

## Filling station

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If the government does not meet the major demands of the owners before May 22, they will enforce the strike, said Nazmul Haque, president of Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners' Association, at a press briefing at a city hotel.

However, the CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) refuelling stations will remain open during the strike although the petrol pump proprietors also own these stations, he added.

One of their major demands is implementation of the government's decision about increasing the pump owners' commission on sales of petroleum product.

After a long negotiation, the government on February 23 agreed to raise the commission, but is yet to implement the decision.

A special committee formed by the government recommended increasing the sales commission of diesel and kerosene by 3.4 percent and octane and petrol by four percent.

Currently, the owners earn 2.4 percent commission for selling diesel and kerosene and 2.7 percent for octane and petrol, mentioned Haque.

Around 4,900 petrol pumps have been operating across the country.

Earlier, the owners observed a six-hour country-wide strike on May 9 last year for realising their demands, but it was called off on government's assurance.

According to the owners' leader, they are negotiating with the government for framing a policy to set up petrol pumps. Due to lack of a policy, the authorities are allowing installation of petrol pumps almost anywhere in the country.

The owners and workers are also fighting to establish a separate tank lorry terminal in the country.

## Gates to help

FROM PAGE 1

Sheikh Hasina at her hotel suite in the Swiss city on Monday evening, PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said.

During the discussion, the Microsoft chairman hoped that Hasina's modern and prudent leadership would take the country into a new height of development.

He further appreciated the present government's development programmes in the field of women empowerment, agriculture and health sector.

The prime minister and the Microsoft chairman also discussed scope of cooperation in vaccination programmes.

Thanking Bill Gates for his commitment and efforts towards people's development, the PM said her government is highly committed to ensure women's empowerment in all spheres of the society to establish their rights.

Besides, the premier told Bill Gates her government's various programmes to reduce child and maternal mortality rate.

The Microsoft chairman congratulated Hasina for Bangladesh's achievement of MDG-4 award.

The PM also said her government is relentlessly working to achieve the other MDGs.

Health Minister AFM Ruhal Haque, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, State Minister for Forest and Environment Hasan Mahmud, among others, were present.

Meanwhile, Supachai Panitchpakdi, secretary general of Unctad, in a meeting invited the PM to attend the UN Conference on Trade and Development (Unctad) to be held in Doha next year.

In another meeting, UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé appreciated the premier for Bangladesh's success in controlling the HIV/AIDS diseases.

Later, WHO Director Shekhar Saxena paid a courtesy call on the PM at her hotel in the evening.

During the meeting, Hasina informed the WHO director that her daughter Saima Wazed Hossain, a psychologist, is arranging a regional conference on autism next July.

## Caretaker govt verdict

FROM PAGE 1

"We've tried to categorically clear the legal position on this issue in details in our verdict. You can understand everything if you read the short order [of the verdict] properly," Justice Khairul told reporters earlier in the day on the Supreme Court premises.

The Appellate Division headed by ABM Khairul in its May 10 verdict declared that the present provision for the caretaker government system is unconstitutional and void. But the system may be practised for holding two more parliamentary elections on the age-old principles that "necessity makes it lawful, and safety of the people and safety of the state is the supremelaw".

The verdict triggered widespread controversy as many jurists and politicians contradicted and questioned how the next two parliamentary elections could be held under the "illegal" caretaker system. Many feared the verdict will deepen the political crisis over holding of the next parliamentary polls.

According to the current provision, Justice Khairul Haque is supposed to be appointed as the chief adviser to the next caretaker government.

Justice Khairul, however, refused to make any specific comments on whether he would take the charge.

The main opposition BNP has said it will not take part in the next parliamentary election, to be held in early 2014, if it is not held under a caretaker government. Also, the party "will not accept" Khairul as the head of the caretaker government.

Abdul Matlub Ahmad, owner of Nitol Group, said his company signed a deal with the Ugandan government last month to lease farmland to grow rice.

"Under the deal, we can bring some 80 percent of our output back to the country after payment of some annual fees. We shall some employ 25,000 workers—some 90 percent from Uganda," he told AFP.

Matlub said the group and other Bangladeshi businessmen are looking for further land lease deals in Tanzania, Benin and Guinea.

"I was a lawyer. I became a judge of the High Court and then I became a chief justice. I've always tried to perform my duties properly."

He welcomed the criticism on the verdict. "There are criticisms on the verdict. Many people are now thinking about and discussing the verdict, which is reasonable and normal, although this trend was absent in the past," he said.

"Criticisms of verdicts will inspire judges to deliver good verdicts," he said.

Judges have to be independent mentally in order to make the judiciary independent, he said at a programme yesterday.

He, however, welcomed

Also, a decision to form a body of the transport owners to discipline the sector is yet to be implemented.

## CHAOS CONTINUES

Against the backdrop of chaos over transport fares, the government on Monday increased bus fare by around 30 percent and CNG fare by seven percent to be effective from May 19.

