

MORE PROJECTS ADDED TO ADP Policy takes U-turn with polls in sight

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The government has drastically increased the number of projects in the Annual Development Programme (ADP) keeping in mind the elections ahead, taking a U-turn from its policy of planning a manageable number of projects.

According to economists, the move will increase the level of corruption and wastage in public expenditure -- and will not benefit the people.

An analysis of the revised ADP for 2005-06 and the new ADP for 2006-07 shows that high priority sectors like power and gas have been given lower allocations than before, while sectors through which money can be handed over to political activists, in guise of contractors, have been given higher allocations.

However the education sector, which is not viewed as an election fund distribution sector, continues to enjoy high allocation.

Due to low rate of ADP implementation, the four-party alliance government had been reducing the number of projects gradually since 2001-02. The Public Expenditure Review Commission (PERC) had also recommended in favour of taking up a lesser number of projects to ensure quality, timely implementation and reduction of wastage.

In 2001-02, the number of ADP projects was 1384. This number gradually came down to 869 in 2004-05 and to 859 in 2005-06.

However, the latest number has been increased drastically by 245 new projects in the revised ADP for the current fiscal, bringing the total number of projects to 1081. Yet, the rate of ADP implementation has

been at a frustrating low of 45 percent in the last nine months. This rate is two percentage point lower than that of the corresponding period in the previous year.

Although the number of projects has increased, the total ADP allocation has been slashed by Tk 3000 crore bringing it down to Tk 21500 crore for the current fiscal. As a result, the quality of implementation will falter. In the next ADP, the government has included 886 regular projects and another 428 projects without any allocation -- totalling 1314 projects.

Planning ministry sources on the basis of previous experience said many of the projects having no allocation now will land on the list of regular projects later on. The 2006-07 ADP outlines an expenditure of Tk 26000 crore.

Zaid Bakht, research director of

Govt to ask SC to form special bench for cases against militants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government decided to ask the Supreme Court (SC) to form a special bench in the High Court (HC) for quick disposal of the cases, especially death references, against militants.

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed told the press yesterday that the government will request the chief justice through the attorney general to form the HC special bench.

"If the bench is formed, the judgements in militants' cases already given by the trial courts can be disposed of quickly," he said.

Disposal of a large number of death references is pending in the High Court, which is now dealing with the death references of 2002.

Questions arose how long it will take to implement the verdict of death sentences of seven Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders given by a Jhalakathi court on Monday.

Legal experts said the HC will need four more years to start



Influential locals at Badda in the capital fill up a part of Gulshan-Banani Lake while Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) seems reluctant to stop such illegal activities. The photo was taken yesterday.

BNP cadres force halt of publication on Kushtia daily

Press attacked, journos threatened

STAR REPORT

Ruling BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam's cadres yesterday attacked a press and stopped the publication of a local daily for continuing to run reports against the lawmaker in Kushtia.

The newspaper, Dainik Andolaner Bazar, was forced to suspend its publication afterwards as its reporters cannot move freely in the town following threats from the BNP cadres.

Sources said around 20 cadres stormed Quality Press at Courtpara of the town at 5:00am when the press was printing the Dainik Andolaner Bazar. The cadres attacked the press employees and snatched the documents required to print the newspaper. As a result,

no issue of Dainik Andolaner Bazar came out yesterday.

They also forced a staff of the daily, Safiq, out of the press as he was supervising the printing of the paper.

The newspaper earlier sought security for its reporters and staffs from the local administration. Anisuzzaman, executive editor of the daily, said he asked the deputy commissioner (DC) of Kushtia in a letter to provide necessary security for the paper and its employees.

"The DC asked me to file a case against lawmaker Shahidul," he said. When asked what steps would the DC take, Anisuzzaman said the DC has asked the superintendent of police to take necessary measures regarding the issue.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

SAIFUR-ILYAS ROW

Is resignation threat real or a bargaining chip?

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Centring the prevailing volatile situation in Sylhet BNP it is now a much-talked-about issue whether Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman is being removed from or is himself leaving the cabinet, perhaps even the party.

