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The Pak PM in his first speech calls for an end to US drone strikes

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REMEMBERING GURU

Rock band Dreek's front man recalls Azam Khan's influence on his music

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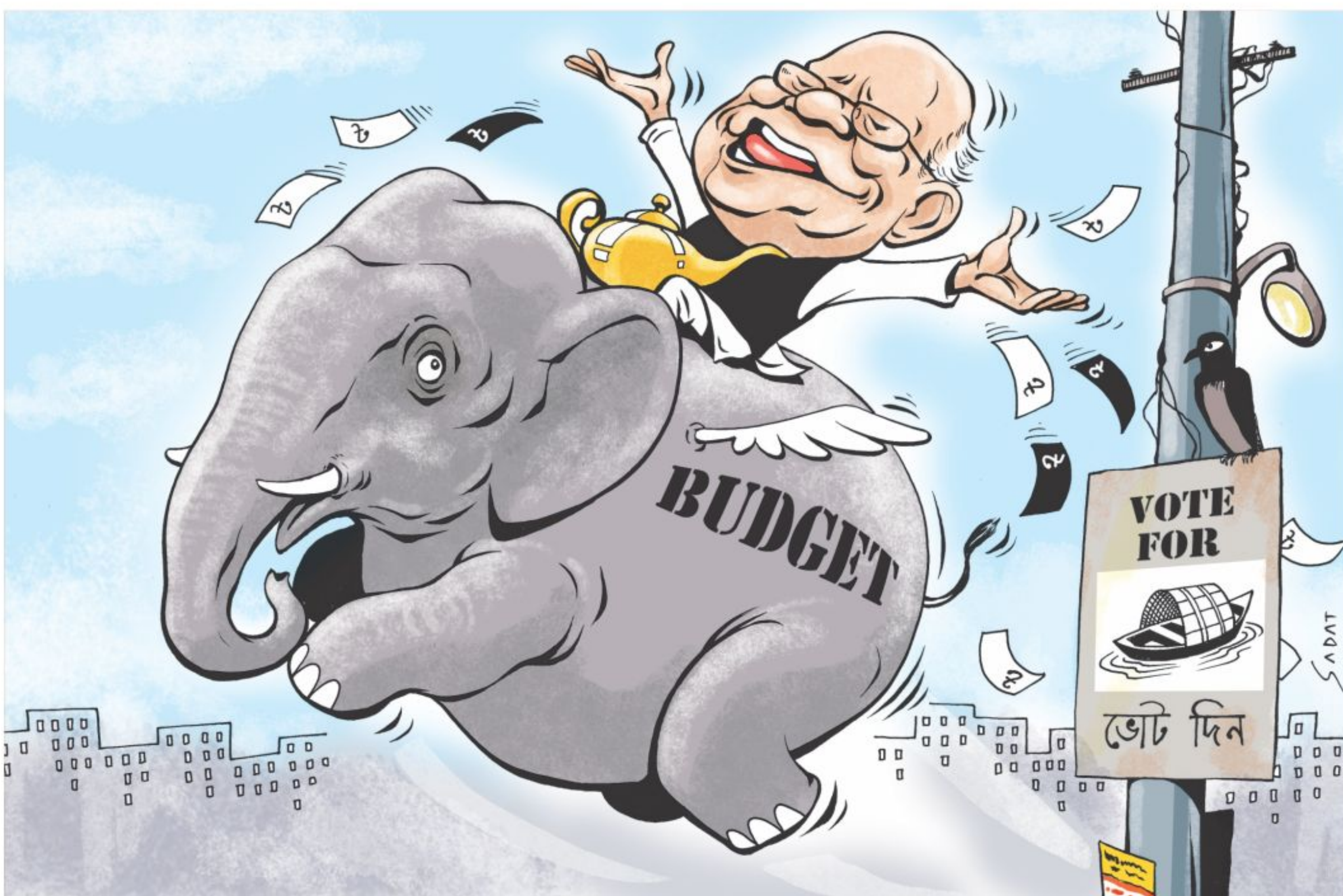
Growth concern

Muhtith needs to address it while he places a flashy budget today

INAM AHMED

It's growth we can all worry about now. A growth rate that can rip us through this low income barrier that Bangladesh is arrested inside. The country needs this magic rate so intensely because it needs to give jobs to 1.8 million new hands every year. If we can't do that, these people may turn rogue and be used in any destructive manner. So when Finance Minister AMA Muhtith presents his last budget of this government this afternoon, we should expect that he rather address this concern. And that would be a stiff job in the shadow of two monstrous developments -- rising political unrest of an unprecedented scale and the depressed global economy where Europe is already in recession. Growth for Bangladesh has remained a sad and elusive story all along. If we look at 1970, Bangladesh's economy was at par with Korea, Thailand and Indonesia and even bigger than Malaysia (see graph). The race began and we kept on tripping while the others sprinted along with huge leaps in growth. The rest is history. Now Bangladesh has a target to berth at the middle income country by 2021. To achieve that we will need to take GNI per capita to \$1,310 from \$923 now. But two things will be needed to achieve that: a sustained GDP growth of 8 percent and remittance growth of 8 percent. The second condition we are likely to fulfill. But there are reasons to be doubtful about GDP growth if the state of affairs remains unchanged. Signs of a slowdown loom on the horizon. Rather than speeding up,

