

Hasina vows to force govt to accept reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government would be forced to fulfil the opposition's proposed reforms to the caretaker government system and the Election Commission (EC).

"They [alliance government] may apply all kinds of trickery but they will have to accept our reforms proposals," Hasina, also the Awami League (AL) chief, said while addressing a discussion on International Mother Language Day in front of Bangabandhu

EU team due today

UNB, Dhaka

A four-member delegation of parliamentarians from European Union (EU) countries arrives today in Dhaka on a six-day visit.

Another parliamentarian of Germany, Alexander Lambsdorf, will reach Dhaka on Feb 23 to join the delegation.

The delegation is scheduled to visit Gazipur, Mymensingh and Sylhet to see the activities of health care projects funded jointly by EU and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The parliamentarians will gain first hand information of the projects titled Reproductive Health

Tripura seeks rail services with Dhaka

PTI, New Delhi

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar has sought rail services between the northeastern Indian state and Bangladesh.

"Indian Railway should be linked with Bangladesh Railway system initially through Agartala," he said in New Delhi on Saturday.

"India should be prepared to invest on such upgrade to carry Indian traffic and should also offer to assist Myanmar to extend railways parallel to Mizoram," he said.

Before the independence of

Urea dearth adds to farmers' woe

REAZ AHMAD

With the farmers already smarting from acute crises of diesel and power, a dearth of fertiliser has been added to the miseries of the peak boro season creating worry of huge crop loss.

Though the government claims show no supply dearth of urea, farmers in Sherpur, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Mymensingh, Jessore and some other farming neighbourhoods are waging movements for over a week for its non-availability and high prices.

Official and market sources attributed the localised crisis of chemical fertiliser, mainly to black-marketing, distribution irregularities, enhanced carrying costs due to fuel price hike, and lacking in district-level monitoring.

Amidst such a situation, suspen-

sion of accepting urea deliveries from Rajshahi buffer stock by fertiliser dealers for the last five days made things worse for several northern farmers. The dealers claimed urea bags were torn out and they declined to accept those.

Officials at Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) yesterday told The Daily Star the dealers have been assured of providing with urea bags intact and the BCIC would take back the torn-out ones for re-packing.

Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA) Chairman Kofil Uddin Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star though there is no supply dearth, the government's buffer stocks for fertiliser were not adequately replenished for tackling the sudden surge of urea demand in February.

"Moreover, due to the fuel crisis,

trucks are now charging double fares for carrying urea from factories and buffer godowns to the retailers' level. As river channels lost navigability on key northern routes, dealers also find it hard to negotiate with rising freight charge and farmers' wrath," the BFA chairman said.

Urea is being supplied to the dealers from six BCIC-run fertiliser factories and 21 buffer godowns.

As the six state-run fertiliser factories' projected urea output of 19 lakh tonnes would fall far short of the demand of 28 lakh tonnes, the government is procuring three lakh tonnes from Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (Kafco).

Besides, six lakh tonnes more will be procured from abroad at international price of Tk 18,000 per tonne, comparing to BCIC's pro

FUEL, POWER CRISES Ershad slams govt for putting blame on media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday came down heavily on the ruling coalition for blaming the media for the fuel and power crises in the country.

"There is a serious crisis of fuel and power. Rail communications and Bangladesh Biman are in deep trouble and the government is dubbing all these are media-projected crises," Ershad said to senior media personnel in a meet

RU TEACHER MURDER Mohiuddin denies his involvement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Dr Mia Muhammad Mohiuddin claimed to be innocent in front of a magistrate yesterday after he had confessed to the police that he and Rajshahi University Islami Chhatra Shibir President Mahbul Alam Shalehi had been involved in the killing of Prof S Taher Ahmed.

The court of Metropolitan Magistrate SN Fazlul Karim Chowdhury sent Mohiuddin to Rajshahi Central Jail rejecting his bail prayer. The police produced

LOAN DEFAULT BB clarifies terms for rescheduling

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank in a clarification yesterday said it did not soften conditions for rescheduling of default loans.

Under the previous policy the borrowers, who had rescheduled bank loans, did not face any bar in



PHOTO: STAR

Sri Lanka cricketers practise running between the wickets at the Shaheed Chandu Stadium in Bogra yesterday ahead of today's first one-day international.

