

Dialogue on policy reforms Minimum consensus a must for survival

Key figures in politics, academy, business, bureaucracy and media yesterday met in a unique dialogue on major economic questions and agreed on urgently reaching a minimum national consensus for the country's survival in the present competitive world, reports UNB.

They were unanimous in stressing the urgency of gaining external as well as internal competitiveness of Bangladesh economy and, therefore, finishing the outstanding reforms in its administrative and other crucial areas like taxation, trade, labour, banking and monetary system.

"If we do not use the time today, opportunities will not be there tomorrow, cost of delay may appear as too much to bear... the nation needs urgent actions," said Dr Kamal Hossain in a tone of appeal. Kamal conducted one of the four sessions of the seminar-like dialogue.

Everyone of some 50 participants was found of the similar view. At the initiative of Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, the Ministry of Finance arranged the dialogue on "Policy Reforms" in an attempt to forge a national consensus on crucial issues the economy is confronting.

Four major economic areas — domestic resource mobilisation, financial sector reforms, external competitiveness and private and public sector reforms — were chosen for the dialogue.

Initiating the discussion in the morning, the Finance Minister cautioned that the prevailing macro stability would run into jeopardy unless micro sectors are reformed immediately.

He, however, wondered at a chronic non-response of private investment in a situation when, according to him, the economy is experiencing by far the best macro stability with the lowest inflation, the highest reserves and contained current account deficit.

Deliberating on taxation, majority of the participants

spoke in favour of cut in the rates of direct tax, including corporate tax slab, to encourage investment. They, instead, suggested the government to shift emphasis on collection of revenue by plugging pilferage and evasion.

"Corruption in tax administration is the crux of the problem... instead of further burdening the people with taxload, the government should contain the corruption," said Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Matur Rahman Nizam, MP.

The meeting divided on the question of whether interest should be market-directed or administered. Business community mostly talked in favour of interest rates to be fully market-directed while others, including the Finance Minister himself, argued that the market here was yet to reach a perfection to allow market force to determine the interest rates.

Refuting the arguments of many of the participants that law and order situation has been a major hindrance to foreign investment, the Finance Minister said "we should not overmagnify the issue."

"No foreign investor has ever been assaulted in Bangladesh while they faced riots in many a Southeast Asian countries," he said.

Among the participants were also MPs Col (ret) Akbar Hossain and Mir Shaukat Ali of BNP, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury and Dr Mizanul Huq of Awami League and Shamsuddoha of CPB, Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Bank Governor Khorshed Alam, BOI Executive Chairman Mahboob Jamil, S H Kabir of Pfizer, Bangladesh Employers Association President Anis ud Dowla, Barrister Motinul Husein of the Itefaq, Mahub Anam of the Bangladesh Times, Ahmedul Kabir of Sangbad, World Bank Resident Mission Chief Christopher Willoughby and IMF Resident Mission head Salehddine Khenissi.

Ishaq sacks Sharif

From Page 1 Col 6

The President, however, has not yet set a date for polls. The dissolution came at the head of a nearly three-month-old bitter tussle between the 78-year-old President and Sharif 43, who had earlier promised to curtail sweeping powers granted to the President under the Constitution.

Ishaq Khan said the dissolution was necessary after the 'mass resignation' of deputies

belonging to the main opposition Peoples Democratic Alliance (PDA) headed by former Premier Benazir Bhutto.

The President accused Sharif of having conducted a reign of terror against personal rivals and the media as well as indulging in corruption, nepotism and other malpractices in running his government.

Sharif was replaced by Mazari, a politician from Punjab's Dera Ghazi Khan district.

Sharif's dismissal came almost 24 hours after his blistering attacks against the President on Saturday in which he accused Ishaq Khan of hatching a conspiracy to destabilise his 29-month-old government.

Ishaq Khan described his speech as subversion of the Constitution.

