

# Won't be in power if voters don't want us

## Says PM at agriculturalists' convention

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said people were now getting the benefits of her government's development programmes as it was able to lower the inflation rate and maintain a sustainable GDP growth.

"Bangladesh economy has made good progress... we've been able to lower the inflation rate, it's now 5.4 to 5.6 percent. The economy is strong as we're maintaining 7.78 percent GDP growth. Now the grassroots people are getting the benefits," she said.

The PM was addressing the 6th National Convention of Krishibid Institution Bangladesh (KIB) on its premises in the capital.

Hasina said the Awami League government has been in power for two consecutive terms. "If people cast their votes for us, we'll be in power again. If they don't, we won't be in power."

She said the government wants to lead the country towards prosperity as Bangladesh is now the third largest vegetable-producing country, 8th in



potato, 7th in mango and third in fish production.

"Our country is now totally self-reliant...now we have to go for value addition to our products...we've to go for food processing as well."

The premier said people's socioeconomic status was improving with the expansion of local market. "We can sell our processed food in our country as well as export those after fulfilling the local demand and earn foreign currency."

Describing irrigation as an important component of agriculture, Hasina said the government wants to encourage the use of renewable energy for this purpose.

The PM requested the agriculture minister to encourage a cooperative system for using solar panel in irrigation as its individual use is costlier.

She said the agriculture sector is first affected by various calamities like floods, droughts, landslides, tidal surge and earthquakes.

Keeping this in mind, the government has been developing modern

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A stretch of the 51km Kulaura-Shahbazpur railway line in horrible state in Moulvibazar's Barlekha. The government is set to restore as well as expand the abandoned line to the Indian border so that it can be turned into a dual-gauge inside the neighbouring country. The prime ministers of the two countries are expected to formally inaugurate the work tomorrow through videoconference. Inset, railway workers survey a part of the railway tracks in Barlekha upazila. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

## Man beaten to death 'for child abuse'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A mob beat a man to death allegedly for sexually harassing a child at Mirzapur upazila on Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Shahin Mollah, 35, a vegetable vendor of Majhalia village under Banail union.

Quoting locals, police said Shahin allegedly harassed the six-year-old daughter of one of his neighbours when she went to his house on Thursday afternoon to bring milk that the family had kept in his refrigerator.

Following the allegation, a group of youths called Shahin from his house to the field of a local primary school around 7:30pm on Friday and beat him up, they said.

On information, police rushed to the spot, rescued seriously injured Shahin and sent him to Jamurki Health Complex.

He was later shifted to Kumudini Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 12:00am, they added.

After filing of a general diary, police sent the body to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy, said AKM Mizanul Haque, officer-in-charge of Mirzapur police, yesterday.

Necessary legal steps would be taken after filing of a case, he added.

## BGB recovers Tk 27cr yaba from Teknaf

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday recovered nine lakh yaba tablets, worth about Tk 27 crore, in two separate raids in Teknaf upazila.

However, no one was arrested. Lt Col Asad-uz Zaman Chowdhury, commander of BGB Battalion-2, said acting on a tip-off that a large number of yaba pills were being smuggled into the country, one of their patrol teams raided Nazirpara Aerial Khal area around 5:00am.

During the raid, they recovered 8 lakh yaba tablets. Another team from the BGB seized one lakh pills from Hariakhali field area around the same time.

The contraband items were kept at the BGB headquarters. They would be destroyed later, said BGB sources.

## BNP ready

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BNP is working to expand the 20-party alliance, which includes Jamaat, before the election schedule expected in weeks.

"Before going to jail, our Chairperson Khaleda Zia has called for a greater national unity and we are heading towards that goal. We believe that we will be successful," Fakhrul said.

He claimed that the government became politically bankrupt and it was now looking for an exit route as it had no place in people's mind.

The BNP leader also criticised the government for holding a trial against Khaleda inside the Old Dhaka Central Jail.

It is unconstitutional and an inhuman act of the government, he said. "The trial can't be held in

## Ghosts within Janata Bank

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reflect the fact that the company had defaulted on the December instalment and paid the March instalment only when the BB launched its probe.

Contacted, Mostofa Sarwar, a director of AnonTex Group, claimed that they have been paying the loan instalments regularly.

According to a Memorandum of Understanding with the BB, Janata was allowed to lend up to 10 percent of its capital or Tk 423 crore to a single borrower as of December last year. But the bank lent 13 times the limit.

But now the situation has reached the extent that the AnonTex's loans are posing a serious threat to Janata's existence.

A BB probe report said, "If the huge amount of loan is classified, the existence of the state-owned bank will be in threat."

In this perspective, the BB probe team recommended that the board of the state-owned bank take up an exit plan to recover the loan.

Contacted, BB Deputy Governor Abu Hena Mohd Razez Hassan said that though Janata was asked to classify the loans of Tk 2,600 crore, it was yet to do that.

