

Political consensus must for economic growth

By Staff Correspondent

Political instability and frequent hartals are the major factors hindering foreign investment in Bangladesh. Japanese Ambassador in Dhaka Shigeo Takenaka said yesterday.

Our investors feel discouraged because of frequent hartals and the unstable political situation. Takenaka told a seminar on 'Two Decades of Japan-Bangladesh Cooperation' at the Sheraton Hotel.

He said, consensus among the political parties is imperative for economic growth and progress in Bangladesh.

Takenaka, however, said the Japanese government never distinguished between a party in power and the Opposition.

Whoever is in power, we consider them as the government of Bangladesh and try to extend cooperation for Bangladesh. He said in reply to a question from the audience.

Organised jointly by the Japan Study Circle and Centre for Policy Research, the inaugural function was also addressed by M. Morshed Khan, special envoy of the Prime Minister, as chief guest.

The Japanese ambassador was the special guest at the inaugural ceremony in which Dr Ataur Rahman, professor of Political Science, Dhaka University made the opening remarks.

Six papers were presented on the first day of the seminar, one of which was read out by Jairo Aiko, Senior Managing Director of the Sony Corporation.

The other papers were presented by Dr Ataur Rahman, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Dr Momtazuddin Ahmed, Mahbulul Haque Khan and Dr R A Mahmood.

The first and second working sessions were chaired by Salman F Rahman, president, FBCCI, and Muslehuddin Ahmed, president, North-South University respectively.

Morshed Khan said Japan is now a partner in progress of Bangladesh.

Terming Japan 'the jewel of Asia', he said the country of the Rising Sun has a very special relationship with Bangladesh.

The Prime Minister's special envoy who studied in Tokyo, said, a relationship defined in financial terms is always a 'second grade relationship'. Japan's relationship with Bangladesh is much more than that, he added.

Japan was among the first few countries to have recognised Bangladesh after its independence, while Bangladesh is the first country to import a complete plant from Japan — the Fenchuganj fertiliser factory.

Morshed Khan also pointed out that Japan was not playing the role it could have played globally.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman termed the relations between Japan and Bangladesh as between a patron and a client.

He said the problems in Bangladesh lie with domestic 'politico-economic' weaknesses and instability of the state.

Dr Ataur Rahman said, Japan's economic cooperation with Bangladesh became widely diversified to cover investment promotion, infrastructure and human resource development, as well as technical, educational and cultural cooperation.

In line with its new aid charter, Japan has become more responsive to Bangladesh, supporting its efforts in economic liberalisation, private sector development, expansion of trade and investment potential and institutions.

In fact, by all practical indicators, Japan has become the key factor in Bangladesh's foreign policy considerations, he added.

Salman F Rahman said Japan had played its key role in Asia's progress.

He said that under the changing circumstances, Bangladesh will have to open its market. 'And the sooner, the better,' he added.

He also said that consensus in every sphere of national life is essential for progress and prosperity of Bangladesh.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia delivering her inaugural speech at an international symposium on 'Biological Nitrogen Fixation Associated with Rice' in the city yesterday. — PID photo

Laws framed by BNP will have no legitimacy, says Hasina

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday criticised the government for running parliament without the Opposition, saying laws framed by one party will have no legitimacy, reports UNB.

'Ignoring the people's demand, the BNP government is running the country and parliament unilaterally... This intransigence will lead the country to a conflict,' she said while welcoming political workers to Awami League at 29 Minto Road.

Hasina said the Opposition moved a number of proposals in Parliament on national problems and public interest, but BNP rejected those by means of a brute majority.

On caretaker government, the Awami League president said the demand was aimed at ensuring independent voting right of the people. Referring to alleged rigging in past by-elections, she said elections would never be impartial under the BNP government.

Calling the government corrupt, Hasina said indecision and inefficiency of the ruling party had deepened problems in different sectors. She also criticised BNP for stagnation in economy and price-hike of essentials.

