



Poverty declining at a slower pace

BBS report shows 1.2pc annual drop in poverty in 2010-2016 compared to 1.7pc during 2005-2010

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poverty continues to decline but at a slower pace since 2010 though the country has recorded more than 6.5 percent economic growth annually during the period, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data.

Between 2010 and 2016, the percentage of poor people dropped to 24.3 percent of the population, registering a decline at a yearly rate of 1.2 percent.

But the annual rate of drop in poverty was 1.7 percent from 2005 to 2010, shows the BBS's latest Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES).

Releasing the final report of the HIES 2016 yesterday, BBS Director General Krishna Gayen said the percentage of poor people decreased further to 21.8 percent last year.

Dipankar Roy, project director of HIES, said that given the current pace of poverty reduction, the nation would be able to eradicate poverty by 2030 set in the

Sustainable Development Goals.

The BBS carried out the survey on 46,080 households in 2016, nearly four times the samples taken in the previous 2010 survey.

The latest estimate by the BBS showed that the rate of annual reduction in poverty edged up slightly since 2016 but still remained below the annual rate of 1.74 percent between 2000 and 2010, raising questions among economists about the quality of economic growth.

"The deceleration in the pace of poverty reduction during a period when GDP growth accelerated is indeed a puzzle. Clearly, the benefits of growth did not trickle down as much as it used to," Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, told this newspaper.

The key reason appears to be the slowdown in the rate of job creation as evident from the labour force survey data, particularly in sectors where jobs are more remunerative, he said.

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Fifty-eight-year-old Majeda Khatun stares blankly into the distance as she along with dozens of other jute mill workers waits for iftar during demonstrations on Natun Rasta intersection in Khulna city yesterday. For the last nine days, these workers have been agitating for arrears. PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

Road, rail blocked in Khulna, Ctg

Workers start indefinite strike at state-run jute mills for arrears, better wages

STAR REPORT

Thousands of agitating jute mill workers blocked roads and railways in Khulna and Jashore and roads in Chattogram yesterday, the first day of their indefinite strike at state-owned jute mills for better wages and arrears.

In Khulna and Jashore, workers of nine state-owned mills blocked Dhaka-Khulna highway, railway lines and other roads in the afternoon. Yesterday was the ninth consecutive day of protests by workers of mills under the

Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).

In several places on Dhaka-Khulna highway, workers of Alim and Eastern jute mills kept the road blocked for hours.

"I have been suffering from deprivation and poverty for over three months now. I am tired of hearing BJMC's false promises. I don't trust a word they say," said Putul Khatun, 58, a worker of Crescent Jute Mills and a key organiser of the demonstrations in Khulna.

In Jashore, workers mostly from Jashore Jute Industry and Carpeting Jute Mills Ltd gathered

in Rajghat area and blocked roads.

Around 4:00pm, workers of Daulatpur, Khalishpur, Crescent, Platinum and Star jute mills gathered in Notun Rasta, Kabir Bot Tola and Daulatpur areas in Khulna and demonstrated from 4:00pm-7:00pm. They also staged a sit-in on Dhaka-Khulna highway and the railway lines. No train or bus could enter or leave the city during the time.

However, workers of two jute mills in the capital's Demra did not take to the streets as many of them joined work

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MAIN OCCUPATION OF PEOPLE		
Year	Farm	Non-farm
2005	47.5	52.5
2010	36.1	63.9
2016	37.8	62.2

SHARE OF EXPENDITURE		
Year	Food	Non-food
2010	54.8	45.2
2016	47.7	52.3

Legalising the ILLEGAL

Mangrove forest made charland on govt papers for leasing it out to ship-breaking yard company; fingers pointed at district admin; HC questions legality



A private firm has put up iron fencing along the mangrove forest in Sitakunda to build a ship-breaking yard. The company took a lease on 7.1 acres of the forest land from the district administration last year. The photo was taken in Abdullah Ghata area last month. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Chattogram

A mangrove forest at Sitakunda upazila in Chattogram was leased to a private company last year to build a ship-breaking yard, violating a Supreme Court directive, existing laws and the national forest policy.

Several letters from the forest department earlier had informed the deputy commissioner's office that the forest was "notified" under Section-4 of Forest Act-1927. A forest is "notified" when it is under process of being declared as a reserve forest.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in 2013 issued a directive to the deputy commissioner of Chattogram not to lease out the "notified" forest to any person, company or organisation for any purpose.

Yet the district administration leased out at least 7.1 acres of the forest land in Abdullah Ghata to the BBC Steel Limited.

To facilitate the lease, the forest was shown as a charland in the Bangladesh Ledger survey by Sitakunda upazila nirbahi officer, according to documents obtained by The Daily Star.

Following a writ petition, the High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why the lease won't be declared illegal, and imposed six months' stay on the effectiveness of the lease contract.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, which filed the petition seeking cancellation of the lease, told The

Daily Star that the leased area was clearly a "notified" forest.

The National Environmental Committee in 2010 stated that forest land "notified" under the forest act would be non-leasable, she mentioned.

The land, part of the 400 acres of forest created in 1983-1984 by the Coastal Forest Division, was "notified" in 1986, according to the Revisional Survey ledger.

In 1996, a land ministry circular prohibited transfer, mutation and amendment of land records of the forest till its declaration as a reserve forest. It was issued to all deputy commissioners of the country.

This newspaper obtained a copy of a letter, sent to the deputy commissioners of 10 coastal districts including

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Fizz shines as BD romp into final

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh continued their winning run in the ongoing ODI tri-series in Ireland by registering a comfortable five-wicket win over West Indies and secured their place in the series final at the Malahide Cricket Club in Dublin yesterday.

Mushfiqur Rahim top scored for Bangladesh with a 73-ball 63, featuring five fours and a six, while Soumya Sarkar also struck a fifty-plus score to help clinch an easy win.

In chase of a modest 247, Bangladesh made a solid start riding on Tamim Iqbal and Soumya, who added a fifty-run opening stand before the former was dismissed by off-spinner Ashley Nurse on 21. Nurse then dispatched Shakib Al Hasan on 29 and followed up with the wicket of Soumya on 54, leaving the Tigers in a precarious position on 107 for three in 20.5 overs.

However, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mohammad Mithun strung together an 83-run third wicket partnership before the latter was dismissed on 43 to help ensure an easy win, where Mahmudullah Riyad remained unbeaten on thirty, in the end.

With this win, Bangladesh secured their place in the series final, where they will once again face West Indies on May 17 after taking on Ireland in their final group fixture tomorrow.

Earlier, Bangladesh had bowled brilliantly as

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KHALEDA'S TRIAL IN 17 CASES

Special court set up inside Keraniganj jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

From now on, the trials of 17 cases against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will be held at a special court inside Keraniganj Central Jail in Dhaka due to security reasons.

The law ministry issued a gazette notification in this regard on Sunday.

The trials would take place at the special court, set up at building-2 of Keraniganj jail, said the notification.



The 17 cases include Niko, Gato and Barapukuria coalmine graft cases.

Talking to The Daily Star, ACC Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol said the government has already set up the special court inside the Keraniganj jail.

The trial in the Niko graft case was being held at a special court set up inside the old Dhaka central jail and the trials in 16 other cases were taking place at a makeshift court at

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