

AL is the strongest party in Bangladesh

Says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party – Awami League is the strongest, largest and the most credible political party in the country now.

Hasina, also the AL president, made the remark when her party leaders and activists came to Gono Bhaban to greet her on her Homecoming Day.

Recalling her election as the president of AL in her absence before her return to home on May 17, 1981, the PM said she had no experience to lead a big party like AL at that time. It was definitely a big responsibility for her to lead AL, she added.

She said the party has overcome conspiracies on many occasions.

Recollecting the day she had returned home

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Senior Awami League leaders greet party president and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with flowers at Gono Bhaban yesterday, marking her 44th homecoming day. PHOTO: PID



Spice prices shoot up by 20 percent

Syndicates allegedly using dollar rate hike as excuse

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Wholesale prices of most imported spices have surged approximately by 20 percent in the markets of the capital, shortly after a Tk 7 increase in the dollar exchange rate.

Importers and traders claim the abrupt spike is a direct result of the recent uptick in the dollar's value, which is impacting market prices.

On May 8, Bangladesh Bank raised the dollar exchange rate to Tk 117 from Tk 110.

During visits to Karwan Bazar, Kochukhet, and Moulvibazar markets in the capital, this newspaper observed that prices of most imported spices have surged.

Currently, cumin is priced at Tk 680 per kg, up from Tk 570, while the lowest wholesale price for cardamom has risen to Tk 3,200 from Tk 2,800. Another type of cardamom that was previously priced at Tk 3,200 is now being sold at Tk 3,500.

Additionally, wholesale price of white pepper has risen to Tk 1,200 from Tk 1,000. Cashew nuts are now selling at Tk 1,300, compared to Tk 1,200 earlier, while chickpeas have seen an increase from Tk 102 to Tk 108 per kg.

Riaz Hossain from Nur Traders in Karwan Bazar, who used to procure spices twice a week from the Moulvi Bazar wholesale market in Old Dhaka, expressed dismay at the recent price surge.

"Just a week ago, I purchased cumin at Tk 570-580 per kg, but now I'm having to pay Tk 700, although these spices were imported well before the new dollar rate came into effect," he said. "It

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Barishal museum fails to attract visitors

Lack of funds, manpower, initiatives key challenges

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The Barishal Divisional Museum is losing its attraction amid a dire lack of initiatives over the years.

The museum was established on June 8, 2015 with 23 rooms in Barishal Collectorate Building, displaying 146 archaeological specimens.

Since the museum's inception, there has been no survey and excavation work from it for the Department of Archaeology.

The museum officials said the museum is managed under the Khulna Divisional Museum. As such, for any activity the decision is made by their authorities. Also, the museum lacks sufficient funds for activities including survey, excavation and programmes.

At present, Barishal Divisional Museum is being run by 12 staffers under an assistant custodian.

During a recent visit to the museum, this correspondent saw various pottery items, recovered ancient idols, inscriptions, furniture, and coins on display.

According to officials, no more than 60 to 70

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Established on June 8, 2015 with 23 rooms in Barishal Collectorate Building, the divisional museum is losing its attraction amid a dire lack of initiatives over the years. The photo was taken on Thursday. PHOTO: TITU DAS

Formulate pro-people budget

Urge speakers at event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The bureaucratic system in the country needs to be dismantled, and the people need to be empowered to prepare a people-friendly budget, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar, titled "Budget and Thoughts of Youth Society," was organised by Bangladesh Jubo Union at Jatiya Press Club.

"The syndicate of dishonest bureaucrats, politicians, and businessmen must be dismantled. For this purpose, the leftist forces must be united," said economist Prof MM Akash.

Prof Akash, also a teacher of Economics Department at Dhaka University, said, "There is a need for public involvement in this movement. Only then, we can have a pro-people budget."

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Female RMG workers deserve better: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sultana Kamal, an RMG worker, used to endure abuse from her drug-addict husband before she relocated to Dhaka six years ago.

Previously, she used to work at a tannery for Tk 930 per month, but now, with her earnings, she manages to bear the educational expenses of her two sons.

"My sons are doing great at school, and now I dream of a better future with my family," said the 30-year-old mother while sharing her story during a day-long cultural programme at the Liberation War Museum yesterday.

The event, titled "Healthy Workers, Pleasant Working Environment, Productive Bangladesh – Garment Workers Star Fair," was organised by Karmajibi Nari, alongside Safety and Rights.

Around 350 RMG and tannery workers, along with their children, participated in the event by engaging in different activities, including dancing, singing, and a raffle draw.

At the programme, Sharmin Kabir, general secretary of Karmajibi Nari, said, "These women spend the entire day working outside and then have to return home to care for their families and children. When and where will they hang out and develop their minds? So, this star fair should be organised every year. It will help foster their economic, mental, and cultural development."

