

# Opposition to consider BNP Amendment Bill

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting at 11-18 am Tuesday with the Speaker Abdur Rahman Biswas, in the chair, reports BSS.

Question and answer session began after Tilwat-e-Quran.

As the question hour ended, the Speaker disposed of the notices submitted by the members on Breach of Privilege and call attention on matters of urgent public importance.

The Chair informed the House that he had accepted the Call Attention Notice submitted by Awami League member Tofael Ahmed on protection of several riverine areas in Bhola district from the river erosion.

## Abdus Samad

Drawing the attention of the Speaker, Jamaat member Maulana Abdus Samad said the government should immediately take a decision on the export of wet blue leather in view of the coming Eid-ul Azha when huge quantities of hides and skins would be collected.

Replying to the member, the Speaker said it would be referred to the Minister concerned.



## Abdus Samad Azad

Taking the floor, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Abdus Samad Azad said he had submitted a bill on April 12 seeking Constitutional Amendment which the select committee had passed.

He said he failed to understand as to why the bill, supposed to come on a non-official day, was not coming before the House.

He urged the chair to take steps so that the bill might come before the House on Thursday (June 20), the Private Members' Day.

Samad also drew the attention of the Chair to a report published in a local daily on the situation in the power sector and wanted a statement from the Deputy Leader of the House.



## Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury

NDP Leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury supported the contention of the Deputy Leader of the Opposition but the Speaker told him that the proposed bill was being processed and that it was now under the scrutiny of the Law Ministry.



## Tofael Ahmed

Rising next, Awami League member Tofael Ahmed said the bill submitted by Samad had not come before the House during the 41-day long first session of the Sangsad.

He said Samad's proposed bill was submitted in the light of the outline of the three alliances.

Ahmed demanded that the bill be brought before the House for discussion.

## Fazley Rabbi

Rising on a Point of Order, Fazley Rabbi (JP-Gaibandha) drew the attention of the Chair to Article 76 of the Constitution and rules 187 to

rule 265 of the Rules of Procedure. He said 46 Standing Committees of Parliament were to be constituted but most of the committees had not yet been formed.

Replying to the Member, the Speaker said some of the committees had already been set up while others were being constituted.

## Salahuddin Yusuf

Salahuddin Yusuf of Awami League drew the attention of the Chair to what he said, a "distorted" report on his speech made Monday in the House.

He said the "Daily Ittefaq" had quoted him wrongly in its report published Tuesday.

Yusuf demanded a corrigendum on the report and the Speaker assured him that necessary action would be taken in this regard.

Ganatantra Party Leader Suranjit Sangupta said the Treasury Bench should make a commitment as to when it was going to introduce the constitutional amendment bill. Otherwise, he said, the proposed bill submitted by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition should come on Thursday.

## Maulana Abdus Sobhan

Joining the issue, Jamaat Leader Maulana Abdus Sobhan said there was no point in sending the bill to the Law Ministry. But the Speaker reminded him that the Law Ministry would have to seek necessary permission from the President in this regard.

## Asaduzzaman

Asaduzzaman (AL-Magura) said though a long time had elapsed, the Treasury Bench still remained silent on the issue of implementing the outline of the joint declaration of the three alliances. The Treasury Bench must say in explicit terms whether they had any intention of bringing a new bill of their own in this respect. The Treasury Bench must have to say if the bill of the Opposition to this effect would be brought in the House on next Thursday, the Private Members' Day.



## Rashed Khan Menon

Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon spoke in the same vein and urged the Treasury Bench to speak out its mind on this burning issue.



## Badruddoza Chowdhury

Making a statement on the issue, Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury said BNP being one of the main components of the three alliances, was pledged-bound to the nation to implement the outline of the joint declaration of the three alliances. Begum Zia under whose leadership the people and the students had fought against autocracy had stated in clear terms, time and again, that the Jatiya Sangsad would take a decision on the form of the government. She had further said that her party would accept the decision of the Sangsad in this respect wholeheartedly, he added.

He said his party had discussed this particular issue for a long time at the party level. We also heard the opinion of the MPs at the Parliamentary Party meeting of BNP. He suggested it would have been better if the announcement on BNP's stand on the form of government came from the Leader of the House. But to defuse the excitement of the Opposition members "I wish to announce with pleasure that a bill to this effect will be brought by the Treasury Bench in the House very soon," he said adding it is now at the conclusive stage and there might not be difference of opinion with that of opposition

on it. Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad said "we felt somewhat reassured over the announcement of the Deputy Leader of the House in this respect." He, at the same breath, said it was unfortunate that the Deputy Leader of the House in his speech had ignored the leadership of Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina in the movement against autocracy.

