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Govt sees 6.21pc GDP growth, lower inflation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government estimates that the GDP (Gross Domestic Product) will grow by 6.21 percent in the current fiscal year (FY2007-08), despite fears that economic growth might dip as much as one percentage point.

Besides, inflation rate has dropped to 7.66 percent, as point-to-point inflation fell by 2.4 percentage points between March and April, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said yesterday.

He was talking to the reporters after yesterday's National Economic Council (NEC) meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have both said over the past year that they fear the GDP growth may fall by around one percentage

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Revenue spending to up 40pc, ADP cut 3.39pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a rare budgetary move, the government yesterday approved a reduced Annual Development Programme (ADP) of Tk 25,600 crore for the next fiscal year (FY09), which is 3.39 percent less than the original ADP of the current fiscal year.

The government is also looking to boost the revenue budget by nearly 40 percent in the new budget to be announced tomorrow.

The ADP is usually increased in each budget from the previous year's original ADP to suggest rising development spending despite low implementation rates.

The original ADP for FY08 was Tk 26,500 crore, which was later revised at Tk 22,500 crore.

The approval for the reduced

ADP came at a meeting of the National Economic Council chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed.

"The ADP has been kept small because we did not want to plan for an ambitious ADP," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters after the meeting. "Every year, ambitious ADPs are announced despite knowing that it would not be implemented," he added.

The BNP-led four-party coalition government spent Tk 19,437 crore of their ADP in FY06, the highest in the country's history.

"They spent that much as it was an election year and the amount was allocated for politically important areas, so it was not quality expenditure," Azizul said, adding that compared to that the approved

ADP for FY09 is "more reasonable."

"If one takes inflation into account, the real size of the ADP is much smaller than it appears," he said.

In the last 10 months of the current fiscal year, Tk 12,367 crore of the ADP was implemented, which is 46 percent of the original ADP and 55 percent of the revised.

The ADP approved for the coming fiscal year will account for roughly one-quarter of the total budget, which is far smaller than in the previous years.

Azizul said the revenue and ADP budgets are artificially separated because they both have an equal amount of impact on people's lives.

Meanwhile, sources said the revenue budget for FY09 may go up

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Free Hasina unconditionally Demands AL

UNB, Dhaka

Renewing their demand for the unconditional release of Sheikh Hasina, Awami League central leaders yesterday threatened to wage a nonstop agitation programme if their demand is not met.

They also said the party will arrange everything for her medical treatment.

"Set our party chief free. We'll take care of her. Otherwise, AL will be compelled to wage a nonstop agitation programme to free our popular leader," AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said.

He was addressing a discussion arranged at the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue marking the historic Six-Point Day.

Presided over by presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, the discussion was addressed, among others, by other presidium members Tofail Ahmed, Abdur

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Hasina, Khaleda may be allowed to have treatment abroad by end-June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The detained chiefs of Awami League and BNP may be allowed to go abroad for medical treatment by the end of this month if they sit for the pre-polls dialogue with the government, said sources.

As a further inducement for BNP chief Khaleda Zia's participation, a medical board will also examine her detained son Tarique Rahman's health today to see if he also needs treatment abroad, said sources.

A government-formed medical board has already suggested that her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko should go abroad for treatment.

However, both the major parties

continue asserting that their leaders don't wish to go abroad and demanded their unconditional release.

"Sheikh Hasina should be sent abroad [for treatment] only after unconditional release," Syed Ashrafur Islam, Awami League acting general secretary, said yesterday.

On the other hand, BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret) Hannan Shah said Khaleda has no intention to go abroad for treatment under the reported "conditional arrangement".

He however said the government should immediately send Koko abroad for treatment as suggested by the medical board.

Meanwhile, senior leaders from

both parties trashed the idea of a "minus-two" theory or sending the two former premiers on exile.

"The minus-two theory is over and now we hope the government will come to its good senses to release our leader [Hasina]," Syed Ashraf said.

