



Members of Sri Lanka's Special Task Force survey the damage in front of the Colombo's Town Hall yesterday at the site where a suspected Tamil Tiger suicide bomber detonated a device during a campaign rally Saturday, that killed at least 21 people and injured Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga. The blast took place on the last day of campaigning for presidential elections due to take place tomorrow. — AFP photo

International

Polls to go ahead as Chandrika rides on sympathy wave

COLOMBO, Dec 19: Sri Lanka's presidential election will go ahead as scheduled despite an assassination attempt on President Chandrika Kumaratunga and the bombing of an opposition rally, a senior minister said today, reports AFP.

Fisheries minister Mahinda Rajapakse said Tuesday's election would not be postponed. Chandrika who is seeking reelection was wounded in Saturday's suicide bomb attack that killed 21 people.

"We are ready to go ahead with the elections, and the president herself will be fit to vote," Rajapakse said, adding that Chandrika had come out of surgery Sunday and was making a speedy recovery.

Colombo's police chief was among those killed in the suicide bomb attack while 110 others, including four senior ministers, were wounded. In a second bomb blast at an opposition United National

Party (UNP) rally north of the capital Colombo, at least 11 people were killed and about 40 injured.

Ruling party politicians said they expected public sympathy for the injured Chandrika to translate into more votes at the polls.

"She was winning anyway, but it will be with a bigger margin now," Rajapakse said.

However, the main opposition UNP, whose campaign had been gathering pace in the last weeks of campaigning, played down the impact of the double bomb blasts.

"People have already made up their minds so this will not affect the vote," a UNP spokesman said.

"I condemn both attacks," said UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, the main challenger to Chandrika in the coming election.

While the suicide bomber was believed to be a member of the

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), there was no immediate indication who was responsible for the attack on the UNP rally.

"We are not a party that condones violence," Wickremesinghe said. "The attack on the president took place at a high security area and we ask the government to make a full statement on this."

A stage from which Wickremesinghe addressed his final campaign rally here Saturday night was torched by rivals at dawn Sunday even as the authorities enforced a night curfew, witnesses said.

Apart from the smashing of the UNP stage, there are no other incidents of violence," a police spokesman said. "The situation is now calm."

The opposition's green coloured bulbs and plastic flags were pulled down and larger than life portraits of Wickremesinghe destroyed at

Colombo's Maradana area hours after the assassination attempt on Chandrika.

Both bombings came on the final day of campaigning for Tuesday's vote in which 12 candidates are challenging Chandrika.

Meanwhile, Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga today ordered a top level enquiry into the security lapse that saw her narrowly escape an assassination bid by a woman suicide bomber.

Chandrika underwent surgery to injuries sustained in the blast at her final presidential election campaign rally on Saturday night.

Twenty-one people were killed, including the bomber — believed to be a member of the Tamil Tiger rebel group.

"This is a very dangerous lapse by the Presidents' Security Division (PSD)," said Media and Telecommunications Minister Mangala Samaraweera.

Lankan troops quit key base amid fighting with LTTE

COLOMBO, Dec 19: Sri Lanka troops have pulled out of a key military base in the north of the country amid heavy fighting with Tamil Tiger guerrillas, defence sources here said today, reports AFP.

The army pulled back their brigade headquarters from the town of Paranthan on Saturday as the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) made further gains, the sources said.

"There could be heavy casualties on both sides, we have no details at the moment," a defence official here said, adding that the army had pulled back some of their defences in the area over the weekend.

However, the LTTE claimed Friday they had already captured Paranthan, located south of the bigger Elephant Pass.

"Unable to withstand the fury of the Tigers' massive onslaught the Sri Lankan troops withdrew from the town in total disarray," the LTTE said.

Clinton leads chorus of concern for Chandrika

COLOMBO, Dec 19: US President Bill Clinton led a chorus of international shock and concern today over the assassination bid on Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga by a woman suicide bomber, reports AFP.

In a personal message, Clinton said he had been shocked and saddened to learn of the "cowardly attempt" on Chandrika's life at an election rally in Colombo on Saturday night. Chandrika was injured in the blast that killed 21 people and injured 110. The attack — believed to be the work of the separatist Tamil Tigers — coincided with a separate blast at an opposition rally that left 12 dead.

