

People suffered

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beyond Tk 50 a kg, some people faced problems and might have run out of their savings," he told reporters at the secretariat.

Muhith's comments came in response to a think-tank's new research finding that says 520,000 people have fallen into poverty due to sharp increase in the price of the staple this year.

Using a computable general equilibrium model, Dhaka-based South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM) on Saturday said it found a 35 percent increase in the price of rice and the results show that there is likely to be a rise in headcount poverty rate by 0.32 percentage points due to the rice price hike this year.

This means that 520,000 people have fallen into poverty because of increasing the rice price, according to SANEM.

This report should not be trusted. One should wait at least for a year to find out whether the poverty rate has gone up or down, Muhith said, adding that his position is that he will not accept the report until a year passes.

Rice prices hit a record high mid-August, triggered by a rumour of India banning export, by a drop production owing to crop damage caused by recurrent floods, depleting public stocks and inadequate supply from millers and traders.

On September 16, retail prices of coarse grains, consumed mainly by the poor and low income groups, shot up to Tk 50-54 a kg in Dhaka city, according to the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

The prices, however, have come down below Tk 50 a kg thanks to huge imports and availability of subsidised rice through open market sales.

Yesterday, coarse rice was sold at Tk 44-46 a kg, which was Tk 40-45 a month ago and Tk 35-38 a year ago, according to the TCB's market monitoring report.

Prices of fine rice varieties rose 26 percent year-on-year yesterday and coarse price 23.29 percent, showed TCB data.

A war baby

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A schoolteacher by profession, Shama said she found the Bangladeshis very generous and overwhelming.

War researcher Mustafa Chowdhury, a Canadian citizen of Bangladeshi origin who wrote the book titled "71' er Juddhoshishu: Obidito Itihash", said Shama had expressed her willingness to visit Bangladesh.

Saying that there are many other war babies who do not come out fearing social stigma, he added it is saddening that the culture of accepting them is still absent in Bangladesh.

Dr Nuzhat Chowdhury Shampa, daughter of martyred physician Abdul Alim Chaudhury, invited Shama to stand for the rape victims and raise voice against the perpetrators during the Liberation War.

Liberation War Museum Trustee Sarwar Ali expressed gratitude to the parents who adopted the war children.

Accused

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person on condition of his making a full and true disclosure of the whole of the circumstances within his knowledge relative to the crime and to every other person concerned, whether as principal or abettor, in the commission thereof," reads section 15 (1) of the Act.

He will give testimony as a witness and will be detained in custody until end of trial, says the law.

Two war crimes tribunals have so far delivered 29 judgements against 59 people. Thirty-seven of them have been sentenced to death. But, for the first time, an accused intends to give testimony as an approver.

Prosecutors Sahidur Rahman and Chaman and defence counsels Abdus Sattar Palwan, Masud Rana and Abdus Shukur Khan placed their submission on charges yesterday.

At one stage of hearing, Shukur, who represents Latif and five other fugitive accused of the case, said his client surrendered before the tribunal on November 22 and now wants to give testimony as an approver.

"In the petition, he [Latif] has pleaded guilty and sought mercy from the tribunal. He will give testimony as an approver if the tribunal allowed," Shukur told this correspondent.

Of the accused, Latif and five others are now behind bars. They are Khalilur Rahman Mir alias Khalilur Rahman, 62, Md Samsuzzaman alias Abul Kalam, 65, Mohammad Abdullah, 62, Mohammad Abdul Malek Akand alias Abul Hossain, 68, and Md Rois Uddin Azadi alias Akkel Ali, 74.

The fugitives are ASM Faizullah, 66, Abdur Razzak Mandal, 64, Alim Uddin Khan, 77, Nurul Amin Shahjahan, 69, and Sirajul Islam, 66. The prosecution pressed four charges against the 11 on April 5.

As per the prosecution, the accused were involved with the Razakar force during the Liberation War and committed crimes against humanity that include killing of four people, torturing nine, looting and committing arson, abduction and confinement in Pagla.

Tending to the sick

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for them," he said recently, expressing his gratitude to the nuns who take care of him and other patients.

Around one hundred people of different religions and faiths, who suffer from a number of problems--illness, drug addiction and physical or mental challenges, even people who are poor and abandoned-- are taken care of by the nuns trained as paramedics and nurses at the centre.

"The people, who are lonely, sick, abandoned are the ones we are compassionate about. They are the children of God. We share God's love with them," said Sister Jeffery, ahead of Christmas, a festival celebrated globally by Christians on December 25 every year, marking the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ.

On this day, Christians rejoice at the emergence of Christ and renew their commitment to good works.

Following in the footsteps of Christ, who preached love, peace and justice, the Christians, especially the consecrated men and women, who dedicate formally to a religious purpose, have been making significant contributions to society.

Bangladesh, where Christianity was first introduced by the Portuguese in the 16th century and then preached by the British, American and other European missionaries, has often benefitted from their presence.

Though small in number-- some eight lakh Christians live in Bangladesh-- their contributions to healthcare, education, socio-economic development and humanitarian activities is significant.

According to the Catholic directory, the Catholic Church runs 124 hostels and orphanages and 75 hospitals and dispensaries in various remote parts of the country. Protestant churches too have some reputed hospitals including Arthington Hospital in Rangamati, Baptist Mission Hospital Malumghat in Cox's bazaar, Haluyaghat Hospital in Mymensingh and Karamtola Hospital at Pubail in Gazipur.

On an average, an estimated 30,000 people receive healthcare in these facilities, said Dr Edward Pallab Rozario, secretary of healthcare mission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Bangladesh (CBCB).

He said most of the Christian hospitals and dispensaries are located in rural areas lacking quality healthcare services.

"Nursing has been a traditional profession for many Christian women because of the community's history of healthcare services," he told The Daily Star. There are around 5,000 Christian nurses with some holding top posts in private and public hospitals, he added.

Some of the best educational institutions, including Notre Dame College, Holy Cross School and College, Saint Joseph School, Saint

Gregory School, St Francis Xavier's Green Herald International School in Dhaka, Saint Placid's High School in Chittagong and Saint Philip School and College in Dinajpur are also run by the Christian community.

According to the Catholic Education Board, there are three universities and degree colleges, 11 high schools with college sections, 42 high schools, 31 junior schools, 219 primary schools and 258 lower primary schools and 25 vocational institutes run by the Catholic Church.

Also, there are 48 schools registered with the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh and National Christian Fellowship of Bangladesh, two umbrella organisations of Protestant churches here.

Some 1.5 lakh students study in these institutions, said Jyoti F Gomes, secretary of Catholic Education Board.

"It is education through which we can enlighten people," he told The Daily Star.

The Christian educational institutions strictly maintain discipline and regularity of classes, exams and extracurricular activities, which result in better quality of education, he said.

"Imparting human values is one of our important goals," said Jyoti, also director of Saint Joseph International School in Dhaka.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), said presence of the Christian community is not only a part of the cultural and religious diversity, but also a boon for the country.

"This community has significantly enriched our health and education sectors," she said.

Choudhury said while there is much concern over quality of mainstream education in the country, the Christian missionary schools and their dedicated teachers have proven the quality of their institutes, where discipline and moral education is integral to learning.

There are also a number of humanitarian organisations, notably Caritas and World Vision.

Caritas, which began its relief operations after the 1970 cyclone in the then East Pakistan, later expanded its programme to various sectors including health, education, economy, agriculture, environment and community development.

World Vision works mostly to promote health and education of vulnerable children and protect their rights regardless of their faith, caste and ethnicity.

"We aspire to bring light where there is darkness and hope where there is hopelessness through our good work as taught by Jesus Christ," said Bishop Gervas Rozario of Rajshahi.

He said they also want to set examples of good works so others may follow suit to establish peace and justice in society.

New sanctions

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The country's weapons programmes have made significant progress since Kim took power in 2011.

SANCTIONS TOOTHLESS'
The North has defended its missile and nuclear weapons programmes as measures for self-defense against "hostile" US policies towards Pyongyang.

And a defiant Pyongyang vowed yesterday that the country would continue its weapons push "more vigorously" to "form a balance of power with the US".

"If you think that those toothless 'sanctions' could stop the victorious march of our people who have... achieved the historic goal of building the national nuclear weapons, there would not be a bigger mistake than that," the foreign ministry said.

"The US and its puppet followers should never forget the newly-upgraded status of our nation as a nation that could pose a real nuclear threat to the US mainland," it added.

