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50 ADP projects ready for place in revenue budget

Bid to tighten cost, up efficiency

REZAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is now bringing all development projects under the revenue budget -- instead of implementing projects under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) -- for 'efficient implementation and tighter cost management'.

Nearly 50 such projects involving about Tk 500 crore are now awaiting clearance of the finance ministry.

In a bid to cut down on waste, the ministry last week restricted hiring of personnel and advisors and

purchase of vehicles unless absolutely needed.

Increased payments and purchases, which are fuelling government expenditure, prompted the decision, sources said. Payments and allowances and goods and services currently claim about 45 percent of the revenue budget and this trend is rising.

According to a report of the Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC), such spending grew by 38 percent in the last four years.

The move is the first in a series of long-term government strategy to trim down the administration, sources said. As per the donors' prescription, the government is likely to merge the ministries of finance and planning. The PERC also made similar recommendations.

The finance ministry's new policy, circulated to all ministries, says under the new arrangement, there will be an inter-ministerial committee that will deal with special requirements of hiring new

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A bamboo gate celebrating Eid courtesy of the local member of parliament, at the crossing of Mirpur and Dhanmondi 27 roads in Dhaka, continues to obstruct traffic 10 days after the festival ended.

Businessman in Ctg rescued after 6 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police rescued a businessman in the early hours of yesterday, six hours after his abduction from East Firoz Shah Colony under Khulshi Police Station, and arrested five of the alleged abductors.

The victim's family sources said armed cadres allegedly belonging to Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) kidnapped Zahiruddin Babar from his residence in the colony at around 10:30pm Friday and demanded a Tk 5 lakh ransom for his release.

But the quick arrest of the five alleged members of the gang during block raids prompted the rest of the abductors to set the businessman free in a hilly area near Chittagong Cantonment. Police rescued him from there at around 4:00am yesterday.

The five -- Habibur Rahman, Mohammad Iqbal, Mohammad Ali Bihari, Mobakkar and Zahidur Rahman were arrested in Firoz Shah and adjoining areas after the victim's elder brother filed a case Friday night accusing 10 people of abducting Babar.

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Yet another warning in Sarishabari

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An anti-Ahamadia outfit at Sarishabari in Jamalpur yesterday gave the government a one-week ultimatum to declare the members of the sect non-Muslims in an echo of a similar action in Dhaka on Friday.

About 1,000 demonstrators under the banner of Hifazate Khatme Nabuwat Andolon went to the upazila administrator's office in procession from Alia Madrassah in Aramnagar Bazar shouting anti-Ahamadia slogans to submit the memorandum to him calling for the declaration.

On Friday, a fanatic group in Tejgaon in Dhaka gave the government a one-week ultimatum to declare followers of the Ahamadia sect non-Muslims from a hate-filled demonstration of over 30,000 people.

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Govt little worried over anti-Ahamadia ultimatum

REZAUL KARIM

The government appears little concerned about a one-week ultimatum by religious bigots to declare the Ahamadiah non-Muslims and has made no move to resolve the crisis that many fear may escalate into a deadly violence.

Highly placed sources said it was clear that a faction of a ruling coalition partner was backing the anti-Ahamadia campaign, but coalition leader BNP did not take any initiative to discuss the issue with them.

The anti-Ahamadia group gave the government the ultimatum from a hate-filled demonstration of over 30,000 people in Tejgaon on Friday, raising the spectre of violence.

Talking to The Daily Star, several policymakers of Bangladesh

Badruddoza floats party in January

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury will float his political party in January.

Sources close to Badruddoza, who is also the founding secretary general of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), told The Daily Star he will open an office as a prelude to party formation at KC Memorial tower at Baridhara.

He met groups of chartered accounts and expatriate Bangladeshis at his residence at Baridhara yesterday and discussed possible formation of the party.

He will visit media offices from today and later sit with the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association, Supreme Court Bar

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Judicial council starts record of statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rokanuddin testifies in camera proceedings of corruption allegation against HC judge

The council restricted disclosure of the proceedings.

"I have to keep mum on the proceedings because they (the SJC) imposed embargo on me," said Rokan after the council meeting.

On October 1, Rokan alleged at a rally that Judge Syed Shahidur Rahman took Tk 50,000 from an accused for fixing bail in a women repression case.

President Iajuddin Ahmed directed the SJC on October 30 to probe the allegation.

Judge Shahidur submitted a written statement to the council on November 17 and denied the allegations.

The SJC will meet December 9 and record the statement of the relative of the accused, Nasim Sultana Kona, who allegedly paid the money to the judge.

Talking to press after the end of the first day's proceeding, senior lawyer Dr M Zahir said the proceedings should be made public for the sake of transparency and accountability.

"People and the media have the right to know about the proceedings," he said. "The council also holds the right to hold camera hearing. It is

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Khaleda asks top BNP leaders to launch massive party activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday directed her senior cabinet colleagues to embark on massive organisational and mass contact programmes to face the opposition.

She also directed them to prepare coalition leader Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), of which she is the chairperson, to face the probable anti-government movement of the opposition politically.

The premier's directive came at an urgent and close-door meeting in the afternoon with three important policymakers -- Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman, Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Health Minister Khandaker

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Another ethnic youth killed ahead of PCJSS hartal in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Another indigenous youth was killed in Khagrachhari's Panchhari area yesterday ahead of tomorrow's general strike called by Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS).

The PCJSS blamed the UPDF (United Peoples' Democratic Front) for the murder of Kina Chand Babu Chakma, 27, although the victim's political link could not be confirmed.

The UPDF has denied the allegation.

Police and local sources said Kina was on his way home from Panchhari bazaar at around 9:00pm when a gang of criminals

attacked him in the Abani Karbari area. The gang first shot him point blank and later slit his throat to confirm his death. There were five gunshot wounds in Kina's body, hospital sources said.

This was the latest in a number of murders in Khagrachhari in a week attributed to the political vendetta between the pro-peace accord PCJSS and the UPDF which opposes the accord signed in 1997 that ended two decades of insurgency.

Meanwhile, a strike called by the UPDF protesting Tuesday's killing of its member Gyaneshwar Chakma was observed peacefully here yesterday.

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Harvest brings no smiles for them

AKM MOHSIN and ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, back from Rangpur

Although the harvesting season is well underway, most people living on the Bijoy barrage in Rangpur's Gangachhara area are still under the grip of the monga or near-famine situation.

The harvest has largely benefited landowners, while most of the 20,000 people on the Bijoy barrage, who took shelter on the flood protection embankment after losing their land to the Teesta, face starvation due to continued unemployment.

Sources said only young men able to endure the rigours of harvesting managed to get jobs in the rice fields, while women, children

and old people remain malnourished with no jobs.

The remoteness of the barrage from the villages also contributes to the lack of job opportunities for these land-less, ultra-poor sections of the society.

Asgar Ali, a 70-year-old man who barely subsisted as a seasonal labourer in his younger days, is now facing starvation after remaining unemployed for years on end.

Many others like Asgar said they received food relief from the government only twice during Ramadan.

The desperate poor ran expectantly towards these correspondents thinking they were government relief

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