

Saifur calls for speedy reforms implementation

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said the reform measures for the country must be in conformity with its political, socio-cultural and environmental realities.

The minister was presiding over a seminar on 'Bangladesh: Reforms, Growth and Poverty Alleviation' organised by the Ministry of Finance in collaboration with the Bangladesh Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurated the day-long seminar held at Sonargaon Hotel.

Noted economist Prof Rehman Sobhan, Director of the IMF's Southeast Asia and Pacific Department Kunito Saito, former ministers RA Gani and Fasihuddin Mahtab, MCCI president Latifur Rahman, economist Dr Kazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmed, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, editor of The Holiday Enayeturrahman, Akhtaruzzaman, MP, Abdul Rob Chowdhury, MP, Farida Hassan, MP, The Daily Star editor Mahfuz Anam and Gano Forum leader Ziaul Huq took part in the discussions.

Emphasising the need for speedy implementation of the reform programmes, Saifur said reforms are needed to achieve a faster growth and generate efficiency in the economy.

John Hacklin of the IMF presented a paper in the working session suggesting future tasks for the government to attain a remarkable growth through reform measures to alleviate poverty.

Taking part in the discussion, Prof Rehman Sobhan said the reform measures being carried out for the past 10 to 12 years have failed to make the country's economy robust.

Pointing to the trade liberalisation policy of the government, he said withdrawal of restrictions on import has pushed the country's manufacturing sector to a premature competition.

"Everyone is happy to cite the Chinese experience of an outward orientation," but its industries are better protected than those of Bangladesh. The robust agricultural sector of China is also in a totally protected environment," Prof Sobhan said.

He also pointed to the ruthless protection of the Korean and Taiwanese heavy industries.

Referring to self-sufficiency in food, as claimed by the policy-makers, he said growth of agriculture in the country was below two per cent for the past three years.

The GDP growth is also below the population growth. This is a symptom of stagnation.

Private investors

From Page 1 Col 4

fund must be provided mostly by domestic, foreign private investors in addition to WB-ADB funding," Malhotra pointed out.

According to the present policy of the WB, the bank is "aggressively pursuing commercialisation and corporatisation" in the countries demanding funds for power projects, he added.

"The increased interest in private foreign investment needs to be expanded to include local private investors," he suggested. He told the audience mostly high officials of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and the Philippines and experts and representatives of donors, — the WB expected to fund between US dollars 1.2 and two billion per year for power in Asia.

Another affiliate of the WB, MIGA, can insure up to 90 per cent of the investment amount of foreign investor and WB can arrange other facilities for private investment, Malhotra pointed out.

ADB representative S Chander said the ADB has a special window for providing direct assistance to the private sector. "For power projects, the total amount, loan plus equity, should not exceed US dollars 50 million or 25 per cent of the project cost," he said elaborating ADB loan policy.

For Bangladesh, he suggested that the business environment must be improved and the government should corporatize the existing sectors.

"I think Bangladesh should involve local private capital in this new process, decide on private investment levels and use transparent procedures in privatising power," he said.

IFC high official Dilip Pathak warned the audience, "unless everybody is convinced, privatisation does not

tion of the macro-economy," the economist felt.

Speaking on privatisation, he said some 700 industrial units had so far been privatised. But out of some 600, of which records are available, 57 per cent units were closed down.

Stressing the need for prior dialogue for further acceleration of the reform measures, Prof Sobhan said, "Let's arrange a discussion to understand what the problems are, what are their possible solutions and to what extent reforms are necessary."

Kunito Saito of the IMF advocated for opening up the economy, saying that the successes of East Asian economies had come from their openness. MCCI president Latifur Rahman said the viability of industries depends on a strong domestic market, which the country is lacking.

Emphasising the need for a reform package harmonised with the country's realities, he said not only is a faster pace of reform important, the sequence of the reform measures is also important.

Referring to the huge non-performing loans of the nationalised commercial banks, the MCCI chief said investigation would show that the public sector has been defaulting more than the private sector industries.