It was the second time in three years that Ishaq Khan has employed his discretionary power as President to dissolve parliament, after first sacking Benazir Bhutto in August 1990 on similar charges.

The power to dissolve parliament was conferred to the presidency under Article 58 of the Constitution amended by the late military ruler General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq in 1985. (Editorial on Page 4)

Bangla 1400 Saal

From Page 1 Col 4

He thanked the city-dwellers who made successful the opening session of the programme at the historic Suhrawardy Uddyan defying ban by the police.

Eminent film-maker Badal Rahman also spoke on the occasion. Besides, lyricists Lutfar Rahman Riton, Aslam Saani, Ahmad Mazhar Amirul Islam and Syed Obaidul Haque recited self-composed poems. Sheulee Ahmed Kona, Mahbub Reaz, Farhana Kalam Lisa, Rasel, Ashkei, Zahid, Babul, Bhashwar Banerjee and others rendered songs. Sharmeen Reza Iva conducted the function.

In the second part of the session, the record of the historic March 7 speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was played and the film "Emiler Goyenda Bahini" by Badal Rahman, Jahir Raihan's "Stop Genocide" and the liberation war-based film "Ora Egarojon" were screened.

Final review

From Page 1 Col 8

Attorney General and a newly appointed lawyer of Munir, who sought adjournment on the ground that defence lawyer senior Advocate Serajul Haq is unwell, allowed the third and the last chance.

After the confirmation by the High Court, a criminal leave petition was preferred on behalf of Munir before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against the verdict (of the High Court) and the same was rejected by the Appellate Division on November 25, 1992. The present review petition based on the basis of the rejection order of the leave petition was filed on November 30 last year under Article 105 of the Constitution.

If the review petition is rejected by the Appellate Division there will be no other door open for Munir as it is the final judicial procedure in the country, court sources said. The one and only resort to be left for Munir is to submit a mercy petition to the President.

Haji goes

From Page 1 Col 5

The intending pilgrims will also have to take vaccine against meningitis before leaving for Saudi Arabia. Those, who are yet to obtain the certificate for meningitis vaccine, have been directed to procure the same before reporting at the Hajj Camp.

As per the rules of the Saudi government none will be allowed to carry food items, betel leaf, betel nut, dried tobacco, catechu arms and ammunition or any book not related to Hajj, the press release said.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting in Mahbaria Government College ground, Pirojpur yesterday. — PID photo

Jamaat statement

From Page 1 Col 7

From its own misdeeds, the Jamaat — which remains sharply divided on the Prof Golam Azam questions — was out to create confusion.

He said that Jamaat engaged itself in the efforts to foil the democratic atmosphere through its deliberate violation of the constitutional stipulations.

He said that the leaders of Jamaat in their speeches at the public meeting had indulged in illogical, motivated and irresponsible statements.

"We consider," Barrister Rafique said, that the Jamaat leaders had been in imbalance in their statements about the elected government, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and Begum Khaleda Zia.

The statements of the Jamaat leaders, he said, also posed challenges to the country's freedom and sovereignty. "Let there be no doubt," he said, "that the government arrested Prof Golam Azam under the existing law of the land. The matter is under trial and the decision would be given by the highest court of the country."

He said that the BNP was determined to uphold the values and the spirit of the Liberation War and independence not merely in its words but by truly reflecting them in the public life.

PM: Conscious people

From Page 1 Col 7

tunities, she said. She said poultry, dairy and other small and medium sized industries should be set up for solving the unemployment problem.

Highlighting the government plans to solve the local problem the Prime Minister said the government would construct Charkhal-Tushkhal-Mothbaria road. It would take step to establish Mothbaria Paurasava and bring the area under rural electrification grid.

Earlier, the Prime Minister also addressed a big public meeting at Nazirpur thana.

Begum Zia said people's participation in the promotion of primary education was a must to attain the target of making the people conscious by ensuring them the light of knowledge.

