

"Fat tummy" cops low on action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday took a swipe at the officers-in-charge (OCs) of police stations, saying they have "fat tummies" who cannot run or draw guns and it is not possible for them to maintain law and order.

It is just because of the failure of the OCs to do their jobs that the government is considering deployment of assistant superintendents of police (ASPs) to head police forces at thana level, Saifur said.

The finance minister was speaking at a pre-budget meeting with members of the parliament at the NEC Conference Centre in the city.

"It is the responsibility of the thana (police station) to maintain law and order. If the thana is well

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## Diplomatic fund siphoning

Staff, their relatives at foreign missions squander tax payers' money to buy gifts or air tickets

RAFIQ HASAN

Misappropriation of public fund is rife at Bangladesh missions abroad where top diplomats down to general employees do not hesitate to spend money like water to advance their personal ends, auditors said.

The diplomats buy gifts, their

relatives' air tickets, enjoy additional allowances and perks, pay puffed-up communications and utility bills and damages -- all from the taxpayers' money, they added.

A recent audit on accounts revealed that officials at 20 Bangladesh missions abroad gobbled up an additional amount of Tk 37.21 lakh from 1996-1998

period.

The auditors found the ambassador of a Middle Eastern country buying gifts for an outgoing envoy of a third country, flouting relevant rules.

He spent \$11,014.84 -- equivalent to Tk 4,75,841.08 -- from the embassy fund to buy the gifts what should have been purchased with

funds raised from contributions of embassy staff.

In another case, a diplomat at Brasilia mission, spent Tk 1.25 lakh to pay for his son's airfare.

The foreign ministry had approved fare for one son, but he

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## Where does all the money go?

Saifur slams wasteful spending in roads, education

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday came down hard on squanderer of public money in education and communication sectors.

He said huge amounts are spent in these sectors, but a chunk of them simply goes to invisible hands.

"Money will be no problem for the next budget, as Shaheed President Zia used to say," Saifur told lawmakers in a pre-budget meeting at the conference room of

the National Economic Council. "But we have to make good use of the money. You have to play your watchdog role to ensure proper utilisation of fund."

"It now costs Tk 10 crore to build one mile of road which should cost Tk 2 crore to Tk 3 crore. Where does the excess money go?"

Saifur said government contribution to non-governmental schools has more than tripled from Tk 550 crore in early 1990s to Tk 1,700 crore now.

But he pointed out that none of the students in 1,000 such schools

could pass in board exams in the last three years.

"None passed in history. So, should we keep the history teacher?"

Saifur also said the health sector is also in a sorry state due to fund misappropriation and the lawmakers have to look after such things.

He said the government will go for an expansionary policy in the next budget because of an IMF loan-induced bloated annual development programme (ADP).

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## AL boycotts JS session over appointment of jail killing accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) walked out of parliament yesterday, the first day of the 7th session, and decided to boycott the whole session in protest at the appointment of an accused in the Jail Killing Case to the foreign ministry.

Its boycott decision was bolstered when the Chair did not allow the AL lawmakers to speak on the issue.

"We will not return to parliament until the issue is settled," Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina told a post-walkout briefing last night.

At around 9:00pm, Hasina led her deputies to stage the walkout as the Chair switched her microphone off.

She stood up to protest the switching off of the microphone of AL lawmaker Mohammad Nasim who tried to draw the speaker's attention to the appointment of Major (rttd) Khairuzzaman, an

accused in the killing of four national leaders on November 3, 1975.

Later, Hasina told reporters, "We have to think twice before deciding to attend the coming budget session."

As soon as the notices were disposed of in the House, Nasim wanted to speak on a point of order as the Chair earlier nullified an adjournment motion on appointment of Khairuzzaman, now on bail.

The government re-appointed him as a director general to the foreign ministry on May 3 following a judgement by an administrative tribunal.

But Deputy Speaker Akther Hamid Siddiqui, who was presiding over the session, switched off Nasim's microphone. This prompted Hasina to scramble for the floor.

