



Colours dominate the grand opening ceremony of the FIFA World Cup 2010 at the Soccer City stadium in Johannesburg yesterday.

## Budget not ambitious

Muhith defends size; says many of opposition's proposals already included

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday firmly defended the Tk 132,170 crore national budget for the next financial year.

He said the proposed budget is not an ambitious one, rather it is a necessity given the size of the population.

He was speaking at a post-budget press conference at the National Economic Council auditorium.

Describing BNP's "alternative budget" as unnecessary, Muhith said he had already included 50 percent of their proposals. "Twenty percent more were in my budget speech."

He urged the opposition to participate in parliamentary debate on the budget for FY 2010-11.

The minister observed this year is different as prices of every day commodities have



remained unchanged even after the presentation of the budget.

A price hike of essentials with a budget being proposed in parliament had turned into a culture. But that was not the case this time, he added.

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## WC explodes with colour

Grieving Mandela misses ceremony

AFP, Johannesburg

Africa's first football World Cup began with an explosion of colour and emotion in a ceremony in Johannesburg's Soccer City Friday, but blighted by the absence of a heartbroken Nelson Mandela.

Fans wept openly as five planes swept over the stadium and the iconic township of Soweto before 1,500 performers piled on to the pitch for a choreographed dance routine which saw them create a map of Africa.

Mandela was missing after his great granddaughter was killed in a car crash on the way back from an eve of tournament concert but his words were interspersed in an opening song, imploring fans to "overcome all adversity".

Artists from the six African teams competing in the finals then took to the stage, including Khaled, the Algerian king of rai music, Nigeria's

Femi Kuti and South Africa's legendary trumpeter Hugh Masekela. The Cameroonian national ballet performed as did Ghanaian band Osibisa.

Organisers had hoped South Africa's first black president Mandela would wow the crowds with an appearance but he was instead mourning the death of 13-year-old Zenani Mandela in a crash police said was caused by a drunk driver.

Mandela is 91 and has been in frail health.

"We are sure that South Africans and people all over the world will stand in solidarity with Mr Mandela and his family in the aftermath of this tragedy," said his foundation. "Madiba will be there with you in spirit."

Zenani Mandela's death is the latest tragedy to hit the Nobel laureate. One of his sons died of AIDS while another was killed in a car crash during Mandela's 27 years in jail as a prisoner of the whites-only apartheid



regime.

"The nation shares your loss and mourns with you, especially on the day on which our dreams and hopes come alive," said South African President Jacob Zuma.

In a letter to Mandela, FIFA president Sepp Blatter said he had been stunned "to hear the unspeakably tragic news."

Both men were present at the opening, alongside 78-year-old Nobel

laureate Desmond Tutu who danced along in a yellow and green South African team strip.

The ground was far from full for the opening ceremony as park and ride buses struggled through traffic jams and a special train service suffered delays.

Ever since it was awarded the tournament six years ago, South Africa has had to fend off accusations that its poor infrastructure and high crime rate meant it could not stage an event of such magnitude.

The hosts hope that a successful tournament with world renowned names such as Argentina's Lionel Messi, Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo and England's Wayne Rooney will overturn perceptions of Africa as the hopeless continent -- a place regarded by many as synonymous with war, famine and AIDS.

"The World Cup must make the world see the beautiful land

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## Growth target challenging

CPD says in its budget reaction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said yesterday the government has set an ambitious economic and investment target for fiscal 2010-11.

In the proposed budget, the government forecast a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate at 6.7 percent and gross investment as percentage of GDP at 26.4 percent, which the CPD said is ambitious.

"The growth target for FY11 has been ambitiously set at 6.7 percent, particularly in the context of uncertainty in the industrial sector," the leading think tank said in its budget analysis telecast live by a private TV channel from Brac Centre Inn in Dhaka.

Currently, industries are facing a shortage of gas, electricity and an uncertainty in external demand, the CPD said.

"It'll be challenging to attain the 6.7 percent growth; rather a target between 6 percent and 6.5 percent may be more realistic," said Mustafizur Rahman, executive director of the CPD.

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CPD OBSERVES

- 6.7pc GDP growth target is ambitious
- Tax-free income deserves a revisit
- The size of the budget is pragmatic
- Integrated policy is absent in PPP

PM sees no problem in implementation  
Says it's common people's budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brushing aside the criticism that the proposed budget is too ambitious, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the budget was formulated to ensure the people's economic freedom, and her government will be able to implement it.

"None can say that it is an anti-poor budget. This budget is for the common people. Inshaallah, we will be able to

implement it," she told reporters in her official residence Gono Bhaban on the occasion of the second anniversary of her release from a special jail.

