

Saifur : Aid disbursements

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He added Taka 1325 crore has been spent in local currency and another Taka 2100 crore in foreign currency till February.

He said that expenditure has been expedited since January as the first months of the fiscal year are usually spent in preparing project proposals and other paperwork.

Rahman said that the import figure during the July-January period this year stood at Taka 1814 crore as against Taka 1884 crore last year. He said the lower amount of import meant that the country's import is settling down to its own need and not to pass across the border.

The export earning was 1087 million US dollar during July-January period as against 1000 million dollar during the same period last year. On the other hand, foreign exchange remittance was Taka 536 million US dollars during the July-February period against 508 million US dollar last year.

Referring to the foreign reserve, he said it now stands at 1.3 billion US dollars. He added that the country should have a one billion US dollar foreign exchange reserve to face any contingency expenditure and this amount in reserve is also required under the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recommended Extended Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) programme.

Referring to the recent remark by the World Bank representative in Bangladesh that the Bank would recommend lower amount of aid this year

for Bangladesh, the Finance Minister said Bangladesh itself aims to reduce intake of aid to become self-reliant.

Rahman said that his government is interested in the effectivity of the pledged amount and not in pledges full of conditionalities. "We have decided not to take conditional pledges anymore", he said.

The Minister pointed out that the budgetary provision to meet 75 per cent of the total ADP outlay for the current fiscal year from internal resources will be met.

He added that the government plans to allocate one-third of the total ADP outlay from internal resources by the year 1995.

He said that the donors are imposing the conditionalities because of the "broken pledges" of the Ershad regime.

The minister said too many conditionalities hinder project implementations.

He noted that different multilateral donors including the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) have lauded the economic reform programmes of the government.

He observed that there is an urgent need for a national consensus on major economic issues which would allow the country to achieve substantial progress.

Commenting on the KAPCO deal, the minister said it was "grossly iniquitous to Bangladesh". Even then, he added, the deal had to be approved "on the balance of the global macro-economic bilateral relationship."

Replying to a question, the minister said that the government wants to restart the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) to protect the interest of the depositors and the banking climate in the country. But, he mentioned that legal conditionalities are delaying the action.

Concerned secretaries, members of the Planning Commission and other officials were present at the press briefing.

Ordinance to realise bank loans SOON

By Staff Correspondent

An ordinance providing stern measures for quick realisation of defaulting industrial bank loans will be promulgated within the next few days.

This was disclosed by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at a press briefing at the National Economic Council Auditorium Wednesday afternoon.

He said that the cabinet has already approved the decision to make an ordinance for strengthening the law against the defaulters to realise the outstanding loans.

The ordinance would allow the sale of confiscated property of individuals with outstanding loans, he added.

Terming the "default culture promoted and protected" by the previous regime as "contagious and done deliberately and intentionally", he declared that the present government would not allow this to continue.

The minister pointed out that the scheme for repayment of defaulting loans could not yield substantial response. He said the decision to promulgate the ordinance had been taken in view of the poor response of the defaulters.



AL chief Sheikh Hasina addressing the fire victims at Islambagh in the city Wednesday. —Star photo

5 MPs allege corruption in canal digging programme

By Staff Correspondent

Five parliament members, who are also the leaders of the Bangladesh Krishak League, in a statement have alleged widespread corruption and irregularities throughout the country in the name of canal digging.

The statement, issued yesterday, signed by begum Matia Chowdhury, Md Rahmat Ali, Rashed Mosharrif, Prof Rafiqul Islam and Mokhelesur Rahman alleged massive misappropriation of wheat by the activists of the ruling party through the canal digging programme.

The MPs made the statement after visiting their respective constituencies recently.

The Krishak League leaders alleged that the programme was being implemented without proper and integrated planning, with a motive to "rehabilitate" the activists of the ruling party.

The programme is causing shortage of wheat in many projects like 'Food for Works Programme' at various places in the country leading those to indiscriminate closures, they said adding that this happened due to maximum sanction of wheat in the canal digging programme.

The MPs also alleged price hike of flour and other wheat-made food items due to the programme.

Pak Minister fired

ISLAMABAD, Mar 11: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has dismissed Federal Communications Minister Ghulam Murtaza Jatoi, state-run television reported, says AFP.

BNP silence

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ring anonymity, said "If someone wants to stage a public trial, what the BNP could do? But he admitted that the Government will have to be careful so that no untoward incident happens." He expressed the hope that the Jamaat leaders and workers will be cautious on the day to avoid any possible clashes.

