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## Hasina leaves for Damascus

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina left for Damascus yesterday evening to attend the funeral of Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, reports UNB.

The funeral service will be held today at his village home at Qardaha, 200-km northwest of Syrian capital Damascus.

Hasina is accompanied by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary CM Shafi Sami and Press Secretary Jawadul Karim.

Cabinet members, the chiefs of three services and the Dean of diplomatic corps were at the airport to see off the Prime Minister.

Hasina is expected to return home tomorrow.

## Khaleda thanks people for observing hartal

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia said the people have rejected the 'anti-people' budget by successfully observing yesterday's nationwide dawn-to-dusk hartal, reports UNB.

The people once again expressed their 'no-confidence' in the government through rejecting the proposed budget, she said congratulating the countrymen on their making the shutdown programme a success.

There is no guideline in the budget for socio-economic development of the country, rather it only reflected the financial bankruptcy of the government, she said in a post-hartal statement.

The BNP chairperson criticised government's failure in controlling law and order, reducing electricity crisis, reducing corruption and ensuring public security.

"People would not get rid of the problems so long this failed, inefficient, corrupt and secretive government stays in power," she said.

The BNP chief, who is leading a four-party opposition campaign for fresh elections, asked the government to step down immediately admitting all its failures and hand over power to a neutral caretaker government.

## HC vacation bench formed

Acting Chief Justice Bimalendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury has formed a Vacation Bench of the High Court that will hear emergency cases from June 18 to 22, reports UNB.

The vacation bench comprising Justice M M Ruhul Amin will sit only on June 18 in the chamber of Court No 2 from 11 am to 1 pm.

## MiG-27 crashes into house in India

NEW DELHI, June 12: A Russian-built MiG-27 fighter jet of the Indian Air Force crashed into a house today in the eastern Indian town of Midnapore, an air force spokesman here said, reports AFP.

Officials in Midnapore said at least two villagers and the pilot were injured in the accident. The plane was on a routine flight when at around 7.30 a.m. (0800 BST) ground control alerted the pilot to a fire at the tail of the jet and warned him that he was flying over a densely populated area.

## Assess impact

From page 1

before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to Washington in October, they suggested.

They also requested the minister to take steps to improve port and customs operations and assured co-operation in removing fraudulent practices in the sector to increase exports.

The minister assured them that all possible steps would be taken to help develop the garments sector and increase exports.

Commerce Secretary Golam Rahman, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) Vice-Chairman A B Chowdhury and a number of BGMEA board members were present during the discussion held at the EPB auditorium.

# Hartal call failed as budget was pro-people: Hasina

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the people didn't observe opposition-sponsored hartal yesterday against a 'pro-people' budget, reports UNB.

"We have framed the budget holding people's interest above everything. We have given the budget for the people, so the people did not respond to hartal," she told a huge public meeting at Polytechnic Institute Maidan in the afternoon.

Jatiya Samik League, the labour front of ruling Awami League, organised the meeting to mark the historic June 7. On June 7 in 1966, labourer Moina laid down his life during the historic 6-point movement.

The Prime Minister said after the announcement of budget price of essentials did not rise, because the government has placed in parliament a people-oriented budget.

She said the only logic behind calling hartal is that they want to go to power by any means to plunder public money, what BNP and JP did during their rule.

Regarding workers' demand, the Prime Minister said the government formed a wage commission that has already placed its report. The wage commission report will be im-

plemented soon, she said, adding that the government has ensured some interim benefits for the workers.

She said: "We have continued our effort for the improvement of law and order and law and order situation improved all over the country. Only in the capital some scattered incidents are being committed."

The Prime Minister said it is not possible for the government alone to improve law and order to optimal levels. "If the people remain alert, if the opposition parties assist us, then we will be able to improve law and order further."

The government is taking strong actions against the terrorists, and if the opposition parties do not give protection and the people stand by the government, then terrorism can be eliminated from the country, she added.

She said when this government took over charge, there was massive misrule and corruption in the country, there was no discipline in any sector.

There were problems in gas, water and power sectors, but for the efficient steps of the present government existing problems are going gradually and discipline has been restored in all

sectors, she added.

Making a swipe at her arch political rival, she said while in power, the government of Khaleda had plundered public money and the Zia family became rich overnight through exploitation of public wealth.

"After the death of General Zia, his wife captured two residences at Gulshan and Cantonment, took facilities from General Ershad and coming to power in 1996 became rich overnight," she said.

She said during the rule of BNP and Jatiya Party a group of people pampered on public wealth and became rich, but during the rule of the present government the poor people are getting the benefits. A change is coming in the life of the deprived people.

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad, Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak and Commerce Minister Abdul Jalil also addressed the meeting.

Executive Chairman of Jatiya Samik League Rehan Uddin Rehan presided over the meeting.

## Decision to purchase 'improved' diesel

Star Report

The government is going to spend Tk 8 crore more to purchase environmentally 'slightly improved' diesel to meet the country's requirement partially.

