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BNP leader and Deputy leader of the Opposition in Parliament Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury speaking at a discussion meeting organised by the Jatiyatabdhi Jubo Dal on the occasion of Ekushey at the National Press Club yesterday.

— Star photo

## Kibria: Much progress

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that the relationship could be based on mutual trust and confidence.

The present briefing will serve that purpose," he said, explaining the logic of the review meeting.

The finance minister will apprise the development partners on macroeconomic management issues, administrative, banking and judicial sector reforms, poverty alleviation endeavours and the role of women in development.

Besides, the present government's policies on agriculture, trade and industries and privatisation will come up for review in the meeting. A national water management strategy in light of the Ganges water treaty will also be discussed.

Kibria said the government had made significant progress in a number of areas in the macroeconomic management of the economy. One can observe the stability and strength of the national economy, he added.

Giving the indicators he said the rate of inflation is low at 2.6 per cent, the reserve is stable at around two billion US dollars, exports are rising while imports are concentrated more on productive sectors such as industrial raw materials and capital machinery, and remittances increased 23 per cent.

The picture, the minister said, is equally satisfactory in other areas of the economy. Revenue collection is about 11 per cent higher during July-December period than that of the

## Bus passengers robbed in city

By Staff Correspondent

A gang of dacoits snatched Tk 12,000 from the passengers when a Dhaka-bound bus from Gazipur reached Bishaw Road near Joar Shahara under Cantonment thana in the city yesterday morning.

## Mid-term review meet

From Page 1

low 2.7 per cent, the year-on-year rate of inflation started picking up in December which might be an indication of rising inflationary pressure. This would be aggravated with continued high rate of bank borrowing by the government.

About real sector developments, the Bank noted that while the prospects of a healthy agricultural growth in FY '97 remain strong, it appears that there is a slowdown in activities in other sectors, manufacturing in particular.

The Bank also noted with concern that non-ADP expenditures are likely to exceed the FY '97 budgetary targets due to overruns in revenue expenditures and larger food account deficits. Revenue expenditures have come under pressure due to unexpected interest payments on domestic debt, increased fertiliser subsidy, transfers to parastatal such as BTMC and BWDB for meeting current wage costs and increase in subsidised food distribution for the police.

According to sources, US and European donors are likely to raise the issue of absence of professionalism and accountability among the bureaucrats and may extend cooperation to raise their skills and simplify government procedures.

As a special feature of the meeting, the government will apprise the donors of the developments in the water sector with the signing of the Ganges water sharing treaty with India.

The government will emphasise that the current account deficit has not widened and if the flow of inward remittance continues in the same pace, it will narrow down, the sources said.

Export has grown by seven per cent while import by one and a half per cent in the last six months. Remittance has gone up by an appreciable 20 per cent.

The government will also highlight that aid disbursement has improved over the months by about six per cent and the balance of payment situation is stable with a foreign exchange reserve of about 1.9 billion US

## PM tells VCs Govt firm to make campuses free from terrorism

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is determined to maintain a congenial academic atmosphere, eliminating terrorism from the campuses, reports UNB.

"We have to revive the past glory of the educational institutions ensuring congenial academic atmosphere," she said while talking to the Vice-Chancellors of 10 universities.

The VCs of Dhaka University, Chittagong University, Open University, National University, BUET, Khulna University, Shahjalal University, Jahangirnagar University, Agricultural University and Islamic University called on the Prime Minister at her office to discuss the latest campus situation.

They discussed matters relating to the academic curricula, giving special emphasis on incorporating the economy-related subjects in the syllabus.

The Prime Minister said steps have been taken to make the educational institutions free from terrorism and violence, and the students have started getting the fruits of those steps.

## Charles' visit

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McMahon said the Prince will meet President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after his arrival.

On the same day, he will visit Tikkapara in Mohammadpur area in the city to see for himself some social programmes undertaken by ActionAid, a British Non-Governmental Organisation(NGO).

The Prince of Wales will attend a number of receptions to be accorded to him during the visit. He will also have tea with Prof Mohammad Yunus, Managing Director of Grameen Bank.

The ActionAid has been working in the slums of Mohammadpur area for more than 10 years.

The Tikkapara projects that started in 1985 offer financial help to the poorest women. The area has a slum population of about 1.5 lakh.

Starting in 1983 ActionAid has expanded its different socio-economic and health care programmes to seven areas in the country.

Its projects cover various poorest areas in Dhaka, Jamalpur, Bhola, Netrokona, Khulna and Chittagong districts.

## BB bldg opens

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Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria lauded support and contributions of his predecessors — former finance ministers Saifur Rahman and M Syeduzzaman — in building the head office of the central bank and hoped that on vital issues all would work together to build the country.

Bangladesh Bank Governor Lutfur Rahman Sarkar said default loans, currently amounting to Tk 13,000 crore, is one of the major problems facing the banking sector.

Later, the Prime Minister, flanked by Finance Minister SAMS Kibria and two former finance ministers Saifur Rahman and Dr M Syeduzzaman, unveiled the plaque of the building.

She also inaugurated a mural "Society and Culture of Bangladesh" by Prof Syed Abdullah Khalid on the ground floor of the building.

## Load shedding

From Page 1

crisis as water pumps remain unutilised.

Many people are complaining that power failures off and on were causing damage to household electronic goods.

Currently, power plants under the Power Development Board are unable to generate around 452 MW power due to severe gas crisis in the Chittagong region.

Sources in the energy ministry also said they expects that construction of the Ashugan-Bakhtrab pipeline will be completed by June next. It will link the gas-starved Chittagong region with the Ashugan system, the country's main gas supply network.

The pipeline was earlier scheduled to be completed by April.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to place a bill in the Jatiya Sangsad on "load management to restrict commercial use of electricity after 8 pm, thereby saving power and reducing the level of load shedding."

The government's other schemes include a 320 MW power plant in Meghna Ghat, a 100 MW barge mounted plant in Khulna, one plant in Sylhet, one plant in Haripur, and a 60 MW plant in Mymensingh.

All these plants will be built either by the private sector or under joint collaboration with the government. However, none of these plants will be completed within this year.

# The Daily Star

## 7 killed, 21 injured in road accidents

Seven people were killed and 21 others injured in road accidents in Comilla and Habiganj yesterday, reports UNB.

Six people, including a minor boy, were killed and 11 others critically injured when a bus skidded off the Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Burichang thana under Comilla yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred at about 1.30 pm when one of the front wheels of the bus bound for Chittagong from Dhaka burst at Kalakachua thana, killing three passengers on the spot.

Three others succumbed to their injuries when 14 critically injured passengers were rushed to the Comilla Medical College Hospital.

The remaining injured persons — Akbar Ali, Ayet Ali, Oliullah, Habibur Rahman, Mostafa, Ershadullah, Hejal, Khokon, Hossain Ali, Dulal and Siddique Mia — were under treatment at the hospital.

Two of the six dead were

## Minister tells JS Talks initiated with India for sharing of Teesta water

The government has initiated talks with India for sharing the water of the Teesta, another common river between the two neighbouring countries, reports UNB.

This was disclosed in Parliament yesterday by Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzaq replying to a written question from Golam Mohammad Qader of Jatiya Party.

Razzaq said the talks for sharing the water of Teesta river had been opened during the visit of Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda to Bangladesh January 6-7 last.

He said the question of sharing waters of all the common rivers, including the Brahmaputra, would be discussed in the next meeting of the Joint River Commission, to be held next month.

## Work on Padma Barrage from '99, JS told

Work on the proposed Padma Barrage is set to begin from 1999-2000 fiscal year, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzaq said yesterday, reports UNB.

Replies to a question from Zillul Hakim in Parliament, the minister said the updating of feasibility study and detailed engineering works would be done between 1997-98 and 2001-2002.

## Power station in N'ganj gheraoed

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Feb 24: Several thousand people gheraoed a power sub-station under Fattullah thana this evening demanding regular power supply.

The angry people also threw stones at the Panchabati power sub-station protesting frequent load-shedding in the area.

## Birmingham City

From Page 1

In the evening, Marion Arnott had a meeting with the president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (BFCCI), Yusuf Abdullah Harun.

During the meeting the Mayor said that the Birmingham city council would provide necessary assistance for improving the environment of Dhaka city.

The mayor said that the council would consider providing assistance in mosquito eradication and waste disposal.

Harun informed the mayor of the different initiatives taken by the government to ensure foreign investment.

According to Immigration police, Jalal Ahmed of Rajapur under Balaganj thana tried to fly to London counterfeiting his photo in the passport of one Aftebur Rahman of the same village.

The BFCCI president urged the British investors as well as the Bangladeshi living in Birmingham to avail the investment opportunities in Bangladesh.

The government is engaged in the protection and promotion of human rights and, in particular, concerned at the violation of women's rights by the continuing practice of imprisoning women and girls in the name of safe custody are

filling this petition in the public interest", the petition stated.

It was said in the petition that Sufia Begum is a victim of sexual assault and the complainant in her own case.

The petition also stated that according to news reports published on February 6 Sufia, 35, of Chandkhali, Beguni, Borguna was stripped naked and violently assaulted by a gang of hooligans, who pushed a stick and marbles into her private parts.

At first she was hospitalised, then taken to the safe custody

"Detention of Sufia and other women and girls in 'safe custody' is a violation of their fundamental rights to equality and equal protection of law as guaranteed by Articles 27, 28 and 31 of the Constitution, as much as it appears that only female victims or witnesses of criminal offences are placed in 'safe custody' in prisons and no man or boy have been imprisoned on the ground of safe custody."

The petitioners often found that the women and minor girls who are kept in 'safe custody' include victims of rape including custodial rape, kidnapping

and other criminal offences, witnesses to such offences and prostitutes. Those who are placed in 'safe custody' are kept confined with convicted and under trial prisoner, the petition stated.

In this regard the petition referred the case of Seema Chowdhury who died while in 'safe custody' at Chittagong Jail.

She was placed on safe custody after being raped allegedly by four policemen at the Rajbari thana.

"Orders to place women and girls in 'safe custody' are issued by magistrates solely in the exercise of an undefined discretionary power which is supposed to be enjoyed by them and does not have any basis in law," the petition submitted.

The petition further stated,

"Detention of Sufia and other

women and girls in 'safe custody' is a violation of their fundamental rights to equality and equal protection of law as guaranteed by Articles 27, 28 and 31 of the Constitution, as much as it appears that only female victims or witnesses of criminal offences are placed in 'safe custody' in prisons and no man or boy have been imprisoned on the ground of safe custody."

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