

# SC locks horns with Zardari

## Fresh fears of Pak instability as court strikes down president's order on appointment of 2 judges

AP, Islamabad

A decision by Pakistan's Supreme Court to strike down a presidential order appointing two top judges triggered warnings yesterday of a new conflict between the judiciary and the government that could lead to broader political instability.

President Asif Ali Zardari's spokesman dismissed rumours the government was planning to declare a state of emergency after the court rejected his appointments at a special session late Saturday, just hours after they were announced.

The development will concern Pakistan's Western allies who want the country to concentrate on battling al-Qaeda and Taliban militants in the northwest. The stability of the nuclear-armed nation is also key to Washington's hopes of defeating the insurgency just across the border in Afghanistan.

In an indication of the threats facing the country, an explosion ripped through a busy intersection in southern Pakistan on Sunday, killing three people in an area that has mostly avoided

violence in the past.

The blast, which was still being investigated, also wounded nine people in Sindh province's Dadu city, hospital official Rafiq Kolachi said.

If authorities determine the blast was caused by a bomb, it would be a rare attack in Sindh outside the provincial capital of Karachi. The migration of violence beyond Pakistan's northwest, where most Taliban militants are located, has been a growing problem for the country.

The latest conflict between Zardari and the Supreme Court could add to those problems. The standoff follows past clashes between the two sides.

The Supreme Court struck down an amnesty in December that had been shielding Zardari and several other senior politicians from graft allegations dating back to the 1980s. Earlier last year, the president was forced to reinstate the court's chief justice, who was fired by former President Gen Pervez Musharraf, after demonstrations that exposed his political vulnerability and the clout of the judiciary.

Saturday's ruling came after Zardari appointed a new Supreme Court judge

and chief of the Lahore High Court, going against the recommendation of the Supreme Court. Pakistan's constitution says the president must consult with the Supreme Court over the appointment of new judges.

The court order said no consultation had taken place and Zardari's appointments "appeared to be in violation of the provision of the constitution."

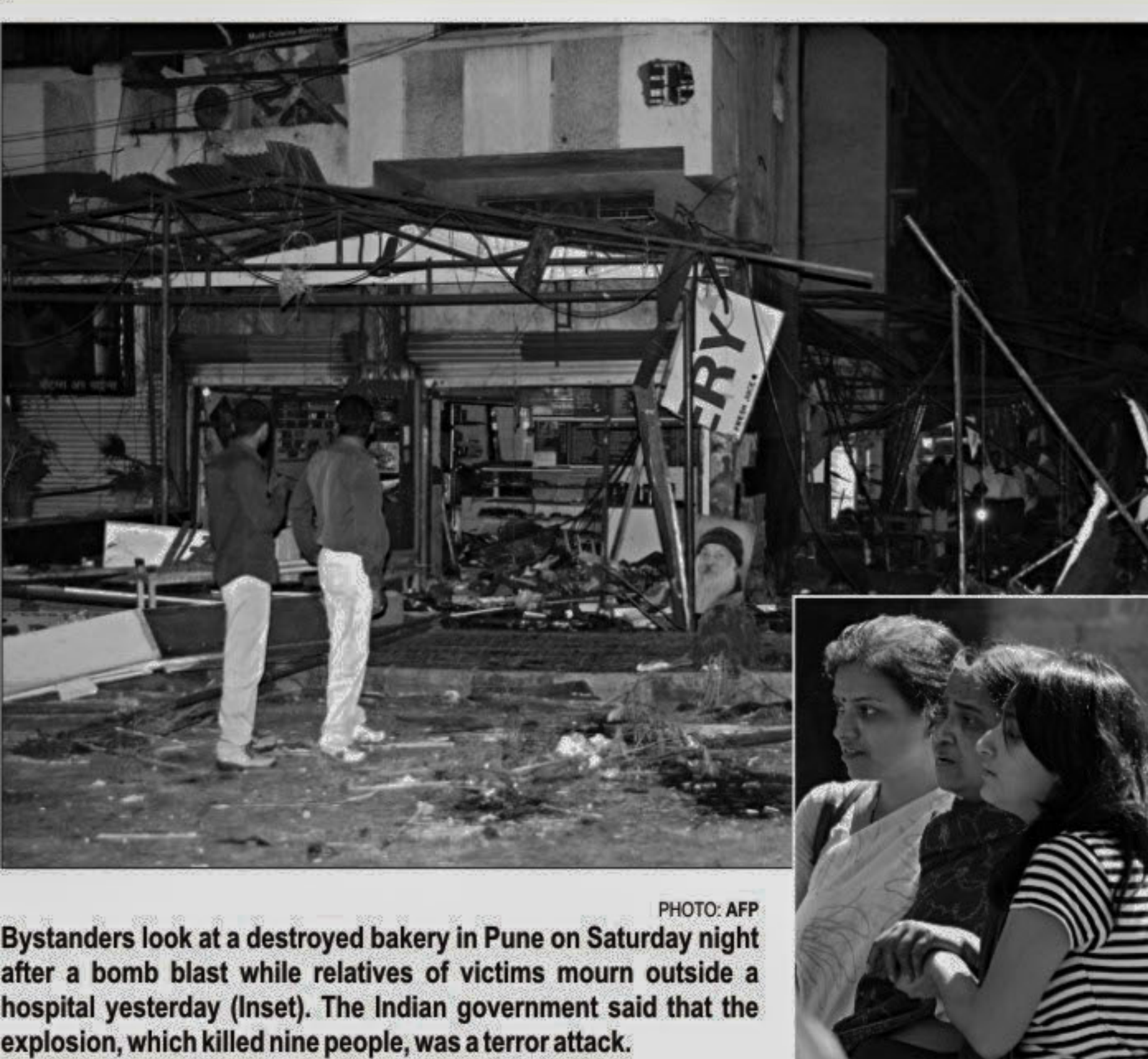
Deputy Attorney General Shah Khawar said officials were summoned to appear this Thursday to explain why the order had been issued against the court's recommendations.