Hannan Shah echoed the same view, saying the government "plans" to arrange for Khaleda's exit from the country would "neverwork".

Highly placed sources said following the unofficial discussions with both the former premiers, the interim administration is now working to find out a way to release them in an accepted-to-all manner.

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BIWTA places an excavator on a barge instead of using a dredger to maintain navigability in the Buriganga near Lalbagh in the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

ARREST DRIVE 1,631 more held in 24 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces arrested 1,631 people, including 96 in the capital, in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday in the ongoing anti-crime drives across the country.

Of the detainees 1,080 were held on warrants, six under the Arms Act, one under the Explosive Substances Act and 521 on various other charges. Twenty of the arrested are convicts while two are listed criminals.

With the latest arrests, the number of people rounded up across the country since the launch of the crackdown on May 28 stands at

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CRICKET TRI-SERIES Tigers face Pakistan in opener today

BISHWAJIT ROY

The country is set for an emotional ride when the Kityp Cup tri-nation one-day cricket series kicks off at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today with Bangladesh taking on Pakistan in the opening match.

The only concern is that rain, a common phenomenon at this time of year, might defuse the excitement which promises to be aplenty during the weeklong meet with the involvement of India as the third

team. The weather forecast for today is light to moderate rain or thundershowers, but the country's home of cricket with a developed drainage system promises its first full 50-over match under magnificent lights even in case of a sudden spell of shower.

For Bangladesh, as it has been the case, it will be a promise to bring rare smile on the faces of millions and of course throwing a fresh Tiger into the deep end

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No one is held without specific charges: IGP


OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police are not arresting anyone without specific allegation during the ongoing special drive across the country, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Nur Mohammad said yesterday.

"Police are only arresting the ones who are accused in cases or have arrest warrants against them," said the police chief at the launching ceremony of official website of Chittagong range of police.

He brushed aside allegations that the special drive is politically motivated, targeting political

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We mourn

We, the management and employees of Commercial Bank of Ceylon deeply mourn the tragic and untimely demise of our beloved colleague Mr. A. R. Samanthilake who expired on 6 June 2008.

Mr. Samanthilake was an epitome of humility and perseverance and the loss of him with his amiable personality has left permanent void in the minds of all who associated with him.

We pray to the Almighty for the eternal peace of his departed soul and stand beside the bereaved family.

The management of the Bank wishes to convey its thanks and gratitude to H. E. The High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Bangladesh and the officials of the High Commission, all employees of the Bank, officials of the law enforcing agencies, management of both Dhaka Medical College Hospital and the City Hospital, the reverend Chief Priest of Kamlapur Bouddha Bihar, the members of the Sri Lankan community in Bangladesh and all the others who have extended their heartfelt support and cordial assistance during the entire process of late Saman's hospitalization to the cremation.



COMMERCIAL BANK
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GRAFT CASE Charge sheet against Khoka, family next week

UNB, Dhaka

The investigation report of the graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) against Dhaka City Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and his family will be submitted early next week.

"The investigation into the case against Khoka and his wife, son and daughter is at the final stage. Shamsul Islam, the investigation officer (IO), will submit the memo of evidence (investigation report) early next week recommending submission of charge sheet," a competent source told the news agency.

The charge sheet in the case, subject to the approval of the ACC, will be submitted against the four,

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5 killed in Sirajganj road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least five people were killed and 32 others injured yesterday as a bus collided with a truck on the Dhaka-Bogra highway at Raiganj in Sirajganj.

Of the deceased, one was identified as Farhad Hossain Bachchu, 26, of Kawnia village in Rangpur. The identity of other four could not be known immediately.

Police and witnesses said a Kurigram-bound bus of Molla Enterprise from Dhaka collided head-on with a goods-laden truck at Ghurka Beltola in Raiganj upazila at about 7:15pm leaving four people dead on the spot and 33 injured.

Of the wounded, one died on

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