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## Economy poised for big growth

### BB board says healthy exports, term loan pick-up bode well

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh expects a robust economic growth this fiscal year, even beyond the projected 5.5 percent, because of an impressive export recovery, industrial output growth on the back of a pickup in term loans, and a slowdown in inflation rate.

A strong agriculture will only fuel the growth and an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) would add more spark, the board of the

Bangladesh Bank (BB) observed yesterday.

However, if the frail law and order situation and political turmoil prevail, the growth leap may be hampered, the board yesterday observed during a press conference at the BB conference room.

In the first eight months of this fiscal year, exports clocked a 14 percent growth compared to last fiscal year's 7 percent, imports of raw materials and intermediate goods rose by 22 percent against last

fiscal year's 14 percent and 8 percent. Import of capital machinery jumped by 17 percent in the eight months of this fiscal year against last fiscal year's 20 percent. In the first six months of this fiscal year, industrial output grew by 7.2 percent and disbursement of industrial term loans increased by 76 percent.

The BB data also showed inflation is slowly easing from as high as 6.7 percent in November to 5.8 in February, which Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud, member of the BB board,

put to better agriculture output.

Figures showed aus and aman rice output this year posted 4.7 percent growth. The total foodgrains output in FY04 is projected to be 281.01 lakh MT, about 5.3 percent higher than the 266.95 lakh MT produced in the previous year. "The outlook for agriculture appears favourable in FY2004 with reports of good aman harvest estimated at 117.4 lakh metric ton (MT) compared with 111.2 lakh MT produced

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## Health minister to face trial on graft charge

UNB, Dhaka

Health Minister Khandoker Mosharraf Hossain is to face trial on corruption charge brought by the Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) in 1998.

His petition for quashing the case pending with the lower court was dismissed by the High Court on Sunday. With its order the stay on trial process stands vacated.

A division bench comprising Justice Sheikh Reziwan Ali and Justice A F M Ali Asgar pronounced the verdict discharging the rule after a lengthy hearing.

Bac filed the case during the Awami League rule against Mosharraf who was minister in charge of Energy & Mineral Resources during the previous BNP rule.

He was accused of awarding

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## AL retreats from Apr 30 deadline

### Hasina says government may fall before or after the day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday said there were all possibilities of the government's fall before or after its April 30 deadline in an apparent retreat from its position of unseating the coalition by the timetable.

"They will go, if not by this 30th, then by another 30th. They had to quit office on March 30, 1996," AL President Sheikh Hasina told a news conference at the party headquarters on Bangabandhu Avenue.

Urging her political arch-rival and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to stand down immediately, she said: "If they want to cling to power using force even after April 30, their future will be very grim."

"There is a massive response at home and abroad, especially among the countrymen, to the deadline and it is our big achievement," Hasina,

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Leader of the Opposition and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina speaks at a press conference in the party's Bangabandhu Avenue headquarters yesterday. AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil is seen on the right.

## Big farm subsidy on cards

### Committee to be formed to talk ministry's proposal

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The finance ministry yesterday decided to inject a significant amount in the sector for greater crop output in response to an agriculture ministry proposal.

"We have no choice but to increase agriculture subsidy considering the reality," said Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, who took the decision at a meeting with Agriculture Minister MK Anwar at his office yesterday.

Agriculture ministry sought to triple the current farm subsidy of Tk 300cr for the next fiscal year.

The finance ministry did not fully accept the proposal for Tk 1,000cr subsidy, but it decided to form a committee with representation from both ministries. The committee, to be formed within a couple of days, will specify how this subsidy will be given to farmers.

"Our population is increasing alarmingly while the cultivatable

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PHOTO: STAR

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rescued these seven boys from a suspected human traffickers' den in Kakrail yesterday after the boys were brought there allegedly to be sold as camel jockeys in the Middle East.

## CAMEL JOCKEYS

### 7 boys set to be sent out rescued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday rescued seven boys brought to the capital from Comilla allegedly for trafficking to the Middle East as camel jockey.

The Rab also arrested three alleged child traffickers - Sarwar Hossain Sumon, the ringleader; Zahurul Alam and Abdul Jalil - in this connection.

