

No more surrender to terror tactics : Saifur

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday said the task of the government is to govern the country for people's welfare, not to submit to "irrational and irresponsible pressure from vested quarters", reports UNB.

"There shall be no more surrender in future, and a handful of people will not be allowed to hold the economy hostage through terror tactics," he categorically said, apparently lashing out at the SKOP-sponsored 48-hour strike by workers and employees demanding wage hike.

The Finance Minister was addressing as chief guest the inaugural session of a two-day conference of general and regional managers of Bangladesh Krishi Bank and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank.

Presided over by the Chairman of Krishi Bank, the session was also addressed by State Minister for Finance Mojibur Rahman, Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed, Managing Directors of the two banks and the Chairman of Krishi Unnayan Bank.

Sadar Uddin Chisti freed

Sadar Uddin Ahmed Chisti, the sufi who was arrested in connection with a December 26 incident at Keraniganj, Dhaka, was released Tuesday from the Dhaka Central Jail.

He was received by a host of his followers at the jail gate.

Chisti was arrested on December 29 last year from a "urs" of Khwaja Mainuddin Ahmed Chisti at Feni and put under detention for 120 days.

Advocate Khandaker Mahbub Hossain moved a writ petition on behalf of Ahmed's wife Begum Gohar Ara in the High Court on February 3 challenging the detention.

A High Court bench comprising Justice Naimuddin Ahmed and Justice Golam Rabbani in a verdict of March 11 declared the detention void.

Sadar Uddin was arrested when several thousand armed people including some madrasa students attacked the "Khanka" of the sufi, Chisti Sangha, a preaching centre of sufiism.

Two people were killed and more than 100 others including some police officials were wounded in the clash between the armed people and police.

Local religious leaders waged a movement against Chisti since October last year and held two rallies at Keraniganj demanding his capital punishment and banning of his books.

Two of the religious books written by the sufi was banned by the Ershad government under the pressure of a religious group.

that some "unscrupulous" political parties were still supporting "economic anarchy".

"Being a popularly elected government, the BNP government cannot create unnecessary inflationary pressure on the economy or increase tax burden and misery of the people through unnecessary and illogical wage-hikes," he pointed out.

Referring to the poor loan disbursement and recovery performance of BKB and RAKUB, the Finance Minister asked the bankers to fraternise with society around instead of sitting in the office like "Kabulwallahs (money lenders)".

"The colonial concept of collateral banking should be given up and in its place the bankers should develop participatory and relationship-based character banking", he said.

Saifur Rahman noted that for development, growth and employment generation, Bangladesh had no alternative but to adopt the policy of strengthening its rural agro-based economy as a development strategy.

Expressing his displeasure at the amount of loan disbursed, Rahman said the volume was quite inconsequential in terms of the size and importance of our agricultural sector. He asked the bankers to undertake a vigorous loan disbursement drive and promote economic activities as monetary agents of the government.

The State Minister for Finance in his speech urged the bankers to resolve the certificate cases as expeditiously as possible so that "default culture" is discouraged. He called upon them to reach banking services to the doorsteps of poor peasants and provide them with timely credits.

PM shocked at loss of lives in USA

The Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, yesterday expressed her sympathy and condolence at the loss of life and damage to property, caused by storms in the United States, reports BSS.

In a message to the US President, William J Clinton, the Prime Minister said, "We have been deeply shocked and grieved at the tragic loss of lives and damage of property, caused by the unprecedented storms that have devastated the entire eastern coast of the United States."

Begum Zia said, "On behalf of the people and government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and on my own behalf, I convey through your excellency our deepest sympathies and sincere condolence to the people, affected by this natural calamity."

Diplomatic postings

From Page 1 Col 4
The AL leader's plea that he should spare any embarrassment to governments of these friendly countries probably represents the view of a cross section of our informed circles.

A diplomat does not — certainly should not — earn an ambassadorial position as a matter of right. It is a privilege that must suit the priorities of the country and, above all, the needs of the Foreign Ministry. This means that an official attached to the Foreign Ministry can be transferred to another ministry or retired with full separation benefits. In other words, the hands of the Foreign Ministry are not tied where appointments of these three diplomats as ambassadors are concerned.

The statement by Sheikh Hasina should also serve as a welcome signal for the Foreign Ministry to take a good look at the staffing, responsibilities and functions of our missions abroad, in the light of new challenges and priorities facing the country.

