airport has eight boarding bridges now.

The investment will also create many jobs as it will require around 100 pilots and 150 engineers to operate the aircraft, Alam told The Daily Star recently.

Biman will purchase two Boeing 777-300 ER aircraft, each costing around \$170 million. The planes will join the Biman fleet in February and March next year. It also plans to buy two turbo-prop narrow body aircraft for domestic operations by November this year.

In addition, the Biman management is planning to take long-term lease of another four aircraft in efforts to double its current fleet of eight aircraft.

Biman will be investing around \$450 million in buying new aircraft, plus a further \$100 million in leasing aircraft, Biman's Managing Director Kevin John Steele told The Daily Star on September 12.

He added Biman would be investing around \$50 million in ground equipment, aircraft spares, computers and infrastructure development and around \$60 million in improving customer service, onboard products and systems

updates.

Regent Airways Managing Director Mashruf Habib said they would be investing around \$60 million in leasing amphibian aircraft soon and four Boeing 737-800 aircraft by 2014 as it planned to expand its international network. The airline now has a fleet of four aircraft and the amphibian aircraft is set to join today.

Unveiling the plan, NOVOAIR Managing Director Group Captain (ret'd) Mofizur Rahman said they would purchase two aircraft within this year or in the first quarter of next year, which will require around \$8-10 million. His company is also expecting to lease another two aircraft in the last quarter of next year, which might require \$5-6 million.

Kamrul Islam, assistant general manager (public relations) of United Airways, said one MD-83 and one ATR-72 aircraft joined their fleet on September 13 while the company was planning to acquire two smaller aircraft for domestic operation.

The US-Bangla Airlines has recently got licence from the Caab but has yet to start operation. Sources said the airlines would require at least two aircraft for domestic operation.

# PM hopeful of AL's win

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Hasina, also the AL president, urged people not to be confused by BNP-Jamaat propaganda and falsehood against the government.

She said a section of women with holy Quran in their hands were misleading rural women saying imams had been killed and no prayers would be held in mosques if AL assumed office again.

"Those are blatant lies in the name of Islam," said the premier.

She directed her party grassroots leaders to work to remove the confusion from people's minds and seek votes highlighting government's success.

People would vote for AL, as it has implemented massive development activities and increased the per capita income, rate of literacy and employment opportunities, she added.

On the other hand, she continued, the last BNP-Jamaat government had resorted to terrorism, militancy, bomb blasts and tortured and killed opposition leaders and religious minorities creating a reign of terror.

Besides, people had been killed during the tenures of BNP government when they wanted electricity and fertiliser, she said, adding that if BNP-Jamaat came to power, they would bring back the past.

Hasina said the present government increased power and gas production

and reduced fertiliser prices. Now farmers do not need to look for fertiliser as it is available to them.

"None but the Awami League works for the welfare of the country and its people," the AL chief claimed, adding that the BNP did not care for public interest other than that of their own.

She said, "Only those who sacrifice and endure sufferings have passion for the country, not the ones that captured power all on a sudden."

At the meeting, grassroots leaders of Rangpur district demanded that Hasina nominate her son Sajeb Wazed Joy in any of the constituencies of the district for the next parliamentary polls, meeting sources said.

They informed the premier that AL's position in Rangpur was good and there was no need to form coalition with HM Ershad's Jatiya Party (JP) to win the next elections.

In response, Hasina said the grand alliance needed JP to win the polls.

Leaders of Chittagong said feuds among the senior leaders of the district needed to be addressed while Comilla leaders suggested nominating only those leaders who maintained close contact with them.

AL presidium members Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Kazi Zafarullah, Abdul Latif Siddique, Mosharraf Hossain, Nooh-ul-Alam Lenin, Satish Chandra Roy

and Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif, among others, were present in the meeting.

PM UPSET BY ASHRAF'S ABSENCE Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed deep frustration over party General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam's absence in the grassroots meeting.

In the meeting, she asked party's Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif about the whereabouts of Ashraf. As Hanif failed to give a satisfactory answer, the PM expressed dissatisfaction on Hanif too.

Being angry, Hasina said she would soon hold a special council to appoint a new general secretary of the party.

Syed Ashraf, also the LGRD and Cooperatives minister, went to London on August 25 on a three-day vacation over some family affairs. But he returned on September 15, after three weeks.

Besides, he hardly appeared in any public meeting after coming back.

Hasina was also upset when Ashraf had taken the leave, said AL insiders, adding that the premier told her close associates that at a crucial time like then Ashraf should have stayed in the country.

At many party meetings, AL leaders had demanded that Hasina replace Ashraf for what they said his inactivity in the party.

# 18 win HSBC-Star

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Fatimah Tanjeem Sabihah of Sylhet Khajanchibari International School and College won the first prize in the junior group quiz competition, while Sharnali Akhter of Dhaka's Bir Shreshtha Noor Mohammad Public College and Parmita Protik Das of Dhaka's Sunnydale School became the first and second runner up.

In the quiz competition held for the senior group, Ashraful Islam, a student of New Model High School in Dhaka, became the champion while Sakib Aleem of Dhaka's Academia and Ifrat Jahan of Sylhet's Scholarshome were adjudged first and second runner up.

Ipshtita Maliat Rahman of Scholarshome finished as champion in the extempore speech competition for the junior level, while Tasnim Mobarak from Dhaka's University Laboratory School and College and Nuzaba Tasannum from Chittagong's Cantonment English School and College became first and second runner up.

In the senior group for speech competition, Sakib Aleem of Academia was awarded champion. Shafat Rahman of Sunnydale and Mansib Tahsin of Chittagong Collegiate School were the first and second runner up.

In the poster designing competition, children expressed their ideas and feelings about climate

change. Maisha Malia Siddique of Engineering University School and College, Nitu Saha of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College and Naila Chowdhury of Anandaniketon won the contest in the junior group as champion, first and second runner up.

In the senior group, the first three were Nabanita Ghose of Viqarunnisa Noon School and College, Pronoy Chowdhury of Chittagong Govt High School and Ahsan Ahmed of Nawab Habibullah Model School and College.

Each of the winners will get six month's free subscription to The Daily Star.

The divisional winners were also awarded with medals and certificates.

The gala event started with a mesmerising cultural performance by schoolchildren. It was marked with jubilation as the audience applauded the awardees for their achievements.

Addressing the programme, speakers suggested the students to learn more on climate change.

Chief guest Prof Ainun Nishat, vice-chancellor of Brac University, said as the climate change issue was changing continuously, the knowledge on the issue should also be updated continuously.

"The entire world took the issue of climate change very seriously and we also need to be serious about it,"

he noted and called upon the students to know all the aspects of climate change and its adaptation.

A victim of climate change, Bangladesh has already been witnessing changes to its weather, mentioned the climate expert.

There will be a great change in the country's food production due to climate change and the students will have to know all these issues using modern technologies, he mentioned.

Andrew Tilke, chief executive officer of HSBC Bangladesh, said Bangladesh is a low-lying country and the rising sea level would have a major impact on the country.

So, it is important that awareness is raised here for climate change, he added.

Congratulating the winners, Andrew said all the participants were winners as they all came to know many things from the contest.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said it is essential that everybody develops the mentality of rightly evaluating the natural objects like water, air, trees and sunlight, all of which came as a gift.

He urged the students to make some changes to their habits and lifestyles. The students' education and knowledge would be incomplete if they did not care about environment, he added. Salehuddin Ahmed, managing editor of The Daily Star, and Ishituaque Mahmud of BD Cyclist also spoke.



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