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## Will political economy come into play, again?

### Saifur faces new challenge in budget today

INAM AHMED

Inside every finance minister there is a political persona struggling to get out. And once the split personality wins, the fallout is a predictable havoc on resource management. But is that going to be the case this year – the first one of the BNP-led coalition?

It will take only hours from now, to be exact, at 3:00pm today, for the curious to know if Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman will win, or his split personality will have the last laugh.

Already that political personality is peeking through whatever figures are leaking out from the government. For one, the ADP has already been bloated to Tk 19,200 crore, a big 20 per cent leap from this fiscal's revised Tk 16,000 crore. The reve-

nue expenditure for the next fiscal has been slated for a modest over 4.5 per cent growth. But this is besides the pension fund requirements.

So, the overall budget will be expansionary in nature, be it from political expediency or from the need to spur investment. But it is understandable that being the first year of the government, pressures are high from party lawmakers to allocate more and more funds for projects. After all, the electorate has to be paid back. And that brings to the fore the question of how the resources will be netted in, specially when the foreign financing portion is on the dip.

But above all, the aura of political economy again creeps in prominence in the way that the budget is going to be formed. Of course, the finance minister can put figures, which he deems

fits his desire and gets the eye-catching headlines. But the revised figures never remain close to the original and even worse, the actual figures are never presented to the parliament. And this double standard dubbed political economy is in practice for years without any corrective measures for a transient do-good image of the economy.

Some of it is expected to visit the next year's budget when borrowing from the bank would be shown zero.

As indications go, the government will eye an ambitious 22 per cent plus revenue growth, a figure never achieved in the past -- the closest being in 1992 when the introduction of VAT pushed the revenue growth rate to some 21 per cent.

Certain amount of optimism can be justified to inspire the

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## United States stunner

REUTERS, Suwon, South Korea

The United States recorded its greatest soccer victory in over half a century when they upset fancied Portugal 3-2 in their World Cup opening group D clash yesterday.

The US, who lost all of their group matches at the last tournament in 1998, took a surprise 3-0 lead after just 36 minutes with goals from midfielders John O'Brien and Landon Donovan and forward Brian McBride.

"We put the pressure on and we took advantage of our chances," McBride said. "The second half was probably (a case of) stand back a little bit, but we hunkered down and held them off."

The Portuguese, appearing at their first finals since 1986, pulled a goal back just before the interval from defender Beto Severo. After piling on the pressure in the second half, an own goal from U.S. defender Jeff Agoos put the Portuguese within striking range.

But they failed to stop the huge

shock, which rivalled the 1-0 defeat of England by the United States in the 1950 tournament.

The U.S. last won a game at the finals in 1994 on their home soil when they beat Colombia 2-1 in a group game and reached the second round before going out to Brazil. They have not scored three goals in one match at the tournament since 1930.

Portugal, semi-finalists at Euro 2000, were expected to make a

serious challenge after scoring more goals than any other European nation in the qualifying competition.

But the United States, 300-1 outsiders to win the tournament compared to Portugal's 12-1, caught them cold with an early goal in the fourth minute.

O'Brien pounced at the post to

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## DHL Spec Report

## World Environment Day Shed inertia, act now: Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday said the movement for protection of the environment should no longer be confined to some formal activities like meetings, seminars or distribution of leaflets.

Khaleda called for an end to inertia and for voluntary services to preserve the environment without the help of the government and foreign funds.

"Let's not be casual. We should be more serious about it because a big environmental disaster is close to us," she told a function, referring to an expert view that 15 per cent of the country's landmass may go

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## Central AL rebels face the axe

### Paltu, Monaem on the list

REAZ AHMAD

Seven central leaders of opposition Awami League might be stripped of their party positions at the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) meeting scheduled for June 10.

AL President Sheikh Hasina will chair the meeting of the 67-member ALCWC which is also likely to take actions against another over 500 party men for anti-party activities in the last parliamentary election, party sources said.