He also said that lack of adequate monitoring and supervision by the banks are the main reasons for poor loan recovery performance from the private sector.

Latifur Rahman, however, stressed the need for a strong political will to implement the reform programmes and said a long-term view should be the guiding factor in this regard, rather than a short-term view.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said absence of any agreed definition of the policy prescriptions is one of the main reasons for the slowness of reforms.

He also observed that further liberalisation of the economy would affect the handloom industries of the country.

Akhtaruzzaman, MP, suggested that the gap between the policy-makers and the executives should be reduced to ensure proper implementation of various development projects.

Kazi Kholiquzzaman said almost all the developed countries are providing subsidies to the agriculture sector, but Bangladesh had been pushed to scrap subsidies to this most vital sector of the economy.

Dr Fasihuddin Mahtab emphasised prioritisation of sectors for development and called for giving importance to the manufacturing sector.

Lack of political cooperation impedes use of water resources

By Staff Correspondent

The SAARC region has a tremendous potential for setting up hydro power plants as water resource is abundant here, but absence of political cooperation in the region is hindering the utilisation of water resource, Indian Secretary of Power Dr S Rajgopal said yesterday.

Speaking at the international forum on private investment in the power sector of Bangladesh now being held in the city, Rajgopal pointed out that the India's water resources can reduce 100,000 mw power if utilised. But only 15 per cent of it is produced.

"Let us exploit this resource through mutual cooperation. Let us begin now. This can change the whole development scenario in this region," he said.

The seminar was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

The inauguration was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.

BNP leaders

From Page 1 Col 8

in a bid to ensure free and fair voting. There is scope to further develop the present electoral system, he added.

Chowdhury, however, questioned whether a caretaker government, instead of an elected one, could represent a true democratic spirit.

In reply to a question, the Deputy Leader of the House said the government had taken initiatives to bring the Opposition back to the House and those would continue.

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder, Bar-at-Law, who has taken initiatives to break the present stalemate, said there had not been any progress in his efforts to bring the Opposition to the current session.

However, Talukder declined to disclose the contents of his negotiations with the opposition leaders or the names of the leaders he had talked to.

Asked if he believed the Opposition would return for the coming budget session, the Secretary General said "I'm continuing my efforts... Man is always optimistic."

On the concept of a caretaker government, he said "I'm not personally interested in a caretaker government. If national elections were held under a caretaker government, who would conduct the elections to the local bodies?" he posed.

In reply to the main opposition Awami League's demand for immediate general elections, Talukder said the BNP government had a mandate to run the country for 5 years. "It is for the government to decide when the elections, will be held."

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia termed the Opposition attitude on the issue of a caretaker government undemocratic. "They cannot impose their decision on the government," he said.

The Opposition should come to the House and give its arguments in favour of its demand. "Parliament is the central place for everything and discussions and debates are necessary to find a solution."

"Even if the demand for the caretaker government were accepted, the question would arise as to whom it would be accountable. Accountability is the essence of democracy and a nominated government has no accountability. There is no example of a caretaker government in any democratic country," he said.

Hartal observed in Gazipur

From Our Correspondent

GAZIPUR, May 10: A half-day hartal called by the All-party Action Committee for protecting the Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory passed off peacefully today.

All shops and business houses remained shut and vehicles did not ply during the hartal hours from 6 am to 2pm.

PM: reforms

From Page 1 Col 4

ment had started the process of privatisation of some of the public sector units to solve this problem.

She also underscored the need for specific programmes for poverty alleviation besides the structural reforms. "It is impossible to remove poverty without the participation of the people of all strata in uplift efforts."

The administration should also be made more efficient and development-oriented to make the reforms a success, she said.

She remarked that unnecessary state interference opens the door to misuse of resources, inefficiency, stagnation and corruption. The objective of the market economy is to allow the creative initiatives of individuals to flourish, she said.

She recalled that East Asia was the shining example of a successful market economy and today it is the growth centre of the world. This is why emphasis is being laid everywhere on structural reforms in the light of the market economy.

