

# The Daily Star

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## Elections could cause expenditure overrun

### ADB lashes at 'loose' fiscal policy

By Inam Ahmed

Observing the weak revenue collection system and forecasting a possible expenditure overrun because of the coming parliamentary elections, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has warned that these may jeopardise price stability and strain the balance of payments.

It projects a seven per cent inflation rate and 5.7 per cent GDP growth rate.

The ADB in its update of Asian Outlook report has observed that unless Bangladesh corrects the recent loosening of fiscal and monetary policies, macroeconomic stability and economic growth are likely to be affected in the short to medium term.

"Recovery in the manufacturing sector, including export industries, is crucial for maintaining balance of payments stability," it said.

"Resorting to substantial domestic borrowing may impose a heavy debt-repayment burden in future budgets as well," ADB said.

It mentioned that the greatest challenge facing Bangladesh in the short to medium term is the emerging weakness in macroeconomic manage-

ment. The sharp surge in government borrowing from the banking system and expansionary public expenditure policy point to an alarming loosening of fiscal policy. The resulting need for monetary accommodation has exerted strain on macroeconomic stability.

If this loosening is not reversed, macroeconomic stability and economic growth will be seriously affected. The revenue mobilisation effort needs to be strengthened and steps should be taken to modernise the tax administration system.

In addition, the government should adjust the administered prices of public utilities and prioritise expenditures, pruning those which are unproductive. It also needs to address the mounting problem of a large debt overhang in the banking sector. Over 40 per cent of loans are non-performing, the ADB update said.

ADB projected the GDP growth in 2001 at 5.7 per cent with the agriculture sector still playing a major role.

## Indo-Bangla border confce begins today

By Staff Correspondent

Exchange of enclaves, demarcation of undemarcated border, drug smuggling and push-in will dominate the border coordination conference between Bangladesh Rifles and Border Security Force (BSF) of India beginning in the city today.

Border clashes, killing of Bangladeshis by BSF and trafficking of women and children by organised gangs will also come up at the talks, officials said.

The Indian delegation led by the Director General of BSF Sree E.N Rammohan arrived in the city yesterday to attend the conference while Bangladesh delegation will be represented by BDR Director General Major General A.L.M Fazlur Rahman.

Agreements on exchange of enclaves between the two countries were ratified by the Indian parliament in 1958 and by Bangladesh parliament in 1975, according to official documents.

The ninth amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1958 ratified the agreement between the then Pakistan and India regarding exchange of enclaves, which is applicable for Bangladesh, officials said.

After independence, the Mujib-India agreement of 1974 also provided for exchange of enclaves. The agreement was ratified by Bangladesh parliament in 1975 but India is yet to ratify it.

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## FBCCI polls take place

Star Report

The biennial election of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) only to elect the vice-president (VP) and 15 executive committee (EC) members was held in the city yesterday.

A total of 709 voters out of 795 from the trade association group exercised their voting rights in polling to choose the leaders of the FBCCI, country's apex trade body.

Till filing of this report, the counting was on.

Earlier, Yussuf Abdullah Haroon was declared unopposed president along with 15 other EC members from chamber group. However, the process to avoid any sort of election in the chamber group created controversy and many business leaders criticised the process.

Three candidates, Khurshid Ali Mollah, Golam Dastagir Gazi and Mohammad Ali vied for vice

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## Inside Today

### Article

**Ceasefire: How Long Will it Last?**  
Column: Connecting the Dots  
by A.R. Choudhury  
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Oct 22		5.27 pm
Oct 23	5:59 am	

### Prayer Timings

October 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-45	5-20
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-35	5-40
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

## BCL leader chopped to death at Pabna

PABNA, Oct 21: A leader of the ruling party backed BCL was chopped to death in broad daylight in front of Pabna Polytechnic Institute today, reports UNB.

The killing of Sazzad Hossain Khan Saju, 22, a first-year student of Pabna College and general secretary of Shaigaria ward Chhatra League, sparked violence in the town.

Agitated protestors ransacked and set fire to several homes.

The BCL blamed pro-BNP Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal for the killing. JCD denied the allegation.