The North claimed last month that its ICBM could deliver a "super-large heavy (nuclear) warhead" to anywhere in the US mainland.

But experts believe that Pyongyang has yet to develop the advanced technology to allow its rockets to survive re-entry into the earth's atmosphere.

The latest UN sanctions were hailed by US President Donald Trump, who tweeted, "The World wants peace, not Death!"

Trump and Kim have traded threats of war and personal insults against each other in recent months, prompting fears of another conflict on the peninsula once devastated by the 1950-53 Korean War.

The resolution bans the supply of nearly 75 percent of refined oil products to the North, puts a cap on crude deliveries and orders all North Koreans working abroad to be sent back by the end of 2019.

It also bans sales of all industrial machinery, trucks, iron, steel and other metals to the North and added 15 Pyongyang officials to the UN sanctions blacklist for global visa ban and assets freeze.

Engineer

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Branch of police in Rangpur arrested him at the capital's Shyamoli.

With Fazlar, 75 people have so far been arrested in connection with the attack. Over a reported Facebook post by one Titu Chandra "demeaning" Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PUBH), religious bigots vandalised and torched 8-10 Hindu houses in Thakurpara, a Hindu-dominated village, on November 10.

On information, police rushed in, charged baton, fired rubber bullets and lobbed teargas canisters to disperse the attackers, killing a man and injuring 20 others, including four policemen.

Suspect

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Abdul Mannan, a rickshaw garage owner of the area, also identified Rajib as running in the area that morning after police had arrested him.

Farid said Rajib had come back to the slum just after a couple of hours of the mugging and acted as if he knew nothing about the incident.

Rajib bought drug by the money he found in the bag, said the DC, adding, it took time for the team to trace him as he is not professional and a floating drug trader.

Aklima, mother of the baby, said she and her husband Shah Alam Gazi, with their two sons -- Arafat and four-year-old Al Amin - - were going to her sister's Sanirakhra house by a rickshaw from Sadarghat at dawn that day.

Shah Alam filed a murder case accusing an unidentified person with Jatrabari police. He expressed his satisfaction over the arrest yesterday and demanded capital punishment of the mugger.

Provide info

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from BASIC Bank between September 2009 and 2012 when Bacchu led the bank's board of directors.

The ACC interrogated Bacchu on December 4 and 6, around four years after one of the biggest loan scams in the country's banking sector came to the fore.

During his grilling on December 6, Bacchu "became sick". An ACC doctor saw him and the interrogation continued.

On July 14, 2014, the BB gave the ACC a report detailing how the money was embezzled through shell companies and dubious accounts.

The report said Bacchu illegally influenced all activities of the state-owned lender, putting the once-sound bank in jeopardy.

The BB also narrated how the former chairman abused his power to play an active role in loan scams. He approved many loans ignoring recommendations of branches.

He also allegedly approved loans on forged documents.

However, Bacchu has not been accused in any of the 57 cases filed by the ACC over BASIC Bank scam.

Corruption in education

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every meeting he pointed out that corruption had to be rooted out.

"All these years, the slogan of our ministry has been 'show zero tolerance to corruption'," he said.

Then he made a reference from the past and said, "When I sat with EED [Education and Engineering Department], I told them that please do good work. My request to you [is] 'you take bribe, but you must keep it within a tolerable limit'. [I said that] because I did not have the courage to tell them not to receive any bribe. It would have been a meaningless remark.

"But now we have made tremendous efforts and brought many changes here.

Due to those changes, he said, hundreds of posts were created and there would be thousands more in future.

Mentioning another programme involving DIA officials a few years ago, the minister said, "The picture then was known to all when I sat with the DIA officials... Envelopes are ready at

schools. You go there to do your job [to inspect the school]. Once you go there, they hand over an envelope to you. You return after having meals there and give a report that everything is fine... This was our image to people."

"But now many headmasters and chairmen of school managing committees phone me to tell that officials [of DIA] came to their schools but they did not act like they did in the past. They worked very well. Some of DIA officials told them that they will not even have a cup of tea."

"Except for some isolated incidents, we are very happy that you all have inspired us and worked really hard," he said.

Referring to an official who owns 13 houses in Dhaka, the minister said similar things happened in many places.

