

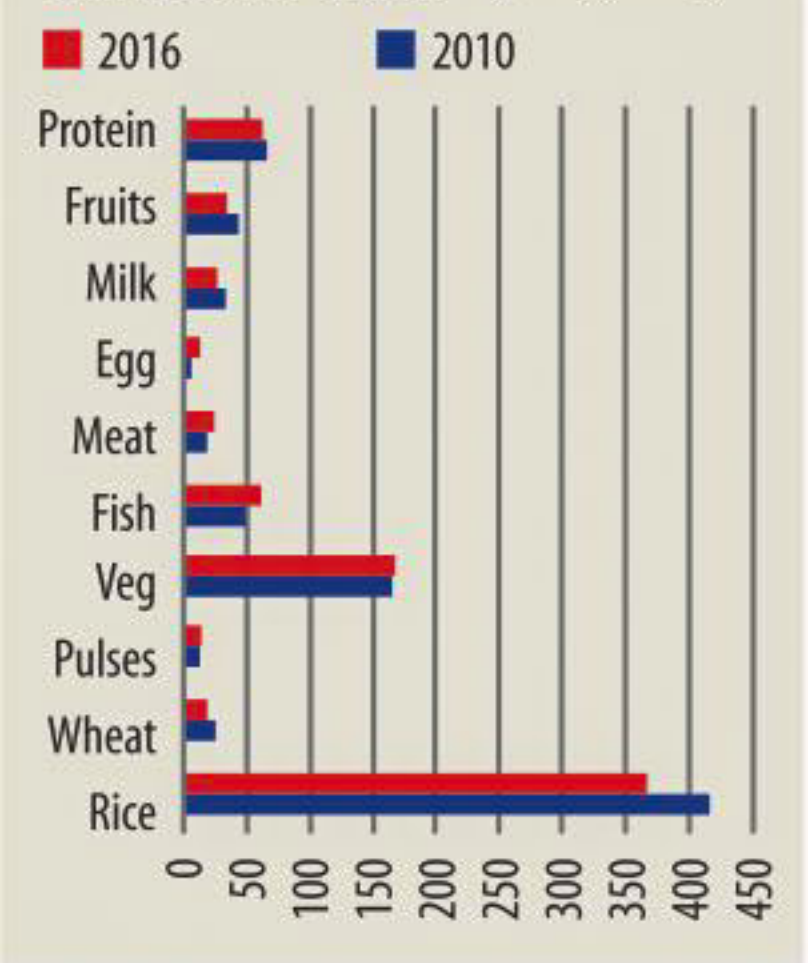
# Poverty declining

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In its latest HIES, the BBS found that the overall calorie intake of people dropped and consumption of food fell between 2010 and 2016. At the same time, people's expenses rose at a rate higher than that of income.

And non-agriculture sectors' share in jobs declined in 2016 compared to 2010 despite an increased contribution of the industrial sector to the Gross

## PER CAPITA PER DAY FOOD CONSUMPTION (in gram)



Domestic Product (GDP).

By contrast, agriculture sector's share in employment rose during this period, meaning more people were dependent on farming in 2016 than in 2010.

Zahid said growth acceleration appears to have come from domestic market-driven sectors where production is less labour intensive, as opposed to export-oriented activities.

Citing BBS Quarterly Labour Force Surveys, he said female employment in the industrial sector declined by 11.3 lakh, and in services by 1.5 lakh in 2016 compared to 2013.

According to him, 1,200 garment factories have been closed for remediation and relocation since the Rana plaza collapse that claimed the lives of more than a thousand workers. "This accounts for the decline in

the proportion of employment in non-agriculture sector, as reported in HIES," said Zahid.

KAS Murshid, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said an increased use of technology would be a reason behind sluggish job growth in manufacturing.

"Jobs are not growing in line with the growth of investment in the industrial sector," he said.

Murshid said if people do not get any opportunity in non-farm sectors, they usually become dependent on agriculture. But one explanation could be that the farm sector is seeing a rise in investment, leading to creation of more jobs.