The Cabinet Sunday approved signing of a deal by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) to purchase a special variety of diesel from Shell Oil, having 0.25 per cent sulphur content instead of the typical one with 0.50 per cent sulphur.

Under this deal, BPC will purchase 90,000 tonnes of this type of diesel manufactured only by Shell Oil. Beside, BPC will also purchase 40,000 tonnes of jet fuel under a separate deal.

Sources said the deal spurred a lot of arguments in the government whether it should purchase the special type of diesel on environmental considerations at a high cost.

One side argued that the diesel having 0.50 per cent sulphur content is internationally accepted. "Even in Singapore, this standard is followed," one source said. "Besides Shell's diesel differs very little," he added.

However, ultimately the government decided to go for it on environmental considerations.

About 16 lakh tonnes of diesel, 4.5 lakh tonnes of

## 26 charged

From page 1

Cox's Bazar Hilltop circuit house for addressing a public meeting, her motorcade came under attack by agitated party activists at Nutin Bazar and Bottala in Ramu thana following internal conflict.

The incident took place between Salahuddin Ahmed, district BNP president and MP from Chakoria, and Advocate Khalequzzaman, the party MP from Cox's Bazar Sadar-Ramu constituency.

The sources said the attack was carried out following a rumour at Rashid Nagar in Ramu by some accused in the case that Khalequzzaman was shot by his rivals.

About 50 people including central leaders and journalists accompanying her were injured in the attack.

## 14 rescued at Benapole while being trafficked to India

BENAPOLE, June 12: Members of Bangladesh Rifles rescued 14 people including women and children while being trafficked to India on Sunday, reports UNB.

The BDR jawans raided some frontier areas here and rescued the people.

The BDR also arrested one Ashok, an alleged trafficker and smuggler of the area, with 117 bottles of phenylsyd syrup.

A case was filed with Sharsa police.

## SSC exams

From page 1

guide books and massive vigilance that prevented students from cheating at examinations.

Moreover, an increasing number of students were not attending classes on one hand while teaching is not adequate in schools on the other, the minister said. He admitted the need for a modern mechanism of supervision and monitoring by the government for overall improvement of the situation.

The government is undertaking a five-year project in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank for academic and management supervision to improve the standards of the schools and colleges, the minister said.



Employees of a department store wear a mask of North Korean leader Kim Jong-II(L) and South Korean leader Kim Dae-Jung(R), pose on a shopping street 'Myongdong' in Seoul yesterday to celebrate an historic June summit between the two Cold War foes. Kim Dae-Jung will meet at least twice with Kim Jong-II during his three-day stay in the North Korean capital (Story on page 9).

## Real increase in suppl budget in only Tk 1775 cr: Kibria

By Staff Correspondent

General discussion in parliament on the Tk 4489.68 crore supplementary budget for fiscal 1999-2000 ended yesterday with Finance Minister S.A.M.S Kibria claiming that the 'real' amount of additional expenditure was Tk 1,775 crore.

Unlike in the previous years, only seven legislators, including one from Jatiya Party faction led by Communication Minister Anwar Hossain Monju, took part in the two-day general discussion on supplementary budget. With the opposition boycotting the parliamentary proceedings, the participants were all praise for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her finance minister.

The minister, however, replied to certain remarks made by some opposition leaders outside the House.

However, in his winding up speech on the supplementary budget, the finance minister said, "Allocations for Tk 4489.68 crore have been sought. But the real increase in the supplementary budget is only Tk 1,775 crore. There are sectors where a lot of money has been saved."

The minister found the figure 'far less compared to that of previous years.' The amount was Tk 2,965.10 crore in 1995-96.

Kibria said the additional

expenditure in the current fiscal was used mainly for the welfare of the rural poor and development of the rural infrastructure.

"Of the total 1,775 crore additional expenditure, Tk 1000 crore has been spent to finance annual development programme, Tk 300 crore to provide price support to the farmers through government purchase of rice, Tk 5 crore for rural infrastructure development and Tk 234 crore for food support to the rural poor through Test Relief and Food for Work programme," said Kibria.

The government also spent an additional Tk 40 crore to introduce pre-shipment inspection facility to accelerate the pace of revenue collection, he said.

Kibria replied to a couple of opposition leaders. Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury and Saifur Rahman, who criticised certain aspects of proposed budget for 2000-2001.

Referring to Chowdhury's observation that the finance minister has 'cheated the people', Kibria said the comment "does not match the reputation of his dignity as a renowned physician and veteran politician."

Replying to opposition criticism for the proposed provision

legalising untaxed money, the minister said the government is "still trying to solve problems created by the previous governments, especially that of late Ziaur Rahman."

"It was General Ziaur Rahman who initiated the problem of black money in the nation's economy. After seizing power, Zia used to give two slogans—'money is no problem' and 'I will make politics difficult for the politicians'."

Zia used the state exchequer to create his party, while bank money to have his own men in the business community. He also bribed politicians to create his own party."

