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Kibria claims much progress in many areas

As the Bangladesh Aid Group sits here today for a mid-term review of the country's economy, Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria said much progress has been achieved in many sectors and he is fully braced to meet the donors.

"I'm fully equipped and prepared for the mid-term briefing," he told UNB yesterday ahead of the two-day meeting with the donor countries and agencies who bankroll the country's development projects.

I thought that it would be useful to review the progress of the implementation of the programmes and policies at a time when the government will be in the office for some months," Kibria said.

The present government, he said, feels that there should be good understanding between the government of Bangladesh and the development partners so

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Pakistan back to weekend holiday on Sunday

ISLAMABAD, Feb 24: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif ordered Pakistan's return to the weekend holiday on Sunday instead of Friday after more than 20 years, reports Reuter.

He announced the switch yesterday in his first televised address to the nation a week after taking office.

Friday was made the Islamic weekend in Pakistan in the 1970's by then prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in an attempt to appease Islamic clergy.

Sharif said the holiday on Friday had been mostly used for social occasions rather than for Islamic prayers.

To give Friday its due status and to restore its sanctity, we have decided to have holiday on Sunday," he said.

But, he said, offices would close at midday on Friday so that people could go to mosques for Jumma prayers.

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Steps taken to reopen 98 govt industrial units: Tofael DSE price index continues to fall

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Supplement

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains a 3-page supplement on 'National Day of Kuwait' Pages 8, 9 & 10

WB report ahead of today's review meeting Macro-economic stability threatened, BOP fragile

By Inam Ahmed

ance of payment is becoming increasingly fragile.

Representatives of all the 30 multilateral and bilateral institutions and countries who are members of the Aid to Bangladesh Consortium will attend the first-ever briefing on the state of economy, taking place at the NEC auditorium.

In the meeting, spread over two days and six sessions, all to be chaired by Finance Minister S A M S Kibria, the donors are likely to raise a number of contentious issues, mainly weakness in project approval and implementation, low level of professionalism of the administration and a weak fiscal situation.

"Even though the external current account deficit through November 1996 — amounting to \$10 million dollars — was less than half of the FY '96 current account deficit through November 1995, the fragility of the balance of payments appears to be increasing," observed the World Bank report.

It also noted, "With respect to bank credits, there are worrisome developments which could lead to aggregate demand pressures with a pick up in manufacturing activity."

About inflation, it said that although the 12-month moving average inflation rate through December 1996 was a

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WB for raising petroleum and fertiliser prices

Star Report

The World Bank has recommended that the petroleum and fertiliser prices should be increased immediately to boost revenue collection.

In its economic update prepared for today's mid-term review meeting of the donors with the government, the Bank has

said, "Apart from pruning the ADP size, the government should consider measures such as revising some of the administered prices in order to boost revenue collection immediately and thus avoid excessive reliance on domestic borrowing."

The report further added, "among the administered prices, petroleum price is a major candidate for an immediate upward revision."

It said in 1996 crude oil prices in international markets increased almost 21 per cent over the yearly average price in

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Load shedding unlikely to improve before June

By Sharier Khan

The irritating load shedding of power in the country is unlikely to improve before June next when the Ashuganj-Bakhraband gas pipeline is scheduled to be completed, allowing gas supplies from Ashuganj to the gas-starved power stations connected with the Bakhraband systems in Chittagong.

The good news is we might add 530 MW power at the end of

the year by launching the second unit of the 210 MW Raazan power plant and resuming power generation in eight other old plants which are undergoing maintenance," said a PDB official.

The second unit of the Raazan power plant is expected to go into operation in Sep-

tember. The eight plants will resume power generation in phases by December, the official said. The eight plants, five oil-based and three gas-based, are capable of generating 320 MW power, the official said.

"But the bad news is, we will continue to have at least 100 MW load shedding this year, no matter what we do. This is because of the poor gas supply situation and power distribution system which need to be upgraded to meet our ever-growing needs," the official said. "Gas shortage will continue to a certain proportion even when the Ashuganj-Bakhraband system will be completed."