About 100 scientists from 29 countries are participating in the symposium aimed at devising ways and means on how best the peasants can benefit from researches on reducing the use of chemical fertiliser and manipulating nitrogen from natural resources.

State Minister for Science and Technology Prof MA Mannan, Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, French Ambassador JM Lacombe, Secretary General of the International Society of Soil Science Dr Winfried EH Blum, member of International Scientific Committee Dr T Meulin, Dr Mustafizur Rahman of Soil Science Department, DU, and Prof ZN Tahmidia Begum also addressed the inaugural function.

The Prime Minister assured all cooperation from her government in forming an association here to coordinate research in Latin America and Africa.

Researchers, diplomats and senior officials attended the function organised by the French Embassy's cultural, scientific and technical cooperation (CESTI) in collaboration with Dhaka University, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

PM tells scientists in city 'Evolve alternative to chemical fertiliser'

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday stressed the need for evolving biological alternative to chemical fertiliser to check environmental degradation and adverse effect on the soil without hampering growth in production, reports UNB.

Although application of chemical fertiliser has led to fast growth in production, she said, its adverse impact is visible in the environment and soil.

She felt that if production can be sustained at the same level with biological fertiliser instead of expensive chemical fertiliser, then farmers would also be interested in using it. This will help maintain environmental balance.

The Prime Minister was inaugurating a 5-day international symposium-cum-workshop on 'Biological Nitrogen Fixation Associated with Rice' at a local hotel yesterday morning.

She pointed out that the indiscriminate use of chemical fertiliser and insecticides to increase food production was polluting the environment. Public health is being threatened in the process.

About 100 scientists from

JP Office Case Trial adjourned

The trial of former president HM Ershad and two others in the Jatiya Party Office Case which resumed in the Special Judge's Court, Dhaka was adjourned till January 16, 1995.

Yesterday the cross-examination of prosecution witness number six Quazi Mohammad Nurul Haq, a senior engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD), was completed before Additional Sessions Judge, Dhaka and Special Judge Zinat Ara, presiding over the court trying the case.

Two others — former Works minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former Works Secretary M A Rouf — are charged as abettors.

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Dr Haque added, 'I have saved the BMA bhaban from being auctioned off by arranging six crore taka. And I have built an 18-seat rest house for the doctors.'

'I have also put forward a proposal to the government with a view to providing health care for all through the Primary Health Care (PHC) project.'

Dr Gazi Abdul Haque said, 'The service age of the doctors has been increased from 30 to 32 years because of our struggle over the past years and 1750 doctors have been recruited so far under the extended age limit.'

'For the unemployed non-government doctors two crore taka has been sanctioned by the government during our time' Dr Gazi, whose panel is backed by the ruling party, declared.

Dr Gazi Shahidul Alam, an associate professor of orthopaedics, said: 'At the moment the doctors of the country are confused. They find themselves in direct confrontation with the people in spite of providing selfless services. The doctors' community is looking forward to the dynamic leadership of the BMA and in particular that of the secretary general so as to make the BMA an effective organisation.'

'Among the various contestants for the secretary's post I hope the doctors will be able to choose me as one of the most competent persons to face all the challenges now confronting our community,' said Dr Shahidul Alam who, teamed with presidential candidate Dr T A Chowdhury, enjoy the support of the Awami League and the CPB.

Dr Alam said, 'We must not forget that at present our community is out of touch of the public. This loss of image is primarily due to the continued negative activities of the present leadership of the BMA. The lost image of the organisation and that of the medical profession must be rebuilt at any cost.'

'If I am elected, I have plans for disseminating modern medical education among all its members including the general practitioners in the country,' said Shahidul Alam.

Dr Mahbubur Rahman Chowdhury, Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology, said, 'During my prolonged association with the BMA I was more concerned with professional matters than with group interest.'

'I believe a majority of the doctors will support me because of my sincere involvement with the BMA. I have tried to keep the professionalism of BMA above personal and political interests,' Dr Chowdhury added.

Chowdhury and his presidential candidate Dr Sirajul Islam head a JSD (Inu)-backed panel.

