

GSP CANCELLATION

BNP protests
PM's remarks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday rejected an allegation by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that the party and its chief Khaleda Zia had worked to cancel Bangladesh's GSP facilities in the US market.

"We condemn the prime minister's remarks. We think her allegation is totally baseless, unexpected and motivated," BNP spokesman Asaduzzaman Ripon told a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan headquarters.

On Wednesday, the prime minister in parliament alleged that BNP, its chief and Jamaat were to be blamed for losing the GSP facilities as they were spreading propaganda abroad through lobbyists.

According to Ripon, Hasina made the allegation only to tarnish the image of Khaleda and her party.

He claimed his party was rather working for restoration of the Generalised System of Preferences facilities in the US market.



A train moves along the Dhaka-Narayanganj rail tracks that run through Jurain Bazar with shops in dangerous proximity. Apart from a risk of collision anytime, there remains another danger here as some people are casually travelling on the train roof and at the front of the engine. The rail lines also look anything but useable. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Forest dept, Rab
seize 57 turtles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A joint team of the Department of Forest and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized 57 turtles from Shakhari Bazar of old Dhaka yesterday morning.

Three people were also arrested in this connection.

Traders had collected those turtles from different districts and taken them there for sale, said Ashim Kumar Mallick, wildlife inspector of Wildlife Crime Control Unit under the Department of Forest, who was with the team.

The team recovered three species of turtles, including Indian softshell turtle, Peacock softshell turtle and Indian roofed turtle. There were four softshell mother turtles among the 57 turtles.

Of the three arrestees, two were jailed for nine months, while the other was sentenced to three months in prison.

Tapan Kumar Dey, conservator of forest, told journalists that according to Bangladesh Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012, trading, carrying, killing, transporting and hunting of turtles are punishable offences.

The Department of Forest later released the turtles into the Gazipur Safari Park.

Laurels for Brilliance in Business

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hosted the awards night, which has been recognising and celebrating excellence in business leadership in Bangladesh since 2000.

Aziz Khan was awarded for turning Summit Group into a giant company that helps build the country's infrastructure that Bangladesh and its business community badly need.

The group's Summit Power generates about 16 percent of the country's total electricity. His companies are the first private sector power generator, port owner and operator as well as provider of information communication connectivity via fibre optic.

Since its inception, the company has invested \$1.2 billion in the country. Its revenue income was Tk 5,000 crore last year, up 64 percent over 2011. It employs about 5,000 people.

Aziz Khan said electricity was the most important physical infrastructure of all and his company would continue to strive to produce power so all entrepreneurs could reach their full potential.

Walton was honoured for its quiet journey towards becoming a local manufacturer and exporter of electronic goods, automobiles and home appliances from an importer.

Established in 2006, the company is in manufacturing, retailing, designing and exporting of its products and appliances including air conditioner, freezer, multi-stage freezer and automobile.

It has about 80 percent of the local refrigerator market in terms of unit sales and around 30 percent market share in the local television industry.

The firm's annual production capacity is 1.4 million refrigerators and freezers, 300,000 motorcycles, 300,000 air conditioners and 1 million television sets.

Mahbubul Alam of Walton said: "The award will encourage us in our journey to the future."

Mutual Trust Bank emerged as one of the best-run banks in Bangladesh where the banking sector is beset with problems from a lack of good governance to financial felonies.

Its management enjoys the broadest power in the industry. As a result, the bank is growing steadily. It paid 20 percent dividends for its shareholders for 2014 when most of the banks were unable to pay even 10-15 percent.

The bank's operating profit rose by nearly 24 percent in 2014 from a year ago. Net profit after tax recorded a whopping 68 percent growth and earnings per share almost doubled to Tk 3.12 in 2014.

Anis A Khan said his bank was different from other banks because of its utmost importance in corporate governance, independent management and focus on customer service.

"The bank will continue to focus on innovation, adoption of technology and improved customer service in our efforts to become one of the best banks in the country."