The current level of load shedding fluctuates between 150 MW and 250 MW in peak hours

everyday. The level of load shedding was 240 MW yesterday.

Almost all parts of the Dhaka city are experiencing load shedding more than twice daily. These areas include Utara, Gulshan, Banani, Mohakhali, Moghbazar, Bangla Motor, Karwan Bazar, Green Road, Dhanmondi, Ziqatola, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Elephant Road, Azimpur, Motijheel, Paltan, Shahjahanpur, Goran and all parts of the old town.

In many areas like Jatrabari and Demra power failure is frequent, five to six times everyday. Due to such frequent power failures, residents of these areas are also facing severe water

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Yasmin murder Police allegedly threatened a witness to beat her up

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Feb 24: Nine more witnesses of the Yasmin rape and murder case were cross-examined by prosecution and defence counsels in the District and Sessions Judge court, here today.

Two of the witnesses — Sultan and Mariam Begum — both of them prostitutes in their depositions said the police and DSE personnel forced them to identify the dead body of Yasmin as Banu another prostitute.

Otherwise, the police threatened them that they would be sent to jail, the witnesses told the court.

While testifying, Mariam sought protection from the court, saying that some policemen of Dinajpur on Sunday had threatened to break her arms and legs if she deposed against the accused policemen.

The Judge, however, told Abdur Rahim, a senior advocate of Dinajpur, to request the DC to arrange security for the prostitute.

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Manzoor murder Hearing not held, next date Apr 27

By Staff Correspondent

Hearing of the Manzoor murder case in which former President and Jatiya Party chief H M Ershad is the main accused could not be held in the court of the additional district judge yesterday, as Ershad could not appear before the court.

Yousuf Hossain Humayun, legal counsel of Ershad, told the court that his client could not appear before the court as he was engaged in a meeting of a standing committee of the Jatiya Sangsad.

The court fixed April 27 as the next date of hearing.

Ershad, accused in 17 cases, following his ouster from power in a mass uprising in 1990, was released on bail last month.

Hearing of Ershad's DIT plot case is scheduled to be held in the court of the 7th additional district judge today. Hearing of the gold smuggling case is scheduled for the next day. Ershad's counsel said.

Police yesterday tried to evict several families residing at 99 and 99/1 Dhalkanagar under Sutrapur thana in the city, allegedly with the help of 'maastans' who, claiming authority under a court decree, pillaged through the houses. But the residents said they had no prior intimation about any court order. Police said they worked under court order but denied involvement of 'maastans.'

Later, the residents obtained a court order which stayed the eviction order. But who would pay for the mess, asked Tajul Islam and Meser Ali, who had been living in these abandoned houses since 1972 taking lease from the authorities.

— Star photo

Taking women to 'safe custody' Rule nisi on govt after 3 HR bodies file writ

By SC Correspondent

Three human rights organisations filed a writ petition challenging the continuing practice of taking women and girls in 'safe custody' upon which the High Court yesterday issued a rule nisi on the government.

In the specific case of Sufia Begum of Barguna, the HC by the rule nisi directed the government to show cause within two weeks as to why Sufia Begum, the detenu kept in 'safe custody' in Barguna Jail, should not be brought before this court so that it may satisfy itself that she is not being held in custody without lawful authority or in an unlawful manner.

Dr Kamal Hossain assisted by Barrister Sara Hossain and Advocate Md Ramjan Ali Sikder moved the case before the division bench of the HC comprising Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury and Justice MA Aziz.

Bangladesh Legal Aid and

Services Trust, Ain-O-Salish Kendra and Bangladesh Mahila Parishad filed the writ against the government represented by the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Inspector General of Prisons, Inspector General of Police, Jailer of Barguna Jail and the Deputy Commissioner, Barguna.

