

World Bank presses for continuing reforms

BANGKOK, Oct 17: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman today called on the World Bank President Lewis T Preston and IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus here, reports BSS. Principal Finance Secretary Khorshed Alam, Secretary ERD Enam A Chowdhury and Bangladesh's AED in World Bank MA Syed were present in these meetings.

During his discussions with the World Bank President the Finance Minister said that Bangladesh's priorities conform with the thrust on poverty alleviation, environment and human resource development given by the World Bank.

Saifur Rahman who is here leading a delegation to the World Bank and IMF meeting outlined the policy reforms that the democratic government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has implemented after coming to office. He also drew the World Bank president's attention to the recurrent natural calamities that Bangladesh is facing over the recent years as a result of global environmental degradation.

Preston conveyed his regards to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia. He expressed concern over the way that Bangladesh's development efforts are suffering setbacks due to recurrent natural calamities.

The World Bank President expressed satisfaction over the way the Bangladesh government had implemented policy reforms inspite of unfavourable circumstances. He urged Bangladesh to continue the process of reform and assured all cooperation and assistance from the World Bank in this regard.

During their discussion the Finance Minister mentioned to the World Bank President the high priority that his government attached to the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Project.

He particularly mentioned that the government had been collecting surcharges for this project and people of Bangladesh, regardless of their

different shades of opinion, are keen to ensure early implementation of this project. The completion of this project will go a long way in helping the development activities of the country, he said. The World Bank President assured the Finance Minister that a decision will be taken about this project very soon. Lewis Preston was accompanied by two Vice Presidents and a Director from the World Bank.

In his meeting with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus, Saifur Rahman expressed his appreciation for the Managing Director's call for global reduction in military expenditure which will increase the amount of resources available for development assistance.

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Maulana Nizami meets Justice Shahabuddin

By Staff Correspondent
The Secretary General of Jamaat-e-Islami and leader of its parliamentary party, Maulana Matur Rahman Nizami, called on former Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed at his residence on Thursday.

The Jamaat leader lauded the role played by Justice Shahabuddin as Acting President in holding the February 27 parliamentary elections in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere under the caretaker government. He also thanked him for giving assent to the 12th Amendment Bill, thereby institutionalising parliamentary democracy and completing the democratic process.

Maulana Nizami hoped that Justice Shahabuddin would make further important contributions from his current position as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Justice Shahabuddin also appreciated the role of Jamaat leaders for their support during the transition to democracy.

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DOWN TO EARTH

Vegetable prices go sky-high

By Khalilur Rahman

The vegetable market though as green as it always was to sight is now becoming a difficult place for a person with a light purse to enter.

Almost all varieties of vegetables, now on sale in the metropolis, have recorded an abnormal price hike compared to the corresponding period

(DND) project at the eastern side of the metropolitan city was implemented under the World Bank aid for boosting agricultural products as well as fish cultivation in the canals within the project. The vast tract of land, stretching from Jatrabari crossing upto Narayanganj in the southern

Traders say that heavy downpour inundated vegetation in August and September causing extensive damage to the plants. Many of the vegetables growing areas from where supply to the metropolis is maintained were under flood water which caused total destruction to the plantation.

(Star photo)



A city vegetable market.

last year. The supply of all these items is scanty but the buyers are many.

During this period last year the price of one kilogram kg of brinjal was Taka 5. It now sells at taka 16 to taka 20 per kg depending on quality. The price of two pairs of radish was only taka two last year. The item is mostly unavailable now. Radish leaf is, however, available at a price of Taka 16 per kg in different markets.

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they added. The growers again had sown the vegetables seeds after the recession of flood water only to be damaged by heavy rainfall in September, the vegetables vendors in some city markets pointed out. However the farmers have again cultivated the vegetables which are expected in the coming winter. But it may not meet the requirements for vegetables as the plantation has been carried out at a limited scale by the farmers because of shortage of inputs and money it is learnt.

Talking to The Daily Star an old agriculturist regretted that during the last 20 years since the creation of Bangladesh our planners did not seriously consider ways and means to ensure adequate supply of vegetables to the fast expanding metropolis. The number of population in the city is at present 70 lakh. But the sources of vegetables supply to the townspeople have shrunk considerably due to use of agricultural land for housing or industrialisation, he stated.

A medium-sized pumpkin which was available last year at Taka 10 to Taka 12 now sells from Taka 30 to Taka 40. Barbati sells from Taka 16 to Taka 20 while bitter gourd and ladies finger are sold from Taka 20 to Taka 22 per kg. Cucumber which was available in plenty previous year is almost absent in the market.

Another agricultural expert said that setting up of green belt exclusively for the metropolis was a must to overcome the crisis of vegetables supply. About 30 years ago the Dhaka-Narayanganj Demra

Concerted efforts on the part of government and other relevant agencies are still lacking to find out land for vegetables cultivation or further develop the agricultural farms under the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) for steady supply of different varieties of vegetables at a reasonable price to an ever increasing number of country's population.

Most of the suburban areas of the city which were once used for cultivating vegetables and other agricultural products have similarly been occupied for building houses or factories. Gradually the situation has turned worse with the rapid growth of population. Now the land is hardly available for growing vegetables in and around the metropolis.

BCCI operations were suspended in Bangladesh on July 6, as also in 70 countries, following alleged money laundering and fraud by the Bank.

A British team of provisional liquidators already visited Bangladesh early this month to get information on some specific queries regarding assets and liabilities of the trouble-ridden Bank in Bangladesh.

Sanctions

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with Australia's Bob Hawke. When he emerged from that meeting, he told reporters he was keen for sanctions to be lifted because, while blacks were prepared to pay the price for the embargoes, they were causing hardships for blacks and "devastating the economy."