Dwelling on the development plans of the government for the local area the Prime Minister said four sluice gates would be constructed to save the thana from the grip of salinity.

The meetings were also addressed by Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Social Welfare Minister Tariqul Islam, State Minister for Education Yunus Khan, Syed Shahidul Huq Jamal MP, Nurul Islam Moni MP, Selima Rahman MP,

Nuruzzaman Babul and other local leaders of BNP.

The Prime Minister also opened the Judges' Court building at Pirojpur sadar. She also opened office of the SP.

Ozal's funeral Thursday

ANKARA, Apr 18: The funeral of Turkish President Turgut Ozal who collapsed and died on Saturday will be held in Istanbul on Thursday, Anatolian news agency reported, says Reuter.

The government had earlier decided he would be buried on Wednesday, following a religious service at an Ankara mosque, but changed the plan to allow people to attend both ceremonies.

7 children

From Page 1 Col 8

Anser Ali Sikder; Kamruzzaman, s/o Shahjahan Madber; Reaz Sheikh, s/o Moti Fakir; Asadul, s/o Late Rashid; Jamal, s/o Abdul Hakim and Sadek Khan, s/o Ismail Khan.

These children are now being sheltered at Sarkari Asroy Kendra at Mirpur in Dhaka. Parents and guardians of these children have been requested to contact Department of Social Services to receive their children.

JU students start action programmes from today

By JU Correspondent

Several student bodies of Jahangirnagar University launch action programmes from today (Monday) to realise their different demands.

The demands include development of transport facilities, increase of hall seats, nominating student representatives in the transport sector, increasing student scholarship. JCD, however, has taken a hardline stand for withdrawal of punitive measures against two of its activists.

Organising Secretary of JCD Md Moazzem Hossain and Assistant General Secretary of Al Beruni Hall Md Yousuf were expelled from the University for on year for insulting and threatening a hall provost in last November.

Earlier, a mass signature collection programme was organised by the JCD leaders to support their movement for the withdrawal of expulsion order from two of its activists.

JCD, however, failed to unite other student bodies on this expulsion issue despite series of meetings.

This movement may jeopardise the honours admission test scheduled to begin from April 23, a guardian sources opined.

Feni double murder: 17 convicted

FENI Apr 18: The district and session judge's court today convicted 17 accused of a double murder case and handed down sentences ranging from transportation for life to one year rigorous imprisonment, reports UNB.

Judge Shah Muhammad Jamshedur Rahman gave the judgement of the case relating to killing of Saleha Khatun (55) and her son Zafar (18). The gruesome murder was committed at village Chandpur under sadar thana in April 1990.

Mir Hussain and Kazi Mahim were awarded with life term and fined Tk 5,000 each, in default of 2 more years rigorous imprisonment.

The court gave 10 years RI to Kazi Jalal and Nazrul — each with a fine of Tk 1,000, and in default 3 more years RI.

In this sensational murder case, the court also convicted 13 other accused to one year RI each and fined Tk 5,000 each — in default 3 months imprisonment. Six others accused in the case were acquitted.

Akhtaruzzaman

From Page 1 Col 8

A police source said that the Detective Branch of Police was looking for the MP.

Even police kept vigil in the court areas following the advance-interim bail petition of Babu was moved to the High Court on April 11, said the source.

Humayun Zahir, a businessman, was shot dead in the premises of his Dhanmondi residence by two young men on April 8, family members accused Akhtaruzzaman Babu of the murder.

Zahir was murdered following a feud among the directors of United Commercial Bank Limited (UCBL) and Janata Insurance Company Limited, said the family members.

Meanwhile, five-day police remand of Abdul Matin, who was arrested on Thursday and remanded to the Detective Branch the following day, will end today (Monday). The source said that during the interrogation on Saturday night, police received significant clues of the murder of Matin.

