

ADP implementation slower by 5pc points

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Despite a massive election-year boost in funding, the government's annual development programme (ADP) implementation in the first five months of this fiscal year is slower by five percentage points than last year's.

Fifteen ministries and departments, who receive 77 percent of the total ADP allocation, could spend only 23 percent of the funds in July-November period. The implementation rate was 28 percent in the same period of last fiscal year.

"Monsoon and procurement for various projects have delayed the implementation of the ADP, but we have found that the implementation rate has started to improve by December," Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday.

By the end of December, the rate would be 33 percent, which is "not bad," the minister said after reviewing the ADP implementation of the 15 ministries at a meeting at the National Economic Council auditorium.

Ministry officials assured Saifur that the implementation rate is sure to accelerate from January

given the progress seen in December. There was a 10-percentage point jump in the implementation rate in only December.

These fifteen ministries and departments were allocated Tk 18,736 crore of the total ADP fund of Tk 24,500 crore for FY 2005-06. They have spent only Tk 4,369 crore in local resources and project aid in the five-month period.

The local component within the already spent fund is 23 percent or Tk 2,853 crore, down by 7 percentage points from the corresponding period of last fiscal year.

The expenditure from project aid component of the ADP has also suffered a 2-percentage point drop with the spending of Tk 1,515 crore during the period.

In the meeting, the ministries were asked to explain how the ADP implementation was higher in the last fiscal year despite massive floods, sources say. The ministry officials showed usual excuses of legal complications, procurement difficulties, monsoon and donor conditions for the slow implementation of ADP.

A Planning Ministry report, however, identified eight main

reasons for the sluggish implementation rate of the project aid component of the ADP fund. These include delayed initiation of projects, complications in selecting NGOs, delay in decision making by the purchase committee, and delay in submitting work orders.

According to the report, the ministries who experienced the slowest spending rate of their total ADP allocation are Power Division (down by 33 percentage points), Home Ministry (down by 29 percentage points), Communications Ministry (down by 6 percentage points), Energy and Minerals Resources Division (down by 24 percentage points), and Women and Children Affairs Ministry (down by 6 percentage points).

The most sluggish ministries using project aid are Power Division (down by 31 percentage points), Energy and Mineral Resources Division (down by 16 percentage points), Agriculture Ministry (down by 4 percentage points), Water Resources Ministry (down by 16 percentage points), Women and Children Affairs Ministry (down by 10 percentage points) and Home Ministry (down by 25 percentage points).

2 kids die of pneumonia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Two children died of pneumonia in Sadullapur upazila on Tuesday night while 71 others have been attacked with the disease due to a prolonged cold wave.

The dead are six-month-old Laboni of village Khoorda Ruhia and Swapan, an infant, of village Nayanpur.

Pneumonia and other cold related diseases are spreading in different areas of the district that has been experiencing a cold spell for the last couple of weeks.

ARMS LOOT

Four forest guards suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Four forest guards of Haldibania forest camp in the Sundarbans from where pirates looted three firearms and some ammunition on Tuesday night were suspended yesterday for negligence of duty.

The suspended forest guards are Aslam, Delwar, Kalam and Babul.

Sources said a gang of 10 to 15 pirates led by the gang leader, SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



A stack of cauldrons kept on the High Court premises yesterday ahead of today's national council of Communications Minister Nazmul Huda-backed Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum.

PHOTO: STAR



An employee of Dhaka City Corporation dressed as a clown conducts an awareness campaign under the National Tuberculosis Control Programme at Moghbazar in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A regional leader of outlawed Purbal Communist Party (Janajuddho) was killed in 'crossfire' on Tuesday during a shootout between police and his accomplices at Mongla upazila in Bagerhat.

The dead was identified as Monir Talukder alias Moni, 32.

Police said the outlaw was arrested from Baniashanta brothel at Mongla on Tuesday evening.

Following his confessional statement, police took him to Chowrangir Math area at Mongla to recover illegal firearms. As soon as they reached the spot, Moni's SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Abbas blames journo for 'pen terrorism'

UNB, Dhaka

Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas yesterday accused journalists of carrying out 'pen terrorism'.

"You have pen... you are carrying out pen terrorism," he said while speaking at a discussion organised by the ruling BNP to mark the 70th birth anniversary of its founder late president Ziaur Rahman.

Taking a swipe at newspapers, Abbas said some newspapers are SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Major demands of pry teachers still unmet

ASHIQUIR RAHMAN

The government is still sitting on the four major demands of the non-government primary schoolteachers, including nationalisation of their jobs, although it accepted 10 of their 14 demands in principle.

The teachers have threatened to continue their ongoing movement until these finance-related demands are fulfilled.

The representatives of the Bangladesh Non-government Primary Schoolteachers' Association are supposed to meet with the prime minister (PM) today when a decision about their demands is expected to come out.

Akkas Ali Sheikh, secretary general of the association, said, "We are optimistic about realising our demands as we are demanding

only what the prime minister had promised us before the last election."

