

'Bangladesh can earn Tk 4,000 crore by developing shrimp culture'

The Jatiya Sangsad resumed its sitting at 10.35 am Tuesday with Speaker Abdul Rahman Biswas in the chair, reports BSS.

The proceeding of the House began after recitation from the Holy Quran.

The Speaker disposed of the notices given by different members saying these were under examination.

Salahuddin Yusuf

Salahuddin Yusuf (AL-Khulna) stood on his feet and told the Chair that the Select Committee which was flamed on August one to examine the constitution amendment bill seeking independence of the judiciary from the executive could not complete its report. Initially three days were given to the committee which was extended by another four days.

Yusuf, a member of the Select Committee, proposed further extension of time and said the Law Minister who is chairman of the committee could say something about the time required.

Law and Justice Minister Mirza Gulam Haifz said since he was heading a number of select committees and parliamentary committees he was preoccupied with their activities. The minister said he would also remain busy with party affairs during the coming by-elections. He, therefore, proposed extension of time limit for the Select Committee by two months.

Salahuddin Yusuf agreed with the proposal of the Law Minister.

The Speaker extended the time limit by two months.

Dhirendranath Shambhu

The Speaker then gave the floor to Dhirendranath Shambhu (AL-Narail) to participate in the budget discussion. Shambhu criticised the budget and said there was no mention in it of any steps for development of the northern region and the Mongla Port. He suggested subsidy on

agricultural inputs to boost production. Referring to local problems, he demanded development of physical infrastructures in his area.

Qamruddin Yahya Khan Majlis

Speaking next, Qamruddin Yahya Khan Majlis (BNP-Sirajganj) said the budget had given a direction for development of the country.

But he said it was not possible to fulfill the commitments for economic development of the people in a single financial year.

Welcoming the increased allocation in the budget for education sector, he suggested integration of madrasa and school education system to introduce a single education system in the country.

Khan Majlis said his constituency Shahjadpur was famous for handloom industries. But about 90 per cent of the looms were closed for high price of yarn and other raw materials, he said and suggested providing yarn at fair price to the weavers.

Mohammad Golam Rabbani

Rising on a point of order, Mohammad Golam Rabbani (BNP-Joypurhat) said the new members were seldom given opportunity to speak. He also said that a treasury bench new comer was allowed only five minutes while the opposition members were given 10 to 20 minutes.

The Speaker said the budget had been placed by the government party, so the treasury bench members were given less time. He said the Finance Minister would speak for an unlimited time. He then gave the floor to Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury (AL-Chittagong).

Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury

Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury said although he could not thank the Finance Minister for

his budget, he thought the minister deserved thanks for projecting him (Chowdhury) as the richest man of Bangladesh and Nurul Islam Moni, as the runners up.

He thanked the Finance Minister for disclosing the names of the defaulters-loanees who had established banks and industries without repaying their loans. He demanded punishment for these people.

The Awami League member said Bangladesh Bank had published the lists of defaulters who had taken loans more than 250 crore at the pressure of the donors. Only one or two names of bank directors had been included in the lists, he said.

Demanding punishment against those who were not repaying loans, Chowdhury called upon the government not to defame those who did not take loans. He denied to have taken any project loan although he owned many industries.

Referring to private banking, Chowdhury said permission for setting up United Commercial Bank was given to the father-in-law of a former BNP minister. 'But I was only a director of the bank and I did not seek any favour from the Ershad regime,' he said.

Urging the government not to tarnish the image of those industrialists who were not members of the House, he said these people had played a big role in the development of the country.

He said without encouraging the private sector market economy could not be expected as desired by the Finance Minister.

Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury said the democratically elected government of BNP had come to power after the fall of autocratic regime. The present budget, he said, was prepared by the autocratic. It was also true that the BNP governments Finance Minister did not get time to go through the budget.

Citing the example of

Japan, he said no budget was adopted without consensus. He said the ratio of the treasury and the opposition bench members in the House was 51:49. He called for adopting the budget with consensus.

Thanking the Finance Minister for taking into confidence the members of the chambers and the business-men, Chowdhury said opinion of the members of this House should also be valued properly, as they are the elected representatives of the people.

