

Budget : Reactions of more organisations

By Staff Correspondent

Various political parties, economic forums and trade groups Saturday continued to express their reactions on the proposed national budget for 1993-94.

Some of them hailed the budget for its proposed measures to reduce dependence on foreign aid while others criticised it for not suggesting specific measures for poverty alleviation and promotion of investment.

The Ganotantri Party, at a meeting of its central committee Friday, criticised the budget saying that it was dictated by the World Bank, the IMF and the donor countries to serve their own interests.

The meeting said the budget lacked specific measures for developing the standard of living of the people and the economy of the country.

The proposed measures for realising overdue bank loans from the defaulters were also absent in the budget, it observed.

The Bangladesh Economic Development Forum, in a statement on the new budget, appreciated the measures on aid while disagreeing with a number of other provisions.

The forum said adequate measures were absent in the budget for promoting the export-oriented industries. The government should have adopted a more liberal policy for encouraging investment in the export-oriented sector, it felt.

The forum also slated the provision of increasing the price of revenue stamp, saying this would affect the lower and middle classes.

The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), in a

statement yesterday, lauded the new budget for not introducing additional or new taxes.

The statement, issued by its President Mosharraf Hossain, said without introducing new taxes, the government had been able to mobilise more than 30 per cent of the resources from the domestic source to finance the development budget.

The BGMEA chief, however, said the budget speech on duty drawback was unclear about the procedure for refund of duty. The refund procedure should be automatic.

He also said the proposed budget did not quite explain the nature of incentives to exporters, rationalisation of interest rate on export credit and cash incentive for use of local fabric in garments.

The Bangladesh Textile Mills' Association Saturday hailed the budget because it reduced the import duty on raw cotton to 3.75 per cent.

It also appreciated the budget for giving importance to poverty alleviation and building up an effective private sector through tapping internal resources and human development.

The BADC Employees' Union expressed concern at the absolute withdrawal of subsidy from the agricultural sector and said that it would increase the cost of production in the sector.

The Federation of Bangladesh Shop Owners' Association said the new budget lacked specific measures to boost investments in the country.

It hailed the withdrawal of Value Added Tax (VAT) from milk products and demanded withdrawal of the same from general restaurants, decorators and other service-oriented sectors.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia presiding over the BNPPP meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday. — PID photo

Punjab Assembly dissolved again

ISLAMABAD, June 12: The Punjab Assembly has been "dissolved" for the second time despite a superior court decision to restore it. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif charged here today, reports AFP.

Punjab Assembly Speaker Saeed Ahmad Manais has refused to convene a session of the assembly despite a ruling Wednesday by the provincial High Court to restore it after a dissolution order was passed May 29, sources in provincial capital Lahore said.

The Assembly has been technically dissolved for the second time, Sharif told foreign journalists at his official residence.

Fresh areas inundated in greater Sylhet

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, June 12: Flood situation in greater Sylhet worsened further as most of the rivers continued to rise and fresh areas went under water.

Road communications between Dhaka and Sylhet remained snapped since Friday evening.

Flood waters submerged in low-lying areas of Chhararpar, Kamalganj, Masimpur, Chali-bander, Shillipatti, Subantighat, Joy Nagar, Kushighat and Shaganghat in the town as water level in the river Surma registered a sharp rise.

Surma is flowing 17 cm above the danger mark in Sylhet, 92 cm at Kanaighat while Kushiara flowing 54 cm above danger mark at Sheola in Baniabazar.

Road and railway communications between Dhaka and Sylhet remained suspended since Friday evening as Kourangi bridge in Babul thana in Habiganj and parts of rail track between Rashidganj and Syeshaganj station were washed away.

Road communications between the district town and Baniabazar, Goainghat, Jaktiganj and Kanaighat have also been snapped.

Our Moulvibazar Correspondent adds: With the onrush of fresh water from the Tripura hills of India, the flood situation in Moulvibazar district has deteriorated during the last 24

hours. The Monu river is flowing 1.05 metre above the danger level near Chadnight bridge at Moulvibazar town while the Dhalal river is flowing 0.35 metre above the danger level near Kamalganj railway bridge.

Candidates of the ensuing HSC examinations have demanded for postponement of the examinations which is scheduled to start from Thursday. Over 75% examinees have been affected by the flood.

Our Habiganj Correspondent writes: One unidentified man drowned Saturday as the flood situation took a serious turn inundating more than 42 unions in six thanas of the district.

They said that over two lakh people have been affected by flash floods in Habiganj, Bahubal, Chunarughat, Lakhat and in Nabiganj thanas.

