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**Assad's death**  
**Bangladesh lost a true friend: PM**

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed her shock at the death of Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, reports BSS.

In a message, she paid tributes to President Assad for his role in the on-going peace process in the Middle East and said with the death of President Assad, Bangladesh lost a true friend, the Muslim Ummah a great leader.

Sheikh Hasina conveyed her deep sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and the brotherly people of Syria and prayed for peace of the departed soul.

**Ansars, launch staff beat up passengers: 50 injured**

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, June 10: At least 50 people were injured as Ansars and launch staff swooped on the passengers of Parabat 3 at Barisal launchghat this morning.

The passenger-launch sailed for Barisal from Dhaka with about 1500 passengers on board. When the launch reached near Munshiganj at about 9 pm, a snatcher jumped into the river with a briefcase belonging to a passenger Sumi Akhtar, 22.

Sumi alleged before the incident the snatcher was talking with the Ansar Rab.

Passengers charged the Ansar for his alleged involvement in the snatching.

Sumi said, Ansar Rab told Sumi to keep the gold ornaments into the briefcase before the incident. Sumi kept the ornaments into the briefcase.

The passengers became agitated and swooped on the Ansars.

Later, it was decided that the launch staff and the Ansars will pay Sumi Tk 35,000/- as compensation at Barisal launchghat.

But when the launch reached Barisal launchghat at about 5:30 am today, the launch staff, Ansars of Parabat-3 and three other launches anchored at the ghat attacked the passengers of Parabat-3. They beat up them mercilessly leaving 50 passengers hurt, 10 of them seriously. The seriously injured were treated in hospital and clinics in the town.

**Flash flood in Sylhet**

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, June 10: Huge areas of Jaintapur, Gowainghat and Companiganj here went under water due to continuous rain and onrush of water from the hilly region in India.

The road communications between Gowainghat and district headquarters remained snarled for the second day today as a diversion bridge went under water.

Over 10,000 labourers at the Jaffpong and Bichhankhan stone quarries became jobless due to the flash flood.



Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil (2nd from left) addressing the ICC business dialogue on "Role of Business for Environmental Protection" organised by International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh in collaboration with Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) in the city yesterday. Mahbubur Rahman, president of ICC Bangladesh, Dr A Atiq Rahman, Director, BCAS and Aftabul Islam, president of DCCI are seen on his left while Latifur Rahman, Vice-President of ICC Bangladesh is on his right.

—Star photo

**Keep environment in mind while producing items'**

By Staff Correspondent

Speakers at a dialogue yesterday underscored the need for integrating environment with production system, saying this was vital not only for ensuring consumers' safety but also for maintaining the flow of export.

The country's ready-made garments and frozen food are already facing the brunt of environmental laws, a new form of trade barrier, which is going to affect exports unless proper steps are taken, they observed.

The dialogue on 'Role of Business for Environmental Protection', organised by the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Bangladesh in association with Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS), was held at the DCCI auditorium yesterday.

Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil was the chief guest at the dialogue. Mahbubur Rahman, President of ICC-Bangladesh presided. BCAS Chairman Dr A Atiq Rahman, Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) President Wall Bhuiyan, Dhaka Chamber

of Commerce and Industries (DCCI) President Aftabul Islam, Managing Director of Dhaka WASA Dr Khondaker Azzhar Hug and Dr. Ainun Nishat of IUCN (BD), among others, spoke at the dialogue.

Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI) President Latifur Rahman was also present at the dialogue.

Abdul Jalil said businessmen must ensure that they maintain environmental stan-

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crore. The meeting was organised by Pirojpur district Awami League on the occasion of formal inauguration of 335 30-metre long Baleswar Bridge over the river Baleswar. The bridge was built at cost of taka 11 crore.

Briefly speaking on the opening ceremony, the Prime Minister said with the commissioning of this bridge, one of the main commitments of her party has been fulfilled. The commissioning of the bridge would also fulfil a long cherished dream of the people of this region.