"It is particularly distressing to me that these heinous acts have occurred during a demo-

cratic election campaign," Clinton said.

"I have full faith that these events will only reinforce the strong commitment of the Sri Lankan people to democracy and peace," he said, wishing Chandrika a full recovery.

In a similar message, French President Jacques Chirac condemned the "despicable bomb attempt" and asked to convey the "compassionate feelings" of the French people to the victims and their relatives.

Neighbouring India labelled the two bomb attacks "acts of wanton terrorism," with President K.R. Narayanan and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee sending personal messages of concern and sympathy to Chandrika.

According to diplomats here, the Indian government also of-

fered medical assistance to the Sri Lankan president, who was said Sunday to be recovering from surgery to one of her eyes.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook condemned the two bomb blasts and said he deeply regretted the loss of life and injuries caused.

"There is no place for violence in the democratic process. It is essential that the forthcoming elections are held peacefully in an atmosphere free of intimidation and violence," Cook said.

Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Sadaaki Numata delivered a similar message.

"Terrorist acts are not only a serious challenge to the democracy of Sri Lanka but also a challenge to the whole of the international community," Numata said in a statement.

Sun sets on European colonial empire in Asia

MACAU, Dec 19: The curtain was due to fall on European colonialism in Asia at midnight Sunday when Portugal was to hand back the tiny gambling and sex trade enclave of Macau to China after more than four centuries, reports AFP.

Macau — which became the first European territory in the Far East when it was rented by China to Portuguese silk and spice traders in 1557 — is to be returned by Lisbon under the "one country, two systems" formula used for the handover from Britain of Hong Kong in 1997 which guarantees autonomy for 50 years.

The re-establishment of Chinese rule over the small peninsula and two islands — home to 450,000 people — means the grand 50-year Chi-

nese plan of national reunification is two thirds complete.

The ultimate prize, Taiwan, which split from the communist mainland in 1949, still refuses to rejoin.

The handover also releases the final outpost in Portugal's once vast empire, which began with Vasco de Gama's circumnavigation in the 15th century and eventually stretched to Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, India, Malaysia, and East Timor.

The return also marks the passing of the colonial era in Asia, which at its height also saw Britain, France, Holland and Spain conquer vast possessions across Asia.

Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio said he would have mixed emotions when the Por-

tuguese flag was finally lowered here at midnight, to be replaced by China's red and gold banner.

"First you have the sensation that 500 years of history are going in front of you in 30 seconds. And the second feeling... I feel proud. I think we did our job as best we could."

Chinese President Jiang Zemin, who arrived Sunday, has hailed Macau's reintegration as a stepping stone to Taiwan as state media celebrated an end to the "shame and humiliation" of the colonial era.

Like Hong Kong, the handover was to be marked by a series of parades and cultural events, a huge waterfront fireworks display and a banquet for world dignitaries, 2,500 in all, hosted by Sampaio and Jiang.



Macau Governor, Rocha Vieira (R) together with his wife and Portuguese Prime Minister, Antonio Guterres (C), during mass at the Macau Cathedral yesterday. Macau was handed over to China yesterday. — AFP photo

Russians elect new Duma amid war in Chechnya

MOSCOW, Dec 19: Russians across this vast country went to the polls today with a surge of patriotic fervour over the war in Chechnya drowning out discontent over deep economic hardship, reports AFP.

Unlike the 1995 vote for the State Duma, when the governing party fared badly as a result of the bloodbath during the last North Caucasus war, this time around voters are rallying around the flag.

Few have reaped the benefits as much as the Unity Party, backed by Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, which has surged into second place in little over two months since its inception.

Polling stations opened at 8 a.m. (11:00 a.m. BST) in the capital Moscow and Saint Petersburg, Russia's biggest cities. Moscow Echo radio reported. Voting was to end in these two cities and the surrounding regions at 8 p.m.

Besides electing members of the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, Moscow is also to choose a mayor. The incumbent Yury Luzhkov is favourite for the job.

Voters went to the ballot box

first at the sparsely populated and icy northeastern tip of Kamchatka in the far east at 8:00 a.m. Sunday (2:00 a.m. BST Saturday).