He said development of the country and solution of unemployment problems could not be thought of without industrialization.

Referring to the curtailing of the time limit of tax holiday, Chowdhury called for restoring the original limit of 2000 ad for it.

Dwelling on the VAT, Chowdhury said this system had not yet been introduced even in the economic giant, the USA. This system started from Europe, but even in the European countries the rate of the VAT was 2 to 16 per cent and that too was levied at the consumer level.

Chowdhury said the VAT had created a situation in with industries would be closed down within a few years. He called for announcing a rational policy for saving the industries of the country and in the interest of sustained development. He said he had pleaded for the country's industrialization wherever he had gone by explaining the facilities provided to the foreign investors.

Turning to the local problems, Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury said his constituency was the worst affected area in the April 29 cyclone and tidal surge. He expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina and other ministers for visiting the area.

He demanded that the government repair the Karnafull

bridge immediately. He said development of Chittagong was the development of the country as it is the main port city. He said Bangladesh could earn taka 4000 crore by developing shrimp cultivation in greater Chittagong alone.

Khairul Anam

Taking the floor next, Khairul Anam (BNP-Lakshipur) thanked the Finance Minister for presenting the nation with a development oriented and balanced budget.

He said sound economy could not be expected without a good budget. People are the best judge of the budget, because they would be affected by its measures.

Criticising the people who opposed the VAT, Anam said these people were opposing this system because their was little scope for evading tax. The VAT system would consolidate our economy, he said.

He demanded development of Lakshipur district headquarters. He also demanded expediting the setting up of the fertiliser factory, a fire service station and cottage industries in his district.

Mosharraf Hossain

Participating in the budget discussion Mosharraf Hossain (AL-Faridpur) said the hopes of the people could not be reflected in the budget formulated by the Finance Minister.

He said the Value Added Tax (VAT), introduced for the first time in the country, had hit the people, multiplying their sufferings.

Mosharraf Hossain then pointed out the problems of the people of his constituency were facing. He made a dispassionate call to start work on the medical college proposed to be set up in Faridpur.

Shahjahan Chowdhury

Speaking next, Shahjahan Chowdhury (BNP-Cox's Bazar) disagreed with the suggestion that the Finance Minister had presented a bad budget in the

House as he was defeated in the last election. He said there was no fault in losing an election.

A scholarly man like Dr Kamal Hossain who was the chairman of the constitution drafting committee in 1972 also lost the last election. He said Finance Minister Saifur Rahman was also a renowned scholar.

He said the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abus Samad Azad who once failed to return had again won the election and came back to the House.

Referring to the problems in his constituency Cox's Bazar, he called for special attention to the area ravaged by the unprecedented cyclonic storm in April last. He demanded to implementation of the Taka 450 crore development plan placed before the government.

He said about Taka eight thousand crore could come from shrimp cultivation in the area.

He urged the authorities to develop Cox's Bazar with a special budgetary allocation.

Disagreeing with the suggestion that the price of Hilsa fish increased due to the introduction of VAT, Shahjahan Chowdhury said the real reason for this increase might be the damage and destruction caused to about five thousand fishing boats in the last cyclonic storm.

Moulana Habibur Rahman

Moulana Habibur Rahman (Jamaat-Chudanga) said a budget is formulated in the light of existing condition of a country. Still, he said the budget presented by the Finance Minister would not be able to solve the problems of the people.

He said a capitalistic economic system based on interest could not deliver the goods to the people.

Moulana Rahman then drew the attention of the House to the problems of his area and stressed the need for

construction of Darshana-Mujibnagar road immediately.

Mohammad Shahjahan

Speaking next, Mohammad Shahjahan (BNP-Noakhali) said the last nine years in national life witnessed widespread financial mismanagement and today's government was finding it extremely difficult to clear the again stabiles created by the autocratic regime.

Despite this, he said, the Finance Minister's bold step in revitalizing the economy was reflected in the budget for the year 1991-92. The present democratic government certainly deserved commendation for this, he added.

Referring to the VAT system, he said certain misconception existed about this new system but the fact was that such pragmatic idea would bring welfare for the nation.