The government has taken

the decision in honour of late Chinese Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping, said an official handout yesterday.

President signs condolence book

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday signed the condolence book opened at the Chinese Embassy

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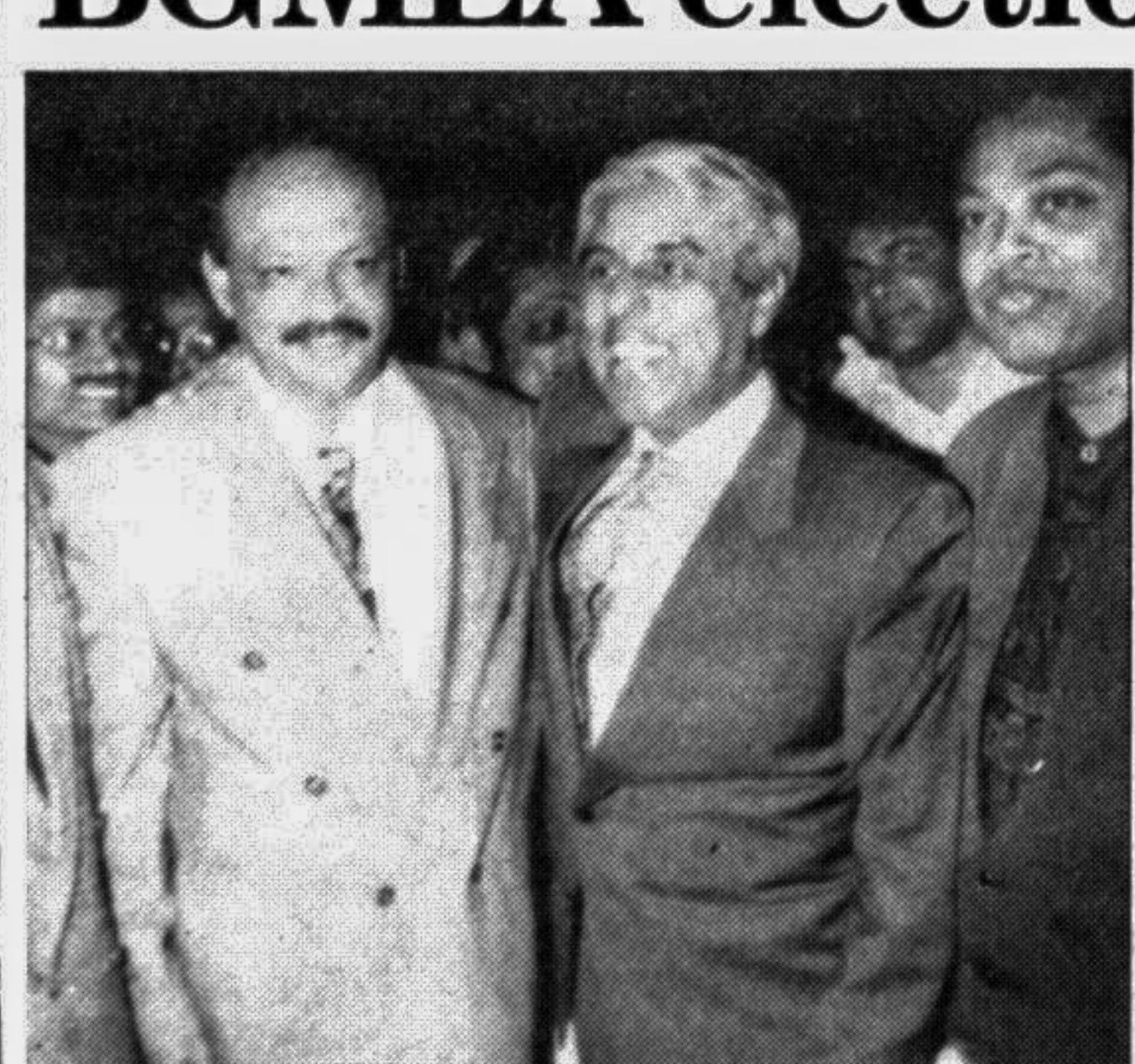
Birmingham City Council to help eradicate mosquito

Visiting Mayor of Birmingham City Council Ms Marion Arnott-Job called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office yesterday, reports UNB.