Nearly two years ago, Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman had told The Daily Star, during a full-page exclusive interview, that from then on, all our diplomatic missions would be geared to economic relations, export promotion, generation of investments and the use of our surplus manpower from Bangladesh.

What is the track record of our missions so far? Are they meeting their targets, if any, in the fields just mentioned?

In posting new ambassadors in countries which serve as the country's strongest economic partners, such as Japan, the

United States, the EEC bloc of nations and even a potential source of joint ventures like Malaysia, do we look for candidates with the right background in trade, commerce and investments? When we do not find them within the Foreign Ministry, do we look at other areas, say, in the private sector or in financial organisations?

Again, what kind of commercial ministers, labour attaches and press counsellors have we posted in our missions in recent years to bring about the reorientation of our external relations along the lines suggested by the Foreign Minister two years ago?

Obviously, much remains to be done in this respect, as we learnt on Sunday, when two visiting Japanese experts talked about several misconceptions which prevail in their country about South Asia in general and Bangladesh in particular.

As Prof Takako Hirose told a seminar of the Institute of International and Strategic Studies, "Japan does not give much importance to South Asia. In our country, we do not even get a travel guide of Bangladesh."

Since Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman inaugurated the seminar, we can assume that the warnings sounded by the distinguished visitors were not lost on the government. The question remains, how and when the relevant ministries will act on these warnings, instead of wasting their time with controversial ambassadorial appointments Bangladesh can do without?



SEASONAL PASTIME: Villagers fishing in a pond on the outskirts of the city yesterday. — Star photo

Stray incidents mark SKOP strike

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Normal production was reportedly hampered in the factories in and around Dhaka, Gazipur, Khulna, Jessore, Sirajganj, Rajshahi, Chittagong, Mymensingh and other places.

The SKOP leaders warned of fresh programmes if festival bonus was not paid to the workers before Eid-ul-Fitr and added that a greater move to realise the demands would be announced soon after the holidays.

However, the government termed the strike "illegal and contrary to labour laws" and warned that legal action would be taken against the absentee workers if they failed to join work immediately.

Bangladesh Employees' Association in a statement Tuesday lauded the government move ignoring the demands of the striking workers. In the capital, life remained normal as banks and offices functioned as usual while the markets and trading centres continued to do the brisk pre-Eid business.

Both private and public transports pined normally but inter-district bus services operated in a considerably reduced strength. However, train and launch services remained undisturbed.

Road communication was disrupted at several places as agitating workers blocked the Dhaka-Narayanganj Highway while buses and trucks stayed off the Dhaka-Mymensingh and Dhaka-North Bengal highways during the day.

Although the barricade on the Chittagong-Dhaka Highway at Sitakundu was removed by law enforcement agencies, buses pined in different routes with some interruptions.

Dhaka City Corporation officials manning the inter-district bus terminals at Moha-

khali and Gabtoli said that none of the buses left the terminals during day while only a handful of buses left the Saidabad terminal.

Thousands of passengers were stranded at the long-rout bus terminals in the city while passengers were also seen crossing the barricaded portions of the highways on foot and in alternate transports in Gazipur, Postogala and a few other places.

Night coaches from the city's three inter-district bus terminals had been scheduled to resume services since Tuesday evening although the 48-hour strike period ends at 6 am Wednesday today, terminal sources said.

According to the Railway Control Room at Kamalapur, all inter-city train services remained normal on the day and that a large number of passengers were availing the services in the absence of regular bus services.

All domestic and international flights of Bangladesh Biman operated normally while services at the Sadarghat launch terminal also remained undisturbed.

Meanwhile, different trade union groups including garments workers staged demonstrations in the city. Rubber and Forest workers organised a rally at Ban Shilpa Bhaban under their leader Khandaker Nasrul Islam in the chair. It was addressed, among others, by Workers Federation President M A Mutalib and M A Maik.

Sugar Mills and Jute Mills Workers Federations organised a joint rally near the Adamjee Court with A B Siddique in the chair. The rally was addressed by Shah Alam, Wadud Sharif and Nur Hossain.

Trade union leaders protested "atrocities" by law enforcing agencies on workers at different places during the shutdown and thanked workers for observing the strike.