Many essential commodities had been left out of the purview of this system and this spoke of the government's concern for the common people, Shahjahan said.

He sought to scotch criticisms that the budget lacked any direction and said it had a definite political commitment to create a healthy society.

He mentioned local problems and drew the attention of the concerned quarters towards communication problem in his district town and demanded the setting up of a textile mill, other industrial units and also a medical college there.

Khan Tipu Sultan

Khan Tipu Sultan (AL-Jessore) said he opposed the budget on principle since the direction contained in it could not be the economic policy of an independent nation.

The budget is heavily dependent on foreign aid, he said adding that the Finance Minister did not say anything how the nation is benefited by the projects aided by the donors nations.

Eighty per cent of the aid is consumed by the consultants.

Fifteen per cent by the mid-diemmen and only five per cent is left for the people, the opposition member said.

Many countries openly said they are not under obligation to pay back the loan and interest if the donor-aided projects were not found to be effective for their national interest, he added.

Father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had taken a bold step in this regard but he was killed because of his such bold nature, Sultan said. He demanded that the House must repeal the Indemnity Act to facilitate the punishment of his killers.

The opposition member expressed concern that a tender had been floated to demolish the Jessore-Benapole railway line without first setting up a new line and said this had caused great commotion among the people.

He demanded that Jessore airport be upgraded to international standard and also called for setting up an agriculture college in the district.

Shahiduzzaman Beltu

Shahiduzzaman Beltu (BNP-Jhenidah) paid rich tributes to late President Ziaur Rahman for giving a direction to the nation when he was in power and said it was heartening to note that his party was now making efforts to follow his policy.

He said an unnecessary VAT and cry had been raised on the VAT system and added that this system came as a boon for many a developing country including our neighbours.

Nevertheless, he said, the government had withdrawn the VAT from 22 essential commodities considering the sentiment of the common people.

Beltu called for providing financial grant for the non-government primary schools to encourage education. He also urged the government to take steps for improving electricity in the rural areas. (Incomplete)

Some VCs reluctant to call police for campus peace : Minister

Following is the remaining part of Monday's JS proceedings:

Prof Chowdhury said the committee would look into different aspects of the issue like the sources of arms in educational institutions, enhancement of stricter laws for punishment for extortion of toll and pledges by the political parties not to harbour hoodlums.

He called for soul searching and purifying the minds to know if all were sincere in finding a solution to this crucial problem of campus violence.

Prof Chowdhury told the House that the proposed parliamentary committee, among other things, could consider formation of a university police more or law enforcing agency for campus since some Vice-Chancellors were hesitant to call police to maintain peace in the universities.

He also said in details about his recent visit to the Chittagong University to see for himself the situation there. He had met the Vice Chancellor and his wife. Both of them expressed their unwillingness to leave the campus when he wanted to know from them, he said.

The House reassembled at 4.40 pm with Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali in the chair, who gave the floor to Alhaj Syed Abul Hossain (AL-Madaripur) to initiate the discussion on the national budget for 1991-92.

Hossain said they got the opportunity to discuss the national budget in this House today because of Bangabandhu under whose leadership the country achieved independence.

He said the budget was prepared as per the wishes of the donors and as a result the hopes and aspirations of the people had not been reflected in it.

Criticising the introduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT), Hossain said this new tax system had frightened the people as they are finding its effects quite against their interest, he said VAT could be avoided if some other sources were found out as had been done for the Jamuna Bridge fund.

He said the BNP came to power with the people's verdict but now its support had declined due to the financial measures taken by the Finance Minister.

Prof Waliullah

Discussing the national budget, Prof Mohammad Waliullah (AL-Noakhali) said the budget lacked guidelines for national development as it was designed to protect the interest of a vested group.

Prof Waliullah criticised the withdrawal of subsidy from the agricultural sector. To attain food autarky, there was no alternative to subsidy in this sector, he categorically said.

He demanded reduction of the prices of agricultural equipment and called upon the government to ensure due prices of agricultural products.

Prof Waliullah also urged the government to rehabilitate the cyclone-affected people of Hatia and construct roads and school-cum-cyclone centers in the island.