The rivers Khwai, Karangi, Sutang and Sonai are flowing above the danger level, according to district control room.

Road and railway communications between Habiganj and Dhaka and Sylhet have been snapped while 250 feet rail track near Shahajibazar has been washed away by the flood water.

District officials said that a total of 429165 families have been affected and 4787 houses have been completely damaged.

BNPPP

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Delwar Hossain told newsmen that the meeting discussed the strategy of the ruling party MPs participation in the budget discussion in parliament.

He said another meeting of the BNPPP would be held next week.

Hossain said the ruling party expects constructive discussion and suggestions on the budget for the interests of the nation.

Deputy Leader of the House Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Whip Ashraf Hossain, State Minister for Cultural Affairs Prof Jahannara Begum and Ansar Ali Siddiqui were, among others, who spoke on the occasion.

PM : Co op

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Bond of Tk. 2,000.

Begum Zia urged all to take a fresh vow to transform cooperative into a weapon for poverty alleviation. "Let honesty, sincerity, skill and productivity be the principles for success," she said.

She said cooperative is a democratic institution and emphasised on building it up accordingly.

The Prime Minister mentioned the three-member sub-committee formed to reorganise cooperative into a flawless organisation. She said the cooperative laws will be reformed to meet the present-day need based on the report of the sub-committee.

Efforts will be taken to give momentum to the cooperative movement in private sector, she said adding that loan and recovery programmes will be systematised.

Begum Zia assured that poverty alleviation, social welfare and women development activities will be integrated with the cooperative programme.

The Prime Minister said the cooperative movement has to be activated for national interest and called upon the members of the cooperatives to play the dominant role in this regard.

Termining cooperative as an economic programme, Begum Zia said the main reasons for failing to achieve desired goals in the past were mismanagement and corruption.

The Prime Minister lamented that despite being identified as the second sector of economy in the constitution, cooperation did not flourish as expected.

Referring to the success of cooperative in Thailand during the last decade due to proper policy, she said, "We have to identify our mistakes."

Hasina

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changed views on various international issues including Rohingya refugees and Bosnia problem.

Earlier, Sheikh Hasina held a meeting with the Speaker of the Austrian parliament and discussed various international matters. She also attended a reception hosted by the Austrian Parliament Speaker in honour of the winners of Bruno Crischi peace awards.

The Speaker introduced Sheikh Hasina with the invitees as the daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

20 more killed in Kashmir violence

NEW DELHI, June 12: Fourteen Muslim rebels were among 20 people killed overnight across the northern Indian state of Kashmir in the continuing secessionist campaign, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

Today, a bystander died and six others were injured when separatists hurled a grenade at a patrol vehicle in downtown Srinagar. The bomb missed the target and burst on the road, PTI said.

Kashmir police chief Balwinder Singh Bedi told the news agency in the state summer capital of Srinagar that 14 Kashmir militants had been arrested in the previous 24 hours.

The Midnight File

Rafsanjani wins 63pc vote

TEHRAN, June 12: President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani took a comfortable lead in Iran's presidential election, winning more than 63 per cent of the vote, according to partial results announced today.

Tehran Radio said Rafsanjani won 4.5 million of the first 7.2 million votes counted — 63.4 per cent of the total. About 29 million Iranians from the age of 15 were eligible to vote in Friday's election, reports Reuter.

Mortar attack on a Muslim funeral in Sarajevo: 8 die

SARAJEVO, June 12: Eight people were killed in Sarajevo today in a mortar attack on a Muslim funeral. Reuter journalists saw the bodies being removed from the cemetery on a hillside in the Bosnian capitals old town district, and a city morgue, reports Reuter.

Tk 728 cr greater Dhaka power project

The government has undertaken a Tk 728 crore project for improvement and extension of power distribution system in greater Dhaka, reports UNI.

The scheme was disclosed at a high-level presentation meeting on the activities of Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (DESA) in Dhaka yesterday. Energy Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain presided.

According to officials, the project includes capacity extension of a 132/33 KV and 33/11 KV sub-stations in the metropolitan and its adjacent areas, setting up, repair an extension of 132 and 33 KV overhead lines, setting up, repair and extension of 132 and 33 KV underground cable, and repair and setting up of distribution transformers.

It is expected to be completed by 1995. Energy Secretary M Faizur Razaque, DESA Chairman S T S Mahmud and Power Development Board Chairman Kazi Golam Rahman were also present.