Abdus Samad Azad narrated how Sheikh Hasina had been making all-out efforts from the beginning to implement the outline of the joint declaration. Sheikh Hasina met the President and contacted the concerned quarters to fulfil the pledge given to the nation through the joint declaration, he added.

He said he wanted to say with all firmness that the constitution amendment bill which he had submitted on April 12 had not been sent to the Law Ministry till Monday. "We on our part are ready to extend our helping hand for the implementation of the outline of the historic joint declaration. We want to see that the government side brings out our Bill in this respect next Thursday," the Private Members' Day," he said.

Amid loud laughter he said a dacoity is quickly detected when it is committed without the knowledge of the police. Where do we really stand if top police and customs officials have to be given gratification for important postings, he asked?

He said "We have to be imbued with the sense of patriotism so that we all can work for the good of the country." He said we must not forget that we have achieved our independence after a bloody war.

Turning to the banking sector he said "If we talk of free economy we must keep in mind the difference in the rates of interest between our banks and those of the foreign banks." He said the prime rate of a bank in foreign country is five per cent whereas on bank loan in Bangladesh interest is as high as 18 per cent.

He urged the Finance Minister to reduce the interest rate of bank which, he said, would be helpful to bring down the prices of essentials.

Akbar Hossain, a former Energy Minister in the 1981 BNP cabinet, said "the price of energy is the mother of all prices". He said the price index of a country must be lower if the price of energy of that country is less.

He said three months had passed since the Gulf War ended but the price of oil in Bangladesh, raised during the war, had not been reduced although other countries had already done it. He said, as a result, farmers were hard hit as they could not operate their irrigation pumps.

"Akbar Hossain for taking measures to increase agricultural and fish production in the budget for decreasing dependence on foreign aid and increasing internal resources mobilisation, he said Awami League will support BNP if it works with the objective to improve the economic condition of the people.

He criticised the budget for giving less priority on family planning programme and said if we fail in controlling the growth of population, all efforts for economic development and progress will be frustrated.

He also criticised the government for nomination of Mayors in the three city corporations and opposed nomination of the District Council Chairmen. He, however, said if it is at all necessary, the District Council Chairmen should be made from Parliament Members.

Hailing the government decision to retire the former naval and air chiefs for their negligence of duties, he said anybody responsible for loss of government assets due to negligence should be punished.

He demanded engaging army personnel for expediting the reconstruction work of the embankment around the Export Processing Zone in Chittagong. He also demanded continuation of the ban on export of wet blue leather to save the local industries.

Referring to the establishment of democracy, he said we want real democracy according to the wishes of the people and now there was no alternative to the parliamentary form of government.

He also referred to the 25-year friendship treaty with India and said this should be placed in the House and added if there is anything contrary to the independence and sovereignty of the country, the treaty should be repealed.

## Akbar Hossain

Speaking next M Akbar Hossain (BNP-Comilla) said the annual budget is a means to provide economic support to a five-year plan. He said the present FYP, formulated by the autocratic Ershad government, was meant for the indentors to use it for their benefit. He said "the current FYP is in no way ours" adding "we should be careful about lending support

to this". Hossain urged the Finance Minister to announce an interim budget for three or six months and reschedule the current five year plan.

He said the proposed budget had allocation only for hospitals and did not have anything for medical colleges. He firmly said a budget, not having allocations for medical colleges along with its hospitals, could not be a complete budget and it could not reflect the ideals of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party. He called for the establishment of the medical colleges in Khulna, Comilla, Feni and Bogra was planned by late President Ziaur Rahman.

He said Ershad government had scrapped the plan for setting up medical colleges in those places.

The Treasury Bench member said unemployment is the root of all our problems. He said, if our educated unemployed youths could be provided with jobs, much of our problems would be solved.

Akbar Hossain pleaded for the increase in the budgetary allocation for the police although he was critical of discharging their responsibility.

Amid loud laughter he said a dacoity is quickly detected when it is committed without the knowledge of the police. Where do we really stand if top police and customs officials have to be given gratification for important postings, he asked?

He said "We have to be imbued with the sense of patriotism so that we all can work for the good of the country." He said we must not forget that we have achieved our independence after a bloody war.

Turning to the banking sector he said "If we talk of free economy we must keep in mind the difference in the rates of interest between our banks and those of the foreign banks." He said the prime rate of a bank in foreign country is five per cent whereas on bank loan in Bangladesh interest is as high as 18 per cent.