Ms Arnott-Job, who is leading a six-member delegation on a 10-day visit to Bangladesh, lauded the Prime Minister's efforts and commitment in different national and international forums, specially to improve the socio-economic con-

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BGMEA election today



Leaders of the two panels — Mostafa Golam Quddus (L) and Anisur Rahman Sinha — at Sonargaon Hotel after their projection meetings yesterday, the day before the BGMEA elections.

By Staff Correspondent
Electio to the nine vacant posts of the executive committee of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) will be held today at the association's office.

Two panels, the BGMEA Forum and the Sammilita Parishad, are contesting the election.

Anisur Rahman Sinha, president of the BGMEA in leading the 'BGMEA Forum' while Mostafa Golam Quddus, who had headed the former BGMEA steering committee on child labour and safety measures, is leading the 'Sammilita Parishad.'

Of the 2,700 BGMEA members, 1,485 will cast their votes. Of them, 291 are from Chittagong region. Voting will be held from 9 am to 5 pm.

Each year, nine out of the 27 members of the executive committee resign to hold a fresh election to re-elect the new office bearers.

The Sammilita Parishad has declared a 32-point manifesto which includes initiatives

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30-storey BB building opens Govt firm to streamline banking sector: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government is determined to restore discipline in the country's banking and financial sector removing all the flaws from the money market, reports UNB.

With this objective, a high-powered committee has been constituted for recommending reformatory measures in the banking sector, she said inaugurating a 30-storey Bangladesh Bank building in the city's commercial hub of Motijheel yesterday.

The building, the tallest in the country, was built at a cost of about Tk 100 crore. With a height of about 3,500 feet, the central bank head office has a floor space of 5.96 lakh square feet.

The government had also taken various measures to make the national economy dynamic and vibrant.

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Inaugurating the building, the Prime Minister also mentioned the constitution of a task force as a measure to recover huge amount of default loan.

The huge amount of unrecovred loans lying in this sector is mainly due to flawed policy, faulty actions and violation of rules in the past," she said.

The Prime Minister sought cooperation of all in bringing back discipline in the banking sector, which she said is essential for accelerating the overall pace of the country's development.

She said the government had also taken various measures to make the national economy dynamic and vibrant.

Meanwhile, the special court for trial of cases of repression on women and children today set a fresh date on March 2 for hearing the rape case of Shima, sources in the court said.

Charles' visit to help promote bilateral trade

By Staff Correspondent

Prince Charles of Britain will visit some British aided projects besides meeting government leaders during his three-day stay in Bangladesh beginning tomorrow.

Stating this at a press briefing at a city hotel yesterday Dr David McMahon, Second Secretary of the British High Commission, said that the visit would also help promote trade between the two countries.

TON Van Zutphen of Action-Aid, Rose Tenyson, John McNell of Cairn Energy group and Fawzia Z Hossain of British Council were present at the briefing.

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Probe into Shima's death begins

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 24: The one-member enquiry commission comprising Daili Uddin Ahmed, retired judge of the High Court, today began probe into the death of Shima Chowdhury, official sources said.

The retired judge today visited Raazan thana where Shima Chowdhury was allegedly raped and killed on October last year, the sources added. He also visited Chittagong jail in the afternoon.

Daili Uddin Ahmed is staying at Chittagong Circuit House. He arrived here from Dhaka yesterday.

Meanwhile, the special court for trial of cases of repression on women and children today set a fresh date on March 2 for hearing the rape case of Shima, sources in the court said.

"অসহযোগিতা শিশুদের সাহায্যার্থে এগিয়ে আসুন"

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