Information Minister Qamar Zaman Kaira said the president issued the order only after consulting the chief justice. "We have always acted constitutionally. We will take any step in future as required by the law and constitution."

Some TV channels quoted government critics as saying the appointment of the judges could be used as the basis for a fresh challenge against Zardari's hold on the presidency. Other media said Zardari may have to accept a humiliating back-down and agree to the court's recommendations on the appointments, while also criticizing the court for escalating political tension in the country.



Supporters of Pakistan's President Asif Ali Zardari shout slogans during a pro-Zardari rally in Lahore early yesterday. Pakistan faced fresh turmoil on Sunday after Zardari and the top judge clashed over court appointments, threatening a showdown between the fragile government and judiciary.



Bystanders look at a destroyed bakery in Pune on Saturday night after a bomb blast while relatives of victims mourn outside a hospital yesterday (inset). The Indian government said that the explosion, which killed nine people, was a terror attack.

# BJP presses govt to call off talks with Pakistan

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, New Delhi

India should call off its proposed foreign secretary-level talks with Pakistan following the bombing in Pune that killed nine people, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said yesterday.

"Terror and talks cannot co-exist. When terror threatens India, then not talking is also a legitimate diplomatic option," BJP spokesperson Arun Jaitley told reporters here.

Foreign secretaries of India and Pakistan will meet in New Delhi Feb 25. This follows India's decision to go back on its earlier insistence of not talking to Pakistan till the masterminds of the Mumbai terror attack were punished.

Jaitley accused the Indian government of taking an unexplained 'U turn' on its negotiating stand in the peace dialogue with Pakistan.

"So (long) as Pakistan continues building an infrastructure for terror against India, and till such time that there is no cooperation in the context of 26/11, we cannot talk to Pakistan," he said, referring to the attack on Mumbai by Pakistani terrorists that left 166 people dead.

"The composite dialogue cannot proceed," Jaitley added.

The BJP leader also found fault with the government's announcement to allow Kashmiris who crossed over to Pakistan in the early 1990s to return to India, saying it would "legitimise infiltration" of terrorists.

He called it, along with the decision to talk to Pakistan, as "misconceived and adventurous."

"It is possible the central government is thinking of softening borders. Today's situation does not permit this. The BJP urges the government to reconsider both these steps - allowing persons from PoK (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir) to return and resuming the dialogue with Pakistan," he added.

The BJP condemned Saturday's bomb blast in Pune, which killed nine people and injured 57. The blast took place in the German Bakery eatery.