He urged the Finance Minister to reduce the interest rate of bank which, he said, would be helpful to bring down the prices of essentials.

Akbar Hossain, a former Energy Minister in the 1981 BNP cabinet, said "the price of energy is the mother of all prices". He said the price index of a country must be lower if the price of energy of that country is less.

He said three months had passed since the Gulf War ended but the price of oil in Bangladesh, raised during the war, had not been reduced although other countries had already done it. He said, as a result, farmers were hard hit as they could not operate their irrigation pumps.

"Akbar Hossain for taking measures to increase agricultural and fish production in

the country. Amid cheers from the members of the Treasury Bench Akbar Hossain said the three projects for the exploitation and exploration of coal, hard rock and limestone, taken up earlier by Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman in the northern Bangladesh and kept in cold storage during the past regime would, have to be revived. He posed a question as to where had the money gone which was sanctioned for the three projects.

The BNP MP gave a brief description on the condition of the hospitals and said it was not possible to enter health centres for stretch.

He said care and medicare were not easily available in the hospitals, adding "as if one has to offer bribe for a smile from the staff there."

Akbar Hossain said the government spends Taka 28,000 yearly for the education of a doctor. He said it was a question as to what service the people were getting at the cost of that.

He said if the nation does not get the expected service from the people after spending huge public money, education upto primary level should continue to be free and individuals should pay for education at other levels.

He said the proposed budget had fewer tax proposals. But he said if the imposition of tax on soybean was aimed at saving the mustard oil, it could be accepted as justified. He, however, said he was in favour of striking a balance between the two.

He strongly advocated for putting a complete ban on the use of polythene bags except in wrapping purpose. He said crores of people use polythene bags daily and if the use of gunny bags could be encouraged it could also give a boost to our jute sector.

He supported the continuation of the ban on the exports of wet blue leather in the greater interest of the nation.

Akbar Hossain called for maintaining a congenial atmosphere in the House. He said there should not be difference of opinion on the question of development in the country, there may be discord only in its process. The Speaker adjourned the House at 4-57 pm for Asr prayer.

After Asr prayer the Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali took the chair.

Sardar Shakhawat Hossain (BNP-Narsingdi) said in a poor country like ours we have to identify the priority sectors. He said maximum utilisation of domestic resources should be ensured to attain self-reliance.

He said the tax proposals of the Finance Minister were quite justified.

The young member of BNP said the Finance Minister's tax proposals for realising additional amount of Taka 700 crore would help building a self-reliant economy.

Defending the introduction of VAT, Sardar said it would

remove uncertainty in revenue collection and assist the government in its austerity policy. Referring to the introduction of VAT as an epoch making step of the present government. The BNP member said the common man would not be affected by the VAT.

He thanked the Finance Minister for taking measure to stop tax evasion in the name of assembling, introduced by the autocratic regime.

Refuting the opposition contention that the people would be burdened with additional tax following extension of the tariff, Sardar said in fact it would restrict the unscrupulous practice of under invoicing.

He said the Finance Minister deserves thanks for providing direction to containing unproductive expenditure and at the same time encouraging the productive sectors with financial measures.

He said the attempt of the Finance Minister for reducing dependence on foreign assistance from 99 per cent to 86 per cent was praiseworthy.

The BNP member said the government was being deprived of Taka 100 to 150 crore from telephone department due to corrupt practices of officials.

He called upon the government to follow Japan by setting up small scale industries for the industrialisation of the country. He said Japan has now become one of the top industrialised countries of the world by setting up small industries of the initial stage. He suggested the reformation in the banking system so that banks could not finance unproductive sectors.

Sardar also pleaded for reducing taxes on paper, gas, fertilizers and ball pen to relieve the poor people.

## Mad Abdus Shahid

Awami League member Md Abdus Shahid (Moulvibazar-4) said the presentation of budget has facilitated hoarders to create artificial shortage of those commodities on which new taxes have been proposed. He said this is for the first time the budget has been placed giving a two-day recess to help many traders make money at the cost of the common people.

Referring to Finance Minister's assertions to attain self-reliance in the economy, the opposition member said in reality we find other way round as foreign assistance contributes 88 per cent to development spending. He said if we add allocation for BDR with defence expenditure, the amount will exceed the allocation in education. Therefore, the claim of the Treasury Bench that education has got highest allocation is not correct, he added.

Shahid said the marginal increase in the allocation for industries and flood control would hardly bring any effect. He criticised the proposal to reduce food subsidy, saying this would cause greater hardship to the poor people.

