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BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia receiving a bouquet from Advocate Taimur Alam Khandaker and other lawyers from Narayanganj who joined her party yesterday.

—Star photo

## Khaleda accuses govt

From Page 1

Reiterating her allegations that the present government had sold out the country to India, the BNP chief also charged the government with non-implementation of any of its election pledges and keeping all its commitments to its 'masters.'

"In its nine-month rule, the government has not done any development work but has destroyed all those done by the previous government," Begum Zia said. It has ruined the national economy, shut down mills and factories and sold out national sovereignty in a planned way to make the country a vassal state of India, she asserted.

Opposing the move to form a sub-regional grouping, the Opposition leader said that the initiative was aimed at turning all the neighbouring countries of India into its provinces. "They've gone to such an extent that they're now contemplating introducing a common national anthem for the countries in the region. It reveals their ultimate design of getting all the independent countries of the region as its provinces," Begum Zia went on.

The BNP chief alleged that the government's plan to give transit to India meant yet another treaty of slavery, which

**Rickshawpullers observe strike in Rajshahi**

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Mar 15: The rickshawpullers observed a half-day strike here today protesting the killing of two persons in a road accident.

Rickshaws and rickshaw-vans were off roads from 6 am to 2 pm. The rickshawpullers also brought out a processions and held a rally.

Two rickshaw-van drivers — Shahjahan, 22, and Shukur Ali Jamsher, 23, — were crushed under the wheels of a night coach at Choudhupur in the city yesterday.

## Minister: Loadshedding

From Page 1

ment Board (BPDB) and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) were also present.

The real problem lies with Dhaka which is currently consuming nearly half (over 900 MW) of the total power generated daily," Noor Uddin Khan pointed out. "We have no choice but to implement load management measures."

"If shops remain closed during the peak hours in Dhaka we can save 30 to 40 MW power," the Energy Secretary said.

The Energy Minister refuted a wide-spread rumour that the government was intentionally organising the loadshedding to create an opinion in favour of purchase of power from India.

"In no way," he said replying to a question whether loadshedding was intentional. "Our energy policy allows import of power. But in importing power we have to see whether it can be done quickly and at a cheaper rate. We will also have to have control over the purchased power and get that during the peak hour," he added.

The minister alleged inaction of the previous government in the sector. The previous government did not set up a single power generation unit during its five-year rule. Implementation of a few important projects like the AB gas pipeline project were also delayed.

The Bakhrabad gas field in Chittagong was producing a smaller quantity of gas

and therefore power generation in the 210 MW Raujan power plant, connected with the Bakhrabad system, remained suspended. The AB pipeline will enable the PDB to restart the Raujan plant with gas from Ashuganj.

The 58-km AB pipeline will pass through three rivers — Gunti, Buri and Titas. Submarine pipeline has already been installed in Gunti river and Petrobangla engineers are currently installing submarine line in Buri river, the minister said.

"We also have some shortfall in gas supply to the power plants in Ghorashal. Work is going on to finish installation of a 26-km gas pipeline to improve the situation in Ghorashal units," the minister said.

The three 33 MW units in Siddhiganj are also unable to go for optimum production due to gas crisis. "Only one unit is partially operative now. To improve gas supply there, a tender will be floated tomorrow to build a 41-km pipeline," the minister noted and expressed his hope that the pipeline would be completed by eight months.

The minister further said that a number of power plants are now under rehabilitation. These plants will gradually come into operation between May and December and add around 300 MW power. "In addition, the second unit of the 210 MW Raujan plant will come into operation after June," he said.

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