Rubana Huq leads one of the leading and pioneering garment companies in Bangladesh: Mohammadi Group. She was awarded for excelling in her professional life both as a leader and a role model.

The company started with only one factory at Khilkhet in Dhaka with 500 workers in 1985 and exported goods worth \$70 million in the last fiscal year with 15 percent year-on-year growth. Currently, it employs 9,000 workers in its eight garment factories.

A trailblazer, Rubana is setting up a new factory where 600 workers will have accommodation and will be given the ownership of the dorms after six years of their stay in exchange for a monthly installment. Bangladesh Bank is helping the project with Tk 20 crore in loans at 2 percent interest.

Rubana said the female workforce was the deciding factor behind the garment company's success. "So, all entrepreneurs should invest in developing human resources. Our entrepreneurs also need to take a hard look at the people working in the factories."

In his speech, Muhith said Bangladesh had done pretty well in the last 40 years although 16 years of the four decades ruled by military adventurism left the country's growth stunted and took the country backward.

He said the country was able to offset the losses thanks to the contribution of all citizens. The government and the private sector also played a key role.

Yasmin Aladad Khan, senior vice president for DHL Express for Southeast Asia and South Asia, said Bangladesh's graduation to the status of a lower middle income country would give a boost to the SME sector

in the country.

She also said investment in education was important for any country as it laid the foundation for creating future business leaders.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said the awards celebrate the greatest achievements of the businesses for their contribution to the economic growth and taking Bangladeshi brands to the international level.

"There are two stories about Bangladesh. One is the journey from where we were to where we are. It's a brilliant story. The second is the journey from where we were to where we could have been. It's a story of missed opportunities," Anam said.

"We should forge our future path in such a way that we do not miss any forthcoming opportunity."

He said the awards honour the success of the enterprises and individuals who made the country successful.

He said Bangladesh's entrepreneurs had proven that they can have a global presence if given the opportunity.

What they need is an opportunity to scale up to be regional players before they graduate to the global level. The fundamental prerequisite for that to happen is the appropriate policy and regulatory framework, he added.

"If we can make them free of political uncertainty and regulatory challenges, our business community will be able to churn out globally successful companies such as Facebook and Google."

He urged the government to create a congenial environment where energy of the business sector can be used to flourish on the world stage.

The awards night started with a dance performance to the tune of a song written by national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

The awards were introduced with the specific objective of creating an environment of excellence and competitiveness which would drive the members of the business community to achieve greater heights of productivity, efficiency, financial discipline and modern management.

The awards recognise and generate public recognition of the achievements and positive contributions of businesses and individuals, who have not only grown themselves, but also contributed to the country's economic growth.

Anjan Chowdhury, a director of Square Group and whose father Samson H Chowdhury won the award in its inaugural edition, said it was an absolutely prestigious award as winners were picked through strict criteria. "It encourages existing and new businesses."

Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh, Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, M Matul Islam, the first finance secretary of the country, M Anis Ud Dowlah, chairman of ACI Ltd, Geetara Safiya Choudhury, former adviser to a caretaker government, and Anisul Huq, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation, were present among others.

UN to mediate
Yemen talks20 killed as rebel
rockets hit market

AFP, Sanaa

Yemen's government in exile yesterday said that it would join UN-mediated peace talks next week, as Iran-backed rebels were accused of killing 20 civilians at a busy market.

The Saudi-led coalition battling the Iran-backed Shiite Huthi insurgents meanwhile sent new reinforcements over the border into Yemen in preparation for an offensive to retake the capital Sanaa.