Referring to the recent flooding in greater Sylhet district including Moulvi Bazar the Awami League member demanded an appropriate plan to the taken up to find solution to the problems.

Shahid expressed reservation at the realisation of the enhanced tax in the proposed budget with the existing administrative machinery. The tax measures have to be dynamic when aim is to enhance revenue income, he said. He criticised introduction of VAT, saying this was done at the behest of the World Bank. He said budget is actually dependent on foreign aid, but attempt has been made to portray it differently through rhetorics.

## Maulana Shahaduzzaman

Jamaat-e-Islami member Maulana Shahaduzzaman (Bogra-2), participating in the discussion on the budget said all ills will be over once the Islamic system of economy is established in the country.

The Jamaat member called for bringing discipline in society, including the economy and demanded that the activities of Non-Government Organisations should thoroughly be examined. The NGOs must work under government supervision, he asserted.

Maulana Shahaduzzaman criticised the proposed reduction of food subsidy and asked the government not to take such measures that would hurt the interests of producers and common people. He pointed out that the subsidy on food had been reduced at the behest of donors who themselves subsidize their agriculture.

He criticised government's overdependence on external assistance and asked for adequate protective steps to stop flight of capital. At the same time he opposed the way the proposals made to mobilise domestic resources.

Referring to his constituency, the Jamaat member demanded more allocation for the development of communication, electrification and education. He also demanded a portion of the money received at Mahasthan Mazar under Shitganj for the development of the area.

## Alamgir Kabir

Alamgir Kabir (BNP-Naogaon) congratulated the Finance Minister for presenting a people-oriented budget for the development of the country. Faithful implementation of the budgetary provisions would help mobilise internal resources to reduce dependence on external assistance gradually, he added.

Launching a blistering attack on the past autocratic regime, Kabir said the anti-people government had destroyed our trade, commerce and industry for the benefit of a handful of people. The vested interests had thrived on the sufferings of the people of the country. System loss in the

generation of power, staggering losses in all public sector enterprises were the results of rampant corruption in all fields.

In fact, the past autocratic regime was synonymous with all pervasive corruption, loot and plunder which had completely ruined the country's economy, he said. Character of our youths and values of the people were destroyed and culture and literature were distorted by the past regime in a very calculated way to impede the development of the country.

The country could never expect to make any stride in any sector unless strong resistance was built against corruption and maladministration, he said.

Kabir expressed his concern over the sharp rise in the number of illiterate people and called upon the government to take realistic steps to raise literacy rate.

Criticising the upazila system, he said a class of tout, looters and privileged people grew up in the countryside under this system.

Alamgir Kabir urged the Finance Minister to reconsider his proposal to reduce subsidy on food and agriculture saying that the poor and middle class farmers would suffer if this proposal was implemented.

Supporting increased duties on VCR and VCP, he said this would check the intrusion of distorted alien culture into our national life. He also pleaded for reconsidering increased duties on soybean oil, ball point pens, gas and fertilizer and said the price-hike of these commodities would hit the general people badly.

He called upon the government to give more attention to the northern districts of the country which are lagging behind in all fields. He called for commissioning the Rooppur Atomic Plant, exploitation of Joypr Hat limestone and coal of Jamalgonj. Sufficient allocation of Funds should be made for the implementation of Barind Project, development of Mongla Port, improvement of communication sector and cultivation of fish. Food procurement drive in Naogaon district, which is self-sufficient in food, suffered a great setback for want of adequate number of food godowns in this region, he said.

Kabir said the decision of the past government to stop cultivation of ganza in Naogaon district had deprived the government of revenue worth crores of Taka on the one hand and retarded the economic development of this district on the other. He requested the Finance Minister to reconsider the matter.

## Prof Rafiqul Islam

Prof Rafiqul Islam (AL-Jessore), paid tributes to those, who had laid down their lives in all the movements from 1952 to 1990. He remembered with gratitude the names of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and those who fell victim in the incident of August 1975. He also recalled the four leaders who died in the incident of November 1975.

Speaking in a language full of rhetorics and flowery words Prof. Islam offered his greetings to the Members of the Sangsad with "Rajani Gandha" which grows in abundance in Jhikargacha and Chowgachany constituency, he said.

He congratulated the Finance Minister for his success in getting the assurance of aid from the donor countries and agencies in a very subtle way by publishing the list of defaulters of industrial loan and holding out promise to mobilise 14 per cent internal resources.

Prof. Islam said the budget had no direction for the disadvantaged, poor and the middle class. The budget has completely ignored the interest of these people, he said.