By 2:00 pm there, 27.5 per cent of voters had cast their votes, surpassing the necessary 25-per cent minimum for the elections to be valid, ITAR-TASS reported.

In Siberia, local electoral officials said they feared freezing temperatures of between minus 30 and 40 Celsius degrees might deter people from coming to polling stations from remote villages in the Irkutsk region.

More than 107 million people are eligible to cast ballots in post-Soviet Russia's third free Duma poll. Turnout is not expected to top 60 per cent after a campaign marked by unprecedented mud-slinging that left many voters disaffected.

The last polls are due to close late Sunday evening in the western enclave of Kaliningrad. The voting across Russia's 11 time zones, in the world's largest country, will take nearly 24 hours.

Preliminary results are due early Monday. Among the 26 registered par-

ties contesting the elections, most polls suggest the communists will maintain their grip as the largest bloc in the Duma.

The party has confidently scheduled a victory press conference for Sunday evening. The most important battle is that for second place between Unity, which has scored 12-20 per cent in polls, and its bitter foe Fatherland-All Russia (OVR) led by dull ex-premier Yevgeny Primakov, which has been scoring nine to 16 per cent.

The Kremlin had struggled for much of the year to build a party that would support ousted President Boris Yeltsin while assuring that the next Russian president guarantees the current regime's future safety.

Meanwhile Putin's backing of Unity, coupled with a media assault on OVR which among other things accused Luzhkov of murder, has deflated the anti-Kremlin juggernaut into a party wheezing for life.

In a last-minute bid to grab headlines and attract Russia's attention to OVR, Primakov on Friday unexpectedly declared that he had decided to run for president next year.

Falun Gong sect members demonstrate in Macau

MACAU, Dec 19: Shortly before Chinese President Jiang Zemin's arrival in Macau, police on Sunday broke up a gathering of about 30 visiting members of a sect banned in China who defied warnings and demonstrated ahead of the enclave's return to Beijing's control, reports AP.

Macau police removed the Falun Gong practitioners — lifting some of them off the ground and carrying them away as they rigidly maintained cross-legged meditation positions.

Authorities would not immediately confirm whether the Falun Gong adherents had been arrested, deported or merely dispersed. The demonstrators were mostly from Hong Kong or Chinese immigrants who live in Australia, Japan and the United States.

"We just want China to understand us. We don't have a political agenda," said Zhang Shuk, 32, a resident of South Korea, who was escorted her off the square with her 6-year-old daughter.

Authorities confiscated banners which proclaimed Falun Gong is not a cult, the characterization used by communists China, where leaders are unsettled by the sheer num-

ber of practitioners. A Hong Kong reporter was arrested after minor scuffles with police.

Although there was no official comment on the police action, officers at the scene were heard talking among one another and saying the Falun Gong practitioners were illegally assembling in public.

Mainland China began massive arrests of Falun Gong members after banning the set in July, but the practice remains legal in Hong Kong and Macau, which was returning to Chinese sovereignty at midnight Sunday.

Falun Gong practitioners said they applied for a permit to demonstrate but it was denied, although Macau officials had said previously there had been no such application.

"Falun Gong is not a cult. We are not here to challenge the Chinese authorities," said Li Bo, 27, a system engineer in Tokyo. "We're very worried that after today, Macau authorities will also muffle our voices due to Beijing's pressure."

The departing Portuguese governor, Vasco Rocha Vieira, said before the demonstration that no one had been kicked out for their belief in Falun Gong.