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It's a matter of compromise

Finance minister says about money whitening scheme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhtith said the government's plan to extend the scope for whitening black money to the housing sector was "a matter of compromise." Muhtith told this to reporters from his office at the secretariat on Tuesday when asked about the government's plan of earning more revenue in the next fiscal year by imposing fines on the black money invested in the housing sector. "People can now legalise their undisclosed money by investing in the stock market with an additional payment of 10 percent tax, by paying the existing tax,"

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SUBSIDY-CUT ON GAS FORECAST

False dawn for power

SHARIEF KHAN

The authorities hope the power sector would require lesser subsidy this year as the cost of electricity generation would come down a bit since they would be able to cut use of oil and increase use of gas, which is cheaper. But Petrobangla that provides gas appears certain to fail to achieve its target set in August last year. Its Chairman is now making new gas production forecasts which would be nearly half of last year's projection, but experts say the achievements would be almost insignificant. This implies that the Power Development Board would not be able

to cut oil-based power generation as it plans or it would be compelled to go for heavy load shedding and would face heavy losses. Due to persistent gas crisis that also triggered heavy load shedding, the government in 2009 opted for imported and costly oil-based temporary power projects while working on long-term low cost large power plants and increasing gas production. This measure almost made load shedding history. But this also pushed up power generation cost to Tk 6 per unit from Tk 2.5 in 2009. To adjust this difference, the authorities increased power tariff six times at both bulk and customer levels in the

last four years, and significantly increased it. But this increase did not cover the losses as the PDB still had to digest Tk 1.3 per unit loss. So the PDB also received hefty government subsidy in the form of loan every year. The subsidy stood the highest in 2011-12 and it came down noticeably the following year. "This year we are looking at Tk 4,000 crore subsidy (which is Tk 1,100 less than that last year), because we are hoping that the power generation cost will reduce by 20 poisa per unit due to increasing gas-based power generation," said a high official. He added

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Labour law amendment bill placed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday placed in parliament a bill on amendments to Bangladesh Labour Law. The proposed changes will simplify the rules of forming trade unions and ensure health and safety for workers, it says. Labour rights activists, however, have been voicing concern since the cabinet approved the changes. They say the changes benefit employers over the interests of workers.

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UK not turning its back on garment

Visiting minister announces £18m aid to help develop skilled workers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UK government would not support the call for nabbing import of readymade garments from Bangladesh, UK minister for International Development Alan Duncan said yesterday. "It will be a 100 percent no. It will bring total disaster for the country, development and poor people," he said, adding that



Alan Duncan

banning Bangladesh was a "crazy and irresponsible statement". The minister was referring to the call by the labour activists in the UK after the Rana Plaza collapse in Savar on April 24. Duncan, who is now in Dhaka on a three-day visit, was addressing a press conference at British High

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Mojaheed verdict any day

War crimes tribunal wraps up trial proceedings

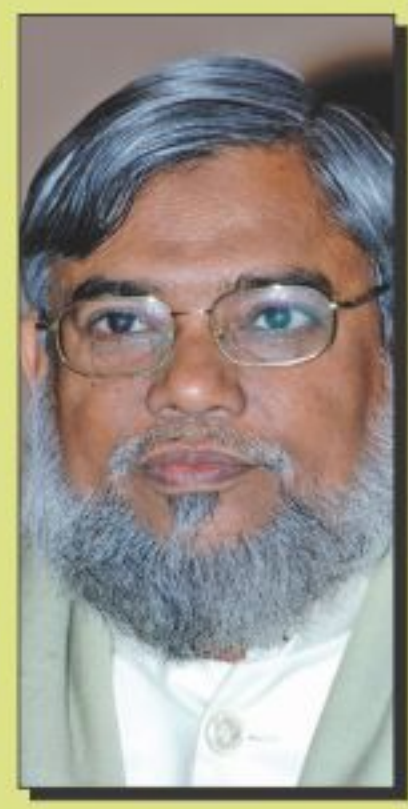
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 could deliver verdict in the war crimes case against Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed any day as the trial proceedings concluded yesterday. Mojaheed, allegedly the chief of infamous Al-Badr force, is facing seven charges including murder, genocide and conspiracy to kill the intellectuals during the Liberation War in 1971. The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge Md Shahinur Islam kept the case waiting for verdict yesterday after the prosecution and the defence completed placing their replies in response to each other's closing arguments.