Two persons — Fazlur Rahman Tonmoy and Abdul Matin — were arrested so far in connection with the murder. Tonmoy was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail after he had made a confessional statement before a Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate under Section 164 of Criminal Procedure Code (Cr PC).

SSC exams

From Page 1 Col 3

ness, including 135024 male and 84558 female will sit from Dhaka Board.

In Rajshahi Board, 154318 students including 102044 male and 52274 female will appear in the examination. A total of 167416 candidates — 107461 male and 59955 female will appear from Comilla. In Jessore Board 137694 examinees including 90366 male and 47328 female will appear in the SSC Examination.

Our Jessore Correspondent adds: All preparations have been taken to hold the SSC Examination peacefully from Monday.

The number of candidates this year is 30000 more than that of last year.

Forty vigilance teams have been formed by the board authorities to ensure fairness of examinations.

The Midnight File

Heavy Armenian rocket attack on Azerbaijani city

BAKU, Azerbaijan, Apr 18: The Azerbaijani city of Fizuli, south of the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, came under heavy rocket fire Sunday from Armenian forces, according to Azerbaijan Defense Ministry. Three other Azerbaijani towns east of the Armenian border — Gedeber, Zengellan and Akstafa — also came under artillery attack on Sunday, said Defense Ministry spokesman Azad Isodzadah. He had no figures on casualties in Fizuli and the other towns, although another Azerbaijani official who spoke on condition of anonymity said 30 people were injured in the shelling, reports AP.

Balladur will not recall Gen Morillon from Bosnia

PARIS, Apr 18: Prime Minister Edouard Balladur on Sunday said Gen. Philippe Morillon will not be recalled from Bosnia, rejecting comments by other officials that the general was about to be replaced. As head of UN peacekeeping forces in Bosnia, Morillon won respect by spending three weeks in the town of Srebrenica as a human shield for 60,000 Muslim residents and refugees, reports AP.

US warplane destroys Iraqi radar

WASHINGTON, Apr 18: A US warplane destroyed an Iraqi radar tracking site south of the no-fly zone over northern Iraq on Sunday after the aircraft was threatened, a Defense Department spokesman said, reports AP.

The plane, one of two on a routine monitoring patrol in the zone, was not fired on but "the crew felt threatened," said department spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Brian Cullin.

White House spokeswoman Lorraine Vols said the action "is consistent with our policy that when our forces feel threatened, we're going to respond." Both aircraft safely returned to their operating base at Incirlik, Turkey.

Iraq's official news agency reported three Iraqi soldiers were wounded in the incident. The Iraqi News Agency, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corp in Cyprus, quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying the attack was provocative, hostile behaviour.

The spokesman, who was not named, said the attack occurred 33 miles (53 kilometers) south of the oil city of Mosul, apparently placing it outside the allied-enforced no-fly zone.

The two US Air Force F-4G Wild Weasel fighters were in the no-fly zone throughout the incident but were illuminated by the radar operating south of the 36th parallel, Cullin said.

"They operated under the guidelines that when you're illuminated it is considered to be a threat," he said.

The 36th parallel marks the border of the no-fly zone over northern Iraq set up to protect Kurds from Iraqi attack after the Gulf War.

"One of the two F-4s in the flight responded by firing a single HARM (high-speed, anti-radiation missile) at the Iraqi radar," the Defense Department said in a written statement.

Officials believe the site was destroyed because "the radar ceased illuminating after the impact of the missile," Cullin said. He said no immediate assessment was available and there had been no response from the Iraqi government to the incident.

"Although the Iraqi radar was located south of the 36th parallel, its associated missile system still posed a direct threat to coalition aircraft operating in the exclusion zone, making it necessary for the coalition aircraft to respond," the statement said.

Grameen Bank

From Page 1 Col 4

Some 142 candidates from all over the world vied for the prize.

The prize will be officially handed over to the Grameen Bank representatives Thursday during an official ceremony at the Royal Palace in Brussels.