On the fall in daily calorie consumption, Murshid said calorie intake should not drop if the level of poverty falls.

According to HIES, daily calorie consumption declined to 2,210 kilo in 2016 from 2,318 kilo in 2010.

"We should examine the calorie intake of poor people," he noted.

The distribution of consumption should be examined to see whose calorie intake has fallen, he said.

"Has the calorie intake of the poor declined or those people who used to consume an increased amount of rice have reduced its consumption to diversify their diet."

"It is important to see who is eating less," said Murshid.

Selim Raihan, executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM), said the country saw an accelerated GDP growth rate since 2013, and the GDP growth rates in recent years are the highest in the country's history.

But the pace of poverty reduction has been slowing. "This means the benefits of accelerated and high economic growth are unable to reach the poor as per expectations," he said. "This is a big concern."

Citing the reasons behind this, Selim said, "High GDP growth over the past few years has not led to large-scale job creation. The country is witnessing a phase of jobless growth."

# Road, rail blocked



FROM PAGE 1

after receiving a week's salary arrears. Ruling party men also allegedly kept them off the streets.

Hundreds of people were subjected to long tailbacks and had to walk miles under scorching heat.

Sohorab Hossain, general secretary of Crescent Jute Mills CBA, told The Daily Star that the workers had been subjected to irregular payment for years.

"The protests will get tougher if we don't get any credible assurance by May 18," he said.

In Chattogram, workers of nine state-owned mills demonstrated on the streets yesterday afternoon.

Workers of Amin Jute Mills kept Muradpur-Hathazari road blocked from 4:00pm-7:00pm.

"I don't know how my wife and three children are surviving at home without any money. It feels we are the most neglected workers in the country," said Momesh Khan, a protesting worker of the mill.

Kamal Uddin, office secretary of the CBA, said, "No promise is

enough now. Please pay us what's due. Nothing else will do."

Meanwhile, workers of Hafij Jute Mills marched along Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sitakunda in the afternoon and partially blocked traffic from 2:30pm-4:00pm.

On September 7, 2015, the cabinet approved the eighth national pay scale to be effective from July that year. The scale has been implemented in almost all government offices and corporations.

But some 60,000 workers of the 22 state-run jute mills are still waiting for the scale to be implemented while all officials and employees under the jute ministry, including the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, are drawing their salaries under the new scale.

On top of this, the agitating workers have not been paid for six to 12 weeks, with many literally starving as The Daily Star has seen during visits to Khulna and Demra in the capital. Officials and employees of the mills have also not been getting their salaries for two to four months.

# Unification support falls in South Korea as talks stall

AFP, Seoul

Ever more South Koreans prefer peaceful co-existence with the nuclear-armed North to reunification of the peninsula, a survey found yesterday.

Despite sharing a common language and ethnicity and centuries of history, North and South Korea have become radically different societies in recent decades.

Ruled with an iron grip by three generations of the Kim family, the North has turned itself into a nuclear power -- at the cost of international isolation -- while the South has embraced democracy and risen to become the world's 11th-largest economy.

The South's President Moon Jae-in regularly affirms unification as an eventual goal, but the picture in his country is far more nuanced, the survey by Seoul's Korea Institute

for National Unification (KINU) showed.

A total of 65.9 percent of South Koreans saw unification as necessary, it said, down from 70.7 percent last year as inter-Korean engagement and nuclear talks between Pyongyang and Washington stall.

But when offered an alternative, 49.5 percent of Southerners favoured peaceful co-existence with the North with only 28.8 percent preferring unification, the biggest difference the survey has shown.

The differences are larger among younger people, with those in their 20s having spent their adult lives living with and sometimes threatened by a nuclear North.

If given a choice between unification and the economy, 70.5 percent put a higher priority on the economy, with just 8.3 percent backing unification.



This truck veered off the Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway and ploughed into a house in Tushbhandar area of Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila yesterday morning, leaving a woman dead and her two daughters injured.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Legalising the illegal

FROM PAGE 1

Chattogram, which said no "notified" forest can be leased out.

But nothing could stop the lease.