Saju, along with a friend, went to the Polytechnic Institute at about 12 noon. "As soon as he reached the institute gate, some 7-8 terrorists swooped on him. They chopped Saju indiscriminately leaving him dead," police said quoting witnesses.

Hearing the killing local people went on the rampage setting fire to some houses, including the one of Nurul Haq, a UP member of Malanchi union.

Firemen rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire.

After killing Saju, the terrorists washed their hands in a nearby water-body, lit cigarettes and then walked away unhindered," says a witness.

People later told police and visiting journalists that Toha, Shapla, Ranglal and Shahid were among others in the gang.

District BCL instantly brought out a procession in the town and

held a protest meeting at Indrapatti. Sardar Mithu Ahmed presided.

District BCL president Sohel Hasan Shahin and other blamed JCD for the killing.

However, district JCD president Mosabber Hossain Shanju said Saju was killed following Chhatra League's internal feud.

Saju's father Abdur Rashid Khan Kalu demanded immediate arrest of the killers, requesting all

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## BNP calls hartal in Ctg today

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 21: The opposition BNP has called a dawn-to-dusk hartal in the city tomorrow to protest arrest of Samrak Dal leader A.M Nazim Uddin.

Security has been beefed up in the port city ahead of tomorrow's hartal, administration sources said.

Nazim Uddin was arrested by police on October 17 from in front of the labour office at Agrabad in connection with a case under Public Safety Act (PSA).

Meanwhile, the opposition alliance led by BNP organised a rally in Laldighi area this after

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**Silent but eloquent**  
Some 500 students boycotted classes at Sir Salimullah Medical College yesterday in protest of what they called BCL reign of terror.

-- Star photo

## SSMC students decry BCL 'reign of terror'

### 500 boycott classes, demonstrate near principal's office

By Staff Correspondent

About 500 students of Sir Salimullah Medical College in the city boycotted classes and demonstrated outside the principal's office yesterday protesting a 'reign of terror' in their hostels, unleashed allegedly by several leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL).

The students of second, third and fourth year walked out of classes wearing black badges and shouted slogans demanding immediate removal of the 'terrorists' from the college.

The students alleged that the 'reign of terror' at hostels, particularly at Alauddin Hostel, continued for over a month now. The BCL activists are beating students and ransacking their belongings, they

alleged. During rag day celebration in the college last month, the BCL leaders and activists broke open several hostel rooms and sprayed liquid colour, soiling clothing, beds and other belongings. They also ransacked the rooms and beat several students, they alleged.

Several days later, the victimised students retaliated in the same way, spraying colour on belongings of BCL leaders. Armed groups of BCL activists led by Mohibul Hasan Sumon, Sohel Rana James, Sajal, Arif, Parag, Ujjal, Apu, Nafiz, Ibrahim, Palash and Ehsan then launched a 'reign of terror'. Every day,

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## Arab leaders launch tirade against Israel

### More deaths in Gaza Strip, UNGA denounces excesses on Palestinians

CAIRO, Oct 21: Arab leaders launched tirades of anger against Israel at a rare Arab League summit today as more Palestinians were killed and wounded in fierce clashes in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, reports Reuters.

Proclaiming solidarity with the Palestinians, the leaders were set to halt further normalisation of relations with Israel and suspend Arab participation in multilateral talks with the Jewish state on economic and regional cooperation, according to a draft communique.

Hours before the summit began under heavy security, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning Israel for "excessive force" against Palestinian civilians and illegal violence by Jewish settlers during the latest flare-up.

Ninety-two countries voted in favour, six against and 46 abstained in Friday night's vote on a resolution drawn up by Palestinian delegates and sponsored by Arab and Islamic states and Cuba. Israel dismissed the motion as "completely one-sided."

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, addressing the Cairo summit in his trademark chequered keffiyeh headdress, promised his people would keep struggling until "victory."

"Our people of the holy Intifada (uprising) ... have made a pledge to every Arab, Muslim and Christian in this world that they will continue their struggle with all legitimate means until we achieve victory," he declared.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, hosting the first such gathering since 1996, denounced Israel's "belligerent attitude" towards the Palestinians but stressed that Arabs had a historic duty to attempt once again to salvage the peace process.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad told the summit: "As we strive for peace, Israel is striving for war. We chose peace as a strategic option. For Israel it was a tactic."