A Rab team rescued the boys and made the arrests from a

house at Kakrail in a four-hour raid. It also seized a large number of passports, photographs of children and women, seals of government officials, money-detecting machine and fake

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## INDO-PAK TEST

### Series go down to the wire

REUTERS, Rawalpindi

India captain Sourav Ganguly may open the batting in the deciding third Test against Pakistan after Akash Chopra was dropped from the team.

Ganguly, who missed the first two Tests due to a back injury, left Chopra out of the playing XI for the Test starting on Tuesday to accommodate left-hander Yuvraj Singh following his blistering maiden Test century at Lahore last week.

"The role of Virender Schwag's opening partner will have to be filled by Yuvraj or me," Ganguly told reporters.

"We brought Yuvraj here as a back-up opener but it's a tough decision to remove the batsman from a position where he's scoring hundreds."

Yuvraj, batting at number six in place of the injured Ganguly, slammed a 59 in the first Test at Multan and followed it up with an

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## Pak foreign secy due on April 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokar arrives in Dhaka on April 18 on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

Khokar, who also served as the Pakistan high commissioner in Dhaka earlier, is scheduled to hold talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury on bilateral and regional issues.

According to foreign ministry sources, they will discuss a possible

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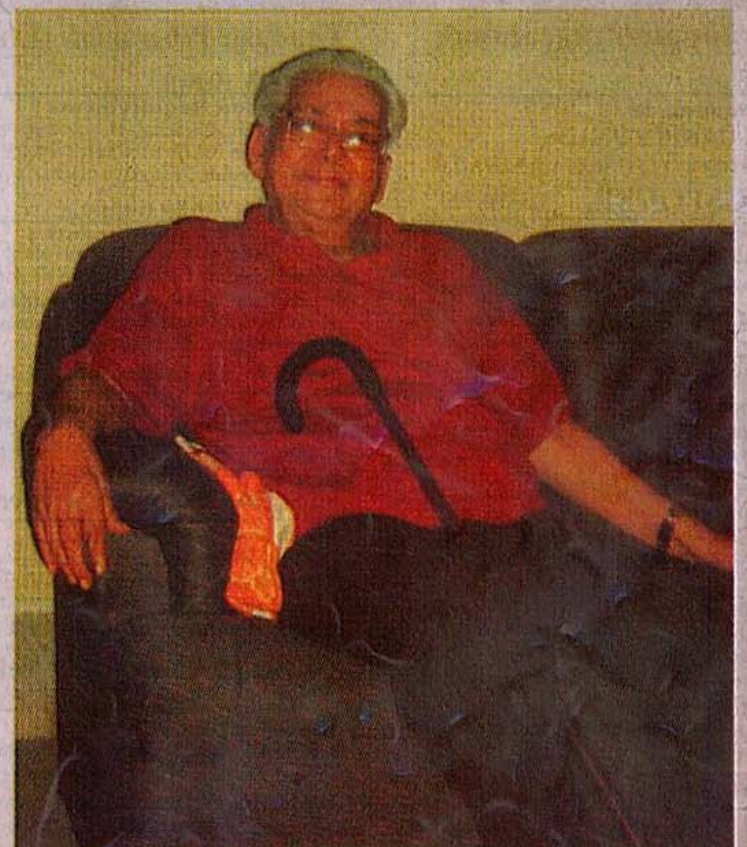
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## Death Anniversary



Today is the 4th death anniversary of Md. Zahurul Haque former Director General, Ansar & VDP. Relatives, Friends, Well-wishers are requested to pray for the departed soul.

Family Members

All employees of WESTECS

Health, Safety & Environment

## HSE AWARD

Mr. A.T.M Rafiq Ahmed, Managing Partner and Mr. Sk. Mujibur Rahman, Partner of I.B.S Associates (Shipping Agent, C&F Agent and Equipment Suppliers) receiving Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) awards from Mr. Wayne Dinham, Field Manager of Sangu Operations, a joint venture of Kellogg Brown & Root Bangladesh Ltd, Shell Bangladesh Exploration and Development B.V, Cairn Energy PLC and Halliburton in Recognition of HSE Excellence 4,000,000 man hours with zero Lost Time Incidents

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