Women, children tortured

**Villagers lay siege to BDR camp in Benapole**

BENAPOLE, June 10: A large number of people laid siege to a BDR checkpost camp at the landport to protest inhuman torture on family members here, reports UNB.

The villagers said a special force of Bangladesh Rifles, called 'Taliban Bahini' swooped on the house of Yusuf Ali at village Rajbari and tortured women and children.

BDR men beat the 75-year-old Gulban Bibi, her daughters-in-law Rahima, 20, Ayesa, 19, and boy, Rahman, with sticks, rifle butts and shoes leaving them seriously injured, they said.

The attack by BDR men enraged local people and they laid a siege to the BDR camp. BDR reinforcements were called in from the district headquarters to bring the situation under control.

The agitated villagers withdrew when a BDR Major from Jessore came here and assured them of taking necessary measures against the BDR jawans responsible for the incident.

BDR sources said the situation ensured when they went to the house to recover smuggled goods. Local UP Chairman Abdur Razzak refuted the allegation saying the family of Yusuf Ali is not involved in smuggling.

—AFP photo

The trial, which is expected to last several weeks, resumes on Monday.

**PM opens Baleswar bridge**

JHALAKATHI, June 10: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina today said the Opposition's movement to topple the government failed as people didn't support them, reports UNB.

She said the government of Khaleda Zia was ousted from power for voter rigging and autocrat Ershad was also pulled down from the chair for the same offence.

"Now they have joined hands with the rajakars of 1971 and are trying to remove the government through movement," she said, adding: "the people do not want rajakars, autocrats and vote thieves in power."

"We will have to protect our independence at any cost," she said while addressing a public meeting at the local stadium in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister also addressed a public meeting at the Pirojpur Government High School ground.

The meeting was organised by Pirojpur district Awami League on the occasion of formal inauguration of 335 30-metre long Baleswar Bridge over the river Baleswar. The bridge was built at cost of taka 11 crore.

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—AFP photo



Followers of Charmonai Peer beating a person suspecting him as a Jamaat activist inside the Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday.

**Budget designed to cheat the people: Khaleda**

By Staff Correspondent

BNP chief Khaleda Zia has said placing of the budget for 2000-01 in a parliament without the Opposition nakedly exposed bankruptcy of the government.

In a statement last night the Leader of the Opposition said the proposed budget is designed to "cheat the people" by imposing fresh taxes on them and help smugglers and back money owners.

"Crimes of people are unmet, but the budget lacks any measures to resolve the crisis. It also ignored the causes of toiling masses," she said. The budget aims at legitimising plunder of national wealth by Awami League men, she alleged.

Law and order has collapsed as the country is held hostage in the hands of ruling party terrorists, she alleged. "Every minister, ruling party MPs and their family members are getting involved in acts of killing, extortion, corruption and looting."

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Immediately after Morshed's arrest, his supporters opened fire on police indiscriminately, police sources said.

Police also fired on them at one stage to force them retreat. Ten of his supporters were arrested, when they tried to flee.

Police later launched a house-to-house search at Baobazar area.

The JCD activists put up barricade on the Kalmia Bazar Road that disrupted traffic movement for one hour till 3 pm, police said.