Referring to certain remarks of former finance minister and BNP leader M. Saifur Rahman, Kibria said, "He has not yet made any substantial comment on the budget. He has only tried to blow up his stature, demeaning others."

He reminded the House that as finance minister, Saifur Rahman took a bold step and published the list of bank loan defaulters. "But what was the end result. Why did he not go further?"

The minister also criticised his opposition counterpart for "appointing a big bank loan defaulter as chairman of a public sector bank."

## Tk 326cr DRGA from Japan

Bangladesh will receive 6,902.18 million yen, equivalent to Tk 326 crore, as debt-relief grant assistance (DRGA) from Japan, reports UNB.

An exchange-of-notes to this effect was signed in Dhaka yesterday between the two governments.

Secretary of Economic Relations Division Dr Masihur Rahman and Japanese Ambassador Kazuyoshi Urabe signed the notes on behalf of the respective governments.

This is the first tranche of the 23rd DRGA being provided to support meeting the balance of payments, said an official release.

The grants will also be utilised for importing commodities, particularly basic raw materials for industries, including chemicals, lubricants, machinery and spare parts, both in public and private sectors.

## Illegal structures in Skid Ghat areas demolished

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, June 12: Police today raided all the dens of drug traffickers at Skid Ghat and Station Road areas and set all of them on fire.

All the unauthorised structures at Skid Ghat and its adjoining areas were demolished during the two-hour long drive.

All unauthorised roadside shops were also demolished.

Police said that the operation was following reports that Ershad Shikdar's accomplices, now at large, were again trying to set up their strongholds with the help of drug-traffickers.

Most of these drug traffickers belong to both factions of the ruling party. Efforts are on to identify some police personnel who have allegedly re-established links with drug traffickers and smugglers at the Skid Ghat, Khulna bazar and rail colonies, they said.

## Three PBCP men held in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, June 12: Khanjahan Ali thana police today arrested three members of an outlawed party from Atrai industrial area.

The arrested have been identified as Monowar Hossain, Iqbal Hossain and Zahidul Islam Tinku.

All of them are activists of Purbo Banglar Communist Party, police said.

They were caught while making an abortive attempt to kidnap a businessman, police informed.

## Taliban

From page 1

Stinger missiles. During the Afghan war against the Soviet Red Army, Stinger missiles were supplied to the Afghan Mujahideen, some which fell into the hands of the Taliban, an offshoot of the Afghan war.

The Taliban emerged during the Afghan civil war between splinter groups of the Mujahideen who jockeyed for political power after Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The army of Taliban swept almost all of Afghanistan.

Though it could not be officially confirmed that there was any organisation in Bangladesh having links with the Taliban, police earlier raided the office of a monthly magazine called Jago Mujahid suspecting that it had links with a shadowy organisation called Harkatul Jihad. It was alleged that the organisation had links with the Taliban.

## Kamal Majumder

From page 1

involved in the murder but the press portrayed him as a killer.

"My enemies who tried to kill me few months back have chalked out a plan to malign me and my family," he said without identifying anyone.

When reminded that he had earlier threatened to resign as an MP if his 'attackers' were not taken to task within three months, Majumder said, "If I resign now my enemies will implicate me in false cases under the newly promulgated Public Safety Act."

The MP from ruling Awami League was attacked on March 1 allegedly by some of his rivals in the party.

The MP claimed that three attempts were made on his life in the last few months. The same group is now trying to implicate his son in the Shipu murder case to tarnish his image, Majumder alleged.

The FIR registered with Gulshan police in connection with Shipu's murder accused Naimuzzaman Jubair, son of Asaduzzaman, Director of Civil Aviation of Bangladesh, Saiful Alam, son of Ahmad Hossain and Jewel son of Kamal Majumder MP.

Detective Branch Police took up the case on June 4.



Police barricaded the road at Purana Paltan crossing to bar opposition activists from marching in a procession towards the Jatiya Press Club during hartal hours in the city yesterday. Putting up barricade on roads to obstruct traffic is a punishable offence under the Public Safety Act though.

## Army attacked Kargil keeping govt in dark, says Sharif

ATTOCK FORT, June 12: Deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif yesterday accused the Pakistani army of attacking Indian-controlled Kashmir without informing the elected government, saying that the operation brought the region to the brink of a nuclear war, reports AP.

The army's May 1999 offensive in the snowcapped mountains of Kargil derailed peace talks with India and isolated Pakistan internationally, Sharif told reporters in Attock Fort, where he is being tried on charges of corruption and tax evasion.

Pakistan and India, both nuclear powers, fought a bloody border war last summer in Kashmir's Kargil area, triggering international fears that the conflict might turn into a full-blown confrontation.

New Delhi had accused the Pakistani army of seizing its military posts in Kashmir—the cause of two wars between India and Pakistan. The two countries control parts of Kashmir but both claim it as a whole.

Pakistan, governed by Sharif at that time, said that Islamic militants had launched the offensive.

Sharif said Monday that the country's military leaders kept him in the dark over the Kargil conflict.

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