

Price hikes make life miserable

Hasina at 6-point day programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government's placing the budget before parliament is a 'mere eyewash', as it has already hiked up prices of all essentials including fuel.

"The spiralling prices of essentials have made people's lives miserable," she said, addressing a discussion marking the historic Six-Point Demand Day at Engineers Institute auditorium.

Hasina, also the AL president, slammed the government for its 'failure' to contain the price hike and curb the rampant crime across the country.

"While commoners struggle to have even a meal a day, family

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Cart-puller killed in misdirected gunshot of 'OC'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A pushcart puller was killed at Gohira in Razoan upazila yesterday in a misdirected gunshot by the officer-in-charge (OC) of Razoan Police Station who was chasing a criminal.

The dead, identified as Mir Ali Akbar, 55, of Gohira was drinking water in front of a wayside shop when Razoan OC SR Mukul was chasing listed criminal Md Selim at Meah Khan Nagar of Gohira at around 11:00am, witnesses said.

At one stage, SR Mukul shot at

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Malaysia agrees to reduce trade gap, up investment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia has agreed to take necessary steps to reduce the trade imbalance and further enhance investment in Bangladesh for bolstering bilateral cooperation.

"We have agreed to enhance the volume of trade to reduce the existing trade gap. Although the trade balance is in our favour, investment is in favour of Bangladesh, so there is a compensatory balance between the two countries," said Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid bin Zaafar Albar.

Addressing a joint press conference after a ministerial-level meeting of Bangladesh-Malaysia Joint Commission in Dhaka yesterday, Hamid said, "We have to look in a holistic way. Of course, in trade side it is more in favour of us, but if you look at the investment side, it is in favour of Bangladesh, so there is already a balance."

Bangladesh Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan also spoke at the press conference held at Sonargaon Hotel.

The ministerial-level meeting of the joint commission that took place after 11 years was followed by the signing of agreed minutes on a range of bilateral matters. Morshed and Hamid initiated them on behalf of their respective countries.

In the agreed minutes, the two countries decided to enhance cooperation in capacity building, agriculture, education, healthcare, tourism and IT (information technology) sectors.

Official sources said that at the 3rd meeting of the joint commission that ended yesterday, Malaysia also agreed to recruit manpower from Bangladesh based on its requirement. It also agreed to relocate its labour-intensive industries to Bangladesh as part of measures to reinforce bilateral cooperation.

Morshed described his Malaysian counterpart's visit to Bangladesh as a "very significant development in our bilateral ties."

Hamid said, "I find the meeting most productive. We have agreed to cooperate in capacity building to develop human resource, tourism, bio-tech and IT sectors."

Malaysia has already invested in telecommunications sector in Bangladesh and is interested in making more investments in telecommunications, and also in power and energy sectors, he said.

Replying to a question, the Malaysian foreign minister said Bangladesh workforce is contributing to economic growth of his country, and recruitment of more workforce will depend on the need of the private sector.

Over 54,000 Bangladeshi workers are now employed in different sectors in Malaysia as against around 200,000 in the past. The memorandum of understanding on recruitment of manpower signed by Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur in 2003 is still valid, he mentioned.

He however noted that since Malaysia has gone for hi-tech industries, requirement of workforce will depend on the needs of the private industries.

Asked about the OIC's weaknesses, Hamid said, "I accept there are weaknesses but I don't think you should blame global order for the OIC situation ... It is important to have cooperation in economy and investment among the OIC countries."

Malaysia is the current chair of the OIC.

The Malaysian foreign minister said his country's Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi will visit Bangladesh soon. "Our Prime Minister has expressed his desire to visit Bangladesh and we will find out a suitable date for the visit as early as possible through consultations between the two countries."

The Bangladesh foreign minister said, "We have discussed all issues including cooperation in agriculture, education, bio-tech, health,

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KL to back Dhaka's ARF bid

Malaysian FM assures PM

UNB, Dhaka

Malaysia yesterday assured its support to Bangladesh to become a member of the Asean Regional Forum (ARF).

The assurance came from Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar when he paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office.

Malaysia is the current chairman of both OIC and Nam and will take chairmanship of the Asean next July.

On the outcome of the meeting, a foreign ministry official said apart from bilateral issues, regional and international matters were discussed.