A leading member of the party, known for his proximity to the party chief, says some political elements are out to 'embarrass' the Government while they forget that the number of seats occupied by Jamaat in parliament 'is also a pointer to their strength.'

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Chief Whip of the party in parliament, when contacted expressed the feeling that the party should take a stand on the question.

When contacted, Abdus Salam Talukder, Secretary General of the party said, "We have not yet taken any decision on the issue." But he added that the Home Ministry would take necessary steps in due course if need be.

Talukder also observed that there were other pressing issues than what is being projected as the issue of 'grave concern'.

Sources close to party chief Begum Khaleda Zia say she will review the situation after her trip to the United States.

Political analysts say the lending some pro-BNP intellectuals' names to the statement supporting the public trial has created an awkward situation for the party.

Band on interest

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commercial loans, 11 to 14 per cent on urban housing, 11 to 16 per cent on term finance while as per the new circular there will be no cap on commercial banks' lending.

On the other hand, lending rates for agriculture, other exports and small and cottage industries retain the existing ones, 11 to 15 per cent, 7.5 to 11 per cent, 8 to 13 per cent respectively.

Bangladesh Bank officials say that the withdrawal of banding on interest rates will encourage banks to work on their own sources and as a result the entrepreneurs as well as the institutions will be pushed for more investment.

According to a senior official of a nationalised bank, the new move will mostly benefit the foreign banks as their cost of funds is relatively lower.

The nationalised commercial banks will be on the losing side because of the Government policy compelling them to take high cost deposits as well as to provide unqualified lending, the banker says.

Hasina slams govt for 'not aiding fire victims'

Awami League leader Sheikh Hasina Wednesday urged the relief and humanitarian organisations, including the Red Crescent, to aid the fire victims at Islambagh in the city, reports UNB.

Addressing a gathering during her visit to the fire devastated area, she criticised the Government for not sending relief materials for the victims even three days after the incident.

At least 11 people were killed in the fire that burnt to ashes about 300 shanties in Islambagh Monday leaving at least a thousand families homeless.

Hasina, the President of Awami League, said the slum dwellers have lost everything and are living sub-human life under the open sky.

She demanded immediate supply of relief materials for the fire victims and also asked the partymen to stand by the affected people.

Earlier, the victims complained that they did not receive any relief from the administration.

Hasina prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathy for the affected people.

She was accompanied by party leaders Abdul Jalil, Matia Chowdhury, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Muzaffar Hossain Paltu, M A Aziz, Akhterul Alam and Alhaj Reazuddin during the visit.

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15 hurt as rival groups clash in Jessore

JESSORE, Mar 11: At least 15 people, including two police men, were injured in the town today following a clash between two rival groups, reports UNB.

Seriously injured Sub-Inspectors Faruq and Habidur Isaq were admitted to Sadar Hospital. Thirteen others injured were admitted to different clinics.

The clash ensued in the morning at the local Kutchabazar when people from Ghope area attacked its rival group from Churpatti after hot exchange of words on prices of some commodities.

Montu

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meeting at the party central office, according to sources, include, Munsif Abdul Aziz (vice-president), K M Saifuddin Ahmed (organising secretary), Abdul Jabbar (office secretary), Noor Mohammad Sharif (cultural secretary) and Nilufar Jahan (women affairs secretary).

According to an information received last midnight, a delegation representing the Montu group went to meet the AL chief Sheikh Hasina last night but failed to talk to her as she was not available at her Minto Road residence.



Mostafa Mohsin Montu speaking at the meeting of his faction of Dhaka District Awami League at the party central office yesterday. —Star photo

Diplomats : Pressure

From Page 1 Col 5
Myanmar refugees have taken shelter at various places of the district to escape repression in their homeland. The government figure of the refugees, however, stands at one lakh 33 thousand.

Additional Foreign Secretary Farook Sobhan accompanied the diplomats.

Earlier on arrival at Cox's Bazar they were received and were briefed by the officials of the local administration. The envoys also visited the local control room set up for the Myanmar refugees where officials briefed them on the ongoing relief and rehabilitation programmes by the government at the camps.

Several non-government organisations were also carrying out relief at the refugee camps.

Giving his reaction to the BTW correspondent, the Charge d'Affaires of Russian Federation Igor Soprykin said that the plight of the refugees was fearful. "We have seen sufferings of the children, women and young men...Oh it's a terrible situation," said the envoy.