Finalised on December 24 last year, the lease also violated the National Forest Policy-1994 that states a forest will not be allowed to be used for any purpose other than forestation given the scarcity of forests against the nation's need.

Just a month before this, the environment, forest and climate change ministry sent a letter to the land ministry, requesting them to direct the Chattogram deputy commissioner not to lease out the mangrove forest to any person.

The letter read that if it was leased out to a ship-breaking yard, it would pollute the nearby forest and inflict damage on coastal biodiversity.

'UNO WAS LYING' Chattogram Deputy Commissioner Md Elias Hossen did not pick up the phone since April 4 as this correspondent tried to reach him for his comment in this regard.

Contacted, UNO Milton Roy told The Daily Star that he was not aware that it was a notified forest. "When forest officials approached me, I asked them for necessary papers in support of their claims. But they could not produce any," he added.

Golam Mawla, divisional officer of Coastal Forest Division, alleged that the UNO was lying.

"He did not want any documents or papers. When I informed him about the gazette regarding the forest, he expressed ignorance about it. It is quite shocking when a government official shows such ignorance," he told

this newspaper on April 4.

This forest was leased out illegally, he categorically said.

"We sat with the deputy commissioner of Chattogram to convey our concern and request him to cancel the lease. I wrote to my higher authorities and sought police help to stop the construction [of the ship-breaking yard]."

Forest officials say the UNO along with Additional Deputy Commissioner (revenue) of Chattogram Mohammed Delwar Hossen visited the spot on July 25 last year, and during this visit the two were told that the land was in fact a "notified" forest.

Contacted, ADC Delwar said forest officials could not show any documents that prove the land was a "notified" forest. Claiming it verbally does not prove that it was forest land, he added.

"The land we leased out is a pure khas land according to the land records we have," he said on May 7 when he was the acting deputy commissioner of Chattogram as the DC was out of the country.

'DUE PROCEDURE' Kashem Raja, the proprietor of BBC Steel, had applied for the lease to the deputy commissioner a year and half ago, and the forest was leased to them in December last year on 34 conditions.

Talking to The Daily Star on April 3, Kashem said he got the land following "due procedures" and paying revenue to the government.

Forest officer Mawla mentioned that there is a case filed with a forest court against Kashem's son Md Sekandar Hossen for killing hundreds

of trees of the forest by spraying poison on them in 2012. They wanted the land to be barren so they could lease it, he added.

The damage estimated by the forest department was worth Tk 17.21 lakh.

Sekandar could not be reached for comment.

Contacted again on Sunday, Kashem said the forest department was a fraud and it made up the allegation of spraying poison in the forest.

The Daily Star has learnt that the company was fined Tk 6 lakh by the environment department earlier this month for starting construction of the ship-breaking yard without its clearance.

Asked about it, Kashem said he was not aware that environment clearance was mandatory to begin the work.

This newspaper also found that some conditions on which the lease was granted were violated by BBC Steel.

Condition 17 and 22 state that the lease recipient will not create any obstacles to the movement of common people. During a visit to the spot, it was seen that BBC Steel installed a 300-feet-long fence along the forest, restricting the movement of the local fishing community.

On April 3, dozens of armed men were seen patrolling the leased forest to make sure no one could enter it. They were also questioning people coming close to the land and even barred some forest officials from entering the forest.

ADC Delwar said they would scrap the lease if BBC Steel breaks any of their conditions.

## Special court

FROM PAGE 1

Government Alia Madrasa in the capital's Bakshibazar area.

Hearing in the Gatco graft case is scheduled to be held today at the special court at Keraniganj Central Jail.

Khaleda landed in jail in February last year after she was sentenced to five years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The High Court later extended her jail term to 10 years.

In the Zia Charitable Trust graft case, she was jailed for seven years.

The former prime minister is now undergoing treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in custody of the jail authorities.

NIKO CASE

The Anti-Corruption Commission had filed the Niko graft case with Tejgaon police on December 9, 2007, accusing Khaleda and 10 others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko.