"We are dependent on foreign aid due to our poverty and it also causes environmental degradation," Begum Zia said, adding "Our main object is to break the vicious cycle of poverty."

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Finance Mujibur Rahman, Director of South East Asia and Pacific Department of IMF Kunito Saito, Resident Representative of the IMF Salaheddine Khenissi, governor of the Bangladesh Bank Khorshed Alam and Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed also spoke at the opening function.

The seminar was attended by top government officials, representatives of donor countries and agencies, noted economists, industrialists, businessmen, intellectuals and journalists.



Dancers of the Bulbul Lalitakala Academy performing Rabinanath Tagore's dance drama 'Mayar Khela' at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium in the city yesterday as part of the poet's 133rd birthday celebrations. — Star photo

Pseudo-democrates

From Page 1 Col 7

vision and radio. The press is also subject to official influence and control through direct and indirect means, she added.

The Awami League chief said democracy cannot be sustained if a vast number of the people live in abject poverty. Citing the example of Bangladesh, she said isolated efforts being pursued in the country cannot lead to eradication of poverty.

She said the interest of foreign investors will be fully protected. "We believe that foreign investors and joint ventures are acts of partnership which both sides stand to gain," she added.

Business, she said, should be left to the businessmen so that the country derives benefit from free market competition, dynamic growth and expanded employment opportunities.

She called for involving women in the mainstream of national life. The Bangladesh Awami League, she said, plans to set up one elementary school in every village and launch a programme for adult and vocational education on a priority basis.

Referring to the tragic killing of her father Sheikh Mujib and other members of the family, Hasina regretted that the self-confessed killers are now being protected by the infamous Indemnity Act. The BNP has not only provided them with diplomatic assignments but is also allowing some of them to engage in politics. She said anarchy, lawlessness and violence cannot be uprooted unless the rule of law is established.

The opposition leader called for more Japanese investments in Bangladesh and

Mandela takes oath

From Page 1 Col 5

in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity — a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world," Mandela vowed.

"Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world," he said.

Mandela, 75, completed his transformation from political prisoner to president of Africa's richest country before dozens of heads of state and heroes of the liberation struggle in the outdoor amphitheatre of the state Union Buildings.

He took over from F W de Klerk, who dismantled the brutal apartheid system his National Party codified four decades ago. Mandela paid the special tribute in his inaugural speech to de Klerk, with whom he shared the Nobel peace prize, for helping secure the transition to democracy.

Mandela's African National Congress won a landslide victory in the country's first election to include the black majority April 26-29, and the new 400-member multiracial parliament chose him president, unopposed, at its first session Monday.

Moments before Mandela's swearing-in, de Klerk and ANC national chairman Thabo Mbeki took oaths of office as Mandela's deputy presidents in a government of national unity.

The inauguration finished with a thunderous cannon salute, plane formations overhead trailing smoke in the new national colours and helicopters carrying in the re-

Fourth part of grant for Meghna-Gumti Bridge

Japan and Bangladesh here yesterday signed an agreement concerning Japanese grant aid of Tk 77.10 crore (1,947 million yen) for the construction of the Meghna-Gumti Bridge, reports UNB.

The amount provided this year represents the fourth year portion of the five-year construction project of the Meghna-Gumti Bridge which was initiated in 1991 with a total cost of 8,203 million yen.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Shigeo Takenaka and Additional Secretary of Economic Relations Division (ERD) Dr Saadat Hussain signed the Exchange of Notes on behalf of their respective governments.

The signing was held on the occasion of the 9th Local Task Force Meeting of the two governments in which various issues on the implementation of Japanese ODA projects and programmes were discussed.

UNB institutes S M Ali fellowship

United News of Bangladesh (UNB), a national news agency in the private sector, has instituted a fellowship for working journalists in commemoration of late S M Ali, one of the best known journalists of this region, reports UNB.

The S M Ali Award will provide a journalist a three-month fellowship to work on his chosen subject, preferably an investigative one, related to national issues.

