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## Delhi hints at attending SAARC summit

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India has indicated its willingness to attend the SAARC summit scheduled to be held in Kathmandu in the first week of January next year.

India's consent has been conveyed to member countries of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation through diplomatic channels, diplomatic sources here said yesterday.

The readiness of India, which has been unwilling to participate in the summit primarily to avoid sharing the platform with Pakistani President Gen Pervez Musharraf for his overthrowing a democratically-elected government in 1999, may finally give the much-needed push to SAARC whose progress has since long been impeded by Indo-Pakistan tension.

A measure of India's willingness to attend the summit could be had from Foreign Secretary Chokila Iyer

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## Six killed in Moheshkhali boat capsizes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Six Buddhists were killed and 20 others missing when a boat capsized in the Moheshkhali Channel Friday evening.

Sources said three boats carrying 150 passengers on board went there to immerse an artificially made pagoda at 5 pm on the occasion of Prabarana Purnima.

As the sea was rough, suddenly one of the boats sank in the channel. Three bodies were recovered on Friday night while the rest three yesterday.

The victims are -- Ula Mong, 40, Balzra, 13, Khin Khin Rakhain, 3, Uthami, 40, Uthoo, 11, and Aa Mong, 24.

Search for the missing people were going on till filing of this report at 6 pm yesterday.

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The neutral caretaker government: An assessment  
Shah A M S Kibria

Law and Our Rights 5&6

Today is our 'Constitution Day'; and A dual citizen is considered to have lost his absolute loyalty to Bangladesh

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 4		5-18 pm
Nov 5	6-07 am	

Prayer Timings		
Nov 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-30
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-31
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

# Corruption cases against BNP men being withdrawn

## Cases initiated against AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has started withdrawing corruption cases filed by the immediate past Awami League government against BNP ministers, MPs and leaders.

On the other hand, it has also initiated the process of filing corruption cases against former Awami League ministers, MPs and leaders.

The Bureau of Anti-Corruption (BAC) has formed two special committees to frame charges and file cases against them.

The Bureau is now seeking the Prime Minister's approval by November 10 to file corruption cases against some 50 AL ministers and leaders, businessmen and bureaucrats.

At the same time, a transfer panic has gripped BAC

officials.

According to BAC sources, on instruction from Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the Bureau has started withdrawing various corruption cases against BNP ministers and leaders. The Prime Minister has approved a summary of the Bureau in this regard.

The government has already withdrawn corruption cases against Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain, Labour and Manpower Minister Abdullah Al Noman, State Minister for Science and Technology Lutfor Rahman Khan Azad and former state minister for Environment and Forest and Juba Dal General Secretary Gayeswar Roy.

Besides, BAC is preparing documents for withdrawal of cases against former state minister for religious affairs

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## JS session resumes today

BSS, Dhaka

The sitting of the first session of the eighth Jatiya Sangsad resumes today after a week-long recess.

The parliament went into the recess after the inaugural day of the new parliament on September 28 with election of new Speaker and Deputy Speaker and presidential speech in line with the convention.

Two bills were also tabled in the Parliament to be piloted later in the current session.

The current session would elect the new president of the republic on November 14 as announced by the Election Commission. Parliamentary sources said if there was no other contestant or opposition nominee, the ruling party candidate would be declared elected.

Main opposition Awami League boycotted the inaugural sitting though other opposition parties including two factions of the Jatiya Party joined the parliament.

# Chopper downed, 50 killed, claim Taliban

## Crashed in bad weather, 4 hurt, says US

REUTERS, Kabul

The United States struck Taliban front lines yesterday after staging a daring rescue of a helicopter crew from hostile Afghan territory as the opposition said it had captured ground from the ruling regime.

The Taliban said 40-50 Americans were killed after they shot down a helicopter south of the capital Kabul. The US Central Command vigorously denied this in comments to CNN.

The Taliban militia hanged three supporters of Afghan royalist envoy Hamid Karzai after they were caught in a clash with Taliban fighters, AFP quoting Afghan Islamic Press (AIP) reported.

Militia fighters were keeping up a hunt for Karzai in hills in eastern Afghanistan near where his camp was surprised, the Taliban said.

The three followers were hanged Friday in Deharward district of Urugzan province, the well-connected AIP said quoting unnamed sources.

Karzai was believed to be on a similar undercover mission to Afghan resistance hero Abdul Haq, who the Taliban captured and executed on October 26 along with two associates.

Abdul Haq was trying to organize a rebellion against the Islamic militia. The Taliban executed him as a "US spy."

Karzai's younger brother, Ahmed Karzai, said he had spoken yesterday to his brother who denied that "any of his associates had been arrested or killed" by the Taliban.

Karzai is close to former exiled king Mohammad Zahir Shah, who is the focus of attempts to form a

post-Taliban government if US military operations against the Taliban are successful.