BNP protests

ministers' comments

on Saifur Rahman

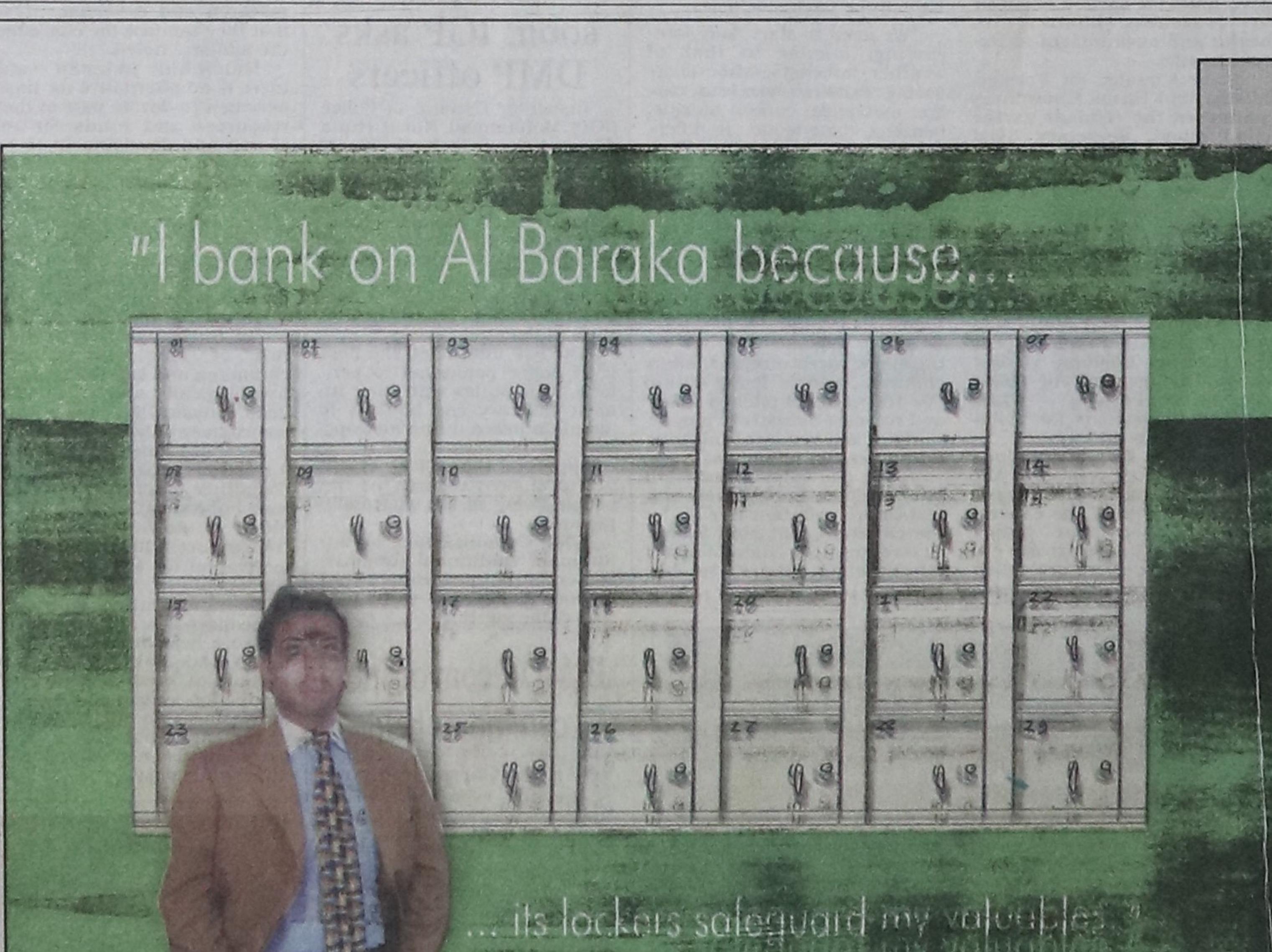
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) protested Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria and several of his cabinet colleagues' comments on Saifur Rahman, saying the ministers were jealous of the former finance minister's success, reports BSS.

"Had Mr Kibria and his colleagues contained one tenth of Saifur Rahman's experience of work planning and guiding the economy, the wheel of economy would have moved forward," said a BNP statement.

The BNP issued the statement after a meeting with party Secretary General Abdul Manan Bhuiyan in the chair.

The central leaders of BNP and its front organisations took part at the meeting, which rejected the proposed budget calling it what they said a "document of government's failures and mismanagement."

The statement said the budget could not reflect the government's commitment and failed to give any guideline for socio-economic development of the country.



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