"The German bakery is in the neighbourhood of a Jewish settlement. The bakery is also visited by foreigners from the OSHO Ashram. The targeting of foreign nationals is also intended to create an international impact. This blast establishes that those inimical to India are continuing their war against India," Jaitley said.

# 15 Telangana legislators submit resignation

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE, Hyderabad

Fifteen legislators from the Telangana region yesterday submitted their resignations to the State Assembly Speaker to protest the terms of reference of the Srikrishna panel set up by the central government to study the demand for a separate state.

Stating that the terms of reference were not favourable for the formation of Telangana state, all 10 legislators of the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) submitted their resignations to Speaker Kirankumar Reddy. Two legislators from ruling Congress and one each from Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) also gave their resignations.

The legislators reached the assembly premises in a rally from the office of the all-party Joint Action Committee (JAC), which is spearheading the movement for a separate Telangana.

The JAC, at its meeting Saturday night, had decided that all legislators would submit their resignations. There are 119 legislators from Telangana region in the 294-member assembly. Congress has 50 and TDP has 39 legislators. BJP and PRP have two legislators each.

Though four Congress legislators had Saturday night announced their decision to quit, only two put in their papers. Party legislators held a meeting at the residence of senior leader Jana Reddy to discuss their strategy. However, they failed to take any decision and agreed to meet again in the evening.

TDP legislators from Telangana also held a separate meeting. Party sources said it was decided that they would resign only after Congress legislators come forward to quit.

# US missile strike kills five in Pakistan

## Market blast claims 3 others

AFP, Indo-Asian News Service, Miranshah/Karachi

Missiles fired from a US drone aircraft killed five suspected Islamist militants at a training compound in Pakistan's lawless northwest-tribal belt yesterday, officials said.

The missiles slammed into a building near the main town in North Waziristan, a tribal region rife with Taliban, al-Qaeda-linked fighters and militants from the Haqqani network, which is known for its attacks in Afghanistan.

Earlier three people were killed and nine injured in a bomb blast Sunday that ripped through a busy market in southern Pakistan's Sindh province, police said.

The blast occurred at Central Chowk intersection in Dadu district, about 225 km from here, local police chief Ghazi Salahuddin said.

Some buildings and shops in the area were also damaged in the blast, the DawnNews reported quoting witnesses.

"It was a huge blast, but it mainly destroyed the sweet shop and the rickshaw in front of the shop," a witness said.

Washington is pressuring Islamabad to dismantle militant border sanctuaries, and US drone missile strikes in the region have soared since US President Barack Obama put

Pakistan at the heart of his fight against al-Qaeda.

"Two missiles landed on a militant compound in Zor Babar Aidak village near Mirali town," said a security official based in Miranshah. "The US drone strike killed five people and wounded three others."

A local government official confirmed the strike, and said the targeted compound about 25 km east of North Waziristan's main town of Miranshah was used for training insurgents.

Officials said the dead were suspected insurgents. A barrage of US drone strikes hit Pakistan's northwest tribal belt in January, most concentrated around Miranshah.

On February 2, a swarm of US drones fired a large volley of missiles at an extremist stronghold in North Waziristan, killing at least 16 militants, but there had been a lull in such raids since then.

The strikes fuel anti-American sentiment in Pakistan and the government publicly condemns them as violating the nation's sovereignty. However analysts say Islamabad gives tacit approval to its ally for the strikes.

More than 700 people have been killed in the US strikes since August 2008.

# Freed Suu Kyi deputy urges junta to open talks with opposition

AFP, Yangon

Aung San Suu Kyi's deputy urged Myanmar's ruling junta yesterday to engage the opposition in dialogue before elections this year, as he took his first steps outside as a free man in seven years.

Tin Oo, 83, vice chairman of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, made the appeal as he prayed at Yangon's famed Shwe Dagon pagoda following his release from house arrest late Saturday.

"Because I am a Buddhist I came here to wish for peace for all Myanmar people," he told AFP as he toured the huge golden monument, accompanied by his wife and a dozen NLD officials who held umbrellas to protect him from the sun.

"My feeling now is that I wish to find a way through successful dialogue that the whole country can live unitedly and peacefully."

The veteran activist said however that his own release means nothing if Nobel Peace laureate Suu Kyi, 64, and around 2,100 other political prisoners are still detained when the elections take place.

