

Delhi cuts taxes, tariffs in budget

NEW DELHI, Mar 1: Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh slashed taxes and tariffs and took a big step towards a full float of the rupee Monday in a bold budget he said was designed to advance reform and stimulate industry, reports AFP.

But the stock market gave an initial thumbs-down to the 1994-95 budget unveiled in Parliament which taxed brokers, posed greater competition to domestic industry from imports and aroused concern over a run-away fiscal deficit.

The Bombay Stock Exchange lost 100 points before recovering slightly in a special post-budget trading session in what some analysts said was a knee-jerk reaction that would die down when the positive impact of the package sinks in.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao said the budget "vastly strengthened" the market reforms he launched in 1991 overturning four decades of socialist-style protectionism.

Singh, saying his prime task was to stimulate recession-hit industry, slashed the corporate tax rate from a prohibitive 51.75 per cent to 40 per cent. Bank lending rates were cut one percentage point to 14

per cent.

He announced a thorough overhaul of the taxation system, describing it as a complex maze.

In line with his commitment to global lending agencies to ease market access to imports, Singh lowered customs duty from a peak rate of 85 to 65 per cent, saying it would give industry access to cheaper imported raw materials.

Corresponding duty concessions were offered to preserve the competitiveness of domestic industry. Service sector institutions such as brokerages, non-life insurance companies and telephones were brought under the tax net.

In a major step towards making the rupee full convertible, the finance minister eased access to foreign exchange on current business transactions and for purposes of travel, education and medical treatment overseas.

Singh projected total receipts at 48.5 billion dollars and total internal expenditure at 50.5 billion dollars in the year to March 31, 1994.

Subsidies were largely untouched and welfare programmes, infrastructure and rural development were given

sizeable raises. Individual income tax payers were given a minor exemption.

Singh boosted defence spending by 1.27 billion dollars to 7.6 billion, saying: "We cannot take chances with national security."

Analysts noted that such generosity, in addition to the burden of debt servicing and repayments on external and internal borrowings, had left an alarming fiscal deficit of 18 billion dollars.

Banker Suresh Babu called it "disastrous." "At eight per cent of the gross domestic product the fiscal deficit is unacceptably high," he said, warning that it held the potential to spark off an inflationary spiral.

The fiscal deficit in fiscal 1993-94 was put at 19.5 billion dollar — about six billion more than Singh had anticipated a year ago — after ballooning as a result of increased spending and falling revenues.

Opposition leader Lal Krishna Advani said the budget presented a "depressing and thoroughly disappointing" picture and warned that the nation was plunging deeper into the trap of deficit financing.

Singh admitted there were

"some warning signals we must heed," and announced plans to tighten the government's access to central bank credit through arbitrary issue of treasury bills.

But he underscored the need to give a major push to industry to boost economic growth above an anticipated four per cent in the current fiscal year.

Slow industrial recovery had kept overall growth low and prompted a fall in revenue collections, he said, voicing hope that lower taxes would lead to greater compliance and lesser evasion.

In a sign of confidence, he said the government intended to repay 1.4 billion dollars to the International Monetary Fund earlier than scheduled.

Industry reaction to Singh's fourth consecutive budget was positive.

The budget is industry-friendly, investment friendly and growth-oriented, said Hari Shankar Singhania, President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Bansi Dhar of the Tata Group was equally optimistic. "It has all the ingredients to take India to the front-ranking nations of the world."

Australia forecasts \$10.5 b budget deficit

CANBERRA, March 1: Australia must stick to its plan for reducing its budget deficit to maintain confidence in the economy, Treasurer Ralph Willis said in a discussion paper released today, reports AFP.

The government has forecast a budget deficit of 14.75 billion Australian (10.5 billion US dollar) for the 12 months to June 30 and is committed to cutting that figure to about 6.0 billion dollars in 1996-97.

"Credible progress in the government's medium term deficit reduction programme is crucial to the maintenance of confidence," Willis said.

"Without it, increased inflationary expectations and concerns about consequential loss of competitiveness and increased interest rates would abort the investment take-off."

The paper will form the basis for discussions on the May 10 budget within the ruling labour party and with minor parties who hold the balance of power in the Upper House.

Willis cautioned against cutting the budget deficit too far in the next financial year.

"Too great a cut would re-

duce the overall level of demand in the economy, and so risk inhibiting economic recovery," Willis said.

It is therefore, a matter of fine judgement as to what the deficit reduction should be for 1994/95, requiring close assessment of the underlying strength of the economy."