But political analysts here said they do not see this as a shift in Mandela's backing for sanctions, but rather an indication that he is keen to get an interim government in place as soon as possible.

Once that was done, efforts could get under way to revitalise South Africa's ailing economy.

Britain, complaining of foot-dragging by other industrialised nations, announced Thursday it plans to write off unilaterally nearly US 1 billion dollars of debt owed by the poorest countries.

Paramilitary riot police Thursday fired teargas and baton-charged crowds of university students protesting government restrictions and accusing Commonwealth summit host President Robert Mugabe of paying lip-service to human rights.

BBC 'racist'
Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, attending the Commonwealth summit in Harare, was quoted in local newspapers as saying the British Broadcasting Corporation was "a bit racist" on the issue of good government.

BCCI

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those in Bombay, may be restarted with new entities.

Sources here suggest that instead of marking time, the government of Bangladesh should explore possibilities of salvaging the BCCI with a new sense of urgency.

An opinion has been expressed by a banking expert that a small consortium of leading scheduled banks could come together in a collective bid to save the operations.

It has been argued that a series of round-table consultations with both leading depositors and borrowers, under the auspices of Bangladesh Bank, could well produce a new formula for refloating the organisation whose suspension has badly hit the economy of Bangladesh, especially the garments industry.

A preliminary assessment of the BCCI owners in Abu Dhabi has earlier suggested that restructuring of the Bank was possible in at least eight countries including Bangladesh.

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The Midnight File

Y'slav air, land and sea offensive on Dubrovnik

BELGRADE, Oct 17: The Yugoslav army today attacked the area around the medieval resort city of Dubrovnik on Croatia's Adriatic coast, Tanjug news agency said. The attack was a land, air and sea offensive, reports AFP.

Baker-Shamir talk ME peace

JERUSALEM, Oct 17: US Secretary of State James Baker held a first round of talks today with Israeli Premier Yitzhak Shamir amid the countdown for a Middle East peace conference, but topics remained for further discussion, reports AFP.

Ukraine won't sign economic treaty

MOSCOW, Oct 17: The Ukraine, the second most powerful Soviet republic, decided today not to sign a key umbrella agreement on economic relations, a senior Ukrainian official said, reports Reuter.

Jamuna bridge

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made on-the-spot study of sites with an alternative proposal of an improved ferry service as an interim arrangement.

Jamuna Bridge Authority sources said the Bangladesh side very convincingly apprised the WB team of the economic viability of the bridge and its vital role in the socio-economic field.

The World Bank team had

raised questions about the feasibility study of the bridge which was done by the consultants engaged by the Bank earlier. The visiting World Bank team said that the configuration of the Internal Economic Rate of Return (IERR) which was shown at 15.04, had been exaggerated during the feasibility study.

But the Bangladesh side said that the calculated IERR was quite accurate and the social demand of the proposed bridge was very high.

The Bangladesh side also argued that while the per capita income of the people was going up and gross domestic product was increasing gradually, there should not be any apprehension of decrease in the economic viability of the bridge, which was calculated in the year 1989.

The Bangladesh side also pointed out that the bridge was essential to bring the western part of the country close to the eastern part for continuing the smooth development work of the whole of Bangladesh.

She said her government with active support of the people and the foreign assistance had overcome the problems.

Mahathir

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the government seven months ago, she found that there remained unsurmountable problems which needed immediate attention.

The Prime Minister said the country had also experienced a severe cyclone in the month of April last and it was followed by floods. She said a vast area in Sylhet district and in the northern region had gone under the flood water.

She said her government with active support of the people and the foreign assistance had overcome the problems.

Attends banquet

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia last night attended a banquet hosted by Queen Elizabeth II for the Commonwealth heads of government and their spouses at the guest house here.

Begum Zia talked to the distinguished leaders attending the summit and exchanged pleasantries with them.

The Queen wished the heads of government success during the CHOGM which opened here yesterday. "At this time of rapid and dramatic change throughout the world heavy responsibility rests on you and there is much important business to be done," she said before proposing a toast to the Commonwealth of nations.

Earlier Begum Zia joined other leaders to pose for a group photograph with the Queen and her husband the Duke of Edinburgh.

Rangpur

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dicted the reports published in a section of the press about food scarcity and spread of epidemics. He firmly stated that there was enough food, medicine and other essential commodities in the greater Rangpur district.

There had been some sporadic cases of diarrhoea but those have already been contained, the Civil Surgeons and DCs of the respective districts told the visiting ministers.

Food Minister Shamsul Islam Khan, while participating in the discussion, said that 2.5 lakh tons of foodgrains have already arrived in the country during the current month and added that a similar quantity is in the pipeline and will reach next month.

Health Minister Kamal Yusuf said since there exists press freedom incidence of diarrhoea is flashed in a big way although this epidemic is not new in Bangladesh. He mentioned that many epidemics of higher dimension had gone unreported during the autocratic regime.

State Minister for Relief Lutfur Rahman Khan appealed to the people irrespective of political affiliation to work for the welfare of the common people. He said, none should indulge in politics taking the advantage of people's miseries.

The ministers later distributed relief materials among the people and visited a relief camp outside the town.



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina addressing a meeting held in observance of the anniversary of Abdul Malek Uki's death at the party central office in the city yesterday.

— Star photo

Misuse of relief

From Page 1 Col. 7
Government's undemocratic attitude has frustrated the people, she said, adding its activities reflected the "autocratic character of the past regime."

Referring to attack on Awami League workers at different places, including in Munshiganj, Narail and Comilla, the Awami League leader said this government wanted to suppress the opposition. She advised the government to demonstrate democratic behaviour and protect democracy.

"The people will not pardon you,