He said both the countries agreed on joint initiative for marketing various potential products,

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India to resume hilsha import next week

BDNEWS, Kolkata

Exporters of Bangladesh will be able to export hilsha to West Bengal from next week through Benapole land port, Fisheries Minister of the Indian state Kironmoy Nanda told BDNEWS after a meeting with officials of the department concerned in Kolkata yesterday.

Considering the food habit of West Bengal people and their dependence on imported fish from Bangladesh, the central government

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PHOTO: PD

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks to Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Seri Syed Hamid Bin Jafar Albar when the latter called on her at her office yesterday.

Suicide bombers kill 19 in northern Iraq

REUTERS, Baghdad

Car bombers struck in Baghdad and northern Iraq yesterday, killing at least 19 people and wounding more than 40, the latest attacks in a surge of suicide bombings that have killed hundreds since late April.

Four of the attacks were in or near the northern town of Hawija, close to the strategic oil city of Kirkuk. One suicide bomber blew up his car near a US base, another beside an Iraqi army checkpoint and a third close to a market, police said.

A fourth car bomb struck a checkpoint in the town of Abasi, near

Hawija. In total, 19 people were killed and 38 wounded in the four attacks, Major-General Anwar Mohammed Amin, the Iraqi army commander in Kirkuk, told Reuters.

In Baghdad, a car bomb detonated alongside a police patrol, wounding nine people, including two policemen, police said.

Since April 28, when Iraq's new Shia led cabinet was announced, insurgents have sharply escalated attacks, killing more than 800 Iraqis and 88 US troops. May was the deadliest month for US forces since January.

The violence has worsened sectarian tensions in Iraq.

A series of assassinations of clerics, and mass killings of Iraqis whose bodies were then dumped, has led some Sunni groups to accuse a militia linked to one of Iraq's main Shia parties of involvement in the kidnap and killing of Sunni Arabs.

The militia, the Badr organisation, has denied involvement and political leaders have called on Iraqis to avoid being drawn into sectarian strife.

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PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Hasina and senior Awami League leaders lay wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman yesterday, the historic Six-Point Demand Day.

Advani quits BJP leadership over Jinnah praising

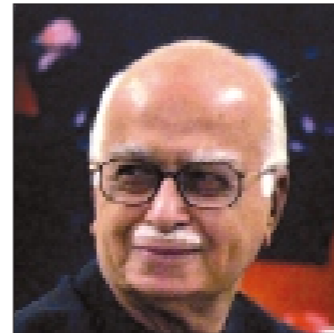
PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

In a dramatic development, India's top opposition leader L K Advani resigned yesterday as BJP chief, plunging the party into a crisis after drawing fire for praising Pakistan's founding father Mohammed Ali Jinnah.

His resignation came after Hindu nationalist allies RSS and VHP demanded that he withdraw his controversial statements made in Pakistan recently praising Jinnah as a secular leader and describing Babri Mosque demolition as the "saddest" day of his life.

"Many persons find a place in history, but there are very few who actually make history. Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah was one such rare personality," Advani had said in his remarks.

But his description of Jinnah as a "secular" leader created huge controversy back in India during his Pakistan visit. Hindu nationalist groups close to the BJP and the ruling Congress Party have led the street protests against his comments.



L K Advani

In a letter to BJP general secretary Sanjay Joshi written in Karachi just before returning from his week-long visit to Pakistan where he was born, Advani said "I have requested the party to relieve me of the post of party president."

"I am sure acceding to my request would be in the best interest of the great cause I have served all my life as also of the party which has given me so much," Advani said.

Sticking to his remarks in Pakistan, which had angered the

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Arman provides 'cooked-up' info on his rivals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arman Khan, one of the country's 23 top criminals listed by the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, is mainly disclosing the names of his rivals to a joint interrogation team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and other intelligence agencies.

He is giving cooked-up information against his rival underworld gangs, said a top Rab official seek-

ing anonymity, adding that they were verifying his information.

The names Arman has so far revealed during the interrogation include Subrata Bain, Jisan, Rony, and Mollah Masud—all his rivals.

The Rab arrested Arman from a house in Dhanmondi on Friday morning and took him on a seven-day remand at the Rab headquarters in Uttara the following day.

Asked about Arman's involvement in the August 21 grenade attack, the Rab official said, "We are certain that he has no involvement in the incident because such a well-orchestrated attack is believed to have been carried out by a militant group."

He also said the Rab members raided several places mentioned by Arman as the hideouts of his gang members and rival groups but found no criminal or firearms at those places.

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Prayer Timing		
June 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-45	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation