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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 Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal on the occasion of Ekushey at the National Press Club yesterday.

Kibria: Much progress

From Page 1
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 Sahara 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 parastatals 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.

However, the government will be ready with its ammunition, though few, to counter these views.

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

same period of last year, though it is two per cent short of the target.

Domestic credit expansion is "satisfactory" Government's net borrowing during the six-month period is less than the borrowing in the corresponding period in 1995, he said.

Thus the overall macroeconomic picture is healthy and on a sound track," he added.

Given the good harvest of aus and aman paddy crops, Kibria hoped, the GDP growth rate will reach the target of 5.5 per cent.

Of course, there is room for further improvement in a number of areas such as increasing exports and industrial production.

Yasmin murder

From Page 1
The other witnesses were Banu, four ex-police constables - Toriqul Islam, Sarwar Hosain, Ahsan Habib and Askan Ali; ex-OC (GRP) of Dinajpur Wazed Ali; and journalist Shajedul Rahman Shetu of the Dinajpur office of the Daily Janakantha.

The District and Sessions Judge, Abdul Matin recorded the depositions in a crowded court from 11 am to 4 pm without any break.

In all, nine accused - eight policemen and a doctor - are facing trial under Section 201 (34) of the Penal Code.

PP Gazur Rahman, assisted by special PP Azizur Rahman, conducted the prosecution while advocates Taleb Ali, Nazrul Islam and Rashid Chowdhury defended the accused.

The hearing will resume on March 15.

Meanwhile, another trial of the Yasmin rape and murder case against the three main accused under the Women and Children Repression (Special Provision) Act, 1995 will resume in the Special Court tomorrow.

dollars. It will say that import is being curtailed forcing that with the expected growth of the economy, import will rise putting pressure on the foreign exchange reserve.

About the slow pace of private sector credit disbursement, the government will clarify the situation by saying that there was a 30 per cent increase in credit in 1994-95 which would have an inflationary effect unless credit was squeezed, the sources pointed out.

About the revenue position, the government side will say that revenue collection increased by about 10 per cent, but tax revenue has been stagnant since 1993-94, which is a weak point in the economy but a result of long term policy.

The government's privatisation programme may face critical review from the donors, the sources said. But the government will highlight its strengthening of the privatisation board with the appointment of Manzur Elahi as its chief.

"This will be a big publicity advantage for the government," said a source. "It will also show that the government is not bureaucratic-dependent for privatisation programme."

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.

According to some sources, the government will seek to sensitise the donors about the vast scope of investment created in the country's water management and irrigation system through larger scale investment.

However, the government will not come forward with any specific projects.

"This is a new opportunity for us. Before the treaty, we could not take up any major project on common water. The donors also used to ask us about water-sharing whenever we sought their assistance in this field. But time has come when we can approach them with some positiveness," said source.

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

From Page 1
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 Mohamampur 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 Mohamampur 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

From Page 1
Speaking on the occasion, Finance Minister SAMS Kibria lauded support and contributions of his predecessors - former finance ministers Saifur Rahman and Dr 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 Ashuganj-Bakhrabad pipeline will be completed by June next. It will link the gas-starved Chittagong region with the Ashuganj 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 Kibria, one plant in Sikalaha on plant in Haripur, and a 60 MW plant in Myensingh.

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.

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, Helal, Khokon, Hossain Ali, Dulal and Siddique Mia - were under treatment at the hospital.

Two of the six dead were

identified as Ali Ahmed and Bhola Mia (2).

The bodies were sent to Comilla Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police seized the bus but the driver was absconding.

Meanwhile a minor boy was killed and 10 others were injured when a jeep met with an accident at Dali Moholla in Baniachang thana on the Habiganj-Baniachang road.

Police said Harris Miah, 9, son of Wahab Ullah of Dali Moholla in Baniachang thana, died on the spot as the Habiganj-bound jeep overturned and fell on him.

Of the injured people, five were admitted to the Baniachang Thana Health Complex.

Local people caught the driver with the vehicle and handed him over to the police.

They also put up barricades on the road disrupting communication between Baniachang and Habiganj for two hours.

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 Razzak replying to a written question from Golam Mohammad Qader of Jatiya Party.

Razzak 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 Razzak said yesterday, reports UNB.

Replying 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 Fatullah 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, Marjion 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.

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

Writ: Rule nisi on govt

From Page 1
The petitioners being 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 filing 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, Betagi, 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' in Barguna Jail where she was handcuffed to a bed, but given serious deterioration of her health, she was then taken to Borguna Hospital, the petition alleged.

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

identified as Ali Ahmed and Bhola Mia (2).

The bodies were sent to Comilla Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

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They also put up barricades on the road disrupting communication between Baniachang and Habiganj for two hours.

President assents to 4 Bills

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed yesterday assented to four bills passed in Jatiya Sangsad, said an official announcement, reports UNB.

The bills are: The Judicial Administration Training Institute (Amendment) Bill 1997, the Securities and Exchange (Amendment) Bill 1997, the Securities and Exchange Commission (Amendment) Bill 1997 and the Local Government (Unions Parishads) (Amendment) Bill 1997.

Mugda, Kamalapur residents stage sit-in from today

By Staff Correspondent
The residents of the city's Mugda, Kamalapur and adjoining areas brought out a procession and later held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday protesting the plan to close the link road near the Kamalapur Railway Station.

Earlier, a committee resisting the closure of the link road at a news conference at the National Press Club announced an agitation programme.

Announcing the programme, the convenor of the committee, Shahajuddin Sarkar, said they would stage a two-hour sit-in on the link road every alternate day from February 25 to March 6 and a sit-in in front of the Jatiya Press Club on March 7.

The Bangladesh Railway is planning to close the road for the ongoing expansion work of the Inland Container Depot (ICD) at Kamalapur.

'Fake' healer arrested

By Staff Correspondent
A self-proclaimed healer, also claiming to have spiritual powers, Dewan Golam Sarwar alias Lalan Shah alias Lakutia has been arrested on charges of deceiving innocent people. Police picked him up from his Shankat Mochon chamber (centre for solving problems) at Malibagh in the city yesterday afternoon.

Police say he allured people through advertisements and deceived them in the name of treatment by realising money from them.

A team of the Detective Branch (DB) police arrested Dewan Golam Sarwar at about 1 pm.

In his advertisements, he promised all sorts of cures and claimed that he could solve any social problems.

1 held with fake passport at Sylhet airport

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Feb 24: One person was arrested at the Sylhet Osmani Airport yesterday afternoon when he tried to fly for London with a fake passport.

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.

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 Rajan 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, is 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 boys have been imprisoned on the ground of 'safe custody'.

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Speaker repeats appeal as JS fails to sit on time

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, for the second consecutive day yesterday, sought cooperation from all the MPs to start the session of the Jatiya Sangsad on time.

JS session began 45 minutes behind schedule yesterday due to lack of quorum, the Speaker said and reiterated his previous day's appeal to all the lawmakers for their timely attendance in the House.

The image of the Jatiya Sangsad was being tarnished as punctuality was not maintained, he said and added that he had received many letters in this. He also referred to recent press reports on the issue.

The Speaker regretted that the Jatiya Sangsad which is the symbol of the nation's hopes and aspirations could not sit on time due to lack of quorum. He, however, hoped that awareness would grow among the MPs for timely disposal of day's business in the House.

Despite the Speaker's repeated appeal, the sitting resumed late, both after the Asr and the Maghreb recess yesterday for lack of quorum.

Later, when Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid took the chair after the Maghreb recess, he also sought cooperation from both Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah and Opposition Chief Whip Khondaker Delwar Hussain for expediting the business of the House.

Ravi Shankar

From Page 1
gaon in the evening, Ravi Shankar said that branching of Indian music in different light and modern musical trends would not reduce the popularity of classical music.

Pandit Ravi Shankar arrived in the city yesterday on a five-day visit to Bangladesh. He is accompanied by Mrs Ravi Shankar and their daughter Anoushka Shankar. Other members of his entourage are Sulekha Das, Rabin Pal, Uday Majumdar, Kumar Bose and Anthony Karmic.

Ravi Shankar, India's most esteemed musical ambassador and a singular phenomenon in the arena of classical music in the East and the West, said as a "traveller in the domain in music," he was happy to create a symphony of Indian classical music and western notes.

Despite being a world traveller, Ravi Shankar said, he always felt a strong urge to visit Bangladesh because this is the land of his forefathers, who hailed from Kalia village in Jessore.

The star maestro, who was born in 1920, contributed to our Liberation War in 1971 through creating sentiments in favour of Bangladesh in the Western world particularly in the USA.

Ravi Shankar said that there was no dearth of musical talent in the country, but to develop the talents of the young musicians, a full-scale classical music institute was a must.

The persons contesting from the 'BGMEA Forum' are Alamgir M Z Rahman, A F M Fakhrul Islam Munshi, A K Azad, Gazi Md Shahnawaz, Md Reaz Uddin, Rehman Sharif, Sharifuddin Ahmed, Badrur Rahim Chowdhury, and Md A Salam.

Those from the 'Sammilita Parishad' are Mostafa Golam Quddus, Nurul Huq Sikdar, Zinnat Ali Mian, K M Zaman Romel, Badal Roy, Md Nurul Islam, Lutfur Rahman, Md Nasir Uddin, and Mahbub Ali.

Meanwhile, the Parishad held a projection meeting at a local hotel yesterday. Kutub Uddin Ahmed presided over the function.

Two shops looted

By Staff Correspondent
A gang of armed men looted Tk 40,000 after ransacking two shops near the Savadabad bus terminal in the city Sunday night.

The attackers reportedly looted the shops and damaged their furniture at about 10.30 pm. They forced the employees to open the cash box from where the gang snatched Tk 30,000. Later, they attacked an adjacent shop and looted Tk 10,000 from there.

WB: Petroleum

From Page 1
1995 while the exchange rate was devalued by 4.2 per cent. "Yet the domestic market petroleum prices were kept absolutely unchanged in 1996."

Fertiliser prices constitute yet another area long due for an immediate upward revision, the Bank observed.

"However, given a very large and powerful farmer lobby within the Awami League, increasing fertiliser price is likely to be politically much more challenging than increasing petroleum prices," it maintained.

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