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# The Daily Star

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## D-8 summit PM leaves for Istanbul on Saturday

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will leave for Istanbul on Saturday morning to attend the first D-8 summit scheduled for June 14-15 in the Turkish city, it was officially announced in the Dhaka yesterday, reports UNB.

The D-8, which will be formally launched at the summit, comprises host Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nigeria and Egypt — all members of the OIC.

The summit will be preceded by the Commission Meeting of D-8 on June 12-13, comprising the Council of Ministers and senior officials of the eight countries.

During the trip, Sheikh Hasina will be accompanied, among others, by Principal Secretary to the PM Dr. S. A. Samad, Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan and other senior officials.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs  
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## President hosts dinner for ministers, MPs

President Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted a dinner for the cabinet members and some MPs of both the ruling and opposition parties at Bangabhaban last night, reports UNB.

Both Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Begum Khaleda Zia attended the dinner.

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, Deputy Speaker Advocate Abdul Hamid, deputy leaders of ruling and opposition in Parliament, ministers, Chief Whip of Opposition, state ministers, whips and deputy ministers also attended it.

Among others were Prime Minister's Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Suranjit Sen Gupta and Members of Parliament of different political parties.

## Tk 18.86cr N'ganj poura budget

NARAYANGANJ, June 11: The Narayanganj Pourashabha has adopted an annual budget of Tk 18.86 crore for the fiscal year 1997-98 as compared to Tk 13.58 crore for 1996-97, reports BSS.

According to Pourashabha sources today, this year's budget shows an increase in the revenue earnings by about 40 per cent over the last year.

The reason for increase in the revenue earnings in the budget was attributed to the proposed allocation of additional Taka five crore for the construction of new office building of Narayanganj Pourashabha which is expected

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## Kazi Fazlur Rahman new PSRC chairman

Former secretary and member of the Planning Commission Kazi Fazlur Rahman has been appointed as chairman of the Public Service Reforms Commission PSRC for a two-year term, an official handout said last night, reports BSS.

Kazi Fazlur Rahman will enjoy the status and facilities of a cabinet minister, the handout added.

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## Kibria places budget today

# Crucial task to restore fiscal balance

By Inam Ahmed

Finance Minister S A M S Kibria is going to place his second budget in the Jatiya Sangsad today attempting a crucial balancing task of reducing fiscal deficits and generating more revenues amid political constraints.

How the deterioration of fiscal balances can be prevented in the face of an increased demand for revenue expenditure is the real challenge for the policy-makers.

According to monetary experts, over-taxing the people or going for further deficit financing to meet the increased expenditure will have inflationary impact. And a further devaluation of the currency will be inevitable if inflation and balance of payment situation does not improve.

The finance minister, however, has assigned top priority to curbing inflation.

Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud, professor of economics at the Dhaka University said, "The coming budget is of particular significance since it will for the first time fully reflect the present government's ideas regarding fiscal management. The broad fiscal targets of the year ending this June are in fact those fixed in the interim budget of the caretaker government."

He added that "the major challenge now facing the government's fiscal management lies in finding ways for increasing the revenue-GDP ratio which improved significantly during the first three years of the previous BNP regime. But since then has remained stagnant or even declined."

The finance minister has estimated a revenue earning of over Tk 20,000 crore for the coming fiscal, 18 per cent up from this fiscal's over Tk 17,000 crore.

Finance Ministry sources said the budget will propose expanding the VAT net at wholesale level, and it will also include more sectors previously exempted from VAT.

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President Shahabuddin Ahmed talking to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Begum Khaleda Zia and some ministers and MPs at a dinner hosted by him at the Bangabhaban last night. — PID photo

## New nat'l pay scale to affect economy badly: FBCCI chief

By Govinda Shil

President of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Yusuf Abdullah Harun has said implementation of the new national pay scale and the award of the proposed wage commission would affect the national economy badly.

In a pre-budget interview with The Daily Star on Monday, he said the economy probably is going to experience a 'high' inflationary pressure and low industrial growth by December this year because of the pay hike.

"I am very much worried about the impact of salary and wage hike," the FBCCI president said. Private sector business will come under gigantic pressure for this, he added.

Harun said the national economy is passing through major reforms and the outcome will be felt in future. Reform period is agonising for a country, but it helps build the economy, he noted.

Expressing his concern over the 'big size' of the government, Harun said almost all the countries in the world are reducing their governments' size. Stressing the need for narrowing the trade deficit and improving the country's balance of payment situation, Harun said the only way out is to increase exports. "We need to identify some thrust sectors and try our best to export more."

He gave due importance to the export-led industries," he said.