He said the PM instantly ordered the bodies concerned to thoroughly examine the teachers' demands when he met her on January 4.

"In a meeting with Harris Chowdhury (political secretary to the PM) on January 16, we came to learn that the government has accepted 10 of our 14 demands," he said.

Introducing the same pay-scale for the non-government primary headmasters as the government ones, assigning the post of secretary to the Non-government Primary Teachers Welfare Trust to the association's president or secretary general, cancelling the order to recruit science teachers, and solving other administrative

problems have been emphasised in these 10 demands, Akkas said.

Meanwhile, a source in the primary and mass education ministry said the government is likely to do "something" about the teachers' demands for 100 percent salary, full house rent and medical allowance, and full bonus soon.

But there are few possibilities at once about accepting their main demand for gradual nationalisation of their services, the source added.

The government's failure to take decision over nationalisation of the primary schoolteachers' services is one of the main reasons for postponing their grand rally today where the PM was expected to make a positive announcement in this regard, the source said.

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Kashmir dominates Indo-Pak peace talks on 2nd day

AFP, New Delhi

India and Pakistan held a second day of talks Wednesday on their dispute over Kashmir, a day after saying their peace process is paying dividends and suggesting new steps to boost confidence.

"Today we are taking up Kashmir," an Indian official said before the start of the meeting in New Delhi between Pakistan Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammed Khan and his Indian counterpart, Shyam Saran.

On Tuesday the two top officials met to review progress in a peace process between the arch-rivals started two years ago. They concluded afterwards that the ongoing talks had helped build trust.

Officials said the two sides had also made fresh proposals on ways to further boost confidence, with India suggesting that neither side build "new posts and defence works" along their disputed border in Kashmir and that senior commanders from both sides have SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

175 army men off to Sudan on peace mission

UNB, Dhaka

A team of 175 peacekeepers of Bangladesh Army left Dhaka on Tuesday to join the UN peacekeeping mission in Sudan.

Some 1,317 army and 78 naval personnel of Bangladesh are being deployed in Sudan as UN peacekeepers. Other members of the team have already reached Sudan.

The peacekeepers are being deployed in Juba area of South Sudan, which will be known as Bangladesh sector. Colonel Nasimul Gani will command the Bangladesh sector.

Major General Fazle Elahi Akbar is currently working as force commander of UN peacekeeping force in Sudan, said an ISPR release.

Govt mulls banning minibuses from Dhaka

RAFIQ HASAN

The government is thinking of imposing a ban on the plying of minibuses in Dhaka, replacing them with required number of CNG-run big buses.

A high-powered meeting at the Ministry of Communications yesterday said removing minibuses is needed for beautification of the capital.

The meeting observed that despite the government's earlier decisions to ban plying of more than 15-year-old public transports on the city streets, a large number of such vehicles are still running in the capital.

Some owners are running the old vehicles on the street after renovation and painting with new colours, the meeting was told.

Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, who chaired the meeting, observed that plying of old and run-down minibuses is the main cause of long traffic congestions in the capital.

He asked the police to check the conditions of buses at all entry points to the capital.

High police officials, members of civil society, and officers-in-charge of all police stations in Dhaka district were present at the meeting on law and order and violence control committee for Dhaka district.

Nazmul Huda ordered the police to file cases against the owners along with the vehicles that are detained for carrying drugs and contraband items.

He said a vested quarter may target the capital to create violence for political gain before the next general elections.

He asked the police officials to remain watchful and see whether criminals take shelter on the city outskirts after committing subversive activities in the capital.

In Dhaka district, the number of cases was the lowest in Dohar upazila, the meeting was told.

Nazmul Huda also stressed the need for actions against the player behind the scene and financier of recent suicide bomb attacks in different parts of the country.

The meeting was told that the police patrol at the Dhaka district SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Plot to kidnap Blair's son foiled

REUTERS, London

British police have foiled a plot to kidnap Prime Minister Tony Blair's 5-year-old son Leo, the Sun newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Citing an unnamed security source, the tabloid newspaper said people on the fringe of a group which campaigns for the rights of divorced fathers had planned to snatch the child and hold him for a short period as a publicity stunt.

Following the report, the Fathers 4 Justice group suspended its activities and confirmed that police had quizzed some of its former members before Christmas.

Fathers 4 Justice has staged several high-profile protests in the past few years. A campaigner dressed as Batman climbed Queen Elizabeth's London residence in

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The landing station for the submarine cable awaits inauguration in Cox's Bazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Submarine cable Bangladesh to be linked in February

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

With the recent completion of the international SEA-ME-WE4 submarine cable installation at the Cox's Bazar point, Bangladesh is all set to be connected to the global information superhighway from February.

Officials said the information superhighway is not instantly available due to a delay in implementing an optical fibre cable link project between Cox's Bazar and

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Prayer Timing		
January 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-40	5-44
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation