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BBS FORECAST FOR CURRENT FISCAL YEAR GDP growth to fall, per capita income to rise

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The country's GDP growth will fall 0.12 percentage point in the current fiscal year coming down to 6.51 percent due to low performance of the agriculture sector and shortage of electricity, projects Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

However, per capita income is expected to increase by a record 10 percent reaching \$520 from last year's \$476.

BBS has also set its final calculation of GDP (gross domestic product) growth rate in FY2005-06 at 6.63 percent, which was 6.71 percent in its provisional estimate, a planning ministry source said.

The BBS projection might be realistic in terms of industrial and agriculture sectors' output, but its estimation on the service sector output for the current fiscal year is questionable, Zaid Bakht, research director of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), observed.

According to BBS, the agriculture and forestry sector, which represents 17 percent of the GDP basket, marked a 2.95 percent growth this year, compared to 5.23 percent in FY'06.

In FY'05, agriculture production suffered due to floods, but the growth of agriculture production in FY'06 was very high, Zaid said. But since the agriculture pro-

duction, especially of rice, has been hampered in the current fiscal, the overall agriculture growth might go down compared to the previous fiscal, he noted.

According to a central bank estimation, and among production in the current fiscal has declined to 1.24 crore tonnes from last year's 1.25 crore tonnes.

Meanwhile, BBS estimates that boro production in the current fiscal is 1.45 crore tonnes, which was 1.39 crore tonnes last year. The estimated boro production might not be achieved due to a problem of sterility in paddies, sources concerned said.

Zaid said if the production of

No new power generation before Sept '08 Says Tapan Chy

UNB, Dhaka

Pointing to a grim scenario of the country's power and energy sector, Energy and Power Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday said no new electricity generation is coming before September 2008.

He said the country's only future option for alternative energy will be coal as the existing gas reserves are likely to be depleted by 2011 or 2012.

"If we don't have a new discovery of natural gas, then coal will be the only option," he told reporters at a Meet the Press programme. The Forum for Energy Reporters, Bangladesh (FERB) organised the function at Square Hospital auditorium in the city.

Tapan Chowdhury said the caretaker government is trying to add about 200MW electricity to the



This steel bridge connecting the capital with suburb on Kamrangirchar on the other side of the Buriganga River is now in a vulnerable condition as the ground holding the pillars has loosened.

Controversial UEOs face 'fitness test'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The military backed caretaker government yesterday gave an examination to around 300 upazila election officers (UEOs) who had been appointed by the immediate past BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government on political consideration.

The test was given to 'examine the UEOs merit and qualifications'. Sources however said the examination of 100 marks, comprising 55 marks on MCQs and 45 on essay type answers, was given as part of the government's move to bring reforms to the electoral system including the Election Commission (EC), and to end the long standing controversy regarding the political appointments.

The two-hour long examination was held in the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) of Dhaka University amid tight

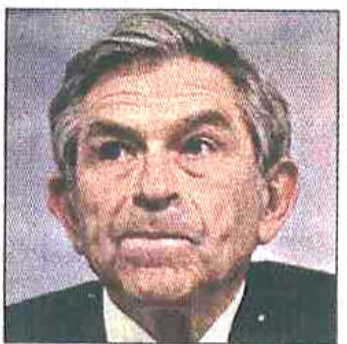
Wolfowitz bows to pressure, steps down June 30

AFP, Washington

World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz bowed to weeks of pressure and agreed to step down June 30 to end a favoritism scandal that had rocked the poverty-fighting institution.

Wolfowitz, 63, said on Thursday he was resigning in the "best interests" of the bank, thus ending a protracted controversy over a generous pay and promotions package for his girlfriend, Shaha Riza.

"I have concluded that it is in the best interests of those whom this institution serves for that mission to be carried forward under new leadership," Wolfowitz said in a



statement after three days of deliberations by the World Bank board. Wolfowitz violated bank rules in arranging a generous promotion and pay package for Riza shortly

after he assumed the bank presidency in June 2005, according to an internal World Bank report made public Monday.

Riza ended up earning almost 200,000 dollars a year when she was transferred to the State Department while still on the Bank's payroll.

The report also said the bank gave Wolfowitz vague instructions on how to resolve the possible conflict of interest over Riza.

Wolfowitz said in his statement that he "acted ethically and in good faith" in what he believed "were the best interests of the institution, including protecting the rights of a valued staff member."

Salman, Sohail sued on land grabbing charge

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Beximco Chairman Sohail F Rahman and his brother Salman F Rahman, vice-chairman of the same company, were sued for grabbing government land and building a business establishment on it in Gazipur.

Borhan Uddin, an official of Kashimpur union land office, filed the case with Joydebpur Police Station Thursday night.