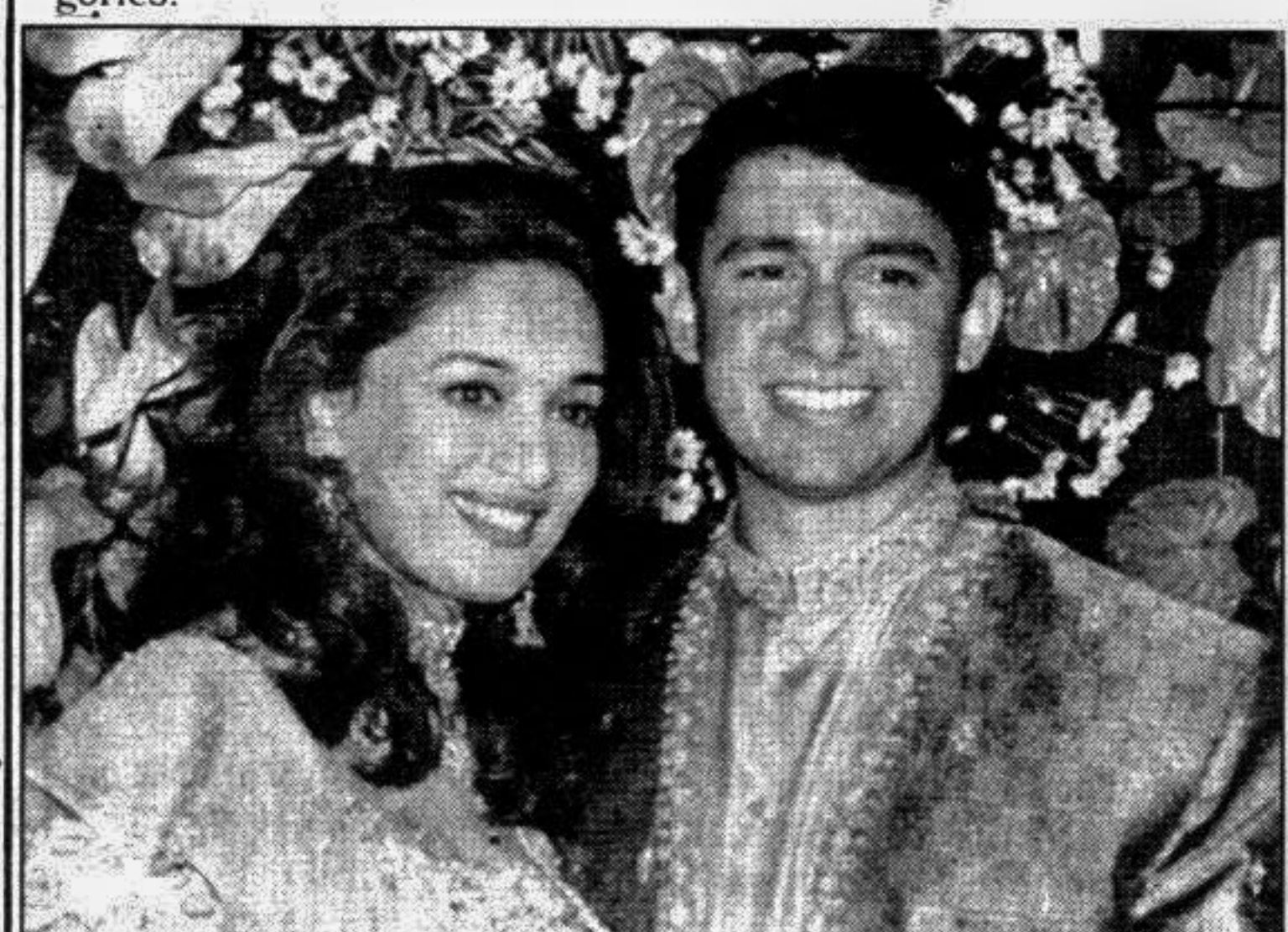
BRIEFLY

Quake shakes Indonesian province: An strong earthquake with an estimated magnitude of 6.1 hit Indonesia's easternmost Irian Jaya province early Sunday, the Hong Kong Observatory said. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The quake which was recorded at 1:51 am (17:51 GMT) Sunday, was centered 110 kilometers (68.35 miles) west of the provincial capital Jayapura.

Al-Azhar wins King Faisal Prize: Egypt-based Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's highest authority, has won the annual King Faisal Prize for services to Islam, official sources said Sunday, reports AFP from Riyadh.

The 200,000-dollar prize, named after the Saudi monarch who died in 1975, has been awarded since 1979 in five categories.



Bollywood star Madhuri Dixit (L) with her doctor husband Sriram Nene at a wedding reception Saturday in Bombay. The marriage took place on October 17 in United States and everyone was kept guessing who the lucky man was. — AFP photo

Italian PM quits

ROME, Dec 19: Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema officially resigned on Saturday after his centre-led coalition unravelled, bringing down the country's 56th post-war government and throwing Italy into full-scale political crisis, reports Reuters.