Israel slaps sanctions on Hamas regime

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel imposed a range of sanctions yesterday on the incoming Hamas-led Palestinian government as the radical Islamists confirmed Ismail Haniya as their choice to become the new prime minister. As Palestinian Authority president Mahmud Abbas lined up talks with Hamas in the Gaza Strip on the government, Israeli acting premier Ehud Olmert told cabinet he would

have no contact with what he branded a "terrorist" regime.

While political tensions between the two sides soared, violence also flared on the ground as two Palestinian militants were killed in an Israeli air strike on the southern Gaza Strip.

Addressing his cabinet on the day after a Hamas-dominated parliament was sworn in, Olmert told his ministers that the new

Khaleda seeks mandate again in next polls

UNB, Bhola

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged all to re-elect the four-party alliance in the next polls to make the country self-reliant in all sectors by continuing the current development programmes.

She said Bangladesh would become a satellite state if her political rivals returned to power as she alleged conspiracy is on to cripple the nation and its economy.

Termining the upcoming general elections "extremely important", she said the polls in 2007 would determine whether Bangladesh remains an independent, self-reliant nation or a subservient one.

Khaleda was addressing a public meeting at Tamijuddin Degree College ground.

The premier called on the people to take their decision judiciously in the next elections as they did in 2001.

"Cast your vote in favour of the roadmap of development initiated by the BNP-led alliance," she said.

Without naming the Awami League, Khaleda said a party has resorted to destructive politics and damaging public property by enforcing unnecessary hartals by sidetracking parliament at a time when foreign investments are pouring in and development work is continuing in full swing.

She also criticised the opposition's "false campaign abroad against Bangladesh", saying communal harmony exists in the country with people of all religious faiths living in peace.

Making counter-allegations, she said during their [Awami League's] rule, rights of the religious minorities were not protected; rather those in power grabbed their land and homesteads.

"While in power last time, they created godfathers, established a reign of terror and used the administration to serve their political ends."

Khaleda narrated development



PHOTO: STAR

A barbed wire fence set up by Bangladesh-Thai Multiple Agrofisheries Ltd allegedly to take possession of 10-acre so-called khas land in Miton in Savar.

SAVAR LAND LEASE

Villagers feel helpless before cops, goons

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Villagers of Miton and Krishnapur in Savar are still in the grip of panic.

They do not know to whom to turn for help, as the local administration and law enforcers on Thursday helped Mirza Hafizur Rahman, a cousin of the state minister for home affairs, take possession of 10 acres of so-called khas land. They assisted Mirza, even though three lawsuits against a lease of the land given to Mirza by the local land office are still under trial at a court.

Most of the men still avoid staying home at night, as the police and hired goons allegedly patrol the villages at night. The villagers apprehend untoward incidents may happen anytime.

"Following media reports, the police harassment has lessened a bit. But, some unknown people,

whom we suspect to be hired goons or plainclothesmen, are still roaming the area," Sofia, a housewife of Miton, told The Daily Star yesterday.

A signboard of Bangladesh-Thai Multiple Agro-Fisheries Private Ltd owned by Mirza was seen yesterday standing at the occupied land belonging to three families of these villages.

The villagers took out a procession yesterday, demanding return of the land and release of Nurul Haq, one of the landowners arrested 11 days ago for his alleged link with the outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

Earlier, Nurul Haq and the other two owners had filed three separate cases with a Savar magistrate's court challenging the validity of the lease to Mirza's company.

They said their ownership of the land was recorded in the Cadastral

Survey (CS) and the State Acquisition (SA) survey, though not in the Revision Survey (RS).

"Nurul was trying hard to protect his family's ownership of the land and recover it. It was the reason for his arrest," claimed his brother Mohammad Siraj Mia.

The police on Thursday night also came looking for Amal Palma and Atul Palma, the other two owners of the land and plaintiffs in two of the cases.

"The police came on Thursday night and searched our house to arrest my husband," said Lily Rojario, wife of Amal and a teacher at a local primary school. Amal and Lily have lost all their landed property to this incident.

But, Savar Police Station Officer-in-Charge M Golam Haider brushed off the villagers' accusation of police raids and harassment

Prayer Timing		
February 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-30	5-35
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