The ceremony will be attended, among others, by the Belgian King Baudouin, General Secretary of the United Nations Boutros-Boutros Ghali and J Delors, Chairman of the Commission of the European Community.

The King Baudouin International Development Prize, given by the foundation in every two years, went in 1990 to the Kagiso Trust (peace foundation) of South Africa for its contribution to the development, education and enhancement of living conditions for the least favoured population in the country.

Among others who won this prize since its introduction in 1980 included the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (India, 1988), the International Foundation for Science (Sweden, 1986), Dr Walter Plowright (Great Britain, 1984), Dr A T Ariyaratne (Sri Lanka, 1982) and Professor Paulo Friere (Brazil, 1980).

The Grameen Bank, winner of the prize for 1992, is a type of cooperative savings bank catering exclusively for the poor. Started in 1976 as a small pilot project by Professor Yunus, it is now probably the world's most successful bank providing credits to very poor borrowers, mostly women, for income generating activities in rural areas.

Grameen Bank is currently providing loans to over a million borrowers in more than 24,000 villages of the country for different kinds of micro enterprises that included breeding, fishing, agriculture and commerce.

A total of over US dollar 250 million have meanwhile been extended to the beneficiaries in small loans averaging about 60 to 70 dollar.

The bank has been able to maintain throughout its 17 years of existence a repayment rate of over 98 per cent.

Numerous organisations from many parts of the world, especially from Asia and Africa, are now trying to follow the Grameen Bank approach to extend credit facilities to the poor people as an instrument for poverty alleviation.



Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina speaking at a public meeting at Rajbari in Gazipur yesterday. — Star photo

Anti-terrorism laws have failed, claims Menon

CHITTAGONG, Apr 18: Bangladesh Workers Party General Secretary Rashed Khan Menon today called for a united movement to root out violence and terrorism from the country, reports BSS.

He said, without rooting out terrorism from society a healthy political climate could not be ensured nor democracy established.

Menon, who is also leader of the Five-Party Alliance, was exchanging views with journalists here at the BJMC Rest House. It was his first visit here after his return from London where he was treated for bullet injuries following an assassination attempt.

Menon said, the whole nation is hostage in the hands of terrorist and anarchists and he alleged that the laws were not being applied effectively. Even the anti-terrorism laws have failed to curb terrorism, he further alleged.

Rule of law, tolerance and respect for others' views must be there in a society to restore confidence of the people in democratic institutions, he said.

Menon said, a political consensus is needed for rooting out corruption from society.

Later in the afternoon, addressing a reception meeting at the Lalight Maidan, Menon reiterated his call for unitedly resisting terrorism, violence and communalism.

Hasina: Movement

From Page 1 Col 3

Hasina was critical of what she called the Prime Minister's hobnobbing with anti-liberation Jamaat-e-Islami and said despite Jamaat's criticism, Begum Zia did never speak against them as she has assumed power with the support of 18 MPs of Jamaat.

But the BNP government, Hasina alleged, is patronising the traders in religion who not only opposed the country's independence but also helped the Pakistani army in staging genocide, loot and raping during the '71 war.

The meeting was also addressed by Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Amir Hossain Anu, Abdul Jalil, Advocate Rahmat Ali MP, Gazipur Paurasava Chairman A K M Mozammel Haq and Ahsanullah Master. It was presided over by Abdul Hadi Shamim, President of Gazipur Paurasava Awami League.

On the occasion, more than 400 leaders and workers of Jatiya Party and its front organisations, Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal and Chhatra Union formally joined the Awami League by expressing their confidence in the leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

The Awami League President criticised the ruling party's move for "politicisation" and said that officials in civil administration and also in the defence services are now scared about their services.

Italians vote in referendum

ROME, Apr 18: Italians voted Sunday on a referendum for electoral reform, a first step in what could be a radical change in their scandal-ridden political system, reports AP.

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