Dr Chowdhury said, 'We will formulate a national health policy ensuring proper health care delivery, especially for the underprivileged, and the professional efficiency of the doctors by increasing facilities and fellowship programmes in collaboration with other medical associations abroad.'

Dr Rafiq Chowdhury said, 'I have a multisectoral approach towards the country's health sector.'

'I am confident of my tested leadership abilities,' he remarked.

Dr Rafiq Chowdhury said, 'As we are committed to solving the prevailing problems of the physicians, there is no way for the doctors but to support me in the polls.'

He added, 'My panel will try to restore the image of the medical community. We will assure you about a complete health policy to involve all sectoral people in the country.'

Child specialist Nurul Islam heads this panel.

Dr A A Asiqul Alam, an independent candidate, said, 'I want to save the BMA from the greedy opportunists and self-seekers.'

He said, 'I would resist the evil conspiracies hatched against our medical system by certain domestic and foreign quarters.'

BMA polls

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The Midnight File

MPs spent illicitly-gained money in polls: Indian CEC

NEW DELHI, Nov 29: India's Chief Election Commissioner T N Seshan said today that most of the deputies in the present parliament had used illicitly-gained money in their poll campaigns to get elected. 'I estimate 15 billion rupees in unaccounted money was used in the (May-June 1991) elections,' Seshan told a news conference at Delhi's foreign correspondents' club, reports Reuter.

Aideed's men kill 2 Somalis

MOGADISHU, Nov 29: Two Somalis protesting against the holding of rival peace conferences were shot dead by gunmen loyal to warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed, witnesses said today. As many as 12 other people, including women and children, were injured in the shooting on Monday morning in the south of the Somali capital, reports Reuter.

BNP MPs for strengthened EC, ID cards for voters

By Staff Correspondent

The ruling party MPs continued to support the proposed law, seeking strengthening of the Election Commission and provision for the issuance of the identity cards to voters, in the Jatiya Sangsad (JS) for the second day yesterday.

The treasury bench legislators, taking part in the discussion, also criticised the Opposition MPs who have been boycotting the House to press home the demand for holding general elections under a non-partisan, caretaker administration.

Quoting certain Articles of the Constitution, the former minister said that according to the supreme law of the land, there was no relation between the running of the affairs of state by a government of any party and holding of elections by the Election Commission (EC). 'With the passage of the proposed law the EC would practically be in a position to conduct the polls independently, while the government is constitutionally obliged to assist the EC to hold the elections,' Huda said and added that the EC, following the adoption of the bill by the House, would be able to secure the unconditional support of the government officials in conducting the polls because the EC would have the authority to take punitive measures against those violating its directives.

Talukder, who is also secretary general of BNP said the meeting was briefed of the party stand and the stand of the opposition.

He said the meeting discussed the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 1994 and the Electoral Rolls (Amendment) Bill 1994.

A few amendments moved by some members also came up for discussion at the meeting, he told a questioner.

Talukder did not rule out the possibility of the passage of the Bills in today's sitting of the House.

Talukder said in all about 20 members made queries on different aspects of the prevailing political situation and the party stand. He said there were suggestions from some of the members to strengthen the publicity mechanism of the party to keep the people informed of BNP's stand through rallies and meetings throughout the country.

Asked what his party would do in the event of the resignation of the opposition members from parliament, Talukder said, 'There are two constitutional options open to us — either holding of fresh elections or to go for by election.'

He said that BNP would hold its extended meetings in Barisal, Rajshahi and Khulna.

Services of docs

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secretary general of Teachers Association Federation, Dr Rafiq Chowdhury, secretary general of DAB, Dr Anisur Rahman Khan, Dr Delwar Hossain, Dr Habibullah Talukder and Dr Shibly. Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf and Deputy Minister Sirajul Haq were also present.

Boycott of Parliament

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He said the Opposition MPs cannot raise any plea, political or otherwise, to justify their intention to render Parliament ineffective.