Soprykin said that the refugee problems were always "big" and suggested prompt international cooperation to help tackle the situation.

"Of course I understand that international pressure should be on the government of

Myanmar to stop persecution of the minorities so that they (the Myanmar authorities) stop the exodus of people from their native land," he suggested.

The Egyptian Ambassador in Dhaka praised the quick response and management of the Bangladesh government in a very short time.

He told BTW: "I think that there were more need of help and that help should arrive from every part of the world."

"It's very touching to see these people being deprived of their rights of staying in their own country just because most of them are Muslims and they want to have their own culture," said Ambassador of Iran Muhammad Ganji Doost.

He said that the assistance being given by Bangladesh was "a symbol of brotherhood and neighbourhood."

"And we think it is a duty of all nations and particularly the Muslim nations to come to the help of Bangladesh at this very time," the Ambassador added.

BSS adds from Cox's Bazar: The High Commissioner of Sri Lanka A K David, who is Dean of the Diplomatic Corps after visit to some of the camps here said, "our presence here is the reflection and willingness of our respective governments to work closely with Bangladesh to solve the

Myanmar refugee problem. We will also continue to provide relief for the refugees."

The Heads of Missions were moved at the plight of swelling number of refugees, many of whom were without shelter.

Ambassador of Netherlands Henricus Gajentaan who had praise for Bangladesh for good management of the situation said all countries "expect refugees will be back to their country soon. We will support Bangladesh in all international forums including the United Nations."

Ambassador of Belgium Zavier R Van Mijem giving his reaction after visit to some of the camps said, "refugees are always a human tragedy. European Community (EC) is participating in a large way to see to it that the issue is solved."

He said the EC had taken note of the requirement of the refugees. The priority at the moment is, however, to help the distressed people as much as possible, he said. Since Belgium is an EC member "we are asking the Myanmar government to reconsider the policy that is now in force regarding its minority population." He said the problem of refugee was also spreading to Thailand and India.

The Midnight File

Myanmar border team off to Beijing

YANGON, Mar 11: An eight-member Myanmar border technical delegation left here for China today to attend a tripartite meeting with their Chinese and Lao counterparts. The delegation, led by Captain Tun Aung, commander of the Naval hydrographic depot under the Myanmar Ministry of Defense, was invited by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, reports Xinhua.

Ray's respiratory trouble

CALCUTTA, Mar 11: Film maestro Satyajit Ray's respiratory difficulty increased since this evening and it had become a cause of concern for the medical team attending him at the city nursing home, his family said, quoting a medical bulletin, reports PTI.

DCC employees

From Page 1 Col 8
sweepers joined in their works in 75 wards unofficially because of threat by the strikers.

The employees went on an indefinite strike from Monday for a separate pay scale in consistent with the national one.

The 'Pouza Federations' which called for the strike claimed that some 120,000 employees of four city corporations and 104 (corrected) pourasavas have been continuing the strike since Monday.

The corporation will start appointing fresh workers from today (Thursday) to replace the strikers." Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation Mirza Abbas said adding that "the authorities will also serve show cause notice today to its permanent employees giving two days time."

"Those who did not join their duties yesterday is no longer a staff of the DCC but we will consider the case of those 1,500 cleaners who are working under contract basis following the strike," the mayor said.

Another official said that 10 more garbage carriers joined with the previous fleet of 54 on Wednesday and the situation would appreciably improve. The striking workers hurled several cocktails when 10 vehicles were coming out of the garage at Sayadabad, he alleged.

The authorities have also taken steps to put the street lights on, the official added.

"The DCC became hostage in the hands of some 80 drivers, most of them were appointed by the past auto-

cratic regime," Mirza Abbas said adding that strict measures were taken to check misuse of fuel which might be the main cause of their agitation.

A fleet of some 200 vehicles cost the DCC Taka 26 lakh monthly, 50 per cent of which is embedded in different ways, he added.

"The strike aimed at gaining political interest by the past autocratic regime and some leaders of that group are now involved with the matter of politics," the mayor alleged.

The employees' leaders were not available for comment.

The authorities have to pay additional Taka three crore and 60 lakh annually if the new pay scale is given. The DCC currently spends Taka one crore and 40 lakh monthly to pay the salaries of its officers and employees.