He suggested that export-oriented industries be given 'tax-holiday facilities' to enable those to become more competitive and survive in the international market.

Recommending expansion of the tax-base to increase domestic resources, he said taxation policy should be simplified.

"Government officials should also be covered by the income tax network," Harun said and added that a section of them possess other taxable assets.

He also referred to a simple Value Added Tax (VAT) collection procedure and suggested restructuring the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

"Sometimes our traders and entrepreneurs become frustrated seeing the complex tax payment process," he noted.

The FBCCI chief said tax officials should take into consideration the self-assessment methods while fixing one's tax.

He demanded that the listed corporate bodies receive concessions. He called for refixing the tax dividend ceiling at Tk

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Yusuf Abdullah Harun  
 He thought that leather and leather products, artificial jewellery, poultry, fresh vegetable and electronics sectors should be the target sectors to expand the country's overseas trade.  
 "We cannot have a breakthrough in the economy unless

## Second Buriganga bridge likely to be completed by February '99

By Morshed Ali Khan

The second bridge over the river Buriganga, connecting Babubazar with Zinzira, is likely to be completed by February 1999 after a year's delay, engineers at the construction site said.

Work on the bridge started in September 1994 and was to be completed by February 1998. Engineers of Bangladesh Engineers Ltd said there were delays because the ferry ghat, along with electricity, water and telephone lines crossing the site, had to be moved.

An engineer said 52 per cent of the project had already been completed. "Over two-thirds of the most time consuming part — the sinking of caissons or pillars in the river bed — have been done," he said. He said only 50 feet out of the 162 feet of pillar sinking remained to be done.

The Roads and Highways Department, which is in charge of the project, has given the firm till December 1998 to complete the work. It has also refused to pay nearly Tk five crore to the firm as compensation for the delay. Departmental red-tape caused delays in clearing obstructions from the site, a source in the R&H Department said.

A Bangladesh Consultants Ltd official said BEL was entitled to ask for an extension of its contract but not for compensation. The BCL was separately engaged by the R&H Department to supervise the construction.

The total cost of the project, excluding the consultancy, will be Tk 133.04 crore. An official document said the length of the bridge, including the approach roads would be 1,479 meters.

The bridge will connect Dhaka with Keraniganj thana and open up new horizons for the congested capital's southern side. Every day more than five lakh people in the area commute by boat to the city, Zinzira

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## BNP walkout not recorded in JS proceedings

By Staff Correspondent

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid said yesterday the walkout from the Jatiya Sangsad by opposition BNP and Jamaat-Islami lawmakers on Tuesday was not recorded in the proceedings of the House.

The reported walkout took place simultaneously with the adjournment of the day's sitting by the Deputy Speaker.

Talking to a group of journalists at his Sangsad chamber, Abdul Hamid said he did not see any walkout on the day. "I saw some of them in the House while I myself was leaving," he noted.

The lawmakers from BNP and Jamaat attempted an adjournment of the moment the Chair put to voice-vote the Opposition proposals for amendments to the JS Rules of Procedure. The walkout coincided with the announcement of adjournment of the sitting.

Coming out of the House, the Opposition lawmakers claimed to have staged a walkout protesting rejection of their proposals and refusal of the Chair to give the floor to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

## Kandupatti eviction HC directs govt to reply by Monday

The hearing of the writ against the 'illegal eviction' of sex workers from Kandupatti began in the High Court yesterday, reports UNB.

A division bench comprising Justice M Mozammel Haq and Hasan Amin adjourned the hearing till next Monday and directed the respondent, the government, to file a written reply by then (Monday).

The same bench had earlier issued a rule upon a writ petition filed by Advocate Sultana Nahar which was moved by Advocate M Faruqi, assisted by advocate M Salimullah.

As the hearing began, some of the evicted sex workers went to the court premises in procession waving banner. Some of them were found in the courtroom during the hearing.

Counsel for the petitioner M Faruqi in his submission said the sex workers were illegally and forcibly evicted from their place of business.

He said the sex workers' fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the Constitution, the 'right to work and service' and 'right to protection of law', were flagrantly violated.

Faruqi further submitted that there exists no law in the country which bars the sex workers from doing their business. "It's a profession approved

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## Govt plans to hold fresh talks with port users June 14

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 11: The government is planning to hold a fresh round of negotiation with the port users, port officials and the port's CBA leaders on June 14 to resolve the issue relating to the use of private equipment at Chittagong Port, official sources said.

The mayor of Chittagong City Corporation was also invited to attend the negotiation to be chaired by the Prime Minister's political advisor, the sources added.