Md Tarikul Alam, director general of Bangladesh's Department of Labour, stressed the need to implement labour regulations.

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RECOGNISE 1971 genocide

Speakers urge the youth to be aware of history, Genocide Museum marks 10th anniversary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The anti-liberation forces oppose preserving Liberation War memorials and genocide relics, but it's crucial for the younger generation to understand their roots, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They also called for the international recognition of the 1971 genocide. They said a vested quarter is trying to distort the country's history and urged the youth to remain aware of that.

The event marked the 10th anniversary of Genocide Museum.

Khulna City Corporation Mayor Talukder Abdul Khaleque inaugurated the programme at the museum in the morning.

Presiding over the event, Prof Muntassir Mamoon, chairman of the museum, expressed concern that those who don't believe in the country's liberation are being allowed to engage in politics. He shared how people endured brutal atrocities during the nine-month-long Liberation War in 1971.

Trustee Tariq Sujat, while delivering a commemorative speech, highlighted the lack of precise statistics on the massacres during the 1971 war. He blamed lack of collaborative research efforts for this. He shed light on the 10 year dedication of the museum to this end.

State Minister for Culture Naheed Zaher Khan said it's important for



Prof Muntassir Mamoon speaks at an event marking the 10th anniversary of Genocide Museum in Khulna yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

the younger generation to know the history of the war.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is playing a key role in running the museum and the cultural ministry is helping in its operations," she added.

Poonam Mukherjee, PhD researcher of Calcutta University, and Sagar Tarang Mandal, assistant professor of Kalyani University of West Bengal, presented papers at the event.

Dr Chowdhury Shahid Quader, trustee secretary of genocide museum, conducted the programme.

The museum began its journey on May 17, 2014. Initially set up at a rented house in the city's Moilapota area, the museum relocated to its permanent place at South Central Road on February 26 this year on 21-decimal land allotted by the prime minister.

According to the museum authority, its archive has recorded over 18,481 mass killing spots where killings took place, 888 mass-killing grounds, 1,313 mass graves and 1,174 torture cells in 42 districts.

Besides, 192 types of evidence,

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Ansar-VDP eyes to provide security services abroad

Letter sent to home ministry for permission

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defense Party (VDP) has expressed its intention to provide security for foreign establishments and protection of VVIPs abroad "to contribute to the country's economy and image", similar to their role in Bangladesh.

The Ansar-VDP stated that its members are now capable of providing security in various countries in the Middle East, including Saudi Arabia.

According to sources, the move came following a recent meeting between Bangladesh's Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan and Saudi Deputy Interior Minister Nasser bin Abdulaziz Al-Daoud.

On May 13, a letter was sent from the Ansar-VDP headquarters to the senior secretary of the home ministry's Public Security Division seeking permission in this regard.

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CURBING DENGUE

DNCC to import pesticides directly from now on

DIPAN NANDY

Dhaka North City Corporation has recently got the government's permission to reimport a pesticide directly from the mother company in Singapore in a bid to curb the spread of dengue fever.

The pesticide, *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) is a group of bacteria used as biological control agents for larvae stages of different pests, including mosquitoes.

Upon the government's approval, DNCC is gearing up to import Bti worth Tk 20 crore in three forms – liquid, tablet, and powder – from Best Chemical Company Limited in Singapore. It also has permission to bring the pesticide in granule form.

According to the DNCC's health department, taking lessons from the fraudulence involving the certificate of import and the product last year, this time DNCC itself is bringing this organic pesticide directly from Singapore.

The certificate of import of four



DNCC will import Bti worth Tk 20 crore in three forms -- liquid, tablet, and powder -- from Best Chemical Company Limited in Singapore. REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO

types of Bti has been obtained from the Plant Protection Wing. DNCC is also in constant contact with the Singaporean company regarding the import of the pesticide.

Apart from DNCC, seven other companies have so far gotten permission to bring different types of Bti to the country.

The DNCC had applied to the ministry concerned to purchase and import mosquito insecticides without an open tender and got approval in principle on May 9 from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs.

"The CCEA approved in principle the proposal to purchase or import insecticides through a

direct purchase system to ensure uninterrupted mosquito control activities," Mahmudul Hossain Khan, coordination and reform secretary of the Cabinet Division, said after the CCEA meeting.

DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said, "Bti is the best solution among biological methods of controlling mosquito populations. We have already worked on it. The process of importing Bti directly from Singapore is underway. We got approval from the government. Now we will bring it by air very soon."

"We learned a lesson from buying Bti last time. This time, it will not be brought through any contractor. DNCC will bring Bti directly from those who produce it," he added.

Johnny Wong, managing director of Best Chemicals, told The Daily Star, "DNCC has been in direct contact with BestChem regarding the possibilities of importing Bti. Due to confidentiality, we are unable to share any additional information at this time."

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