The meeting was informed that in the metropolitan area, 866 distribution transformers out of 4,635, 14 high-voltage 33 KV lines out of 69 and 37 high-voltage 11 KV lines out of 473 were now over-loaded.

Overloaded are the areas under Baridhara, Gulshan and Uttara sub-stations, Satmasjid sub-station, Lalbagh sub-station and Mirpur and Kafrul sub-stations. Loadshedding has become a common feature in these areas.

BIDS staff to 'non-cooperate' with new DG

By Staff Correspondent

Researchers and non-research staff of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) Saturday announced, what they called, a "moral war" against the appointment of Dr S A Latifur Reza as the Director General of the institute.

In an emergency meeting on Saturday morning the staff decided to continue the work stoppage that began on June 1 and non-cooperate with the new DG, who assumed office yesterday.

The meeting, presided over by Dr Delipriya Bhattacharya, also condemned the former acting DG Dr Mashur Rahman Khan for issuing an "untrue and distorted" statement to the press and said this had tarnished the image of the institute.

The decisions of the meeting were later read out before the outgoing and new DGs.

Reuters change

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Bureau Chief in Dhaka by Anis Ahmed, who is designated Chief Correspondent Bangladesh, the press release, signed by Michael J Neale, Reuters' South Asian manager, said.

Informed sources said that Neale, who has been in the city for the last three days, announced the surprise decision Saturday.

"We should be grateful if you could extend full cooperation to Ahmed and his staff in their coverage of general and economic news from Bangladesh," the New Delhi-based manager said in the press release.

When contacted over telephone Atiqul Alam, who served Reuters for 19 years, told The Daily Star "I have left. I played my innings. It is about time, I did something else."

Alam had joined Reuters, one of the three biggest wire services in the world, in 1974 and has been Bureau Chief for 11 years.

"I intend to take rest for some time before I make myself active again," he said when asked whether he was going to join any other organisation.

Bangladesh Television sources said that Atiqul Alam did not turn up at the VTR recording of the "Mukhomukhi" in which he was to have questioned Planning Minister A M Zahiruddin Khan.

The New Bureau Chief Anis Ahmed, who joined Reuters in 1983, said over telephone that he had no inkling of the changeover until the announcement. He declined to elaborate.

Clinton

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The Clinton Administration has proposed 4.2 million dollar assistance to Pakistan for narcotics control for fiscal 1994, despite the Pressler Amendment which bars regular economic and military aid as before to Islamabad.

In fiscal 1992, Pakistan received 229,000 dollar under Title 11 PL 480, three million dollar for anti-narcotics operations, 355,000 dollars for Peace Corps (later withdrawn) — total 3,584 million.

This is part of the large amounts already in the pipeline before regular aid was cut off because Pakistan had violated the Pressler Amendment.

Clinton also proposed increased aid for the Maldives and Sri Lanka while Bhutan and Myanmar have not been recommended for any American aid in fiscal 1994.

Ershad faces fresh corruption case

Deposed President Hussain Muhammad Ershad was produced before the divisional Special Judge's court to ascertain the charge against him in yet another corruption case, reports BSS.

Divisional Special Judge Mohammad Ali Khan after hearing both the prosecution and the defence fixed June 17 for framing the charge against the former general who is the lone accused in this case.

Special Public Prosecutor Abdul Tawheed in proposing the charge said that the former President while in power abused his position as public servant to get an illegal refund of Taka 2,76,324 — one third of income tax paid by him by a mere declaration without any supportive document. A total of Taka 7,43,416 as income tax was paid by the former general for six financial years 1983-84 to 1988-89.

The proposed charge said that Ershad on 5.9.1989, filed six review petitions to the tax officials of Dhaka West Zone to get a refund of tax money as permitted under law, but did not submit any document to support his claim. Ershad withdrew the said amount through six vouchers, the proposed charge said.

The prosecution in the charge said that Ershad used his position to derive pecuniary benefit causing damage to the state and thereby committing offence under Section 5 (1) D of Act II of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1947.

This is the eighth case that came up for hearing against the former President. On June 7, Authorities take possession of Janata Tower

The authorities yesterday took possession of the Janata Tower, the multi-storied building situated in the capital's Kawran Bazar Commercial Area, which was earlier ordered by court for confiscation by the state, reports BSS.

Sessions Judge Md Ansa-ruddin Sikder while announcing the verdict of the special case No 11 of 1992 (better known as Janata Tower Case) on June 6, directed that all plots allotted on order of former president Ershad to be confiscated.