The meeting has been convened by the political advisor to the Prime Minister, against the backdrop of a port boycott programme on June 15 announced by the Port Users Forum (PUF).

Earlier, a series of meetings were organised by the government with port users and CBA leaders, but those ended inconclusively.

## Forex reserve down by 22 pc, govt borrowing up by 47 pc

By Reaz Ahmad

The country's foreign exchange reserve has declined by 457 million US dollars or 21.96 per cent over the last one year.

The forex reserve of 2,081 million dollars on May 5 last year, fell to 1,624 million dollars on May 5 this year.

"The reserves are now at a critical level and need to be monitored very carefully," cautioned a confidential report on the recent economic trends, a copy of which was obtained by The Daily Star yesterday.

Usually 3.5 months' import requirement is considered to be the minimum safe limit of foreign exchange reserve, observed the report, adding that the latest reserve is roughly equal to 2.7 months' import bill. It noted that reserve declined recently because of ACU payment in the second week of last month.

Besides, the government's borrowing from Bangladesh Bank increased by Tk. 1,424 crore (46.88%) between June 30, 1996 and April 29, 1997 as opposed to Tk. 969 crore during the corresponding period of the previous fiscal. The borrowing stood at Tk. 4,461 crore on April 29, 1997 compared to Tk. 3,037 crore on June 30, 1996. Tk. 2,223 crore on April 29, 1996 and Tk. 1,254 crore on June 30, 1995.

The latest economic situation came up for detailed discussion at a meeting held at the state guest house Jamuna earlier this week. The high-level meeting was held on the eve of the national budget for fiscal 1997-98, to be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad this afternoon.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, ministers, advisors to the PM, whips of the Jatiya Sangsad and Chairman of Privatisation Board were present as Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria apprised the meeting of the present economic situation of the country.

The meeting was told that the level of total domestic credit has increased by Tk. 6,531 crore (15.82%) over the year, of which, credit to the public sector has increased by Tk. 2,410 crore (24.13%) and credit to private sector increased by Tk. 4,121 crore (13.17%).

The rate of inflation declined from 4.07 per cent in June 1996 to 3.34 per cent in April 1997. The Finance Minister, however, assured the meeting that the inflation rate would remain under four per cent.

It was told at the pre-budget meeting that the Taka was devalued five times since the AL government took over on June 23 last year.

The finance minister told the meeting that a growth rate of 5.7 per cent exceeding the target of 5.5 per cent is going to be achieved in the current fiscal.

Imports increased by 213 million dollars (4.8%) to 4,644 million dollars.

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## Inflation not adjusted ADP for next fiscal virtually downsized

By Mizan Ali

The actual size of the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for fiscal 1997-98 has decreased compared to the ADP for 1996-97 if inflation rate is taken into account, according to a Planning Ministry estimate.

The ADP allocation for the coming fiscal year is Tk 12,755 crore and that for this year is Tk 11,700 crore. The annual rate of inflation stood at 3.4 per cent in April 1997.

A total of 1242 projects are proposed in the next ADP, which include 278 new projects, officials said adding that 37 projects of the present ADP were dropped.

Another 64 projects have been included in the new ADP, which await foreign assistance.

Officials said that of the Tk 12,755 crore ADP allocation, the local currency component will be Tk 6885.25 crore, while project aid will constitute Tk 5316.75 crore and 'food projects' Tk 553 crore.

Education sector's share in the new ADP is Tk 1685.62 crore, of which project aid comprises Tk 585.55 crore. The total allocation for the sector is 14.7 per cent of the ADP, officials added.

The social sectors like rural development, education, health, family planning, women affairs and youth development, mass contact, sports and culture, public administration and labour and manpower will get Tk 4178.71 crore, 36.5 per cent of the new ADP. These sectors are directly related to human resources development.

Of the total proposed allocation for social sector, the local currency component will be Tk 2,367 crore.

The poverty alleviation programmes (rural development, etc.)

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## Office timing extended for building nation quickly: PM

The dissident groups of secretariat employees yesterday called off all their agitation programmes against the new office timing in a meeting with the prime minister, reports UNB.

"We have extended office timing as we want to build the nation in the shortest possible time," Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told them, reiterating some facilities for the government employees who are working as per the new timetable.

Addressing the meeting with Sarkari Karmachari Sanghati Parishad and other associations of the Secretariat employees at ICC, she said already one year of the government had passed and it worked hard to use the time for people's welfare.

The government wants to utilise every moment of its tenure for economic development of the nation, for ensuring a standard lifestyle of the people.