Leaders of transport owners' association on Monday agreed with the government that they would not charge increased fares until tomorrow when the new rates would come into force.

The communication minister even threatened to cancel the route permit of the busses that would charge extra money from the passengers. But visiting different city spots, no ministry supervision to implement the decision has been found.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of passengers from different city routes said they have to pay hiked fares even after the government decision.

A bus passenger said he has to pay Tk 28 instead of Tk 20 from Uttara house-building to Kakrail.

"We have no alternative but to pay hiked fares amid severe scarcity of transports in the city," said a passenger who regular travel from Mirpur to Motijheel.

The operators are realising extra money by putting the amount on the tickets.

Asked about violating the

criticisms of the verdict on the 13th amendment through which the system was introduced in 1996, against the backdrop of agitation by Awami League.

The verdict also put the parliamentary special committee on constitutional amendment in a difficult situation. It now has to find ways for two more elections under the system.

The parliamentary special committee that sat on Monday said it is waiting for a copy of the full verdict to see if there is any suggestion on ways to continue with the caretaker system for two more parliamentary polls.

The verdict on the caretaker government, however, expected that the parliament would take steps to amend the provisions and exclude chief justices and other judges of the Appellate Division in leading the caretaker government.

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When journalists enquired about his position, Justice Khairul said, "None but Allah can say what will happen in future, and I always depend on Allah."

He said the law will take its own course.

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## City

## Unite to fight diseases

FROM PAGE 1

session of the World Health Assembly at the UN office here in the afternoon.

On her arrival at the Palais des Nations, she was received by the Director General of World Health Organization (WHO) Margaret Chan.

Speaking on the occasion, the PM also urged the international community to renew their commitment to ensure "Health for All".

"If health for all could be ensured, the world leaders will be able to promote human dignity and enhance quality of life for individuals," she added.

Hasina said healthcare is one of the most important prominent aspects of people's overall wellbeing and it can be attained only through collective actions.

Regarding Bangladesh's position in achieving MDG-6 target, the premier said her government is working for a greater regional collaboration to check water borne diseases like cholera, hepatitis A and E, typhoid, and paratyphoid.

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In respect to MDG-6 on combating HIV/AIDS, the PM said "it has been possible to keep HIV/AIDS prevalence rate to less than 1% in Bangladesh due to the effective national programme aided by the country's strong inherent social values."

Regarding her government's efforts to provide services to the children suffering from autism and other developmental disabilities, the premier said she is going to organise a regional conference on Autism from 25 to 27 July this year in Dhaka.

Hasina hoped that the conference may also provide important input for the United Nations High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable diseases to be held in September 2011.

On climate change and increasing frequency of natural disasters, she called

for global recognition of this challenge, including its public health dimensions, to find innovative responses to it.

The PM appreciated the H4-1 Initiative by UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, World Bank, and USAID that provides an institutional mechanism for enhanced support to countries in need including Bangladesh.

Hasina said since health is linked to other factors, the policies of Bangladesh government encompass poverty reduction, gender equality, women empowerment, education, maternal healthcare, child mortality, family planning, among others.

## Khaleda

FROM PAGE 20

meeting with Khaleda Zia at the House of Commons wanted to know about functioning of democracy, socio-economic and political and human rights situation in Bangladesh.

Khaleda apprised Miliband about the prevailing scenario in the country including the government's undemocratic activities and repression on its political opponents, Khaleda Zia's ex-assistant Press Secretary Musfiqul Fazal Ansari who was present at the meeting, told UNB over phone.

Prof Muhammad Yunus issue and extrajudicial killing were discussed during the meeting that lasted about an hour from 1:30 pm.

Miliband also expressed concern over removal of Prof Yunus from Grameen Bank.

The two leaders recalled the good relations between the two governments while both were in power.

Later, Khaleda Zia, also leader of the opposition in parliament, met former British PM Gordon Brown at the House of Commons.

Brown appreciated various achievements particularly in women empowerment, female education and reduction maternal and child mortality under the leadership of Khaleda Zia during the last BNP-led alliance government.

Khaleda also met the Chairman of Britain-Bangladesh All Party Parliamentary Group Anne Main.

BNP leaders Shamser Mobin Chowdhury, Osman Faruk and Sabihuddin Ahmed, among others, were present.

## CNG cylinder

FROM PAGE 1

The other victim is a passenger.

Witnesses said the explosion occurred when the Kanungopara-bound local bus was being refuelled at HN CNG Station around 10:00am.

There was no passenger on the bus at the time of the accident.

A flying portion of the cylinder hit Nasir's car waiting just beside the bus for refuelling, smashing its front part.

Babul, the passenger, of Sadhinagar under Rangunia upazila in Chittagong was wounded when another portion of the cylinder struck him.

They were rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Mostak Ahmed Chowdhury, sub-inspector of Chandgaon Police Station, said they sealed the station following the blast.