GATCO CASE

On September 2, 2007, the ACC had filed the case with Tejgaon police accusing Khaleda, Galib Tanveer and several others of misappropriating Tk 1,000 crore while dealing with Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Company Ltd (Gatco).

The ACC pressed charges against Khaleda and 23 others in May, 2008.

BARAPUKURIA CASE

The ACC had filed the case with Shahbagh police on February 26, 2008, accusing 16 people, including Khaleda and 10 of her former cabinet colleagues, of taking Tk 159 crore in kickbacks on the Barapukuria coalmine deal awarded to the highest bidder.

## 'Drug dealer' killed in a 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A suspected drug peddler was killed in an alleged gunfight with police at Harua Bazar area in Mymensingh's Ishwarganj upazila early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Mustafa Bhuiyan, 30.

Ahmed Kabir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Ishwarganj Police Station, said that on information about drug peddlers gathering at the Harua Bazar area, a police team, led by him, conducted a raid there around 12:45am.

A team from the detective branch (DB) of Police in Mymensingh also joined the raid, he added.

Sensing police presence, the criminals started throwing brickbats at them and fired several gunshots to which the law enforcers retaliated, said the OC.

Police rescued Mustafa from the spot and sent him to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), where doctors declared him dead. His body was sent to MMCH morgue for autopsy.

Police claimed to have recovered 200 grams of heroin and 100 yaba pills from the spot.

Two sub-inspectors -- Md Mobarak Hossain and Shafiqul Islam -- were injured during the incident and they were given treatment at Ishwarganj Upazila Health Complex, the OC claimed.

A case was lodged with Ishwarganj Police Station. The OC said Mustafa was earlier accused in four drug related cases filed with the same station.

# Seventh grader raped by elderly man

## Police arrest accused

STAR REPORT

A seventh grader was allegedly raped by a 65-year-old man at her home in Savar yesterday.

Meanwhile, law enforcers arrested four people on charges of rape and sexual assault in four districts in the last two days.

In Savar, the schoolgirl was alone at her home in Genda area around 11:00am yesterday, said the victim's brother.

At around that time, Shah Alam, a night guard, requested her to open the door saying that he would use the toilet.

As the girl complied with the request, Shah Alam forcibly violated her.

Hearing the victim crying, locals rushed to the home, caught the night guard and later handed him over to police, said AFM Sayeed, OC of Savar Model Police Station.

In Mymensingh, police on Sunday night arrested a man for allegedly raping a college girl for several times in Gafargaon upazila.

The arrestee is Chand Mia Sing, 43, an expatriate from Saudi Arabia.

Quoting the victim, OC Fayeazur Rahman of Pagla Police Station said the arrestee allegedly violated the 17-year-old girl in February.

Since then, Chand Mia raped her several times threatening that he had recorded the rape scene and would post the footage on social media.

The arrestee even put pressure on the victim's mother to ask her daughter to do as he said. As they refused to comply, Chand Mia assaulted the mother and her daughter, said the OC.

On Sunday evening, the victim filed a case against Chand Miah and two others over raping her and assisting the arrestee in the act.

Police picked up Chand Miah around 8:00pm. Later, a local court sent him to jail after he was produced before it.

In Barishal, police yesterday detained a schoolteacher on charges of sexually harassing a female student.

The detainee is Ekramul Haque Nasim, a part time teacher of Halima Khatun Girls High School in the city. He also runs a coaching centre at his home on Gora Chand Das Road, say police.

Headmaster SM Fakruzzaman told The Daily Star that Nasim had denied the allegation.

In Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat, the Rab on Sunday night picked up a youth and a teenager for allegedly raping two schoolgirls a few days ago.

The arrestees are Shakil Mia, 19, of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila and a 16-year-old boy from Dinajpur's Biral upazila.

Mozammel Haque, commanding officer of Rab-13 in Rangpur, yesterday said Shakil allegedly raped a first grader in Maddhapara village of Lalmonirhat on May 5.

The other arrestee allegedly violated another first grader on the Tulai river in Biral upazila on May 8, the Rab official told journalists at his office.

Our Savar, Mymensingh, Barishal and Dinajpur correspondents contributed to this report.