At least 20 Palestinians died today and dozens were wounded during a 'day of rage' called by militant groups after the collapse of a US-brokered agreement to end violence.

The fatalities took the death toll in more than three weeks of Israeli-Palestinian violence to 119, all but eight of them Palestinians or Israeli Arabs.

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## BNP stays focused on polls preparations

### 'Untimely agitation' harmed party image, says a senior leader

By Rezaul Karim

BNP has planned to concentrate more on preparations for the coming general elections to face electoral challenges from the ruling Awami League than on anti-government agitation, party sources said.

The movement launched by BNP about two years back to dislodge the AL government before completion of its five-year tenure did not prove effective due to wrong strategy, lack of foresightedness and imprudence of party hardliners.

"We have now reached an understanding to step up preparatory activities for the elections side by side with anti-government movement. We have already harmed the party by going for untimely agitation at the influence of undemocratic elements in it," a senior leader of the party told this correspondent.

The leader, who preferred anonymity, said that several hundred party activists were killed and disabled and thousands were arrested

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**Polls predicament**  
As usual FBCCI polls, held yesterday, once again meant election booths on the road and traffic congestion for hours together.

-- Star photo

## BPC takes a wrong turn

### Half-yearly deal to cost the oil import authority dearly, fear experts

Star Report

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has decided to purchase petroleum for the period of January to June at a higher rate, which would ultimately increase the level of loss for the country's sole oil import authority.

According to sources, against the backdrop of a global oil price hike, the BPC faced difficulties in finding a supplier to ensure petroleum import and supplies for the period of January to June next year.

BPC, which selects an oil supplier through competitive bidding for the period of every six months, floated two rounds of tenders in two categories this month. But only two companies -- Shell Oil and Exxon Singapore -- took part in the tenders, each in separate category. The prices quoted by the two were also very high.

In this context the government is considering re-introduction of short-term imports or 'spot tendering' instead of fixing a supplier for six months, sources added.

"The oil price is currently soaring as high as 32-33 dollars a barrel in the international market. But this

price has to fall sooner or later," said a source. "It would be prudent to watch for the price trend and purchase oil for short-term consumption."

"Any long-term deal we make now on the basis of this current rate would be disastrous," he added. "We expect that from early next year the oil price would come down."

On October 3, BPC floated a tender for a half-yearly petroleum supply, in which only Shell Oil and Exxon Singapore participated in two separate categories.

Dearth of bidders forced the BPC into floating the tender late last week once again. This time, too, only Shell and Exxon participated.

"But this time, they offered higher price and higher premium rates," said an official without quoting their price offers, "which means if BPC selects them as the supplier for the next season without increasing petroleum prices at retail level, BPC would incur more losses."

Till the Gulf War, BPC often purchased oil

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## Suicide bid in protest

By Staff Correspondent

A fourth year student of Sir Salimullah Medical College in the city attempted to commit suicide yesterday protesting the alleged atrocities by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leaders at students' hostels of the college.

Faisal took out a knife and stabbed himself in the belly at the class between 9 am and 10 am while Dr Sankar was teaching medicine. Faisal's class friends grabbed the knife and prevented him from inflicting further injury as blood soaked through his shirt.

Faisal's sad and unusual protest followed weeks of alleged 'torture' by several armed BCL leaders on innocent students in hostel areas on the campus.

Following Faisal's suicide attempt, about 500 students of the college boycotted classes and staged a sit-in in front of the Principal's office.

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## Vegetable prices up

By Staff Correspondent

Prices of vegetables, sugar and some other essentials have soared in the city markets in the last few weeks.

However, prices of rice, flour and meat remained almost unchanged.

Wholesalers and retailers at different city markets attributed price hike of vegetables to the floods in the south-west region, a major vegetable growing area in the country.

Green chilli was selling at Tk 70 per kg in retail markets yesterday while the price was only Tk 15 about a month back.

Retail prices of most of the vegetables including potato, bean, lady's finger, eggplant and onion have increased by Tk 2 to 10 per kg.

Sugar was now selling at Tk 40 per kg as against Tk 34 a month

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