Bangladesh Steel, Engineering and Energy workers arranged a rally in front of the BSEC head office with Abul Hossain in the chair. It was addressed among others by allied workers federation including Machine-tools Factory Stramik League, Titas Gas Employees Union and Mehar Industries Employees Union.

In Khulna, production in jute and textile mills was hampered. Inter-district buses did not ply and banking transactions were closed during the strike. In the morning, workers took out a procession in the town.

The workers also held a rally at Khalishpur industrial area in the afternoon. Sarder Motahar Uddin, Sirajul Haq and Hafizuddin Bhuiyan addressed the rally. The speakers told the rally that their movement will continue till their demands are met.

Our Gazipur Correspondent reported that almost all factories in the Tongi Industrial Area remained inoperative during the day and that inter-district buses did not cross Tongi.

Meanwhile, the Blue panel selected Professor Aminul Islam of the Department of Soil Science, Professor Mashhuzzaman, Dean of the Science Faculty and Professor Mohammed Montruzzaman of the Department of Bengali, as its candidates in the election.

The Pink panel reportedly will not contest the election, sources said.

The 104-DU Senate includes VC, Pro-VC, Treasurer, Registrar, government nominated five high officials, Jatiya Sangsad nominated five parliament members, Chancellor nominated five educationists, DU Syndicate nominated five researchers, Academic Council nominated five Principals of different colleges and ten teachers, Chairman of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Board, Dhaka, 25 representatives of registered graduates, 35 representatives of DU teachers and DUCSU nominated five student representatives.

Our Staff Correspondent from Chittagong adds: The SKOP called 48-hour shutdown was observed Tuesday for the second consecutive day leading to a collapse in the operation of several hundred mills and factories at the industrial belts here.

In the absence of the workers all the industries at Sitakundu, Kalurghat and Nasirabad industrial belts remained closed. They caused a production loss of 100 crore taka.

Sources said, the situation in those industrial belts remained tense with police deployed to thwart any violence.

All industries inside the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (EPZ) functioned as usual without any disturbance, officials said when contacted.

Loading and unloading work at the Chittagong Port was also quite normal, Port officials confirmed.

Railway sources said, train communication was normal Tuesday between Chittagong and other parts of the country. No barricade was put up by the striking workers as security was beefed up around the strike hit areas.

The transport movement was also restored Tuesday between Chittagong and other parts of the country, police said.

The transports bound for the remote places in Chittagong pined normally.

No unlawful incident was reported Tuesday.

UK assures help in implementing administrative reforms

Britain will extend all-out cooperation to Bangladesh government in implementing administrative reforms for restructuring the bureaucracy, reports UNB.

The assurance came from British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Sir Colin H Imray in a meeting yesterday with State Minister for Establishment Mohammad Nurul Huda regarding administrative reforms and British technical assistance scholarships for public servants.

Water talks

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This [an accord on water sharing] can be a gift to the leaders [who meet during the summit], he said.

The meeting of the JCE, co-chaired by Irrigation Secretaries, has been eagerly awaited by Bangladesh as there has been unusually low discharge of Ganges waters this season, due to absence of an accord on sharing the flows.

India has been withdrawing waters since 1988 after expiry of the last memorandum of understanding on May 31 that year.

Flows have shown a declining trend over the period and this year it came to an all-time low.

On March 7, 1993, discharge at the Harding Bridge point was the lowest ever with only 12,547 cusec, down from last year's lowest 13,500 cusec.

As a result, the Ganga-Kobadak projects, one of the two large irrigation schemes, has been threatened. Pumps of the projects that divert water to dry lands of several districts could not be put into operation as scheduled on March 1, due to unusually low water level.

The JCE, formed late last August after a two-day meeting of Irrigation Ministers, was mandated to "work for an equitable, long-term and comprehensive arrangement for sharing of flows of the Ganges, Teesta and other major rivers."

The joint body first met in mid-November in New Delhi but it did not yield anything except agreement on meeting soon in Dhaka.

Bangabandhu

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organisations and different socio-cultural organisations have drawn elaborate programmes to mark the day.

The day's programmes start with hoisting of the national and the party flags at the Awami League Central Office and at the Bangabandhu Bhaban at Dhanmondi at 6 am.

An exhibition of children art works and a juvenile rally will take place at 10 am at the Bangabandhu Bhaban premises.