She was released from the jail on this day in 2008 after being incarcerated for 11 months during the immediate past

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## 3 pirates killed in 'shootout'

UNB, Barguna

Three pirates were killed and two Rapid Action Battalion members injured in a "shootout" between the law enforcers and pirates in the river Baleswar near Chardoi in Patharghata upazila early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a joint team of Rab and Coast Guard conducted a drive in the area at about 2:00 am and challenged a trawler carrying 15-20 pirates of Raju Bahini.

The pirates were heading towards deep-sea area to commit piracy.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, the pirates opened fire on them, prompting the elite force to fire back.

Three pirates - Kuddus Molla, the leader of the gang, Aroj Ali and Idris Ali died on

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## Another victim of Nimtoli fire dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another victim of the June 3 Nimtoli blaze succumbed to her injuries at the capital's Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday.

The deceased was Mahmuda, 32. More information of the victim could not be known immediately. With this the death toll of the Nimtoli inferno stands at 121.

With 43 percent burns, Mahmuda died at 10:00am, said Samantala Sen, project director of the Burn and

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## NBR fixes transit, transhipment fees

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has set fees for transhipment and transit of goods from neighbouring countries, as Bangladesh is getting ready to offer the service.

The related statutory regulatory order (SRO) was issued on Thursday while the finance minister was saying in his budget speech that the next budget pays attention to boosting regional and sub-regional cooperation with neighbouring countries -- India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, and China.

He also highlighted opening up Bangladesh's ports for transhipment and transit of goods from India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

The fees will be Tk 10,000 per TEU container if the cargo is transported by road or rail in such containers; and Tk 1,000 per tonne of cargo if

transported by covered vans or trucks, or in bulk by non-container ships and trains.

The SRO titled "Rules for Customs Management of Commodities in Transhipment and Transit 2010" will go into effect on July 1.

The move comes in line with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's commitment to provide transit and transhipment facility to neighbouring India as part of regional cooperation.

Providing such facilities to Nepal and Bhutan is also under consideration. However, no formal agreement has yet been signed with any country in that regard.

NBR officials said the fees were fixed in advance to expedite the service when agreements will be signed.

The circular says controlled items like arms and ammunition, alcoholic drinks and narcotics,

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## Mother, 2 children found dead

Police suspect 'suicide'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman and her two children were found dead in their house in the capital's Jurain area yesterday.

Farzana Kabir Rita, her 12-year old son Ishrat Kabir Pabon and 10-year old daughter Raisa Rashmi Payel might have committed suicide by taking sedatives, said Towfique Mahbub, deputy commissioner of Wari Division.

Zinnat Ara, who works as house help in their residence, said when she entered the house to work at about 10:30am yesterday, she found the three lying on a bed.

She tried to wake them up but none of them responded. Then she rushed to Rita's uncle, who lives in a nearby house, the maid said.

Rita's elder sister Mita Akther said Rita had an affair with businessman Rashedel Kabir and got married about 18 years ago.

She said the relationship between Rita and her husband Rashed got strained after Rashed's second marriage with her cousin Smriti.

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## Kutubkhali canal on death throes

HELEMUL ALAM

Unabated encroachment and continuous dumping of solid waste into the Kutubkhali Khal in Dhaka have put the canal in a very sorry state.

Around 200 illegal structures have been constructed on the canal stretching from Chittagong Road to Dholapar.

The canal, which is now 10 to 12 feet wide, was around 80 feet wide in the 70's and was linked with the Buriganga at Sadarghat. Now the water in the canal is blocked at Dholapar Bazar.

Waterlogging has become a serious problem for the people living near the canal as even the lightest of showers causes waterlogging. The locals blame this encroachment and dumping of waste in the canal.

Abdul Mannan, a resident of South Jatrabari, said around 2,500 students of Jatrabari Madrasa got trapped in the madrasa after a moderate raining as one to three feet deep rainwater surrounds the institution.

Belayet Hossain, a resident of South Jatrabari and Kutubkhali remain under two to three feet of rainwater for about 10 days after a half-an-hour of rain.

He claimed that parts of South Jatrabari and Kutubkhali remain under two to three feet of rainwater for about 10 days after a half-an-hour of rain.

Residents of the area dump

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Encroachment and waste dumping suffocate the Kutubkhali canal. The photo was taken at Jatrabari.

PVT UNIVERSITIES  
Education cost to rise if VAT implemented

WASIM BIN HABIB

The cost of education in private universities of the country may go up if the proposal made by the finance minister of levying VAT on the private universities is carried out.

This new move would worsen the situation for students, as the tax burden would ultimately fall on them along with a large amount of tuition fees paid to the universities, said students, guardians and teachers of the private universities.

Students with rich family background may not face much problem but those belonging to the middle-class

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