The actions will include expulsion, suspension from party positions and warning, a member of AL Presidium told this correspondent seeking anonymity.

The seven leaders are AL Joint Secretary Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Science and Technology Secretary

Monaem Sarkar, Assistant Office Secretary Siddiqur Rouf Khan, Assistant Publicity Secretary Nurul Fazul Bulbul and executive committee members Prof Fazlul Haq, Phulu Sarkar and Nurul Majid Humayun. Some of them may lose primary membership of the party, the sources said.

The actions will be taken as per recommendations of AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman, made in his report submitted to the party chief on May 28.

A total of 540 party men including the seven were issued show-cause notices after the election.

The June 10 meeting is also expected to review of national budget for fiscal 2002-2003 to be placed in the Jatiya Sangsad today, the sources said.

AL expelled 24 party leaders including Presidium

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PHOTO: AFP

Irish forward Robbie Keane (L) slots the equaliser in the extra time past German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn during the Group E first round match in the World Cup at Kashima Ibaraki Stadium in Japan.

## Cliff-hanger finish for Ireland

REUTERS, Ibaraki, Japan

Robbie Keane scored an equaliser deep into injury time to keep Ireland's World Cup hopes alive in a 1-1 draw with Germany yesterday.

The Irish looked to have lost, sending Germany through to the second round, after striker Miroslav Klose scored his fourth goal of the tournament to give the Germans a 1-0 lead at the end of normal time in group E.

But with seconds of injury time left, a nod-on by towering substitute Niall Quinn left Keane clear and he rapped the ball jubilantly home for a memorable equaliser.

Irish manager Mick McCarthy said: "What's the point of coming here and going out without a fight? Great result. I'm delighted for Quinny who got involved and, of course, Robbie gets his goal."

"We've given ourselves a chance, haven't we? We have to go and play

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## Grameen Match Report

## India for dual patrol along Kashmir front

### Pakistan refuses

AFP, Almaty

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee yesterday offered joint patrols with Pakistan of their disputed border in Kashmir which is at the center of a dangerous military standoff between the nuclear rivals.

"If Pakistan decides that it will not support infiltration then both countries can set up a joint patrolling mechanism. This proposal can be considered," the Indian premier said.

India claims that Pakistan armed and funded militants operating in the Indian zone of Kashmir and has demanded that this stop before any peace talks can begin.

"For verification India and Pakistan can have an agreement of joint patrolling," he said.

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## Car bomb kills 16 in Israel

MEGIDDO, Israel

A Palestinian car bomb exploded next to a passenger bus packed with civilians and soldiers in northern Israel yesterday, killing at least 16 people and wounding dozens, security officials said.

The attack was a major new setback to international efforts to end 20 months of Israeli-Palestinian violence. It followed two days of talks between US CIA Director George Tenet and Palestinian and Israeli leaders.

The blast coincided with the 35th anniversary of the start of the 1967 Middle East war in which Israel seized the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where Palestinians now want to establish a state.

The militant Palestinian group Islamic Jihad, in a telephone call to al-Manar television station in

Lebanon, said it carried out the bombing near Megiddo, the Hebrew name for Armageddon.

The car blew up during the morning rush hour at the Megiddo road junction. The bus was on its way from Tel Aviv to Tiberias by the Sea of Galilee.

A chunk of mangled metal was all that remained of the car-bomb and the bus. The explosion sprayed body parts and debris for hundreds of metres (yards) across a main highway.

Security officials said at least 16 people had been killed in the blast, a few kilometres (miles) from the "green line" border with the West Bank.

"I could not get near the bus, it was too hot. We pulled casualties away from the bus. Personnel came out of the nearby prison. We started

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## Hasina wonders if gas is safe with govt

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday wondered if natural gas would be safe in the hands of present government that came to power "giving an undertaking of selling out gas."

"This government, which has no concern for the nation, can do anything to hold on to power," she said, calling upon the people to decide whether gas would be utilised for removing poverty or sold

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