President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the supreme arbiter in Italian politics, announced he would begin consultations with institutional figures and political parties within 12 hours in a clear signal he would like the crisis over by Christmas.

An official statement said consultations would start at 8:45 am (07:45 GMT) today with Senate Speaker Nicola Mancino, Italy's most senior institutional figure after the president.

The talks will last all day and wrap up on Monday afternoon with consultations with former Italian presidents.

12 die in Moscow university fire

MOSCOW, Dec 19: At least 12 people died and 15 were injured overnight Saturday in a fire at a residence of Moscow State University, Moscow Echo radio reported, says AFP.

One person was killed when they jumped out of a window to escape the blaze. The bodies of the other victims were discovered by firefighters inside the building.

The blaze, concentrated on the second floor of the 13-storey building, began just after midnight Saturday (3:00 am BST Saturday) and took more than two hours to bring under control.

Ex-Punjab chief minister barred from politics for 21 years

LAHORE, Dec 19: A former chief minister of Pakistan's eastern Punjab province was barred from politics for 21 years after being found guilty of corruption, a senior government official said Saturday, reports AP.

Arif Nakai was the first politician to be disqualified from politics since the army took power in a bloodless coup on Oct 12 and imposed a strict new anti-corruption law.

According to the court ruling Nakai spent 1.9 million rupees, or \$135,000, of state funds on a private visit to Islam's holy sites in Saudi Arabia in 1996 along with six other family members, said Deputy Attorney General Sher Zaman.

Army chief Gen. Pervez Musharraf has promised ruth-

less and swift accountability of corrupt politicians.

Zaman said Nakai admitted misusing state funds during a hearing before a newly formed accountability court. Nakai apparently deposited the amount he was accused of misusing thus avoiding arrest.

"Because he has admitted corruption, he can no longer hold public office or take part in politics under the new accountability laws," Zaman said. Corruption is a major issue in Pakistan where four elected governments have been ousted from power since 1990.

Both Nawaz Sharif, whose government was thrown out by the army on Oct 12 and Benazir Bhutto have been accused repeatedly of relentless corruption.

500 bodies recovered in Venezuela

Thousands still unaccounted for

CARACAS, Dec 19: Some 500 bodies now have been recovered by rescue workers in Venezuela, the country's President Hugo Chavez announced late Saturday, following torrential rains and mudslides that have devastated much of the country's coast, reports AFP.

"I have been informed that we have more than 500 bodies at a recovery site," Chavez told reporters at a press conference at Simon Bolivar International Airport.

Thousands of people were still unaccounted for, many of them in the slums that ring the capital of this oil-rich country, where 80 per cent of the population lives in poverty.

"We have reasons to believe there are bodies we shall never

find; God knows how many," Chavez said.

He said 50 of the bodies were retrieved from the Caribbean sea by the crew of a Navy ship participating in rescue operations.

After touring the devastated area by helicopter, Chavez said some 7,000 people had been evacuated to higher ground Saturday. An estimated 150,000 people lost their homes, rescuers said.

"Thousands of people are coming down from their attics, out of the bushes," he said after the rains that devastated the country for almost two weeks gave way to bright sunshine.

The worst affected was the state of Vargas, which abuts the capital.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Faridpur Public Works Division
Dated: 5-12-99/21-8-1406 Bang

Corrigendum Order to Tender Notice

This is for information for all concerned that the date of selling and receiving of the tender notice No-64/1999-2000 of this office invited through memo number 1863, dated 1-11-99 and the tender notice No-65/1999-2000 invited through memo No 1847 dated 1-11-99 for the undermentioned work have been changed due to unavoidable circumstances. The last dates of selling of these tenders have been fixed on 22-12-99 instead of 5-12-99 and date of receiving has been fixed on 23-12-99 instead of 6-12-99.

It is mentionable that the schedules of tenders which have already been sold will be treated as valid and the dates of lottery of these tenders will be 6-1-2000 at 11-30 hours instead of 20-12-99 and will be held in the office of the Superintending Engineer, Public Works Circle, Jessore. Other terms and conditions of the tender will remain unchanged.