He said increase in duties on soybean oil, fertilizer, ball point pen would hit the commonman. There is no allocation of funds in the budget for the ten thousand private primary schools in the country. He said and urged the government to give due attention in this matter.

Prof Rafiqul Islam pleaded for establishing at least one industry in each upazila of the country, based on locally available raw materials.

He made a strong plea for nationalising the Syed Mahsir Rahman College. The college is named after Syed Mahsir Rahman, a prominent Awami League leader, who was killed during the 1971 crackdown.

Prof Islam pleaded for the establishment of sugar and textile mills in his area. He laid stress on the extension of rural electricity network and development of road communication in his area.

After Prof. Islam concluded his speech, Deputy Speaker adjourned the House at 8-4 p.m. Tuesday until 11 AM to-day (Wednesday).

## Taxes on ingot under fire

# Prices of aluminium utensils will increase

Exemption of duty on aluminium scrap and imposition of 17 per cent fresh tax on aluminium ingot has been labelled by the utensil manufacturers as a wrong policy of the government in helping the poor cyclone-hit people.

Talking to UNB on Tuesday they cautioned that the measure would, on contrary, lead to sharp increase in prices of aluminium utensils instead of making it easily available.

The new budget proposed to exempt import duty on aluminium scrap and sheet with an objective to make the utensils available to the cyclone battered coastal population.

Utensil manufacturers said neither aluminium scrap nor

sheet is used as raw materials for its production.

Only aluminium ingot, which has been brought under fresh taxes, is used as raw materials for the essential commodity, they added.

Terming the new measure

## 25-bed centre for drug addicts

Education Minister Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury told the Jatiya Sangsad on Tuesday that there was a 25-bed cure centre for drug addicts at present and it was under the Narcotics Control Directorate, reports BSS.

Replying to a question from Sardar Shakhawat Hossain (BNP-Narsingdi) on behalf of Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf who was absent from the House, the Education Minister said in addition to this there was a 25-bed ward for the treatment of drug addicts at the mental hospital in Pabna. He said drug addicts were being treated in the mental section of PG Hospital and all other medical college hospitals.

He said 25 patients are now under treatment in the Dhaka centre.

Replying to a supplementary question from Abdus Samad Azad (AL-Sunamganj), Prof Badruddoza said he would request the Home Minister to give a statement on the source of drugs and steps taken for checking their entry.

"unjustified", M A Bari Talukder, President of Bangladesh Aluminium Manufacturers Association said it would further plunge the sector, already netted with crisis, into a virtual extinction.

The sector has long been regarded as a priority sector and until now there existed exemption of sales tax on ingot import, he said adding that the product was also free from excise duty.

But, henceforth, VAT will be imposed on the sector at the rate 15 per cent leading to rise in retail price of the utensils by about 2 per cent.

With VAT, total tax including 20 per cent import duty would now stand at 35 per cent. Industrial importers till now are to pay only 18 per cent duty on import of ingot.

Price hike of locally made products would make way for smuggling of Indian aluminium utensils, industrialists cautioned.

Manufacturers said about 75 per cent of the country's nearly 400 aluminium utensil manufacturing units were closed down during the last couple of years due to increasing prices of aluminium ingot in international market.

The rest 25 per cent units are now running with only 40 per cent capacity utilization.

Manufacturers also feared that the fresh duty on the sector would now lead the age-old sector to a total extinction leaving its more than 15,000 work force into unemployment.

## Airlink with Barisal planned

Barisal will be connected by air during the current Fourth Five-Year Plan, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism M A Mannan told the Jatiya Sangsad Tuesday, reports BSS.

Replying to a call attention notice by Rashed Khan Menon (Workers Party-Barisal), he said the Acting President and the Prime Minister took active interest in reviving plans to link Barisal by air and the Finance Minister would make necessary lump sum allocation to improve the air strip at Rahmatpur in Barisal to a full fledged airport.

Menon, in his notice, said that the Rahmatpur air strip in Barisal was established a long time ago but it was not developed into a full fledged airport to link Dhaka with Barisal despite plans by subsequent governments during the last two decades.

Menon said the a earth filling work had suddenly been stopped and urged the government to revive the work to develop the air strip so that the southern region of the country could be connected by air through Rahmatpur airport.

## Tk 1,265 lakh BUET budget approved

The Syndicate of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) has approved a budget of Taka 1,265.53 lakh for the fiscal 1991-92 of the university, a BUET Press release said in Dhaka Tuesday, reports BSS.

The BUET Syndicate, in a meeting Monday, also approved Taka 1,187.40 lakh revised budget of the fiscal 1990-91 of the university, the press release added.