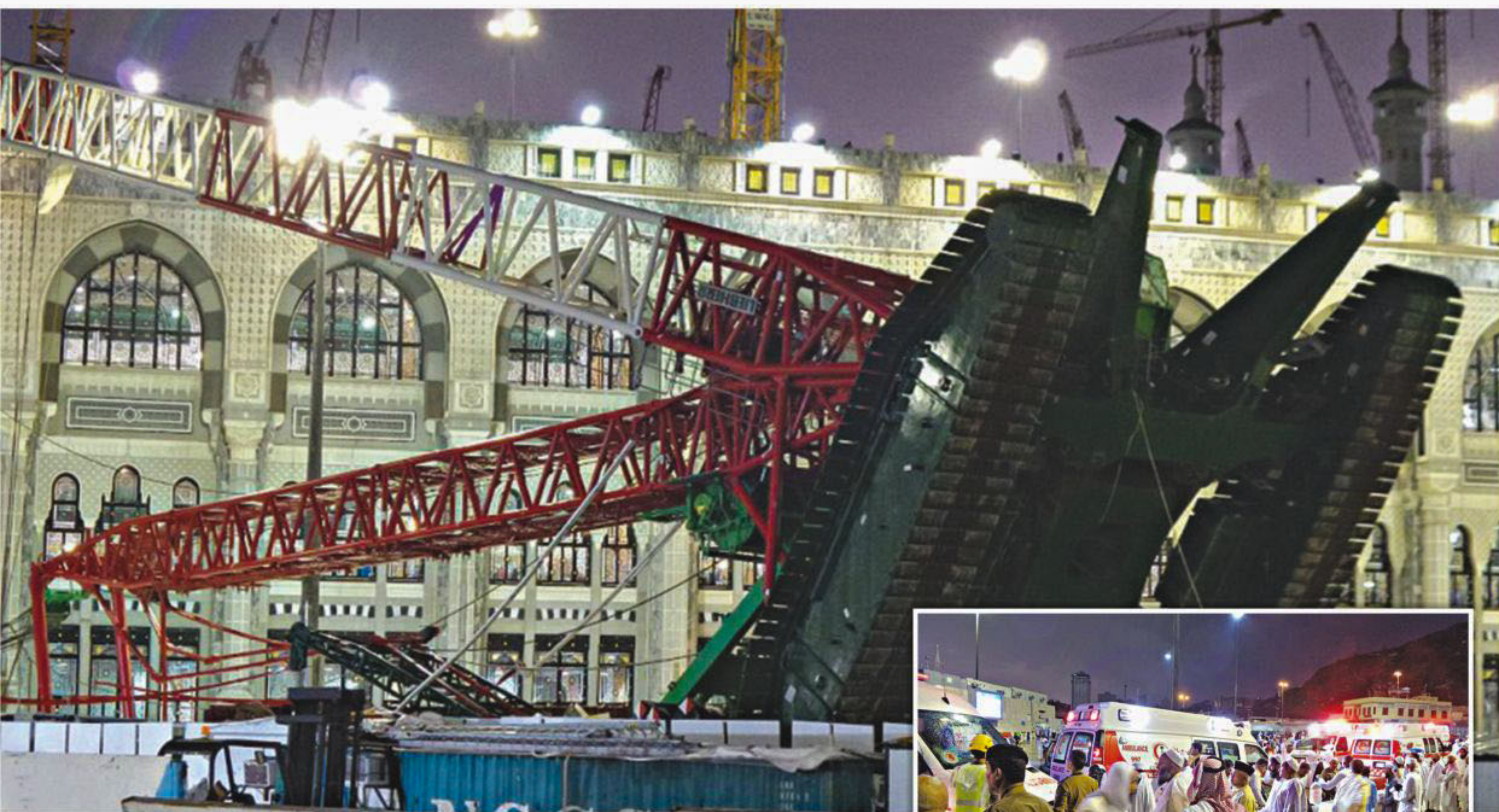
Coalition warplanes struck an arms depot in Sanaa, triggering powerful explosions that killed at least seven civilians and wounded 10, witnesses and medics said.

International rights groups have repeatedly voiced alarm at the heavy civilian toll in the conflict, which has killed more than 4,500 people since March, according to UN estimates.

The coalition sent more military vehicles and troops across the border into Yemen Friday to try to recapture more territory from the Huthis, who overran the capital a year ago and swept southwards across the impoverished country.