Hossain further argued that without the Speaker's permission, non-attendance of Parliament sessions by the Opposition MPs is tantamount to interruption of the proceedings of the Jatiya Sangsad, and is violative of the provisions of Article 75 (a) (1) of the Constitution and Sections 179, 180 and 267 (ix) of the parliamentary rules of procedure.

In reply, K S Nabi, Bar at-Law, the counsel for Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina Wazed, said both the writ and the rule nisi issued by the court are not maintainable as these would interfere with the functions, powers, privileges and jurisdiction of Parliament.

Opposing the writ on the question of maintainability, Nabi said the writ application is not entertainable inasmuch as the fact that if the prayer is allowed, it would be tantamount to destroying the principle of the separation of the judiciary and the Constitution.

He further argued that Sheikh Hasina, a member of Parliament, is accountable to her parliamentary constituents only, not to the whole nation.

Air strikes on Chechnya

GROZNY, Nov 29: Three planes bombed the capital of Russia's breakaway region of Chechnya today and loyalist troops appeared to have downed one of the planes they believe belonged to the opposition, reports Reuter.

Media reports incorrect

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gained by the Army with the Bangladesh troops in Bosnia. He took questions from Daud Khan Majlis of the Voice of America and Richard Galpin and Afsan Chowdhury of the BBC.

Col Selim informed them that there were no journalists of any foreign media, including the BBC, CNN, AP or AFP 'on the ground in Bihaq.' He said the video pictures shown on CNN and BBS were provided by Serbia TV.

Asked about the latest situation, Col Selim said that for the last two days it was comparatively calm and that shelling had decreased.

Speaking from Koralic, 28 kilometres from Bihaq town, the Bangladesh commander said, UNHCR relief had not been coming in for a long time and that the people of Bihaq would face a difficult winter unless supplies resumed soon.

Commenting on reports of sniper fire at some Bangladesh troops, he said, 'Those were stray firing. They were not deliberately intended against us.' He said that as a UN protection force, 'We do not have the mandate to fight or stop the fighting.'

Col Selim also informed the newsmen that the Serbs have not yet entered the fortified area of Bihaq.

Replying to another question, he said, the decision of keeping or withdrawing the peacekeepers was the responsibility of the UN.

Major General Bhuiyan refuted media reports that the Bangladesh forces were ill equipped. 'Of all our troops involved in peacekeeping operations, the Bihaq battalion is the most well equipped,' he added.

Gen Bhuiyan said the issue of heavy arms was raised with the United Nations who agreed and also provided some heavy equipment to the Bangladesh battalion. The UN, he said, has provided the contingent with 51 Armed Personnel Carriers (APCs), each of them able to carry ten personnel. These are fitted with 14.5 and 7.62mm machine-guns supplied by Germany. It was also standard practice that heavy weapons go by ships and this also happened in this case, he said.

The PSO told journalists that the decision to send troops was not taken in haste and there was a lengthy correspondence between the government and the United Nations after which the decision came.

Bhuiyan said the request first came to the government on June 11, 1993 while the first contingent of troops were sent to Bosnia in September, 1994 and the deployment was completed gradually in October, 1994. The total strength of the Bangladesh force in Bihaq was 1223, he said.

He said that from the time of receiving the request till the despatch of the troops a lot of consultations had taken place between the government and the United Nations. He also said, the Army had sent two reconnaissance teams to Bosnia 'to understand the terrain and our requirements.' Bangladesh troops were also sent to Germany and Slovakia for special training under the auspices of the United Nations before their deployment in Bosnia.

General Bhuiyan said that any country would feel proud to send its troops in UN operations. Presently, some 5,264 Bangladeshi soldiers were involved in peacekeeping operations and additionally some 2,138 soldiers were in Kuwait engaged in reconstruction work.

Involvement of Bangladesh troops in peacekeeping operations is enabling them to gain experience and also affording them the scope to learn about new technologies and techniques of warfare through interaction with the armies of the world, Bhuiyan said.