"If the government does not sanction the additional amount, I cannot offer the new pay scale," Mirza Abbas said adding that "otherwise the corporation has to increase the taxes of the city dwellers."

The mayor said that he wrote to the ministry concerned to increase sanction but did not get any reply.

He said that 50 per cent employees of the DCC would not be benefited if the new pay scale is given.

Mirza Abbas said that the strike stopped collection of Taka 16 lakh revenue daily. But alternative measures are being taken to end the crisis, he added.

ing discussions with a section of professional economists of the country, is learnt to have received a large number of amendments to the draft resolution from party leaders.

Professor Abu Sayed, previously a Baksal leader who joined the AL in August last year also proposed some amendments.

According to him, the AL should opt for a 'welfare economy' comprising public, private and cooperative sectors. His amendments underscored the necessity of a sound coordination between these three sectors for the 'socio-economic emancipation of the people.'

The ALWC however, according to sources, will exchange views with other professional groups as well as with the leaders of the party's labour and peasant front before taking the final position on the new economic policy of the party.

AL economy

From Page 1 Col 8
Economic Affairs of the AL. Ataur Rahman Kaiser presented a draft resolution March 4 on the new economic policy to be adopted by the party in the 'changed global situation.'

The draft policy advocated a mixed economy for the country with the public sector playing a minor role.

Ruling out the necessity of the state's role as a controlling authority over the economic activities of the country, the draft maintained that the state should play a more complementary role.

The draft also maintained that no commercial or industrial establishments would generally be nationalised.

Particularly on the question of industrialisation in the country, the draft said, 'the country has to be industrially developed within the framework of a mixed economy.'

Referring to the recent experiences of the developing countries, the draft said, 'it was impossible to develop the country industrially in the absence of an efficient management system, a class of proper industrial entrepreneurs, competitive nature of the market and flourishing of a capital market.'

The draft was however critical about the role of the present private industrial sector of the country.

It said, 'despite backing by the development investment organisations, the role of maximum of the industrial establishments in the private sector was not satisfactory.' Besides, the draft added, 'the rate of loan recovery from these establishments was very poor.'

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Commentary

From Page 1 Col 4
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Another step that should be taken by the Government is to send special ministerial envoys, as personal representatives of Prime Minister Begum Zia, to countries within the region and outside to brief their presidents and prime ministers on the position of Bangladesh on the Rohingya issue. In fact, it is a little surprising that no such step has yet been taken by the Foreign Ministry.

In deciding on which countries the envoys should visit first, the priority should be given to members of the UN Security Council, some Arab block nations, SAARC members, and countries which have already come out strongly against the suppression of democracy inside Myanmar.

Indeed, this may well be the time for Bangladesh to join the international alliance for the restoration of democracy in our strife-torn neighbouring country.

After all, the safe return of over 1.5 lakh refugees, now sheltered in Bangladesh, to their own homes in Arakan very much depends on the restoration of a democratically-elected civilian government in Yangon.

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OIC condemns

From Page 1 Col 5
Najib Tun Razak, head of the national youth wing of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), also called on the Organisation of Islamic Countries to support Malaysia and other ASEAN countries in pressing Myanmar to allow the Rohingya Muslims who have fled to Bangladesh to return home unharmed.

"We express grave concern over the plight of the Rohingyas not because they are Muslims, but on humanitarian grounds", Najib said.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Mohathir Mohamad said Malaysia would take a firm stand against any persecution of the Rohingyas, and the same day, Foreign Minister Abdullah Badawi called for action by ASEAN.

The Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and youth wing, however, have all failed to specify specific actions that should be taken to discourage Myanmar and have avoided mentioning sanctions or condemnations.

Later Wednesday, five members of the UMNO's youth

wing's international affairs bureau, headed by its chairman, Nazri Aziz, submitted a letter to Myanmar ambassador U Ko urging his government to allow the Rohingyas to return to their homes unharmed.

The Myanmar embassy in a statement Tuesday said the 'so-called' Rohingya people was a creation of a group of insurgents in the Rakhine border state and had never been among the 135 national races living in Myanmar.

Another report says Singapore has expressed concern that the large influx of refugees into Bangladesh could lead to regional instability, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman said today.

"The influx of large numbers of refugees from Myanmar (Burma) into Bangladesh is creating a potential area of instability for the region and human suffering," he said.

"Singapore hopes that the Myanmar authorities would take action that would allow the refugees to return home safely and thus defuse a potential source of regional instability and tension," the spokesman said in a statement.

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