The prime minister said every citizen of the nation would be benefited if the country could gain economic stability through concerted efforts of all.

The government will not hesitate to give money to the people if its economic activities and earnings increased, she said.

Government Employees Association President and Sanghati Parishad leader Zafar Ahmed, general secretary Syed Ataur Rahman, vice-president Azizur Rahim, class four employees association secretary Araz Ali, Audit Parishad president Kazimuddin, and Sanghati parishad leader Abdul Maleq also addressed the function.

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## Test facilities at city's pvt labs poor Contact physicians take 20-50pc commission for procuring clients

Patients pay 20 to 50 per cent extra charge for testing blood at private pathology centres give commission to their contact physicians for procuring clients, reports UNB.

At least 17 laboratory directors in the city, out of 25 interviewed for a study, admitted that they offer 20 to 50 per cent commission to the doctors.

As a result, the charge of a test is pre-fixed at 20 to 50 per cent higher than the actual cost, says a study conducted by Population Council, a New York-based international research organisation.

The study on Testing Facilities for STD/RTI and Quality Assurance in Private Pathology Centres in Dhaka City, also found that test charges are not uniform in all the centres.

Sometimes the charge is two to five times higher at some centres than the cheapest rates. The difference in charges often lead to confusion among people about the reliability of the reports of the cheaper centres.

The study revealed that facilities for the diagnosis of most of the sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or reproductive tract infections (RTI) tests are not available in most of the centres.

Only VDRL test for syphilis and HBsAg test for hepatitis B virus infection are available in all the centres. But, the testing facilities for STD/RTI and the overall condition of pathology centres in most cases are not satisfactory.

It found that the pathology centres lack skilled technical manpower like pathologist, technician or nurse. The number of non-qualified technicians is twice the qualified technical hands.

Most of the technicians don't have required qualifications or are not qualified for carrying out STD/RTI tests. The knowledge of the technicians about STD/RTI and related tests is also poor.

Even centres, out of 25 visited by the researchers, have not a single female nurse and where they exist often they have no academic qualification. All the 25 centres are running without any well defined policy or any written operational manual.

Specimen from STD/RTI patients are mostly collected by a technician, often an untrained one. In some centres, samples are collected, specially from female patients, by a yuq (cleaner) or the patient herself.

Most of the specimen from STD/RTI patients are processed or prepared by a technician, and results are interpreted mostly by a pathologist. Sometimes, technicians alone process the sample and interpret

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## Acid thrown on 2 teenage girls, grandmother

By DMC Correspondent

Two teenage sisters and their grandmother sustained serious burn injuries as a group of people threw acid on them in Gombour village under Ruggaj thana in Narayanganj Tuesday night.

The victims — Beauty, 16, Jharna, 14, and Gulbahar Begum 65, — were under treatment at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) till last night. According to hospital sources, they suffered injuries in their face, eyes and other parts of the body.

The relatives of the victims alleged that a group of about

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## JCD walks out of DU Parishad meet

By DU Correspondent

No decision about the DUCSU election could be taken at yesterday's meeting of the Dhaka University Parishad as the Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) once again walked out of the meeting.

The last meeting was also boycotted by the JCD.

Yesterday's meeting was held at the Senate room with Vice-Chancellor, Prof. A. K. Azad Chowdhury in the chair. The proctor of the university, Dr Nur-Un-Nabi was present.

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## RU reopens ignoring strike

From RU Correspondent

RAJ/SHAHI, June 11: The classes of Rajshahi University resumed today at the end of the summer vacation.

The strike called by the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) and pro-Jamaat teachers was ignored as all university offices opened and functioned normally.

The bank, the post-office and all shops in the Station Bazar were open and the University buses plied to and from the campus.

Police and paramilitary personnel are on duty on the campus to maintain law and order.

The police camp set up at the Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall has meanwhile been withdrawn.

## Businessman kidnapped in Raozan

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 11: A businessman was abducted by a group of armed terrorists from Raozan today, police said.

Haji Abu Taher, alias Gura Meah, the owner of Agrani brick field, was kidnapped at gun point by four terrorists at 1:30 pm and brought here for realising ransom, police said.

The gunman went to Raozan by a car and brought the victim in the same vehicle, police added.

According to sources, a group of terrorists used to collect tolls from the brick field owners in Raozan every month. Following Gura Meah's refusal to give tolls this month, the terrorists, allegedly having links with police, abducted him in broad day light today.

## Panchlaish thana OC suspended

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, June 11: The Officer in Charge (OC) of Panchlaish thana was put under suspension today.

Official sources said Abul Kalam Azad was suspended for negligence of duty.

Further details were not known.