Tin Oo had been held since 2003, when he and Suu Kyi were arrested after a pro-regime mob attacked their motorcade during a political tour, killing 70 people.

He was a former army general and defence minister who was forced into retirement in the 1970s after falling foul of the country's military rulers. He was in trouble again in the 1990s because of his involvement with the NLD.

"How can I be glad (that I am free) when there are so many who have been sentenced to life imprisonment? It is not enough to release me alone," Tin Oo said.

"All people will be happy if all things can be discussed and a solution can be reached."

# Pigeons carry message of love across border

ANI, Suchetgarh

In the backdrop of increasing infiltration bids and cease-fire violations by Pakistan on international border and LoC, Indians yet again conveyed a message of peace and brotherhood to the neighbouring country via roses, balloons and pigeons on the eve of Valentine's Day.

Dedicated to Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari and the people of Pakistan, the roses tied with balloons and pigeons flying across the border.

The heart-pleasing scene near the Octroi post here filled the atmosphere with positive vibes.

Rose is a symbol of love and this is the message we want to convey to Pakistan. Our aim is to have peaceful relations with the neighbouring country," said Dr Darakhshan Andrabi, president of the Socialistic Democratic Party (SDP).

"We call Valentine's Day as Indo-Pakistan Peace and Love Day. If this day can bring cheer to lovers, why we cannot create love between the two countries," Dr Andrabi added

# Nizami Meets Khaleda

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criminals. The government has started a combined operation against Shibir, student wing of Jamaat, following killing of Faruk Hossain by Shibir cadres at Rajshahi University on February 9.

Law enforcement agencies in the ongoing drive have arrested a number of Shibir activists from different parts of the country in the last couple of days.

Against this backdrop, Jamaat Chief Motiur Rahman Nizami on Saturday night met BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and sat in an exclusive meeting at her Gulshan office that lasted for an hour.

During the meeting, Nizami proposed announcing an anti-government programme unitedly while Khaleda Zia placed stress on a separate programme.

Party sources said Khaleda discussed the issue with a number of senior leaders and her advisers but most of her colleagues prefer

a separate programme.

But Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah told The Daily Star last night that the meeting of the two chiefs is a usual matter following "repression of Shibir leaders and workers."

Replying to a query about the possibility of announcing a joint programme, he said it may take time as BNP also passed a tough time during the 'illegal' caretaker government. "But we are happy to see that BNP leaders expressed their deep sympathy to us in last few days."

While talking to The Daily Star, a number of BNP leaders said they think the steps taken currently by the government against Jamaat and Shibir topped the agenda in the meeting between Khaleda and Nizami. But they believe that time has not come to forge a movement from a common platform.

"But maybe we have to forge a united movement in future if the ongoing situation continues," a BNP leader said, wishing anonymity.

# Extortion in name of car parking

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privilege of parking and picking up passengers from the airport. They charge the passengers twice or even thrice the reasonable fare barring other rental vehicles from getting into the airport, sources at ZIA said.

Contacted, several police personnel at ZIA seeking anonymity said police can hardly play any effective role against random realisation of parking toll as the leaseholder is a ruling party leader.

Several youths with sticks were found assigned by the leaseholder during a recent visit of this correspondent at the airport. These men were intercepting vehicles and collecting parking charges from drivers who were using the driveway and canopy.

CNG run auto rickshaw driver Abul Kalam was seen paying Tk 30 to one of the leaseholder's men, Shaheen. Kalam said, "We have to pay the charge even if we use the driveways."

He also added that the car park token holders prevent other drivers from picking up passengers from the airport.

Asked, Shaheen said as they have taken lease of the parking lots, they can realise parking charge from the vehicles using the ZIA compound.

Contacted Basher said, "Although the parking lots were leased to me, I have engaged many Jubo League leaders and activists of Dhaka Mohanagar (north and south) to manage the spaces."

He said he paid Tk 3.27 crore including Tk 51 lakh VAT for the lease and the Civil Aviation fixed Tk 50 for parking a microbus or a car for three hours.

He admitted that some local auto rickshaw and taxi drivers were issued tokens for using the car parks.