Besides, the tower which is situated on 49, Kawran Bazar Commercial Area plots 49A, 49B, 49C, were also taken into possession by the authorities, it was learnt.

Former president H M Ershad, his wife and 17 others were sentenced to seven years' simple imprisonment each in this corruption case.

Ershad who was earlier sentenced to 13 years in two cases was jailed to seven years in the famous Janata Tower Case.

Objecting to the proposition of the charge Ershad's lawyer Yusuf Hossain Humayun said there is no evidence to support the prosecution claim of misuse of power by his client. As for the delay in filing the review petition, Ershad's defence counsel said it is up to the tax official to entertain a prayer for refund beyond the normal limit of 90 days.

Humayun wanted to know how three others who were named in FIR to have colluded with his client have been excluded from the charge-sheet. He also rejected the prosecution's claim that Ershad did not submit documents in support of his claim for the refund.

17 activists held Police prevents JP rally in city

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party workers went on a rampage Saturday, damaging scores of vehicles and clashing with police at the downtown Motijheel area, witnesses and police said.

Several groups of party workers who were marching towards the Shapla Square to attend a scheduled rally, turned violent when police obstructed them from attending the meeting, witnesses said.

Police arrested at least 17 JP workers and leaders including three women. At least 10 people were injured in the clashes.

FBCCI hails

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make the Bangladesh currency convertible terming it as "a brave and a promising step." Rahman urged the minister to take necessary steps regarding its implementation.

The FBCCI chief said that subsidy on the agriculture sector should not be withdrawn totally because the sector provided 40 per cent of the revenue. "Subsidy is being provided even in the most rich countries," he added. He also called for some financial incentives for the farmers.

Rahman said, "The proposal to further reduce bank rate would encourage investment and export."

He pointed out that the government should have in-



FBCCI's Mahbubur Rahman

creased facilities like bonded warehouse or tax exemption on exports if it really wanted to realise the export strategy by the year 2000.

"Imposition of 15 per cent import tax on wheat would lead to a price hike," he said. "So this demands a reconsideration."

Expressing solidarity with the Finance Minister's statement, the FBCCI commented "The bureaucracy can not give up its old habit of exercising power and control in so short a time. But the time has come to do so otherwise the bureaucracy would become unimportant and segregated from the public."

Mahbubur Rahman observed that the tax rebate, reducing different complexities in the current laws and streamlining the tax administration would encourage the tax payers to pay.

He also welcomed the enhancement of tax free income limit from Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000, fixation of the upper slab of income tax from 15 per cent to 25 per cent and decrease of corporate tax from 55 per cent to 50 per cent. But he suggested that corporate tax should have been decreased to 40 per cent to create a positive impact in the share market.

The FBCCI president, particularly welcoming the withdrawal of VAT charges from poultry feed and reduction of taxes on locally packed powder milk, said, "This would save the country Tk 300 to 400 crore annually which is presently being spent on imports of powder milk."

Rahman said the budget would lay a permanent foundation for a long-term sustained economic growth in the country.

Nurul Huda sacked

From Page 1 Col 6

President Abdur Rahman Biswas after a switch to the parliamentary system in September, 1991.

According to sources, the Prime Minister, while asking Huda to resign, gave no reason for her action.

But, according to press reports published earlier, Nurul Huda had committed various irregularities including financial impropriety, especially relating to promotions and transfers of government officials.

Nurul Huda served the ministry for the last 21 months. He had replaced Osman Gani Khan, the first Establishment Minister of the present government.

Huda, talking to this correspondent last night, however, denied media allegations of corruption against him.

"The Prime Minister requested me to resign and I honoured her desire," Huda told The Daily Star, adding that he had full confidence in the Prime Minister's judgement.

Meanwhile, minutes before he was sacked, Huda had presided over the Parliamentary Standing Committee meeting on the Establishment Ministry.

Incidentally, some members of that committee belonging to the opposition raised the topic of the media allegations of irregularities against the Minister in the meeting.

The Minister, although denying the charges, failed to do so convincingly, meeting sources said.

In the face of Huda's ambiguous replies to the opposition MPs, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Minister for Public Works and a member of the Parliamentary committee, became very critical of Huda, sources added.

A member representing the ruling party in the committee told The Daily Star, on condition of anonymity, that the Works Minister bluntly asked

10 Palestinians to die in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, June 12: A Kuwaiti court today condemned to death 10 Palestinians for collaborating with the Iraqis during the occupation, the official news agency KUNA reported, says AFP.

A total of 20 collaborators have now been condemned to death since February 1992.