Reliable sources said a section of government policymakers are, for the first time in BNP's history, also seriously thinking of an alternative to Saifur as finance minister after next budget.

Saifur, the senior most leader of the ruling BNP who locked horns with his party's local lawmaker over establishing supremacy in the party's politics in Sylhet, demanded of Prime Minister

Khaleda Zia, also BNP chairperson, to sack party MP Ilyas Ali.

But the PM did not entertain his demand; rather his powers in the district BNP have been drastically cut. The party chairperson's directive that no lawmaker will interfere in other's constituency is seen as a rebuff to Saifur, who has been operating as the final arbiter of Sylhet BNP politics. The directive has clipped Saifur's power and has confined him in his own constituency.

Although the party chairperson has dissolved the convening committee of Sylhet BNP led by Ilyas Ali, she did not take any disciplinary action against the lawmaker as demanded by Saifur, also a national standing committee member of the ruling BNP. Instead

of siding with him, the party's activities in Sylhet have now been brought under control of the central high command. This in effect has brought district BNP's activities directly under Tarique Rahman's control.

As per earlier party decision, BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman had been assigned to look into the activities of Sylhet district BNP. As the man in charge, he will now monitor party activities. This effectively sidelines Saifur.

An annoyed Saifur told his followers at his residence Sunday night, the day the prime minister issued her directives: "I will wait for a few more days. I will quit politics

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AUG 17 BLASTS 5 militants in Patuakhali jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court, Patuakhali, yesterday sentenced five people rigorous imprisonment (RI) for life and fined Tk 5,000 each, in default they have to serve one more year's RI, in the case of last year's August 17 serial bomb blasts in Patuakhali.

Judge ABM Sajedur Rahman delivered the judgement in the

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MAHASTHAN MUSEUM 2,500-year-old artefacts lie neglected

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

A large number of antiques, including an earthen stove of 500 BC, excavated seven years ago have been kept at the Mahasthan Museum without any scientific preservation.

Sources at the Archaeology Department said the stove is

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Part of an around 2,500-year-old ring stone found while excavating in Mahasthangarh area in Bogra.

Four repairmen killed as bridge collapses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Four construction workers were crushed to death and four others injured when an under-construction bridge collapsed at Amjhupi of Mujibnagar upazila in Meherpur yesterday.

The dead were identified as Ashraf, 22, Mahidul, 45, Rabiul, 30, and Palash, 28 of Basantapur village in Mujibnagar upazila.

The bridge over the Kajla river

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THIRD KARNAPHULI BRIDGE Kuwait fund agrees to provide Tk 350cr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mission of the Kuwait Development Fund in a meeting with Communications Minister Nazmul Huda yesterday agreed in principle to provide Tk 350 crore in the Tk 550 crore project of the long-awaited third Karnaphuli bridge in Chittagong.

Bangladesh government will bear the rest Tk 200 crore for the construction of 950metre long bridge, Nazmul Huda said in a press briefing at his secretariat office after the meeting with the mission.

Finally the construction of the long-awaited bridge is going to start, the minister said, adding, "There was uncertainty about the funding and now the problem has been solved."

He admitted that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid foundation stone of the bridge three years ago without sanction of fund.

Nazmul Huda said the delegation of the Kuwait Development

Fund has already visited the construction site in Chittagong and they will give the final decision regarding financing in the project within a couple of days.

The Kuwait Development Fund also agreed to provide another Tk 311 crore for construction of four other bridges over the rivers Buriganga, Sitalakkhya, Teesta and Dapdapi, he said.

The Fund representative Dr Nabeel Abdur Raheem, who was present at the briefing, expressed hope that construction of the third Karnaphuli bridge will start very soon.

"Kuwait has very good relations with Bangladesh and such ties will strengthen in the coming days," he said.

Asked about funding for the proposed Padma bridge, the country's longest bridge, the minister said they are looking for donors.

"We have already selected the area for the bridge after survey and feasibility study for the 6.1

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