Maj Gen Bhuiyan said, 'Our troops have been able to contribute in building a positive image for the country by participating in the peacekeeping operations with great courage and dedication and they have been recognised internationally as a highly professional army.'

The journalists attending the press conference were informed that Bangladesh soldiers were involved in UN missions in ten countries as peacekeepers and observers.

The countries where they are currently deployed or posted are Kuwait, West Sahara, former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Liberia, Georgia, Haiti and Tajikistan.

So far some 17,455 officers and troops have participated or are currently involved in peacekeeping operations.



Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Maj Gen M S A Bhuiyan briefing newsmen about the Bangladesh contingent in the UNPROFOR stationed at Bihaq, Bosnia. The briefing session was held at the Prime Minister's Office, Armed Forces Division, Dhaka Cantonment yesterday. — Photo: ISPR

Big wave

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presented a paper entitled 'The Asian dimension' on the opening day of a two-day seminar on 'Two decades of Japan-Bangladesh cooperation' organised jointly by the Japan Circle and the Centre for Policy Research in a local hotel.

He spoke of three specific waves of foreign investments in Asia, emanating from the economic growth of Japan, which first fuelled the growth of Asia's newly industrialised economies (NIEs) — South Korea, Taiwan, Hongkong and Singapore — in the 60s, the ASEAN countries during the second wave in the 1970s and now the third wave in fuelling the growth of China and Indonesia.

(The full text of the presentation will be published in the business page of The Daily Star tomorrow.)

Aiko also sounded very upbeat about the future economic growth prospects of Asia. 'In recent years, Asia has become the centre of the world's economic growth. New business opportunities are emerging in East Asia, ASEAN and China, with opportunities for further expansion found in less developed areas such as Vietnam and India. There is a need to examine Asia very closely in order to achieve future business success.'

The pictures also showed Bosnian Serb special forces jamming a Turkish fez (hat) onto the head of a plainly terrified young prisoner. Some Serbs refer contemptuously to the Bosnian Muslims as 'Turks.'

Humiliation

PALE, Bosnia, Nov 29: Scores of frightened Muslim prisoners of war were forced to chant 'Bosnia belongs to Serbia' in front of television cameras, recent pictures from Bosnian Serb television showed today, reports Reuter.

The pictures also showed Bosnian Serb special forces jamming a Turkish fez (hat) onto the head of a plainly terrified young prisoner. Some Serbs refer contemptuously to the Bosnian Muslims as 'Turks.'

Barricade disrupts life

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structured at Tongi, the Dhaka Cantonment crossing and Teja-gon station.

Inter-district and city bus services remained closed for the day.

Pickets made up of supporters of the three parties also prevented motor vehicles from plying at different points in the city such as Azimpur, Maghbazar, Mirpur, Farm Gate, Jatrabari and Gulistan.

Some pickets were seen damaging vehicles at Mirpur, Jatrabari and Gulistan. However, no casualties or arrest were reported.

Huge contingents of police and the para-military BDR patrolled city roads.

Our correspondent reports

Sarajevo

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the missile site appeared two days ago just outside the 20-kilometer zone around Sarajevo where all heavy weapons are banned.

The missile, with a range of 50 kilometers was a potential threat to Sarajevo airport traffic.

Byazid

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mandated effective measures to root out terrorism from the area. The local people held a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday morning demanding arrest and trial of those responsible for the death of Byazid.

Activists of the Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat put up barricades at vantage points but nothing untoward was reported.

A London report says: Margaret Thatcher called today for air strikes against Serb military positions to protect a Muslim 'safe haven' in north-west Bosnia.

PM's remark

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'But, instead, she spoke against the opposition agitation in the language of weapon, blocking all avenues of peaceful solution to the current political impasse,' he said.

The Prime Minister will be responsible for any killing of any opposition worker by Chhatra Dal after her provocative statement on Monday, the Opposition chief whip cautioned.

'We think that her statement will only push the country towards confrontation. We always want a non-violent solution through dialogue. We still urge the ruling party to accept the demand for non-partisan caretaker government,' Nasim said.