The Deputy Speaker adjourned the house at 5.22 pm for 20 minutes for the Asr prayer.

When the House resumed after the Asr prayer with the Speaker Abdul Rahman Biswas, in the Chair, Azizur Rahman (AL-Moulvi Bazar) drawing attention of the Chair said AIDS panic had spread in the country due to detection of three AIDS cases.

He pointed out that the AIDS patients were detected in their work place in Dubai and were repatriated to Bangladesh.

He said a large number of people from greater Sylhet district have been living in Dubai. He called for an enquiry about their conditions there.

He also wanted a statement from the concerned minister in this regard.

The Speaker said, the attention of the concerned minister would be drawn when he arrives in the House.

Shamsuddin Ahmed

The Speaker then gave the floor to Mr Shamsuddin Ahmed (BNP-Narsingdi) to discuss the budget.

Shamsuddin supporting the budget, said the people did not know anything about the VAT system and suggested wide publicity on it.

He said by taking advantage of introduction of VAT many traders had increased the prices of essential commodities.

Referring to local problems Mr Ahmed demanded power supply in the char areas of Narsingdi and handing over of the distribution lines from the Power Development Board to the Rural Electrification Board.

He also alleged irregularities in the gas bills in Narsingdi with unexpectedly inflated amounts.

He demanded reopening of the Jaba Textile Mills there which already owed the government Taka 7.50 crore, he suggested that if the owner of the mill failed to reopen it, the government should take it over.

Dhirendranath Shumbhu

Speaking next Dhirendranath Shumbhu (AL-Barguna) demanded development of his area as a tourist spot. He said there was a point in the Sundarbans in Barguna where tigers, deers and crocodiles could be seen together.

He also demanded development of the newly built 60 km kucha road from Barguna to Bakerganj via Betagi as a regional highway.

Criticising the budget he said, though a direct taxation system, the VAT had increased the sufferings of the people by way of indirect taxation as many businessmen were taking under advantages through it, exploiting people's ignorance. He demanded its withdrawal.

He criticised the setting up of new taxation offices in the new districts and said this would increase overhead expenses and sufferings of the people.

The Speaker at this point told the members that when they spoke of the problems of their respective constituencies, concerned officials took notes for information of the relevant quarters. He said due attention is given about the local problems. Some members had earlier wanted to know what happened after they spoke about their local problems. Taking the floor, State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman, said he himself took notes about the local problems mentioned by the members since there is no provision to take notes from the gallery.

The Speaker intervened to say that there is no bar on the part of the officials to take notes and they could always do it.

Taking part in the discussion on the budget, Dr Kamruzzaman (BNP-Comilla), paid tributes to late President Ziaur Rahman and also congratulated Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed for organising a free and fair election in the country.

Referring to the VAT system, the Treasury Bench member said it was a new system but was in practice in many countries he expected the system to work in Bangladesh and said efforts should be made for its successful implementation.

Dr Kamruzzaman

Dr Kamruzzaman called for a pro-people health policy and said as a doctor he felt that the health sector needed greater attention. Recalling that the Prime Minister had mentioned earlier about setting up a medical university, he called for financial allocation for the purpose in the budget.

Dr Kamruzzaman mentioned local problems like communication hazards and drew the attention of the concerned quarters for their solution.

At this stage Chief Whip of the opposition Mohammad Nasim drew the attention of the Chair to that fact that the parliamentary committees, except a few, had not been announced as yet although this should have been done in the first session. 'It is a matter of interest for all members,' he said and demanded the announcement of the committees by Tuesday since the current session was coming to and end soon.

The Speaker agreed and said the committees are necessary. Chief Whip Khandker Delwar Hossain said he was equally anxious about this and had talks with Prime Minister and the Law Minister on the issue. There would be no dearth of efforts to announce the committees at the earliest.

Aminul Islam

When the House re-assembled after Magreb prayer Speaker Abdul Rahman Biswas gave the floor to Mr Aminul Islam (AL-Dinajpur) to speak on the national budget.

