

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

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ENERGY PRICES

Govt profiting, people losing

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The government goes into an immediate-action mode to hike fuel prices in sync with global oil prices. But consumers do not get any benefit when the prices of fuel come down in the international market.

People in power defend their move to increase prices, saying that the state-owned corporation has been counting losses, no matter if it is due to corruption, mismanagement or inefficiency. But they don't reduce the prices.

After a long gap, the government has been making huge profits by selling petroleum products such as diesel, petrol and octane for several years.

According to the data of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), it is going to make a profit of Tk 7,334 crore this fiscal year ending on June 30, down from a whopping Tk 9,040 crore a year ago. In the last three years the BPC made profits of Tk 20,500 crore.

The last time the BPC slashed the fuel prices slightly was in April last year considering crude oil price at \$80 per barrel when the actual price in the international market was \$40 per barrel. Now a barrel of crude oil costs less than \$50. Yet, the government seems to be least interested in passing on the price benefits to consumers.

Economists and development partners have repeatedly urged the government to lower the fuel prices for the sake of the economy, but the government is reluctant to do so.

For implementing a budget of over Tk 4,00,000 crore for fiscal 2017-18, the government proposes to increase tax burden on people. Taxes have been increased in the budget even on bank accounts of small savers.

But there is no announcement of cutting fuel prices, which would have benefited the economy.

According to the finance ministry, price cuts would benefit transport

BPC PROFIT	
FY15	Tk 4,126 crore
FY16	Tk 9,040 crore
FY17*	Tk 7,334 crore

*Provisional



Under the protection of influential people, illegal shops and businesses sprout on the Buriganga at Binaghat in Badamtoli area. The BIWTA often launches eviction drives but the occupiers return within days. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMINGS

Ramadan	June	Sehri	Iftar
8	4		6-47
9	5	3-39	6-47
10	6	3-38	6-47



PRAYER TIMING JUNE 4

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
JAZAN	3-45	12-45	5-00	6-47	8-15
JAMAAT	3-55	1-15	5-15	6-57	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

UNSC expands N Korea sanctions

US vows to respond to Pyongyang's missile and nuclear tests

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council on Friday imposed sanctions on 18 North Korean officials and entities as the United States vowed to respond to Pyongyang's missile and nuclear tests "through other means, if necessary."

The council unanimously adopted a US-drafted resolution that put North Korea's suspected spy chief, 13 other officials and four entities on the UN sanctions blacklist, hitting them with a global travel ban and an assets freeze.

"The Security Council is sending a clear message to North Korea today: Stop firing ballistic missiles or face the consequences," US Ambassador Nikki Haley told the council.

"Beyond diplomatic and financial consequences, the United States remains prepared to counteract North Korean aggression through other means, if necessary," she added.

China, Pyongyang's ally, backed the sanctions but renewed its appeal for dialogue to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Chinese Ambassador Liu Jieyi described current tensions as "complex and sensitive" but added that there was "a critical window of opportunity" to return to "the right track of seeking a settlement through dialogue and negotiations."

"It is incumbent on all parties concerned to exercise restraint and do more to ease tension and build mutual trust, instead of the contrary," Liu added.

Among those added to the sanctions blacklist was Cho Il-U, believed to be the head of foreign espionage for Kim Jong-Un's regime.

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PARIS CLIMATE TREATY Oil down 1pc after Trump snubs deal

Experts fear move could spur faster growth in US oil output

AFP, New York

Crude closed down more than 1 percent on Friday for a second straight week of losses, on worries that US President Donald Trump's withdrawal from the Paris climate accord could accelerate U.S. production and flood the global oil market.

Brent crude futures settled at \$49.95 per barrel, down 68 cents or 1.3 percent, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell 70 cents to settle at \$47.66 per barrel or 1.5 percent. Both contracts ended the week down more than 4 percent.

Market analysts are troubled by a growth in US crude production that is offsetting efforts from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to reduce global oversupply.

US drillers this week added 11 rigs, in a record stretch of 20 straight weeks of

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Bringing a forest back to life



AGENCIES

83-year-old Antonio Vicente has spent the last four decades of his life fighting against the current. As Brazilian landowners cut down rainforests to make room for profitable plantations and cattle grazing grounds, he struggled to bring the lush jungles of his childhood back to life. Today, his efforts are being rewarded, as the completely stripped land he once began planting trees on 40 years ago, has become a beautiful jungle teeming with tropical wildlife once again.

It was 1973 when Antonio took up the challenge of restoring the forest on a 31-hectare piece of land that had been razed for cattle grazing.

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N'GANJ ARMS HAUL It all started with a chance discovery

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and SANAD SAHA SANY

Over three months ago, Hriday, an alleged drug addict, found a travel bag while fishing in a canal near Sector-5 of Purbachal Residential Area in Narayanganj. Much to his astonishment, he discovered eight submachine guns (SMGs) in the bag.

He told his friends -- Shaheen, Russel and Shanto -- about the matter and kept the arms.

Over a month later, Shaheen took a gun from Hriday and went to the house of a local drug peddler, Sharif Mia, in Rugganj. There, he gave it to Sharif and took 200 yaba tablets from him, saying he would return soon and pay him the money and collect the firearm.

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It's a cruel budget

Says Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the proposed national budget for fiscal 2017-18 was the final attempt by the government to suck out the very last drop of people's blood.

In a tweet, she also said, "It is a cruel budget....Resistance is only the way to get rid of the situation."

Meanwhile, BNP standing committee member Moudud Ahmed gave his reaction to the budget worth over Tk 4 lakh crore that had been unveiled by Finance Minister AMA Muhith on Thursday.

Moudud said that despite being huge in size, the budget would bring no good to the public.

"There is a huge tax burden on people," he said at a discussion organised by Bangladesh Youth Forum at the Jatiya Press Club.

The budget is like a "big beautiful balloon" from the outside, but essentially empty inside, he said.

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The imported bonsais planted on the pavement of Airport Road in the capital. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

AIRPORT ROAD BEAUTIFICATION

What's it for?

RHD doing the job of city corporation; naturalists say bonsais are not meant for roadside decoration

TAWFIQUE ALI

Although it is the job of the city corporations, the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has embarked on a Tk 90 crore beautification and pavement maintenance work on the capital's Airport Road.

The work is being backed by an ad firm. Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Annisul Huq himself said he requested the RHD to hand over the tasks to them but to no avail.

"We have officially objected to erecting billboards along the Airport Road," said the mayor. "A government department is doing the work. What can I do?"

The RHD's move to plant 500 Chinese and Taiwanese bonsai Ficus (Bot) as part of the "beautification" has also been slammed by naturalists.

The firm concerned, Vinyl World Group, is planting imported bonsais worth Tk 5.5 crore, constructing pavement and maintaining drainage along the 6km stretch of road between Banani Level Crossing and airport intersection.

"To my knowledge, bonsai is not meant for roadside beautification," said noted naturalist Prof Dwijen Sharma. "Do we have any dearth of native tree species?"

Botanical gardens usually supply suitable trees for beautification in most countries, he said, adding, "I have written on these issues for four decades, but no one paid any heed."

The project comprises of beautification, street lighting, renovation and construction of pavements and drainage, jobs the city corporations are legally entrusted with.

They are also building 10 "service stations" with vending

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