Within a minute, her microphone

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A view of construction of a building on the land allegedly grabbed by Abdul Khaleque, a ruling BNP lawmaker, at Rishipara in Mirpur. Ten families alleged that they lost their land to the construction.

PHOTO: STAR

## EU to raise human rights issue at donor meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) yesterday said it may raise the issues of rule of law and human rights with the government during the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting slated for May 17-18.

"Governance, human rights and rule of law are still matters of concern in our perspective and these will come up during the meeting," Esko Kentrschynskyj, ambassador and head of delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh, told reporters at a briefing on the eve of the Europe Day at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) office.

Asked if the human rights situation has improved in Bangladesh, Kentrschynskyj avoided a direct answer and said, "Like many other donors, the EU is concerned over Bangladesh's human rights situation."

"Governance, human rights and the rule of law are issues we value and we want to promote them everywhere," he said and added that improvement is needed on these fronts.

"We are ready to work closely with the government to promote these issues," he said.

"Our approach to development partners is based on our belief in sustainability of the actions, transparency, accountability and overall improvement in governance and human rights."

Kentrschynskyj said the EU appreciates the readiness of the government to talk these issues of concern.

He said the EU would consider Bangladesh's status regarding the rules of origin.

"I think this issue has been discussed in the recently held Textile Conference organised by the EC in Brussels," he said.

Kentrschynskyj said the government and the EC have agreed on the implementation of the National Indicative Programme (NIP) 2003-2005 with an indicative amount of 411.5 million euro. The NIP includes trade and economic cooperation linked to development issues with human rights and good governance coming as cross-cutting issues.

## BNP MP 'grabs' land in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A ruling BNP lawmaker has allegedly grabbed the land of ten families to construct a building in Mirpur, locals alleged yesterday.

Abdul Khaleque, the member of parliament, occupied the land of seven Hindu and three Muslim families at Rishipara in Mirpur and laid foundations of the Khaleque Tower.

Last Sunday, the lawmaker and his son Sajur were present when their henchmen knocked down toilets, kitchens and tubewells of the Hindu cobblers, said eyewitnesses.

Some members of the families accused the duo of intimidation.

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## Where outlaws call all the shots

Law and order takes a tumble in the southwest

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

The law and order in the southwestern region of the country has taken an alarming turn with the armed cadres of some outlawed organisations attacking the law enforcers and looting their arms.

Activists of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) and Biplobi Communist Party (BCP) killed nine policemen in the

region in the last 16 months and also looted arms. But none of the killers and looters could be nabbed as yet.

The situation has become worse particularly in Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, Kushtia, Jhenaidah, Meherpur and Chuadanga districts.

Police blame politicians for the situation, who in turn blame police, while people hold both

responsible.

Sources said the PBCP has branded police as the main 'class enemy' and put them on its hit list. Even they throw challenge to police, distributing leaflets in different areas. They loot arms and ammunition virtually without any obstruction and go away raising slogans of their party.

"It seems the situation has gone

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## US to check containers at Ctg port

UNB, Dhaka

The USA will set up a customs office at Chittagong Port for pre-shipment security check of containers bound for American ports.

Three US officials yesterday visited the port to select the site of what they call Container Security Initiative (CSI) port.

The officials -- Richard Waker from Citizen Analyst, James from Border & Transportation Security (BTS) Directorate and Cleveland of Economic Relations section in US embassy -- held meetings with the Port and the Customs authorities

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## Teenage maid slaughtered at Shahjahanpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenage domestic help was slaughtered at her employer's residence at Shahjahanpur railway colony yesterday.

Police suspects that the girl was raped before being killed.

Police recovered the body of domestic help Halima Begum yesterday afternoon.

The couple, Shajahan Kabir Bhuiyan and Mahmuda, and their son Shahrier, a university student, had left their residence in the

morning.

When the couple returned home at about 2:00pm, they found the victim's body lying in a pool of blood. All her clothes were stripped off.

Shahrier is missing, police said.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Dhaka medical College Hospital (DMCH) for autopsy.

The duty officer of Motijheel Police Station said, till last night, none had filed a case with the police station.