Before Islam started his speech the Speaker had told the House that general discussions on the budget would conclude tonight and the Finance Minister would deliver his winding up speech on it after Asar Prayer tomorrow. He urged the members to speak briefly on the budget so that other members go opportunity to participate in the discussion.

Abdur Rouf

At this stage Abdur Rouf (AL-Nilphamar) said diarrhoea had broken out in an epidemic form in Domar and Dima upazilas seventeen out of 100 persons attacked by this disease died so far. He appealed to the Health Minister to take steps for the supply of adequate medicine and tube-wells to these upazilas immediately. He also urged the Relief Minister to launch relief work in these two upazilas to provide succor to the needy people.

The Speaker said both the Health and the Relief Ministers were away from the House at the moment. He hoped that the concerned ministers would take note of what Rouf had said.

Mr Aminul Islam began his speech by paying tributes to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the four leaders killed in jail. He said the national budget for 1991-92 would increase our dependence on foreign aid.

He pointed out that besides the three alliances students, farm workers and peasants took active part in the movement against autocracy. But the budget could offer nothing to overcome the problems of the peasants and students. The 10-point demand of the students still remained unfulfilled he added.

Islam demanded modernisation of the Mongla Port and construction of a bridge with railway provision on the Rupsa river to accelerate the pace of industrialisation in the northern districts.

Mr Aminul Islam called for upgrading the Agriculture College at Dinajpur to a university and establishing a medical college there. He said 900 deep tubewells in greater dinajpur district could not be pressed into operation for the lack of electric connection. He

urged the concerned authorities for making these tubewells operative immediately.

He suggested giving unemployment allowance to unemployed youths, as a measure to curb terrorism.

Nizamuddin Khan

Nizamuddin Khan (JP-Manikganj) in his speech on the budget thanked those who went to see him at the Casualty Ward of Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Narrating his sad experience during his stay at the Casualty Ward, he said when he was admitted to the hospital with his several rib-boons broken there was no doctor and no nurse to attend him. He pleaded for increasing the number of doctors, cabins and beds of this hospital substantially to ensure better treatment to the patients. He also urged the government to see to it that the patients at the hospitals got improved diet.

Mr Khan said population explosion and unemployment were the two main problems confronting the nation. Now he urged the government to take steps for making the country self-sufficient in the production of contraceptives and said that population of the country could not be kept at the desired level by depending on the supplies from donor countries.

Referring to unemployment problem, he said there was scope for employment of one to two million people in the Middle Eastern countries. He pleaded for appointment of political ambassadors in the Middle Eastern countries saying that career diplomats were no good in finding employment for our youths in those countries.

He appealed to the government to set up a Casualty Hospital at Manikganj and nationalise the Faizunnessa Girls' School there. He said Mr Abdul Awal Khan Majlis built this girls' school after his other spending the last penny of his life's savings.

Md Nasim

As soon as Mr Khan concluded his speech, Opposition Chief Whip Md Nasim stood up. Drawing the attention of the Speaker he said that a good number of leaders and MPs of his party were keen to participate in the discussions on the national budget.

Injustice would be done to them if they were not allowed to take part in the general discussions on the budget. It was decided at the meeting of the Business Advisory Committee that the leaders and MPs of his party would be given opportunity to take part in the general discussions on the budget. They would be deprived of this opportunity if the discussions were closed tonight, he added.

Speaker Abdul Rahman

Biswas said everything must have a timing. At the initial stage it was decided by the Business Advisory Committee that the budget session would conclude by the middle of July. He, however, hastened to add that during the current session the Sangsad transacted many work of national significance.

He said no budget session in the past continued for such a long period. He said he was ready to continue the sitting till midnight tonight to accommodate as many members as possible and urged the Opposition Chief Whip to bring his party leaders and MPs, who are outside the House at the moment, so that they could take part in the general discussion. He further said the current session might not possible go beyond August 14.

Moreover, there should not be justification to prolong the current session, he said and hoped that both sides would give due attention to this.

Md Nasim requested the Speaker to hold discussion with them after the adjournment of House tonight.

