

## 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 Bangladeshi very generous and overwhelming.

War researcher Mustafa Chowdhury, a Canadian citizen of Bangladeshi origin who wrote the book titled "71'er Juddhoshibhumi: Obidito Itihas", 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 Choudhury Shama, daughter of martyred physician Abdul Alim Choudhury, 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, 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 passionate 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 benefited 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, Haluaghata Hospital in Mymensingh and Karamtola Hospital at Pabail in Gazipur.

On an average, an estimated 30,000 people receive healthcare in these facilities, said Dr Edward Pallab Rozario, secretary of healthcare commission 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

## AL, BNP to go all out

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candidates came up at the meeting, but the name of Atiqul Islam, former president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, figured prominently, said meeting sources.

"Though the party president seemed positive about Atiqul, considering his capabilities, she was yet to make a final decision in this regard," added one source.

The names of several party leaders and pro-AL businesspersons were also discussed as prospective mayoral candidates. They include ex-president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) AK Azad, former AL lawmaker and businessman HBM Iqbal, and AL lawmaker Rahmat Ullah.

The mayoral post fell vacant following the death of DNCC Mayor Anisul Huq on November 30. The by-election is likely to be held in late February next year, and the EC is expected to announce the polls schedule in mid-January.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of BNP leaders said the party is likely to nominate party leader Tabith Awal, son of BNP Vice Chairman and ex-FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo, as mayoral candidate.

Backed by the BNP, Tabith contested the 2015 DNCC polls, but boycotted it halfway on the voting day, bringing allegations of widespread rigging.

Seeking anonymity, a senior leader of the party said Tabith would get the party ticket for the upcoming by-election, and that he had met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her office a few days ago.

Several party leaders said the Rangpur election result is an indication that the ruling party will face debacle in every election if it is held in a free and fair manner.

The BNP now wants to win the DNCC by-polls to show that the government's popularity has declined.

About the party's preparations for the by-polls, another senior BNP leader said, "We will devise our strategy once the Election Commission announces the polls schedule. We will surely win the election if it is held in a free and fair manner."

At the AL presidium meeting, Hasina asked party General Secretary Obaidul Quader to find out the rea-

son behind Jhantu's defeat, meeting sources said.

"It can happen... You may face defeat in an election. But what happened in the Rangpur City Corporation polls is not merely a defeat, it is a debacle. You should look into the reasons behind this," an AL presidium member quoted Hasina as saying.

The free and fair Rangpur City Corporation polls under the new EC has brightened the AL's image but the huge margin of defeat has created concern among the party's policymakers, especially ahead of the national election, the presidium member said quoting the AL president.

Expressing frustration over the polls result, the AL chief asked the party's top leaders not to be overconfident in any election.

"You should not be too confident in any election. If you do so, the party may face such defeats in the future as well," said the presidium member quoting Hasina.

She advised them to tour the entire country to publicise the government's development activities to woo voters ahead of the national election.

Hasina also thanked the EC for holding a free, fair and credible election in Rangpur as the BNP had cast doubts on the polls.

In Thursday's polls, Jhantu, who was elected mayor in the maiden Rangpur City Corporation polls with the AL's support in 2012, got 62,400 votes while his rival Jatiya Party candidate Mostafizur Rahman Mostafa bagged 1,60,489 votes.

In the previous election, Jhantu defeated Mostafa by 30,000 votes, bagging 106,255 votes.

From the BNP's perspective, Rangpur is not a party stronghold, and it didn't expect its candidate to win the mayoral race.

The BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed said, "We didn't hope to win the Rangpur City Corporation election. Our candidate secured the third place as in the previous polls. In this election, the number of votes of the Awami League candidate decreased significantly while that of our candidate increased."

BNP mayoral candidate Kawsar Zaman Babla bagged 35,136 votes in the just-concluded polls against 21,235 votes in the 2012 polls.

## 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 Fazlur, 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 against 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.