He, however, didn't say why the BB didn't take any action against the state-owned bank for not complying with its instructions.

"Meetings and discussions on the

issue are taking place... let's see when they carry out the instructions," he added.

This correspondent tried to reach Janata's Managing Director Md Abdus Salam Azad over the phone several times, but he didn't pick it up. A text message was sent to his mobile phone on August 28, but he was yet to respond.

Janata has been at the centre of such dubious activities for quite some time, which have led to drastic deterioration in its health.

For example, the BB last year detected another loan scandal at Janata's Imamganj corporate branch that gave 98.4 percent of its total loans to one client, Crescent Group.

The BB has also unearthed that in violation of its instructions, Janata had purchased export bills worth a few hundred crore taka from Crescent, a leather company, without verifying whether the export proceeds could be repatriated.

Janata's loans to Crescent account for about 55 percent of the bank's equity capital. It's a complete violation of the Banking Company Act which says a bank can in no way give more than 25 percent of its capital as loans to an individual or group.

Beximco was another group for which Janata Bank faced a fine of Tk 10 lakh from the BB in May this year for providing undue facilities.

### JANATA'S IRREGULARITIES INVOLVING ANONTEX

The BB has investigated the loans given to AnonTex and found a number of irregularities.

It has found that Janata had violated the laws by giving loans 13 times the ceiling set by the BB with the approval of Janata's board.

Though AnonTex couldn't repay instalments regularly and failed to complete most of its projects within the scheduled time, Janata's board approved further loans of Tk 150 crore for the Group in December last year.

At a meeting in 2011, the board okayed loans of Tk 95.28 crore against a project of Simi Knit, a concern of AnonTex.

As per the loan conditions, the project was supposed to be completed in November 2012, but it was not finished till January this year, found the BB probe team.

By this time, the board approved another loan of Tk 92 crore for AnonTex Knit Tex, a concern of the Group, at another meeting on August 6, 2014.

This project was supposed to be completed by November, 2016, but that too was not completed till January this year, the report mentioned.

The board also allowed the Group to have its loans rescheduled several times. The state-owned bank sent rescheduling proposals to the BB,

hiding the overall loan status of the Group, it mentioned.

Besides, AnonTex had restructured its loan of Tk 1,094 crore from Janata in 2015 under the large loan restructuring package offered by the BB.

But the Group failed to pay loan instalments regularly and requested Janata last year for further rescheduling of the loans. Janata then sent the rescheduling proposal to the BB but it was rejected.

### FORCED LOANS

Since 2013, Janata continued to provide LC (Letter of Credit) facilities to six firms of the Group to import raw materials though the entities had forced loans with the state-run bank.

A bank creates a forced loan when a client fails to make LC payments to the foreign bank concerned in due time.

The total forced loan against the Group stood at Tk 1,720 crore as of December last year.

Moreover, Janata allowed the Group to convert its forced loans into term loans which later became classified, the report said.

The probe even found serious mismatch between the import value and imported goods kept at the Group's warehouse.

For instance, the total loan against imported goods of Suprov Composit, a concern of the Group, stood at Tk 526 crore as of December last year.

But the stock value of imported goods was found to be at Tk 198 crore

which meant the client sold goods but didn't deposit money to the bank, according to the report.

### MEETING WITH MUHITH

On August 20, high-ups of Janata Bank and AnonTex Group met Finance Minister AMA Muhith to convince him that the Group is running well and making significant contribution to the country's export earnings.

The Group even sought fresh loans at the meeting to run its business activities.

The minister also appeared impressed by the business Group as he highly praised its plant after the meeting.

"I visited the group and it is a first-class unit. The units are there," the minister told reporters soon after the meeting that day.

"It is not that they took the money and got away. It [the Group] exports products to many European countries, including Germany."

### JANATA'S FINANCIAL HEALTH

The bank faced a capital shortfall of Tk 161.48 crore in December last year whereas it had a surplus of Tk 278 crore in the same month of the previous year.

Its defaulted loans went up to Tk 9,702 crore in March this year from Tk 5,818 crore in December last year.

The bank also saw a sharp decline in net profit to Tk 96.77 crore last year from Tk 260.55 crore in the previous year, according to BB data.

## Bangladesh's sorry record continues

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Despite three changes in the eleven early in the second half and a lot of huffing and puffing from the men in red, the defeat looked inevitable as the clock ticked down.

And to leave no doubt as to which was the more deserving side to go through, they conceded a second goal right before the final whistle, a fine finish from Nepal substitute Nawayug Shreshtha.

The end was nothing like the beginning, both in the match and in the tournament.

The hosts, who needed only a draw to advance, looked more adventurous in the opening half hour than their opposition, who needed a victory to reach the last four.

The hosts had good reason to be adventurous too as they had lost against the same opposition in the group stages of the 2011 and 2013

editions of the regional tournament.