The awardee will be given 50 per cent of his/her salary subject to a written confirmation that at least the rest will be paid by his or her employer. Funds for local travels and sundry expenses to complete the fellowship will be calculated subject to a ceiling of Tk 50,000 for the entire period.

The fellowship is designed to provide an opportunity to working journalists to investigate a subject which normal deadline schedules do not permit.

Besides, it should help the journalists achieve a higher level of professionalism and develop a sense of continuity of the high standard of competence and dedication to which S M Ali was committed and to which the UNB subscribes as well.

A six-member fellowship award committee, which will scrutinise, and select the awardees has been formed. The committee members are: Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury, Prof Rehman Sobhan, Executive Chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, F H Abed, Executive Director of BRAC, the Chairman of Mass Communication and Journalism Department, Dhaka University, Ahmadul Kabir, Editor of the Sangbad and Enayeturrahman, Chief Editor of UNB.

JS okays Post Office (Amend) Bill '94

By Staff Correspondent

Jatiya Sangsad (JS) yesterday adopted the Post Office (amendment) Bill, 1994, by voice vote with the Opposition seats empty.

The opposition parties have been boycotting the current session of Parliament to press home their demand for holding the next general election under a caretaker government.

A bill seeking amendment to the Police Officers (special provisions) Ordinance, 1976 was introduced in the House yesterday while the Chair withheld passage of the Highways (amendment) Bill, 1994, following a request from the Communication Minister, who had moved the bill.

Minister for Public Works Rafiqul Islam Miah told the House that the existing law relating to the postal service had now become redundant. Pointing out that the existing legislation had been made as early as in 1898, the minister said the old law naturally did not cover the service charges of modern telecommunication system.

Seeking introduction of the Police Officers (special provisions) (amendment) Bill, 1994, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury said that the administrative business of the police had increased especially following the increase of the number of members of the law enforcing agency.

The bill moved by the Home Minister sought restructuring of power of the police officials. The House took up for consideration the Highways (amendment) Bill, 1994, seeking some major changes in the law concerning the highways management.

The session was adjourned at 8:45 pm and it resumes at 4:30 this afternoon.

The Midnight File

Israeli planes attack guerilla targets in South Lebanon

BEIRUT, May 10: Israeli warplanes attacked Palestinian guerilla targets south of Beirut for the second time today, security sources said. They said planes returned to bomb bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — General Command (PFLP-GC) at Na'amah, 15 km (nine miles) from Beirut, four hours after blasting them with rockets and killing at least two fighters and wounding five, reports Reuter.

North Yemeni troops down 2 Southern fighters

SANAA, May 10: Northern commanders said early today their forces downed two Southern Sukhoi fighter-bombers in battles for control of approaches to the southern stronghold of Aden. A military statement read over Sanaa Radio said the southern planes were shot down on Monday over the southern district of Al-Rahida close to the former borders that separated the two Yemens before they were united in 1990, reports Reuter.

Azam showed allegiance to Pakistan: AG

The role of Golam Azam during Bangladesh's Liberation War was elaborately discussed by Attorney General Aminul Huq before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court when it resumed hearing for the fourth day yesterday of the appeal against a High Court verdict restoring the citizenship of Azam, reports BSS.

As the court resumed hearing, the Attorney General argued that Golam Azam was not a citizen of Bangladesh because all his activities, showed his loyalty to Pakistan both during and after the liberation of this country.

He said Golam Azam's coming to Bangladesh with a Pakistani passport was conclusive evidence that he was a citizen of Pakistan.

In this context, Attorney General Huq said while acquiring a Pakistani passport, Golam Azam had to affirm as per the law of Pakistan that he was loyal to that country.

He said Golam Azam had acquired a Pakistani passport by voluntarily showing his allegiance to Pakistan. Otherwise, the Attorney General argued, Golam Azam could have thrown away his Pakistani passport when he went to London from Pakistan and sought a Bangladesh passport.

Huq said the argument that Golam Azam was disqualified from becoming a citizen of Bangladesh and hence had to come to this country with a Pakistani passport was not tenable. If that were so, then Golam Azam could have sought a Nansen passport from the British government which is usually issued to stateless persons as a travel document.