In the case the complainant alleged that the accused on different dates since 1997 filled a government land of 2.68 acres at Kashimpur in Gazipur with earth and illegally established Shinepukur Ceramics Ltd, a sister

EC's stand raises questions Why this hurried rejection of army experts' timetable?

MAHIFUZ ANAM

When the people of the country are eagerly waiting for the earliest possible election and when all concerned are repeatedly reassuring us that all efforts are afoot to hold one as soon as possible, the principal body in charge of making that a reality, appears to be sending out very confusing signals, giving rise to serious questions in the public mind.

We are obviously referring to the Wednesday's army given timetable of 5 to 6 months needed for making a voter list with photographs and national identity cards, and the

Thursday's rejection of it by the Election Commission (EC), saying that the task requires 18 months minimum.

Let us go back a bit. The chief election commissioner (CEC) on April 5 said he would need 18 months to hold the election. He divided the time required into two parts -- six months for preparatory work and 12 months for field work -- so that the election could be held at the end of that period. Later, on several occasions, he even mentioned that the election might be held earlier if things move fast enough. In fact, we should congratulate him because he did move fast.

On the 14th of this month after meeting the chief adviser, the CEC told the nation, through the press, that he was ready to start the field level work from August. Obviously this implies that all preparatory work will be completed by July, which means he will have done in four months what he had planned to do in six.

Adding to our speedy movement towards the election, the chief adviser, on every occasion he gets, reiterates his determination to hold the election as early as possible, the last being during his meeting with the Korean

FEW INTERNS RETURN TO WORK Five more patients die at RMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Five more patients died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) yesterday amid virtual work abstention of the intern doctors.

Earlier, in absence of treatment facilities due to the strike that intern doctors called following a clash with patients' attendants on Wednesday afternoon, four patients died and many others left the hospital without treatment.

The five patients who died yesterday include two children and an elderly person from Bogra, a RMCH official told reporters last night.

Only a very few interns joined the work at some emergency wards following the RMCH director's notice, witnesses and RMCH sources said.

At a press conference yesterday evening, where some 60 interns of a total of 150 working at the hospital attended, the interns said they temporarily withdrew the strike till Saturday.

That day they will sit with the RMCH director demanding security and resume their strike if the meeting fails, they said.

After reading out a written statement, intern Dr Soye Sarwar

BNP men in dilemma over party reforms

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The BNP seems to be in disarray with a group of senior leaders ready to go all out to reform the party while those of mid-level still keen to keep Khaleda Zia at the helm.

The grassroots level leaders and workers meanwhile continue to be in the dark about what would become of the party and them.

Many of the former ministers and lawmakers are trying to mobilise support in favour of reforms as they feel the imperative now is to ensure intra-party transparency, accountability and democracy through bringing about radical changes, said party sources.

"In the post-emergency

Bangladesh, a political party cannot do without reforms and decisions on the prospective changes should follow discussions at different tiers including the grassroots level leaders," Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul, a former lawmaker, told The Daily Star last night.

A party insider said some senior leaders including Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan are trying to gauge the future of Zia family in BNP politics. Some others including Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka who too are believed to be loyal to Bhuiyan have called for measures aimed at curbing absolute power of the chairperson.

Meanwhile, the recent extortion

Foreign student 'abducted' earlier leaves SBMC without notice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Palestinian first year student of Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College (SBMC) left the institution bag and baggage without prior notice or permission from the authorities.

On May 1, 4 and 11 Jalal Ahmed Yusuf Hamed, the Palestinian student, alleged that he was abducted, beaten, had his money snatched and someone wanted to kill him by mixing poison in his drinking water. The allegations created a sensation on the campus.

However, an enquiry body, formed by the college authorities,

Shady groups active again as FBCCI election nears

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

A quarter, which has long been allegedly damaging the image of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) by using it in their personal interest, has again become active ahead of the apex trade body's biennial election.

With the election to be completed by August 20, the leaders of some associations and chambers--that many consider as fake--are now very prominent in the federation building or around like previ-

ous years. Sources said the aim of these leaders is to remain available for bidding votes to intending candidates.

Sources also alleged that there is more than one loan defaulter on the FBCCI board of directors involved with this "vote business".

A few loan defaulters are even planning to contest the next election since loan defaulting does not restrict or disqualify one for contesting although it does so in case of national election or those of other bodies, the sources added.

Wife meets Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman expressed worries about his mother Khaleda Zia and younger brother when his wife and mother-in-law visited him at the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday, said family sources.

Tarique's wife Dr Zubaida Khan Rahman and her mother Syeda Iqbal Mand Banu reached the jail gate at 4:15pm and met Tarique in the senior jail superintendent's room.

They talked for around 30 minutes in presence of the deputy jailer and an official of the Special Branch (SB) of police.

"He denied meeting Giasuddin Al Mamun in the jail as reported in a newspaper recently," Tarique's

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