Matiur Rahman Nizami

Participating in the budget discussion, the leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami Parliamentary Party Moulana Matiur Rahman Nizami said he would criticise the bad side of the budget and would definitely praise its good part. But he said, he would not be able to praise it much as the budget could not come out of its traditional character.

He said the budget speech of the Finance Minister was good but the measures he had proposed.

He said the Finance Minister could not come out of the influence of the foreign donors and their advice while formulating the budget. He said the dependence on foreign loan became clearly evident.

He said 'we must keep our needs and planning uppermost in our mind while taking foreign loans' he said it would never being any good if we accept foreign assistance on the basis of their plans and programmes for US.

He, however, thanked the Finance Minister for his optimism to bring down the quantum of foreign loan to 65 per cent by 1995 and to 50 per cent by the year 2000.

Moulana Matiur Rahman Nizami said 'we will never plead for sudden discarding of interest system from the country like the introduction of the Value Added Tax (VAT) in Bangladesh hastily.'

He said the society would have to be mentally prepared before introducing something new to derive proper benefit out of it.

Mr Nizami also stressed on the need for increase in the per acre productivity of land to further step up food production.

Referring to the withdrawal of subsidy from the agricultural sector he said the countries which had advised for such withdrawal were themselves giving subsidy to this sector in their own countries. He said subsidy is being given in the agricultural sector in Japan.

He said import got preference over export in the proposed budget.

He said it was not proper to curtail budget allocation for the industries and science sectors. He said the reduction of allocation for the science sector would hamper research work in science.

Referring to the activities of the non-governmental organisations, which he described as non-official government, organisations, he said the NGOs in Bangladesh was an impediment in the way of the country's achieving self-reliance. He said an NGO was a state within a state. He said some countries during the last floods in Bangladesh channelized their assistance through the NGOs only.

Laying emphasis on making the administration corruption free, he said, moral standard must be set by those at the helm of affairs in this regard. He also spoke of proper application of law in the interests of the nation.

He said Islam was a religion of mankind. He said Islam was identified as the panacea for the freedom of mankind. He said a Zionist conspiracy was at work to identify Islam as a religion of fundamentalism and fanaticism.

Nizami then pointed out some problems the people of his constituency were facing.

Mohammad Sirajul Haq

Mohammad Sirajul Haq (BNP-Jamalpur) thanked the Finance Minister for presenting the nation a balanced budget despite all odds.

He said the autocratic regime had ruined the economy of the country. He said our contribution to annual development programme was only one per cent of GDP during the autocratic rule but it was proposed in the current budget to be 22 per cent. The Finance Minister, he said, had expressed the hope that at the end of the current budget period industries were expected to earn profit at the rate of 14 per cent.

Terming it as a realistic budget Haq said it had projected a bright future for the country. He said the Finance Minister had provided direction for bringing in accountability and discipline in the economic sector. He also called for taking step for bringing discipline in loan giving system. Repayment of loan should begin from the Sangsad members if there is any, he added.

Haq urged the government to give importance to primary education, vocational training instead of producing clerks.

Dipankar Talukdar

Dipankar Talukdar (AL-Rangamat) said the objective of a budget of a country should aim at building for it a self-reliant economy and suggested that the population of the country should be turned into manpower resources.

Talukdar said some villages developed during the autocratic regime after spendings crores of taka had failed to achieve desired goal due to wrong policy of the past government. He said people had to take permission to enter these villages. Even they had to take permission for collecting woods and bamboos.

He said democracy could not be achieved keeping some areas outside its preview. He said they denounced terrorism in any form. Terrorism spread its root in the country with the killing of Bangabandhu. He expressed the hope this House would be able to findout a solution to the problems of Chittagong Hill tracts.

The Awami League member said duration of the five-year lan in hill districts had ended. He called for its extension for the development of the area.

Mohammad Abdul Ali

Mohammad Abdul Ali (BNP-Narsingdi) said the nine years of autocratic rule had ruined the country's economy. He said some unscrupulous traders had increased the prices of essentials in the pretext of introduction of the VAT before the budget was announced.

He called upon the Finance Minister to withdraw this from those items which the general people needed everyday.

Turning to his local problems, Ali called for exempting weavers from repayment of loans upto Taka 5,000.