The men in red did make some early inroads, earning a number of corner kicks and a free-kick from a dangerous position, but the final act was always missing.

But that unfortunate goal turned things upside down.

Magar's free-kick was more of a chip than a shot and it came at a comfortable height, a regulation catch at any level of professional football. But the veteran goalkeeper from Abahani seemed to be caught in two minds, palming it into the back of his net.

It was not the first time that Sohel had conceded a goal like that. Susceptible in the air throughout his career, Sohel has a history of making costly errors in crucial times. He had made a similar mistake from a free-kick from then Nepal Skipper Sagar Thapa during the 2011 SAFF Championship in Delhi, dashing

Bangladesh's hopes of a semifinal berth. The other day his error in judgement led Bangladesh to a 1-0 defeat against Sri Lanka in a pre-tournament friendly in Nilphamari.

The goal against the run of play seemed to have a devastating impact on the psyche of Jamie Day's men as they started to make too many errors, tried to hurriedly clear the ball away from their own half and found little room to manoeuvre the ball past a disciplined Nepal defence.

Day made three changes in a desperate attempt early in the second half, but the lack of creativity, especially in midfield, meant Bangladesh failed to pose any real threat to the opposition goal.

Nepal virtually dug themselves inside their own half for the last half hour, helping Bangladesh launch into attacks but allowing little space to manoeuvre the ball in the attacking

third.

Substitute striker Shakhawat Hossain Rony had a shot in anger from outside the box in the 80th minute, but that was the best they could get. Sohel, at the other end, tried to make amends for his earlier mistake by making two fine saves in the 54th minute and in the 87th minute, but there was no redeeming the impact of his costly blunder from the first half.

And then Nawayug's fine strike from inside the box in the 90th minute sealed the fate of the game beyond doubt, ending Bangladesh's campaign prematurely yet again.

It was a sorry end to a promising campaign which had gathered steam with wins in the first two matches, building on the historic run in the recent Asian Games and drawing on an expectant full-house crowd at the Big Bowl, only to leave everyone with a lot of frustration and anguish in the end.

## Narrowed by illegal dock

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according to the chambers of commerce and industry in Barisal and Jhalakathi.

The encroachment would impede trade under the Bangladesh-India protocol agreement on river traffic, said Md Saidur Rahman Rintu, president of Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The canal was excavated between 1912 and 1918 to link the Sugandha river in Jhalakathi and the Kocha and Sandhya rivers of Pirojpur, said Md Azmol Huda, deputy director (route) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The canal reduced the distance on the Dhaka-Mongla and Chittagong-Mongla river routes by about 118 kilometres and travel time by up to

eight hours.

Sixty to 70 passenger or goods-laden vessels used to ply this every day four years ago but now the number has come down between 30 to 40, according to the Jhalakathi signal office of the BIWTA.

Talking to this newspaper recently, Md Mahamud Hossain, captain of an oil tanker that operates on the water body, said, "In the dry season, depth of the canal water decreases and we have to wait a long time for the ebb tide to resume vessel movement."

Khan Siafullah Ponir, a BIWTA contractor who collects toll from vessels using the canal, said the government was losing revenue as the number of the vessel has decreased.

Every vessel pays Tk 2,000 to Tk 4,000, based on its load capacity, he said.

"This canal is important as we can carry imported goods directly from Haldia Port in India to the southern districts of Bangladesh," said Md Salek, former president of Jhalakathi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

If the canal loses navigability for grabbing or lack of maintenance, vessels headed for Chittagong, Barisal and Dhaka from Mongla, Khulna and India would have to use the sea, which would increase their carrying costs, he added.

Asked, Md Mostafijur Rahman, joint director (port) of BIWTA (Barisal port) said, "I have been informed about the grabbing and we will take immediate action."

## Progress in key areas a must

### Says UN about resolving Rohingya crisis

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations has said a substantial progress is urgently needed in three key areas, including addressing the root causes of the Rohingya crisis and a clear pathway to citizenship for Rohingyas.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) say they stand ready to commence assessment activities in 23 villages in line with an MoU signed by the two agencies and the Myanmar government three months ago.

Two other areas covered by the Memorandum of Understanding are granting effective access in Rakhine State and ensuring freedom of movement for all communities.

"These assessments would be a first step only, with the expectations that access will be expanded to allow for the large scale comprehensive assessments that continue to be needed," Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for the UN secretary-general, told reporters during a regular briefing at the UN headquarters.

The assessment in the initial list of villages is part of a broader work plan that has been under discussion with the Myanmar authorities since July, he said.

By commencing with need assessments to identify and implement quick-impact projects, the UNHCR and the UNDP hope to jump start confidence building measures aimed at rebuilding trust and social cohesion with those communities that remain in Rakhine, said Dujarric.

On Thursday, the International Criminal Court (ICC) came up with a ruling that it has jurisdiction over

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