Begum Sufia Kamal, President of the Bangabandhu Parishad, which is organising the function, will open the art exhibition.

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina will address the rally as chief guest.

Hasan Imam, Prof Panna Kaiser and Abdul Mattin will speak on the country's glorious Liberation War at the juvenile rally.

Russel Shishu Kishore Parishad will organise a rally from in front of the party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 11 am.

Awami League will hold a discussion at the party office premises at 2-30 pm in observance of the day.

Sheikh Hasina will preside the discussion.

At the Bangabandhu's village home at Tungipara, the programmes start with placing of wreaths at his mazar and offering of فاتحة.

Besides, milad mahfil and discussions will also take place.

Awami League General Secretary Zillur Rahman and Education and Cultural Secretary Obaidul Kader will leave for Tungipara today.

The 400 Bangla year observance committee members Syed Shamsul Huq, poet Ismail Chowdhury and architect Rabiul Hossain will also join the Tungipara functions.

Nuruzzaman

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Commissioned in the Pakistan Army in October 1960, he retired from the Bangladesh Army in 1975.



Brig Zaman was one of the accused in the Agartala Conspiracy Case.

In January 1978, he began his diplomatic career and served as Trade Commissioner in Australia, Charge d'Affairs in Philippines, High Commissioner in Canada, Ambassador in Senegal.

In July 1990, he took over as Ambassador in Sweden and was concurrently accredited to other Scandinavian countries.

During his tenure in Dakar, he was awarded the country's highest honour by the Senegalese government.

On Tuesday morning, he returned home after driving his son to school and felt pain in his chest while parking his car in the garage. He died instantly. It was 8:30 am Swedish time, his family sources in Dhaka said.

Son of late Abu Ahmed, a civil servant under British Raj, Brig Zaman left behind his wife, two sons, only daughter, five brothers and two sisters to mourn his demise.

His body will be flown to Dhaka after his eldest son, now in Florida, USA, returns to Stockholm, his relatives said.

One of his brothers-in-law is Ambassador Humayun Kabir, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Diarrhoea

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borne bacteria across the country, particularly in eight southern districts, control room sources said.

Of the latest deaths, eight were in Laxmipur, seven in Habiganj, two in Jhalakati, three in Patuakhali, three in Barisal, one in Barguna, two in Proppur, one in Khulna, one in Bhola and another in Kishoreganj.

Chinese diplomat missing in Russia

MOSCOW, Mar 16: China's Consul-General in Russia's second city of St Petersburg and his wife, who disappeared over the weekend, have defected to Sweden, the city police chief said today, reports Reuter.

"This is now a matter for diplomats," Major General Arkady Kramarev told the news agency.

The acting Consul-General of China in St Petersburg is now in Sweden. He has chosen freedom," he said.

The Midnight File

Russian democracy in danger : Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Mar 16: President Boris Yeltsin told a news conference with French leader Francois Mitterrand today that democracy was in serious danger in Russia, according to ITAR-Tass news agency. Last week's session of the country's highest legislature showed Russia faced possible "restoration of a communist regime", he said, adding: "There is a very, very serious threat hanging over democracy and reforms," reports Reuter.

Pandemonium breaks out in Italian parliament

ROME, Mar 16: Pandemonium broke out in the Italian parliament today as opposition deputies brandishing a hangman's noose and multi-coloured sponges interrupted a speech by Prime Minister Giuliano Amato. The Speaker of the Lower House expelled three opposition MPs after Amato's opponents noisily demanded the government resign over a nationwide corruption scandal, reports Reuter.

Pilgrims

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government and that the number of pilgrims would not exceed 12,000 people.

The agreement specifically mentioned that all Bangladeshi pilgrims must reside at the houses hired by the government of Bangladesh in consultation with relevant authorities in Makkah Mukaramah and Madina Monwarah.

It was also clearly stated that none of the pilgrims will be allowed to hire accommodation privately.

BEA lauds

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long-term interests of the workers," the statement said. Anis-ud-Dowla reiterated that imposition of wages ignoring capacity to pay would not ultimately contribute to the welfare of workers and creation of new employment.

"In the present economic situation, what is necessary is immediate improvement of the financial health of the public sector, in one hand and on the other, promotion of industries in the private sector particularly the small and medium industries so that existing jobs may be protected and new opportunities for employment are created," the BEA president said.