Willis said the fiscal framework was "very tight" but was in the context of a greatly improved economic outlook.

He repeated the government's most recent forecast that growth in Gross Domestic Product would run at 4.0 per cent in 1994-95 compared to a predicted 3.5 per cent in this financial year.

"Sustained high levels of economic growth require the maintenance of low inflation, low interest rates and the avoidance of balance of payments constraint," the paper said.

"A fiscal policy which reduces the level of public sector demands on the economy as private sector growth accelerates, and reduces the public sector's call on the national savings needed to fund economic growth, is essential to achieve these outcomes."

Dhaka Stock Prices

At the close of trading on March 1, 1994

Gainers dominate floor

Star Report

Trading at a glance

DSE All Share Price Index 549.84509
Market Capitalisation 25014038095.09
Turnover in Volume Tk. 55095
Turnover in Value 6693835.00

Company's Change Number
name (per share) of share traded

Gainers (88)

Islami Bank 43.75 4

National Bank 2.00 350

IDLC 11.95 420

3rd ICB M Fund 4.42 60

4th ICB M Fund 3.00 60

6th ICB M Fund 2.27 1370

Afabi Automobiles 8.10 80

BD Lamps 100.00 20

Atlas BD 2.91 2510

Quasem Drycells 0.07 2150

Howlader PVC 0.50 160

B Tha Aluminum 1.16 130

Bengal Food 1.05 605

BTC 1.96 13650

Frogleg Legs 1.00 350

Gemini Sea Food 40.00 30

NTC 25.00 5

Dhaka Vegetable 1.65 525

Zeal Bangla Sugar 0.03 3500

Rupun Oil 0.29 560

Ctg Vegetable 0.82 110

Sonali Ansh 1.00 10

Saham Textile 1.00 10

Eagle Star Textile 0.15 1750

Dulamia Cotton 6.31 350

Tamijuddin Textile 5.08 120

Pharmaco 3.00 35

Rahman Chemicals 7.16 250

Beximco Infusions 5.00 60

Beximco Synthetic 2.21 6220

Paper Processing 0.50 30

Alex Tannery 0.36 250

GQ Ball Pen 1.00 2670

Modgen Industries 5.00 5

Savar Refractories 7.63 160

Beximco Ltd 0.99 7600

Alex Footwear 5.81 380

BGIC 1.00 30

Losers (7)

Uttara Bank 10.00 86

Eastern Cables 0.28 550

Karim Pipe 5.00 16

BD Autocars 0.32 75

Ambre Pharma 0.51 50

Ctg Cement 2.81 95

Taluk Spinning 0.86 750

Issues (10) unchanged

5th ICB M Fund (50), Monno

Jute (55), Apex Foods (35), BD

Oxygen (62), National Oxygen (70),

Padma Textile (30), Bangla Process

(75), Beximco Pharma (35), Bata

Shoe (300), Aziz Pipes (20).

DSE Shares and Debentures

Company	FV/ML	Closing (Taka)	Rate (Taka)
Padma Textile	100/20	266.00	
Quasem Silk	10/100	2.48	
Quasem Textile	10/50	2.50	
Raham Textile	100/5	95.00	
S.T.M. (ORD)	100/5	20.00	
Stylecraft	100/5	550.00	
Swan Textile	100/5	9.00	
Taluk Spinning	100/10	98.00	
Tamijuddin	100/10	150.00	

PHARMACEUTICALS & CHEMICALS (20)

Ambe Pharma	10/50	17.20
Bangla Process	100/5	60.00
BCL	100/10	313.60
Beximco Infusion	100/00	655.00
Beximco Synthetic	100/5	1280.00
B. Synthetics	100/20	219.27
Glaxo	10/50	125.00
A.C.I.	10/50	10.00
Kohinoor Chemical	100/5	70.00
N. Polymer	100/10	115.00
Petro Synthetic	10/50	7.00
Pfizer	100/5	650.00
Pharma Aids	100/5	175.40
Progressive Plastic	100/5	22.00
Rackitt & Colman	10/50	90.00
Rahman Chemicals	100/10	57.16
Therapeutics	100/5	72.00
The Bensins	100/10	104.00
Wata Chemical	100/20	194.00

PAPER & PRINTING (6)

Edge Box	10/50	16.00
Monopack Paper	100/5	25.00
Paper Converting	100/5	55.00
Paper Processing	100/10	15.00
Padma Printers	10/50	50.00
Sonali Paper	10/50	52.00

SERVICE (2)