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'Govt's 100-day programme heading for cherished goal'

UNB, Dhaka

A high-level meeting here yesterday reviewed the progress of implementation of the government's 100-day programme.

The meeting was told that the 100-day programme announced by the prime minister to speed up the pace of development activities was heading toward its cherished goal, said an official handout.

Presided over by principal secretary at the Prime Minister's Office Dr Kamal Siddiqui, the meeting was also informed that the progress of implementation of work in all sectors had been expedited. It viewed that continuation of the present trend would help fulfil the prime minister's political commitment to the nation.

After a threadbare discussion on the programmes of different ministries, the meeting expressed the view that the 100-day programme could be implemented in time.

It was told that as per the direc
SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Pintu allegedly tries to snatch auction papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ruling party lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu yesterday allegedly tried to snatch auction documents of a bankrupt property scheduled to go on auction on Thursday.

Pintu, however, denied the allegation and told The Daily Star that he would hold a press conference this afternoon to explain the situation regarding the auction of the bankrupt property.

He also said that he had gone to see the Receiver's office after a section of prospective bidders complained to him that there had been some irregularities in the selling of bid documents.

Receiver of Bankruptcy Court Advocate Md. Jahangir Alam Khan in a statement said yesterday that an influential person along with some
SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

INSIDE TODAY

Article 4

After the last rickshaw dies
Column: Straight from the heart
Afsan Chowdhury

Business 6-8

Govt borrowing posts 29pc rise in 4 months of FY02

Argentina halts debt payments

DSE, CSE price quotations

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Dec 25		5-18 pm
Dec 26	6-39 am	

Prayer Timings		
Dec 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-25	5-30
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation

Two fire incidents Woman burnt alive, 150 shanties gutted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was burnt alive and two other persons were injured in two fire incidents in the city yesterday.

At least 150 shanties were gutted in one of the incidents at a slum.

Jainab Bibi, 35, was killed when the electric motor she was operating caught fire and gutted a small factory and some adjoining warehouses near the Ansar camp at Mirpur Section 1 at about 9:30 am, police said.

Garments cut piece used to be turned into cotton at the factory. Waste paper and other goods were stored in the warehouses.

Mirpur police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Fire brigade personnel who doused fire said property worth Tk seven lakh were gutted in the incident.
SEE PAGE 11 COL 8

Gas, fuel & power prices to soar from New Year's Day

STAR REPORT

Prices of electricity, gas and all sorts of petroleum products will significantly soar from January 1, 2002 that would trigger a sharp rise in the prices of essentials and other products, energy and mineral resources ministry sources said.

The government has come up with the decision to increase petroleum prices following a recent proposal by the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC). With the rise in fuel prices, each litre of octane will sell at Tk 30, petrol at Tk 28 and diesel and kerosene at Tk 17 instead of the existing rates of Tk 25, Tk 23 and Tk 15.55 respectively.

The government would also increase the domestic and commercial electricity tariff by Tk 0.10 and Tk 0.25 per kilowatt hour respectively as per a World Bank formula. The tariff for farm users would remain unchanged.

The prices of gas will also be increased by at least five per cent against a recommended hike of 10 per cent. For domestic users, the tariff for a single burner

oven will be Tk 300 and that of a double burner Tk 350. With such tariff hike, prices of other utility services would also increase sharply, officials concerned and experts said.

The BPC has also proposed an increase in jet fuel (JP-1) price by Tk 4 per litre and furnace oil by 100 per cent to Tk 23 and Tk 13 respectively.

The immediate past Awami League government increased prices of petroleum products by 20 to 23 per cent that fuelled street protests by the then BNP-led opposition alliance, now in power.

Recently, the prices of petroleum products have been increased in neighbouring India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

As for the power sector, the current rate of per unit of electricity is Tk 2.15 for domestic consumers, Tk 3.50 for small industries and Tk 4.65 for commercial use. The rate is Tk 1.75 for the farm users, which has remained unchanged for the last seven years. Except for the farm rate, all other rates would go up Tk 0.10 in case of domestic users and Tk 0.25 for commercial ones.
SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

PCJSS leader shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Activists of UPDF allegedly shot dead Debu Bikash Chakma, 45, a PCJSS leader, at his residence and abducted three others, including two government employees.

However, two of the abducted persons identified as Bhubon Chakma, 35, and Dibendu Chakma, 15, were released unharmed yesterday morning, police said in the evening. The other abducted person is Gyano Jyoti Chakma, 30.

The incident occurred at about 9.30pm Sunday at Tintila under Longdu thana in the district, police said.

The PCJSS blamed the murder and abduction on the UPDF, known as the opponent of CHT Peace Accord, and urged the government to take steps to stop violence. The government failed to ensure
SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

43 more graft cases against ex-PM & ministers soon

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) is taking preparations to file 43 more graft cases against Awami League chief and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, some of her cabinet members and Dhaka city Mayor Mohammad Hanif.

Sources said the first information report (FIR) of three graft cases will be filed by the end of this week. The rest of the cases would be filed in phases.

A BAC high official said the bureau has been investigating a total of 55 charges of graft. It has already filed a dozen cases with different police stations of the city against Hasina and six former ministers and 47 former and serving bureaucrats and businessmen. BAC high officials held a meeting

with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia Sunday to discuss the progress of the investigations.

