

**INFLATION TARGET**

Govt hits the goal as annual average inflation now 6.41pc

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TIGERS LOST AGAIN

South Africa beat Bangladesh by 31 runs in the second T20I, focus shifts to ODIs

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MALALA'S CALL

'Cut eight days' military spending, give all children free education for 12 years'

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Taking refuge in ruling party

Several thousand grassroots BNP-Jamaat leaders 'join' AL to survive in hostile political climate

SHAKHAWAT LITON and PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Shifting political allegiance, BNP and Jamaat men are joining the ruling Awami League in droves, apparently to get their names off "politically motivated cases" and avoid police harassment.

Media reports suggest several thousand grassroots leaders and activists of the two parties have joined the rival party in the past three months, and sources in the AL say more BNP-Jamaat men will soon follow suit.

Tangled up in an adverse political situation, the opposition men are taking refuge in the AL in efforts to save themselves from the numerous cases filed against them over street violence during the BNP-led alliance's movement since 2013, according to sources in all the three parties.

AL insiders say they want to cripple the BNP, especially in the districts that are deemed its stronghold. As part of this strategy, the party

wants to coax as many opposition men as they can into joining the ruling party.

In some areas, opposition leaders have even openly spoken against their own party.

Political analyst Nizam Ahmed sees this political exodus as an ominous sign.

"This is a manifestation of ugly politics. The situation would have been different had we had a healthy democratic atmosphere in the country," Nizam, a professor of public administration at Chittagong University, told The Daily Star.

On April 15, eight leaders along with more than 1,000 BNP-Jamaat supporters joined the AL in Comilla. Planning Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal himself received them. A ministry press release later confirmed this.

In Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila, around 500 BNP-Jamaat leaders and activists joined the ruling party on June 6 through a press conference. District AL President and party MP Shamsul Alam Dudu was present there.

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A poster, near the capital's Sonargaon intersection, publicises a ward-level BNP leader's joining the Awami League yesterday. Many BNP-Jamaat men have joined the ruling party in the last three months, apparently to have their names struck off the cases against them.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

ASHRAF SKIPS ECNEC MEETING

PM 'annoyed'

The minister dismisses rumours about his 'removal'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Rumours ran high that Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraf Hossain was removed from the post of LGRD minister yesterday after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had expressed displeasure at his absence from an Ecne meeting.

Ashraf, however, brushed off the reports.

Talking to reporters in his home district of Kishoreganj in the evening, he advised journalists not to pay attention to rumours.

"I know nothing about it. You'd better not listen to rumours," said Ashraf.

Earlier in the afternoon, Cabinet Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan told reporters at the secretariat that he didn't get any directives regarding Ashraf.

AL sources said Ashraf was at his official residence on Bailey Road when the meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) was going on at the council auditorium in the morning.

After the meeting, the premier summoned Ashraf to parliament. He went to the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban around 1:00 pm and

SQ CHY'S APPEAL

SC verdict on July 29

ASHUTOSH SARKAR



The Supreme Court is set to deliver its verdict on July 29 on the appeal filed by war criminal and BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury challenging death penalty and other sentences handed down on him for his wartime offences.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha yesterday fixed the

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BASIC BANK GRAFT

Muhith for legal action now

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday directed the BASIC Bank to take legal action against those involved in irregularities at the scam-hit bank.

He was in a special meeting with the newly appointed board of the state-owned bank, led by its Chairman Alaudin A Majid. This was the first meeting of the incumbent board with the minister.

The board was reconstituted in July last year against the backdrop of the serious scam committed during the tenure of the previous chairman Abdul Hye Bachchu.

Muhith instructed the board to send its latest documents to the Anti-Corruption Commission to enable the graft watchdog to file cases against the accused.

He asked the bank to lodge cases against bankers and customers

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**TOP QUOTE**

"We have evidence of many of his non-banking activities. So it won't be a problem to take action against him."

FINANCE MINISTER
AMA MUHITHABOUT ABDUL HYE BACHCHU,
EX-CHAIRMAN OF BASIC BANK

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