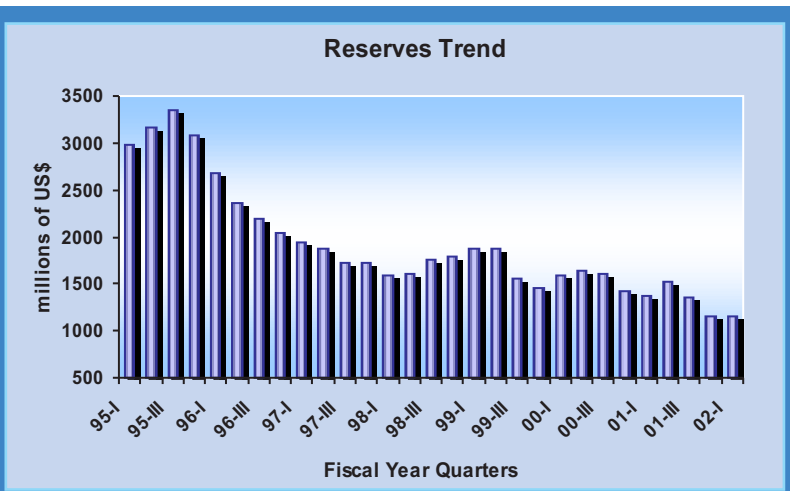
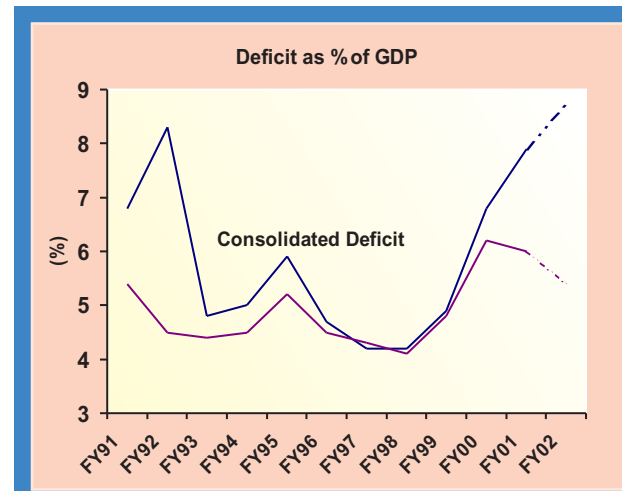
A US helicopter on a special forces mission in Afghanistan crashed in bad weather on Friday, injuring four of its crew, but all were rescued and evacuated by another helicopter on the same mission, the Pentagon said.

But in a version of events that appeared to point to the same incident, the Taliban said it shot down a US helicopter in the Nawoor district of Ghazni province Friday.

The helicopter was trying to rescue another aircraft that had crashed in the area, Qari Fazil Rabi, an Information Ministry official said.

"All together between 40 to 50

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## World Bank suggestions Correct macroeconomic imbalances, fiscal deficits immediately

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank has said the government needs to take immediate measures to correct macroeconomic imbalances in external sector and the rising fiscal deficits now facing further strain following the September 11 attacks in the US.

"The macroeconomic situation has been deteriorating over the last few years," said Frederick T Temple, World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh, while talking to some journalists at his Dhaka office yesterday.

"There has not been much progress in reforms necessary to address the economy's structural problems. While the deficits may have helped sustain growth, they exacerbated the effects of the structural weaknesses and contributed to the current difficulties."

Showing graphs of steadily declining foreign exchange reserve, he said that after the Asia Clearing Union payment due in November, the reserve might go below the \$1 billion mark.

"The steady downward trend in reserves reflects fundamental weaknesses in the economy," Temple observed.

He said IMF bailout facility and the Bank's poverty reduction support facility are two recourses for the government in short-term to steady its reserve position. But, for these the government has to implement reforms

The government needs to undertake structural adjustment programme to remove infrastructure bottlenecks, improve governance and strengthen financial sector. Besides the 'unfavourable' law and order has to be improved and exports diversified to spike reserve, the WB chief said.

"The slowdown in the global economy following the events of September 11 will accelerate the downward trend in exports," he said. "Export growth has turned negative during the last two months and the steady decline in

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## 3-day int'l confce opens in city Dhaka's call to develop common security strategy for S Asia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AQM Badruddoza yesterday said South Asian countries should work for development of a common security strategy bolstering stability and prosperity of the region where problems should be solved through dialogue instead of militarisation.

He also called upon the countries of the region to discard the baggage of the past, and suggested that they give a closely focussed attention on strengthening the SAARC process which has the best chance of harmonious development of South Asia.

The Bangladesh foreign minister put forward the suggestions while inaugurating a three-day international conference on "Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) and Security Cooperation in South Asia: Challenges in the New Century".

Scholars, academics and experts from Germany and the South Asian countries are participating in the conference, hosted by

the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) in collaboration with the German Embassy in Bangladesh.

The opening session was chaired by Director General of the BISS AM Mansur Ahmed and addressed by its Chairman Shafi Sami and German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas.

Badruddoza Chowdhury said, "Security situation in South Asia remains fragile and bogged down in differences and complex problems dividing us."

"We believe, at the beginning of the new millennium, we must free ourselves from the baggage of the past, anachronistic ideas and iniquitous approach to resolution of problems which cannot address the aspirations and needs of our people."

"Prosperity and stability for all in South Asia should be sought in developing a common perspective for the region as a whole," he said adding that "security can best be ensured through peaceful means and dialogue than through over-

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