"The only way to do it is to link wages with productivity," he said, "somehow, our repeated pleas in the past have been ignored." He stated that the decision of the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia "is a bold one."

Anis-ud-Dowla said that sector-wise committees should be constituted under the Tripartite Consultative Committee to recommend ways of linking wages to productivity and hoped that this could be established with sincerity within a month.

No killer tried

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Chhatra Shibir and other student organisations, in which five students were killed and some 500 others injured. Rumours, however, are still there that the death figure was more than 10 on February 6.

Another severe clash occurred March 11, 1981 in which four Shibir activists, three of them outsiders, were killed. Since then political activities of the Shibir had remained suspended until 1988 when the Shibir announced its becoming a major political power on the campus.

Of the total victims in the RU incidents 10 were identified as Shibir activists, two from the JCD, and one each from JSD-Inu backed Chhatra League and the Chhatra Union.

The source said that some 25 students were either crippled or lost parts of their bodies because of the Shibir-style torture of cutting tendons and gouging eyes.

The University students had also fought several battles with the people of Binodpur, Mberchandi, Butpara and Kaza villages that surround the campus, 10 kms from the city.

Prof. Shamsul Haque of the Political Science Department, who had headed at least 15 probe bodies told The Daily Star that none of reports except one in 1986 was implemented.

In 1986 the former Vice-Chancellor Prof M A Raqib was injured by unruly university employees who joined the villagers in attacking students.

A total of 17 employees mostly transport workers were terminated for their involvement in the incident but most of them were reinstated later.

Haque said the authorities could only know facts about the incident from the inquiry committee report.

"The implementation of the probe body recommendations will start another trouble on the campus," Haque said, adding that "the varsity authorities have a limited power to punish the culprits."

The University Act 1973 allows expulsion of a student as maximum punishment for

US experts

From Page 1 Col 5

visory. Indian Home Minister SB Chavan told parliament that he would ask the External Affairs Ministry to check with Washington about the US advisory.

"Security in the country would be tightened," Chavan pledged as police evacuated the Delhi Stock Exchange after an anonymous caller warned that a powerful bomb would explode. The call turned out to be a hoax, one of many reported in New Delhi and Bombay since Friday's bombings.

Bombay police were combing the city Tuesday for two suspected gangsters who fled with bullet wounds following a gunbattle on Monday with officers, national television said.

Police have identified the two gangsters as Philoo Khan, 30, and Mangesh Pawar, 26, and said they were suspected of booking the rooms at Bombay hotels where bombs later exploded.

Security was being stepped up at airports, rail stations and along Bombay's coast on the Arabian Sea to prevent the two, alleged hitmen for Dubai-based Muslim ganglord Dawood Ibrahim, from fleeing, television said.

Bombay police chief Amarjit Singh Samra announced the first arrests in the case on Monday and said that the authorities were also looking for six Muslim brothers believed to have connections to the local underworld.

Samra indicated that local Muslim gangsters may have carried out the actual bombings but said "the crime has international links" he did not elaborate.

PTI also said that detectives with extensive experience in anti-terrorism operation from the state of Punjab had also reached Bombay to help the city police.

He said that the university authorities can take action over individual non-political academic offences.

Recalling such an incident Prof Haque said that three students had been expelled each for three years for ransacking the room of the Chairman of Economics Department a few years ago. The present Pro Vice Chancellor Azhar Uddin was the Chairman of the department during the time, he said.

A university source said that another student was expelled from the campus for life because of extorting money at gunpoint from a shop on campus.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of University teachers said that implementation of probe body reports could help curb campus violence. They saw non-implementation as an "encouragement" to the violence.

BOI okays

From Page 1 Col 4
Bangladeshi missions abroad have to take initiative and play an effective role in attracting foreign investors.

The BOI Executive Chairman M Mostafizur Rahman spoke at the meeting among others, highlighting the activities of the board.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Commerce Minister M K Anwar, Industries Minister Shamsul Islam Khan, Planning Minister Zahiruddin Khan, Energy Minister Prof Khandkar Mosharraf Hossain, Environment and Forest Minister Abdullah al-Noman, Jute Minister Brig (Retd) Hannan Shah and State Minister for Textiles M A Manna were present.

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