An AFP reporter at the Wadia border post between Saudi Arabia and Yemen saw at least 40 coalition military vehicles cross over into Yemen's oil-rich Marib province on Friday.

The vehicles were carrying Yemeni troops trained in Saudi Arabia as well as coalition troops whose nationality military officials in the area declined to specify.



The toppled crane leans on the Grand Mosque, with the top section of the vehicle having crashed through the ceiling. Inset, ambulances gather outside the mosque as hundreds of injured people are carried to nearby hospitals.

PHOTO: DAILY MAIL

87 killed in Makkah

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Some of them received primary treatment, Golam said.

The diplomat said as the injured were saying prayers when the incident took place, they might be hajj pilgrims. "We are yet to get confirmation whether any of them are workers."

Saudi Arabia's civil defence authority said on Twitter that emergency teams were sent to the scene after a crane fell at the Grand Mosque, reports

AFP.

That came about an hour after it tweeted that Makkah was "witnessing medium to heavy rains", with pictures circulating on social media showing lightning.

Authorities were yet to release an official account of what happened.

Pictures of the incident on Twitter showed bloodied bodies strewn across a courtyard where the top part of the crane, which appeared to have bent or snapped, had crashed into the several

storey-high building.

A video on YouTube showed people screaming and scurrying around right after a massive crash was heard and as fog engulfed the city.

The incident occurred as hundreds of thousands of Muslims start to gather from all over the world for the annual hajj pilgrimage expected to begin on September 21.

The Grand Mosque is usually at its most crowded on Fridays, the Muslim weekly day of prayer.

It houses the Kaaba -- the massive cube-shaped structure towards which Muslims worldwide pray.

The governor of Makkah region, Prince Khaled al-Faisal, has ordered an investigation into the incident and was heading to the mosque, the official @makkahregion page on Twitter said.

Meanwhile, online activists created a hashtag on Twitter urging Makkah residents to donate blood at hospitals in the area.

No details were immediately available on the nationalities of the victims.

But Iran's official IRNA news agency, quoting the head of the Hajj Organisation, said that 15 Iranian pilgrims were among those injured.

Most of them were treated as outpatients, Saied Ohadi said.

A massive project is currently underway to expand the area of the mosque by 400,000 square metres, allowing it to accommodate up to 2.2 million people at once.

The mosque is surrounded by a number of cranes.

The hajj has largely been incident-free during the past few years, with Saudi Arabia investing billions of dollars in transport and other infrastructure to facilitate the movement of the huge number of people who take part.

The official SPA news agency has said in a statement that already almost 800,000 pilgrims arrived in the kingdom for hajj.

Three new divisions
soon: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country is going to get three more divisions -- Mymensingh, Faridpur and Comilla. This will be done to accelerate overall development in those areas, the government claims.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, also the prime minister, said this at a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), highest decision-making body of the party, at the Gono Bhaban yesterday, meeting insiders told The Daily Star.

Faridpur division will comprise five districts -- Faridpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj, Rajbari and Shariatpur.

Sherpur, Jamalpur, Netrakona, Mymensingh and Kishoreganj districts will form the Mymensingh division, and Comilla division will have Comilla, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria, Laxmipur and Noakhali districts in it, according to meeting sources.

Mymensingh has already got the cabinet's approval to become the eighth administrative division of the country.

At the ALCWC meeting, Hasina said that the 20th triennial central council

of the party would be held in December, and asked AL leaders to hold councils to the 14 remaining district units by October and form full-fledged committees in 15 days where councils had already been held, sources said.

The AL held its last central council on December 29, 2012 and elected Sheikh Hasina and Syed Ashrafur Islam the president and the general secretary of the party. Their tenures at the party's helm will expire on December 28 this year.

Meeting insiders said Hasina expressed her annoyance over some AL leaders' recent criticisms of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal for its alleged controversial role surrounding the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

Reminding the leaders that the JSD was now an ally of the AL, she asked her party colleagues to "exercise restraint while speaking".

Hasina also told the meeting that the party would construct a new building with its own funds for its headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.