Sources said the first three cases likely to be filed this week would include graft charges against former telecommunications minister and Awami League Organisation Secretary Mohammad Nasim and former state minister for power Rafiqul Islam for irregularities in their respective ministries. Another case will be filed against AL presidium member and former food minister Amir Hossain Amu.

The bureau would need the prime minister's nod before filing the cases.

The sources added that almost all former ministers of the AL government would be implicated in the new lot of 43 cases. There are several charges of graft against some

former ministers and BAC is likely to file several cases against them.

Sheikh Hasina, against whom the bureau has already filed two cases, is likely to be charged for alleged irregularities in distribution of Tk 200 crore from the Relief and Welfare Fund of the prime minister. She is also likely to be accused of misuse of power and graft in the Mukti Juddha Kalyan Trust.

BAC is currently investigating allegations of Nasim's involvement in irregularities in the bidding process for installing three lakh telephone lines.

Former public works minister Mosharrif Hossain is likely to be accused of irregularities in the MA Hannan Airport project.

Former finance minister SAMS Kibria is likely to be accused of
SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Pakistan freezes assets of 2 militant groups

Troops trade fire along border again

REUTERS, Jammu

Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged mortar and heavy machinegun fire yesterday in the latest flareup along the tense Kashmir border where the two rivals had moved troops since and attack on India's parliament, a defence official said.

"We have destroyed some of their (Pakistani) bunkers even today (Monday) as the two sides exchanged artillery, mortar and heavy machinegun fire at some places along the Line of Control in Rajouri and Poonch sectors," the officials said. "No casualties have been reported so far on either side."

Meanwhile AFP from Kahachi says, Pakistan yesterday froze the bank accounts of two groups accused of involvement in terrorism, including Lashkar-i-Taiba which India has blamed for last week's deadly attack on its parliament.

"We have advised all the banks to freeze the accounts of these organisations," Pakistan's State Bank spokesman Sayed Wasimuddin said in a statement.

The State Bank of Pakistan announced it had moved against the assets of the two groups "in view of the decision of the United States".
SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

Delhi expels Pak embassy staff, arrests its official

Passing of 'sensitive' information alleged

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday ordered the expulsion of a Pakistan High Commission (embassy) staffer accused by police of receiving sensitive information from an official working at the Indian parliament.

Foreign ministry spokesman Nirapuma Rao said Mohammad Sharif Khan was being expelled for "engaging in activities beyond his legitimate sphere of activity" and

would have to leave the country within a week.

Rao refused to give details of Khan's activities, but New Delhi police said yesterday they had arrested a senior executive assistant in parliament's administrative staff, Ajay Kumar, for passing information on defense, atomic energy and ship design to the high commis-
SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Christmas today

BSS, Dhaka

The Christian community here as elsewhere across the world celebrates the holy Christmas with great enthusiasm, gaiety and festivities today.

The celebration will start at zero hour with chimes of bells and traditional midnight mass at all churches of the Christian community in the country.

Salient features of the day, commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem 2001 years ago, include special prayers for peace at churches, singing Christmas carols, cutting Christmas cakes, Santa Claus presenting lucrative gifts to children, illumination and decora
SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

Young girls and nuns are decorating a church in the city's Mohammadpur area on the occasion of Christmas.

Trade talks with Delhi stalled

Difference of opinion over agenda

SHAHRIAR KARIM

The talks between the commerce secretaries of Bangladesh and India scheduled for December 26-27 in Dhaka has been postponed as the Indian side declined to attend the meeting following difference of opinion over the conference agenda.

According to sources, the Indian authorities informed the Bangladesh side last evening about their inability to attend the meeting. No fresh date has been fixed for the talks considered by many as very important for both the countries.

However, a commerce ministry source expressed the hope that the meeting might be held in January 'if all other things go in the right direction'.
"There were uncertainties for the

last few days over the meeting. Now it is clear that there will be no meeting on the scheduled date as the Indian authorities informed us that they were not coming," Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed told The Daily Star yesterday.

With more than US\$1 billion trade gap between the two countries in favour of India, Bangladesh expected a 'goodwill gesture' from its next-door neighbour through accepting the country's long-standing demand for zero-tariff access of its 25-category products to the Indian market. Keeping this in mind, Bangladesh put the issue of zero-access on the top of agenda.

But India persisted with tariff concession on a reciprocal basis and demanded duty-concession by Bangladesh on 90 items. India even proposed that it could agree to the

country's demand of free access if it allowed similar facility to 10-12 Indian items.

India also wanted to discuss the transit issues at the commerce secretary level talks.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee while on a visit to Dhaka in 1999 made a clear commitment to offer zero-tariff access to Bangladesh. However, India did not keep its commitment, rather it tagged fresh demands including transshipment and transit facilities.

"It is not possible for us to offer any duty concession as we are already having over US\$1 billion trade deficit with India," the commerce secretary said.

Bangladesh also wanted to have a new bilateral trade agreement with a wider scope as it thought the
SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



A woman sits on ruins of a slum near the Ansar Camp at Mirpur Section 1 yesterday as others clear away the debris. Some 150 shanties were reduced to ashes in a fire at the slum yesterday.