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Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed

Present position : Secretary general, Jamaat-e-Islami
In 1971: Chief of Islami Chattra Sangha, ex-student wing of Jamaat & alleged chief of Al-Badr force
Charges: Seven charges include genocide, conspiracy to abduct & kill intellectuals
Eminent victims: Journalist Serajuddin Hossain, musician Altaf Mahmud, Rumi (son of Jahanara Imam)
Prosecution witness: 17
Defence witness: One



BNP walks out of Sangsad twice

To remain absent today during budget presentation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP-led opposition lawmakers staged two walk-outs of the House yesterday protesting the remarks by two ministers on late president Ziaur Rahman and his elder son Tarique Rahman. They walked out first during the question hour session protesting Jute and Textiles Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui's abusive remarks about Ziaur Rahman's "destroying jute mills." The opposition legislators returned to the House after an hour. They staged the second walk-out around 9:00pm protesting the Speaker's refusal to give them the floor again to counter Foreign Minister Dipu Moni's

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BANGLADESHI WORKERS UAE factory fire kills at least 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six Bangladeshi workers died on Tuesday, two days after they were injured in a fire at a pesticide factory in Sharjah of United Arab Emirates. The dead are Bacchu Hawlader, Al-Amin, Ali-Akbar, Jakir Hossain and Md Khabir of Shariatpur and Md Mizan of Faridpur, said Nasreen Jahan, first secretary of the Bangladesh consulate in Dubai. The victims have been identified based on the information provided by their fellow Bangladeshi workers. But Sharjah police could not confirm the nationalities

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Oh no, judge!

CJ embarrassed with colleague's antics over bridge toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain yesterday got annoyed with Justice Md Rezaul Hasan, a judge of the High Court, for ordering police to arrest a supervisor of the toll plaza at Bangabandhu bridge, said sources at the Supreme Court. It was reported in the media yesterday that Justice Hasan became angry with toll plaza supervisor Asaduzzaman on Tuesday for stopping his car and another vehicle of his entourage for not paying toll while crossing the Bangabandhu bridge. Later, the vehicles were allowed to leave after the judge paid the toll. The judge then asked the police to take action against Asaduzzaman on charge of committing contempt of court. Police arrested Asaduzzaman after a general diary was filed with

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MAY 5 DRIVE AGAINST HEFAJAT Death claim still unfounded

RASHIDUL HASAN

Even after a month Hefajat-e-Islam failed to substantiate its claim that 2,500-3,000 of its men were killed during its May 5 rally at Shapla Chattar in the capital. Despite promising to prepare a list of the dead and missing men, Hefajat leaders were still dragging their feet when The Daily Star spoke to them yesterday. Earlier they had said thousands of Hefajat activists were gunned down by police and Rapid Action Battalion soldiers while they drove out of the capital Hefajat men holding the "peaceful" rally. It had claimed that the law enforcers switched off the street lights and committed genocide. The gathering had turned violent and Hefajat men clashed with law enforcers even before Rab and police started to flush them out in the middle of night, witnesses said. Taking their cue from Hefajat, the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami also put out the death toll at Shapla Chattar at 3,000 and claimed that many bodies of the victims of the "genocide" had been trucked away or stuffed into the manholes, a claim dismissed by police and the government. Commissioner Benazir Ahmed of Dhaka Metropolitan Police on May 8 said 11 people, including a policeman and three pedestrians, died in the violence centring Hefajat's Dhaka siege programme and law enforcers' action on Hefajat men. The Daily Star found 18 men dead in the unrest centring Shapla Chattar.

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12th Youth Assembly at the United Nations, USA

Tomorrow's Leaders Today

আগামী ৩-১০ আগস্ট আমেরিকার নিউ ইয়র্কে '১২তম ইয়ুথ এ্যাসেম্বলী' অনুষ্ঠিত হতে যাচ্ছে। উক্ত এ্যাসেম্বলীতে সারা বিশ্বের সহস্রাধিক শিক্ষার্থী অংশগ্রহণ করবে। বাংলাদেশ থেকে ১৬ থেকে ২৪ বছর বয়সী, সহশিক্ষা কার্যক্রম ও ইংরেজিতে দক্ষ ২০০ ছাত্র-ছাত্রী সপ্তাহব্যাপী এ অনুষ্ঠানে অংশগ্রহণের সুযোগ পাবে।

অধিবেশনে অংশগ্রহণে আগ্রহী শিক্ষার্থীরা প্রাথমিক বাছাইয়ের জন্য ৭ ও ৮ জুন শুক্র ও শনিবার সকাল ১০টা থেকে বিকাল ৫টা পর্যন্ত নিম্নোক্ত ঠিকানায় সংক্ষিপ্ত বায়োডাটা, পাসপোর্টের ফটোকপি ও ২ কপি পাসপোর্ট সাইজ রঙিন ছবিসহ সরাসরি উপস্থিত হতে হবে।

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