The Attorney General submitted that traditional concept of citizenship meant that a cit-

Partial hartal in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, May 10: Normal life was partially disrupted here today during a half-day hartal called by the Islami Chhatra Shibir. Shibir called the hartal in protest against the recent killing of one of their activists S M Kawsar who was a student of the Chittagong Polytechnic Institute.

Sergeant murder: one more held

By Staff Correspondent

One more suspect in the murder of police sergeant Hasanul Farhad was arrested from the city's Siddiq Bazar area Monday night.

The suspect, Mohammad Awal, 28, was detained in the Detective Branch (DB) office for interrogation.

A special team of the DB nabbed Awal near the counter of a transport office, Sawkhin Poribahan, at about 11 pm Monday.

Opposition

From Page 1 Col 7

Samad' Azad said.

The Deputy Leader of the Opposition accused the ruling party of creating the present impasse in the House and hoped that the ruling party would take proper initiative to resolve the crisis.

Tofael Ahmed said that the government was trying to suppress the corruption issue by placing the special committee report at the House bypassing the Opposition.

Moudud Ahmed said there are reasons the government should now resign, otherwise "it will collapse under its own weight."

The JP leader said the government failed to realise that Parliament is the "heart" of any government under parliamentary system.

He said what decisions or rules were now being taken and passed in the Parliament had no credibility. Suranjit Sen Gupta said that the Prime Minister and Leader of the House enjoyed criticism of the Opposition parties.

The Opposition parties would brief the press regularly from today, the leaders said.

izen must have unconditional allegiance to his country, which Golam Azam did not have.

He argued that under no circumstances had Golam Azam shown his allegiance to Bangladesh and since the beginning of the Liberation War, he had actively supported the occupation army and made a concerted effort to jeopardise the liberation struggle.

Attorney General Huq showed to the court some evidence from the clippings of Dainik Sangram and Dainik Pakistan.

Published from Dhaka during the time that the Jamaat-e-Islam, whose chief was Golam Azam, had organised the Al-Badr gangsters to annihilate the freedom fighters and the intellectuals.

He also submitted before the court photocopy of a coupon with Golam Azam's signature and the inscription "Save Pakistan Fund" during the Liberation War.

The Attorney General said Golam Azam again showed his allegiance to Pakistan by participating in a by-election to the Pakistan National Assembly from a Tangail seat when the nation was fighting for liberation in 1971.

The Attorney General said the Golam Azam case is a case with a difference and nowhere in the world was such a case heard in any court. Therefore, he said, the verdict of this court would remain as a precedence for courts around the globe.

The bench comprising Justice Mohammad Habibur Rahman, Justice ATM Afzal, Justice Mustafa Kamal and Justice Latifur Rahman heard the Attorney General for three and a half hours. Hearing resumes this morning.

The Attorney General was assisted by Deputy Attorney General AF Hasan Arif, Asst Attorneys General Sharifuddin Chaklader, Mir Hashmat Ali, and Advocate Obaidur Rahman Mustafa while A R Yusuf, Bar-at-Law, Abdur Razzaq, Bar-at-Law and Advocate Nayab Ali appeared for Golam Azam.

Relief activities in cyclone-hit areas reviewed

An inter-ministerial disaster management coordination committee at a meeting yesterday decided to send reports to the Disaster Management and Relief Ministry by tomorrow to make a final report on damages by the recent cyclone in the southeastern part of the country, reports UNB.

3 jailed for raping colleague

Three employees of a health department office were sentenced yesterday to 10 years rigorous imprisonment each for raping their colleague, Gouri Rani Das, reports UNB.

The convicts are Abdur Rahman, driver, Mohammad Hossain, peon, and Abdul Berek Mridha, security guard, of the health office at Mahakhali.

The court also fined them to pay Tk 5,000 each or in default serve another year in jail.

7 killed

From Page 1 Col 3

critical conditions have been admitted to the Comilla sadar hospital. They are Joyanal Abedin (25), Aminul Islam and another unidentified person.