Group No	Name of work	Estimated expenditure	Earnest money	Time limit	Classes of contractors
1 (one)	Converting present Shishu Sadans into Shishu Paribar. One in Faridpur in 2nd phase.				
1 (one)	Sub-head construction of 5 storied dormitory building-1 for 100 persons	Tk 1,16,35,522/-	232711/=	210 days	Valid enlisted building/sanitary/plumbing contractors/firms of Public Works Department within their financial capacity as per their licences.
2 (two)	Construction of dormitory building-2 do do	Tk 1,16,35,522/-	232711/-	210 days	Do
3 (three)	Sub head: Construction of 3 (three) storied office and pre-primary school building for 200 persons	Tk 24,10,017/=	48201/=	120 days	Do
4 (four)	Sub-head: Work of water supply and sanitary for dormitory building-1	Tk 5,63,577/-	11,272/=	60 days	Do
5 (five)	Do Do building-2	Tk 5,63,577/-	11,272/=	60 days	Do
6 (six)	Sub-head: Work of sanitary and water supply for office and pre-primary school	Tk 2,42,565/-	4,852/=	45 days	Do
1 (one)	Project for increasing infrastructural facilities for introducing SSC (Vocational) course at Technical Training Centres (TTC).	Tk 37,99,550/-	75,991/-	90 days	Do
2 (two)	Sub head: Construction of Physics, Chemistry and Computer Laboratories above the workshop of Faridpur TTC	Tk 2,56,306/=	5,127/=	45 days	Do

DDP-27759-9/12
G-2133

Executive Engineer
Faridpur Public Works Division
Tel: 3257

Government of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Faridpur PWD Division
Tender No. 67 of 1999-2000
Memo No. 2031
Dated: 6.12.99/22.8.1406 Bang.

Notice Inviting Tenders

Sealed tenders are hereby invited in Bangladesh Form No. 2911 from the valid enlisted Bldg. Contractors/Firms according to their financial limit for the undermentioned work and will be received by the undersigned as well as by the Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Magura, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Jessore, Kushtia, Meherpur, Narail, Rajbari and Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka Division, Dhaka in their respective offices up to 12:00 Noon of 30.12.99. The estimated cost and earnest money for each group of work shown the group list in shape of Taka in TG/PO/BD/CDR from any schedule bank of Bangladesh or Pratiksha Sanchaya Patra, Bonus Sanchaya Patra, 5 yrs. BD Sanchaya Patra must accompany each tender duly endorsed to the Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Faridpur. Otherwise his/her tender shall be declared informal. No tender form, schedule of items, additional terms and conditions etc. will be sold after 29.12.99. The tender papers, schedule of items, additional terms and conditions etc. may be obtained from the office of the undersigned as well as by the EE, PWD Division, Magura, Jhenidah, Jessore, Kushtia, Chuadanga, Meherpur, Narail, Rajbari and the Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka Division and Addl. Chief Engineer, PWD Zone, Dhaka/Chittagong/Rajshahi and also PWD Division, Khulna-III/Satkhira/Bagerhat/Barisal/Patuakhali/Bhola/Madaripur/Shariatpur/Gopalganj/Barguna/Jhalokati/Pirojpur for information and sale to the tender paper to the intending tenderers on all working days during office hours on payment of usual charges of Tk. 750/- (Taka seven hundred fifty) only per set of tender schedule and a sum of Tk. 25.00 (Taka twenty-five) only per copy of the Form No. 2911 (Both non-refundable).

Details may be seen from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Gr. No.	Name of works	Estimated cost	Earnest money	Time allowed	Category of contractors/firms.
1.	S.H. : Two storied 100 Bedded Dormitory Building.	Tk. 92,69,915/-	Tk. 1,85,399/-	270 days.	Valid enlisted bldg. contractors/firms under Public Works Department according to their financial limit.
1.	S.H. : Constrn. of Multipurpose and Kitchen Building.	Tk. 55,80,986/-	Tk. 1,11,620/-	210 days.	

DDP-27751-13/12
G-2131

Md Syedur Rahman
Executive Engineer
Faridpur PWD Division.