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## Soybean oil at Tk 110

TCB to sell to cardholders



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Showbiz stars speak about motherhood



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## 'Better they stay at home'

Taliban orders Afghan women to wear burqa



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## SL's tour of Bangladesh

Lions arrive today for two Tests

# All-out effort to bring BNP to JS polls

Hasina tells her party about govt plan; hints at EVM use in all 300 seats

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League-led government will make all-out efforts to bring opposition BNP to the next parliamentary election, slated for late next year. Besides, the AL will participate in the polls with its 14-party allies, said party sources.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the AL chief, said this at a meeting of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALWC), the highest decision-making body of the party, at the Gono Bhaban last night.

She also said voting in all 300 parliamentary constituencies will be held using electronic voting machines (EVM), meeting sources said.

At one point, AL presidium member Shajahan Khan wanted to know whether the party and the government would take any initiative to bring the BNP to the next national polls.

In response, Hasina said her party will take every initiative to bring the opposition party to the election, the sources added.

After boycotting the 2014 parliamentary polls, the BNP contested the last general election and also took

- AL to participate in polls with 14-party allies
- To hold all grassroots councils by December
- Dissidents will not get party posts
- AL to start preparing for national polls now

part in elections to local government bodies with its electoral symbol "sheaf of paddy". But the party recently boycotted local government polls saying that free and fair elections are not possible under the current administration.

At the meeting last night, Hasina said the next general election will be held in a free and credible manner and it would be a participatory one.

She said her government would provide all-out support to the Election Commission to hold a credible election.

The PM criticised some of her party leaders, saying those who are not confident about their win don't want BNP to take part in the national polls.

She also said conspiracies are afoot to make the next national polls controversial. Naming Dr Kamal Hossain of GonoForum, Mahmudur Rahman Manna of Nagorik Oikya and Reza Kibria of Bangladesh Gono Odhikar Parishad, she said they can do nothing, said the sources.

The AL chief also said 14-party alliance is with her party and it will contest the next general election with the "ideological partners". She asked the party leaders to maintain good relations with the allies.

Hasina also suggested maintaining close relations with friendly countries who, she thinks, would be a factor in the next polls.

She asked her party leaders to prepare for the

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Thousands of people returning to the capital after the holidays walking out of Sadarghat launch terminal yesterday morning. Most of them had to walk for a long time before they could find any vehicle to go to their destinations.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## REVISED BUDGET FY 21-22

# No room for downsizing

Rising inflation looms large in budget management

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Every year, the budget gets bigger, and like clockwork, gets revised down -- much. But not this year.

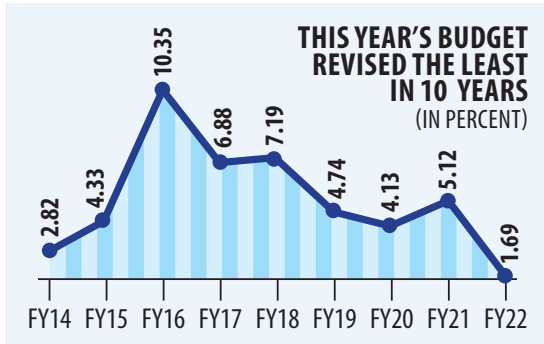
In the face of growing demand for subsidies, rising interest burden and higher government wage bills, the finance ministry will be cutting the budget for fiscal 2021-22 by about 1.69 percent -- the lowest in recent memory -- to Tk 593,500 crore.

An additional Tk 2,655 crore is being channelled to service the government's debt, while a fresh Tk 1,500 crore is needed to pay the wages and salaries of government employees, according to a finance ministry official.

Neither of the expenses was factored in when the revenue and expenditure forecasts were made during the preparation of the budget last year, he said.

The higher interest bill is for the government's domestic borrowing, which comprises national savings certificates and bank borrowing.

The government's payroll expanded during the pandemic as additional nurses and doctors were recruited to manage the global public health crisis.



The allocation for subsidy is being revised upwards by 24.1 percent to Tk 66,825 crore, and the bulk of the additional funds is going towards liquefied natural gas imports and electricity generation.

It was earlier proposed that there would be adjustments in the gas and electricity tariffs but given the rising inflation, that has been put on hold, the finance ministry official said.

"For now, the government is footing the

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# Journey back not as smooth

People suffer at ferry terminals on the Padma amid huge pressure of vehicles

STAR REPORT

Thousands of people returning to Dhaka after the Eid holidays suffered immensely at ferry terminals on the Padma over the last two days.

Many people from the south-western districts had to wait for over 10 hours at the ferry terminals on Friday before they could cross the river.

Women and children suffered the most in the scorching heat. Beside, toilet facilities in the terminals are largely inadequate.

The journey to the hometowns before Eid was a lot smoother than anticipated. Those who returned to Dhaka on Wednesday and Thursday also did not face much trouble.

But tailbacks began to form after Friday noon. There were a lot more vehicles than the ferries could carry across the river.

At Daulatdia ferry terminal in Rajbari, the tailback on Dhaka-Khulna highway reached 10km at one point yesterday, reports our Faridpur correspondent. Most of

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## College student 'picked up by Rab' released after 12 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A college student was allegedly picked up by Rab and released 12 days later yesterday in the capital.

Eshak Hossain Lincoln was "picked up" by the law enforcers from his home in Hazaribagh on April 25, his father, Md Azhar Hossain, told this correspondent.

He added that his son had been taken for questioning at 1:15am that day.

He was released yesterday afternoon.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), it is illegal for law enforcers to detain anyone for longer than 24-hours. When this time limit is exceeded, the person kept in detention must be produced before a court.

A violation of this law renders the detention illegal.

"I spoke to my son on the phone three days after

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COOLNESS OF KULFI ... Tareq Mandal carries his potful of Kulfi (traditional ice cream popular in the subcontinent) on his bicycle near the river in Pagla of Narayanganj. During warm summer days, he sells at least Tk 500-700 worth of the ice cream. The cold dessert has been popular in the subcontinent for centuries.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## COVID RECOVERY INDEX

# Bangladesh ranks first in South Asia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is now ranked first out of eight countries in South Asia and fifth out of 121 countries across the globe on Nikkei's Covid-19 Recovery Index.

With a score of 80 on the index, Bangladesh ranks only below Qatar, UAE, Cambodia and Rwanda in the latest edition of the index published on Thursday.

Of the other South Asian countries on the list, Nepal ranked sixth, Pakistan 23rd, Sri Lanka 31st, and India 70th in the world.

Covid-19 infections in Bangladesh have been on a downward spiral in recent months. The country's total fatalities remain unchanged at 29,127, with no new deaths reported for over a fortnight till 8:00am yesterday.

In March, Bangladesh placed 13th in the Covid recovery index.

Taiwan's ranking has plunged in the latest edition of Nikkei's index as the island transitions from a strict zero-virus strategy to living with the respiratory illness, even as infections surge.

The country tumbled out of the fourth spot to 94th in the latest ranking, tying with China, which fell 62 places from last month as it battles its worst outbreak since the virus was first detected in the city of Wuhan more than two years ago.

The index, updated at the end of each month, assesses countries and regions on infection management, vaccine rollouts and social mobility.

The higher the ranking, the closer it is to recovery,

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