"It's not that only the officers are thieves. The ministers are thieves as well. I'm a thief too. This is how things are in this world. We all have to change ourselves," he said.

Navy to turn into builder

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settlement of the maritime boundary disputes with Myanmar and India in the international court, maintaining friendly relations with the two countries.

"After establishing the rights in the vast sea area, our responsibility has largely increased to protect the marine resources so that we can use that for our socio-economic development. We've already taken various steps in this regard."

Hasina hoped the Navy midshipmen would engage themselves in the noble duty of protecting the country's independence and sovereignty being imbued with the spirit of Liberation War.

She said she was glad to know that there were 21 females among those who were commissioned into the Navy yesterday.

She paid deep homage to Birshrestha Shaheed Ruhul Amin and other members of the Navy, who sacrificed their lives during the Liberation War.

Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman could realise the importance of the Naval force considering the geopolitical location of Bangladesh and demanded establishment of the force's headquarters in the then East Pakistan in the historic six-point programme in 1966, but the Pakistani rulers didn't accept it.

Bangabandhu had commissioned BNS Issa Khan, the largest naval training base, in 1974 to build a modern and strong naval force. He bought modern warships from Yugoslavia and

Largest amphibious plane

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The amphibious aircraft has military applications but will be used for firefighting and marine rescue, with at least 17 orders placed so far with state-owned manufacturer Aviation Industry Corp of China, state media reported.

While it is around the size of a Boeing 737, the AG600 is considerably smaller than billionaire Howard Hughes' flying boat, better known as the Spruce Goose, which had a wingspan of 97 metres and a length of 67 metres but only made one brief flight, in 1947.

The AG600's flight capabilities put all of China's island-building projects in the South China Sea well within range.

"Its 4,500-km operational range and ability to land and take off from water makes it well-suited for deployment over China's artificial islands," said James Char, a military analyst at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University.

The aircraft can fly to the southernmost edge of China's territorial claims -- the James Shoal -- in just four hours from the southern city of Sanya, state-owned Global Times

reported.

The shoal is also claimed by Taiwan and Malaysia, and is currently administered by Malaysia. The collection of submerged rocks lies roughly 80 kilometres from Malaysia's coastline and about 1,800 kilometres from the Chinese mainland.

"The plane's capacity and maneuverability makes it ideal for transporting materiel to those maritime features that are too structurally fragile to support runways," Char said.

Beijing's buildup in the South China Sea, through which some \$5 trillion in annual trade passes, is hotly contested by other nations.

The Philippines for many years was one of the region's strongest opponents of Chinese expansionism, and brought a complaint to a United Nations-backed tribunal.

The panel ruled last year that China's territorial claims in the sea were without legal basis, but the Philippines has backed away from the dispute under its new president Rodrigo Duterte.

The launch of the new amphibious aircraft further strengthens China's rapidly modernising military.

Prepare for movement

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Jatiyatabadi Muktiyodhdha Dal at Mahanagar Natyamancha in the capital.

Addressing the other political parties, she said, "We all are victims. Let's get united and protest against the misdeeds [of the government] and wage movement for democracy and establish people's government through election."

Further criticising the current government, the BNP chief alleged that the government has compelled former chief justice SK Sinha to resign.

"The government has done a judicial coup, for which it should face punishment."

Khaleda also alleged that the independence of the judiciary has been snatched away. "SK Sinha's crime was that he spoke the truth and worked for the independence of the judiciary. He gave observations about 154 lawmakers elected uncontested."

Claiming that killings and abductions have been occurring on a regular basis, Khaleda said the government should have to be held accountable for

them.

The BNP chief criticised the price hike of daily essentials and said people are in miserable condition due to the skyrocketing prices of daily essentials. "For this, the government's corruption is responsible."

While praising India's role in sheltering the people of Bangladesh during the Liberation War, Khaleda said, "Freedom fighters have contributed to the country's independence, and at the same time India also contributed to our Liberation War."

Addressing her party members, she said, "You will have to prepare for the demonstration to be announced in the days to come. You must move forward for both our movement and the elections. We believe we'll succeed this time, and be able to restore multiparty democracy in the country."

Expressing optimism about the success of the movement, Khaleda said, "Multiparty democracy was restored in the country under our leadership and it will be restored once again in the country under the leadership of BNP."