Jubo League leader Sentu Miah who also supervises the car park collection procedure said, "We charge Tk 30 for an auto rickshaw and Tk 50 for a

taxicab for a day's token. The token holders enjoy the parking facility for picking up passengers whenever they wish on the day. Only some selected drivers of airport area enjoy the facility."

Like field worker Shaheen, Sentu believes that they have the authority to charge any vehicle entering the airport premises as they took lease of the car parks.

Chief Security Officer of Civil Aviation Mohammad Nurul Islam said the civil aviation authorities leased out parking lots in front of terminal-1 and 2 and the three-storey car park adjacent to terminal-1.

He added that driveways in front of the terminals and the canopy are not for parking. Therefore, realising parking charges from vehicles passing through the areas is illegal.

He said he couldn't take any action against the alleged random charging as no complaint has ever been lodged.

# River pillar

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Authority to find out proper ways of disposal of the huge waste removed from the Buriganga river bed, instead of dumping it here and there.

The committee is supposed to submit its report within this week.

The shipping ministry launched the Buriganga cleaning drive on January 6.

Hasan Mahmud mentioned that the drive is not being conducted properly but the government intends to go on with it.

The task force decided to stop any encroachment on the rivers. The HC on June 25 last year issued directives on the government to save rivers around the capital from encroachment and pollution.

The 27-member task force was formed to evict river grabbers, ensure navigability and natural flow of rivers, restore river system and save it from pollution and conserve environment in the country.

Land Minister Rezaul Karim Hira, Environment Secretary Mihir Kanti Majumder and Shipping Secretary Md Abdul Mannan Howlader, who are members of the task force, attended its meeting yesterday.

# Siddhirganj power plant switched on

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MW by 2013 through coal-fired units and 2,600 MW renewable energy-based powers.

The premier said that her government has allocated Tk 3,579 crore for the development of the power sector to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply to bring pace in the development activities of the country.

"We will increase it, if needed. We will do whatever required, whenever required," she said.

The PM said the country needs gas pipeline for quick supply of the fossil fuel that will be extracted from various gas wells.

The government needs time to ensure supply of gas in the near future. "I can ensure that in the future there will be no problem with gas, but we need time for that," Hasina said.

The PM also listed her government's steps to generate electricity from solar, nuclear, renewable energy,

biogas plant and coal-based plants.

"We will construct that type of power plant which is appropriate in any place."

The premier said the government has invited the private sector to come forward to invest in the power sector.

She asked the officials and employees of the power sector to reduce the system loss, which was once rated highest in the world over 40 percent.

She urged the consumers to be more careful about misuse of electricity and gas. "Please don't burn gas in your gas burners just to save a firestick."

The PM said that her government decided to supply electricity to the rural areas by load management in the city areas.

"Our prime aim is to make the country food-sufficient, and for that we supply electricity to the rural areas for irrigation," she told the function.

This is the first power plant inaugurated by Hasina after her government assumed

office for the second time.

Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh, a newly established state-owned entity, is implementing the project with Asian Development Bank financing of \$ 109.864 million (about Tk 769.048 crore). The total project cost is Tk 1133 crore.

Indian company Bharat Heavy Electric Limited (BHEL) is constructing the power plant as the EPC contractor on turnkey basis. The Indians completed the installation of the first unit recently while the second unit is also in an advanced stage of completion.

This is the second project that the BHEL constructed in Bangladesh. Earlier, it built a 100-MW power plant at Baghabari in Sirajganj, being run by the state-owned Power Development Board for about last one decade.

Major equipment like gas turbines, generators, gas-booster compressors, generator transformers as well as

state-of-the-art control system were manufactured by BHEL at their various plants in India.

BHEL provided two units of the plant, each having 126-MW ISO-rated gas turbine and generators along with auxiliaries and gas-booster compressors.

For the civil works and erection commissioning and other local works, local companies in Bangladesh were associated.

Besides this project, BHEL has executed several contracts, including 230 KV Baghabari Substation and extension of the existing 230KV Iswardi Substation.

Earlier, the PM inaugurated the first unit of Siddhirganj peaking power plant by unveiling the plaque. Adviser to the PM Toufique-Elahi Chowdhury, State Minister for Power and Energy Enamul Huq, ADB Country Director Paul J Hytens, Power division Secretary M Abul Kalam, among others, were present on the occasion.