

Saifur tells regional seminar Political commitment must for cooperation

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has said no efforts for regional cooperation can succeed unless those are supported by political commitment and open-heartedness of the leadership.

"I am disheartened by the narrowness of the political leaders in South Asian region, who cannot see anything beyond their national interest," Saifur Rahman said, describing the state of cooperation in the region as "quite discouraging".

The finance minister was addressing the inaugural session of a two-day regional workshop on "Payments and monetary cooperation in the South Asian region."

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a private sector thinktank, and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), a German research organisation, jointly organised the workshop at a local hotel.

The minister pointed out very little progress in implementing the South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) and said leaders of the SAARC countries will have to shun their conservative approach if they really want cooperation in the region.

Leaders of the South Asian nations would have to understand that collective endeavour is much better than individual efforts," Saifur said and added that they would also have to understand that reciprocity is another important factor for any cooperative efforts.

There are several confronting and conflicting interests in the region. But despite this, cooperation is essential", the minister said. For this, irritants within the region should be uprooted through the process of cooperation, he

Bangla Academy celebrates founding anniversary

Bangla Academy yesterday celebrated its 39th founding anniversary with festivity through a day-long programme arranged at the academy premises, reports BSS.

Director General of the

AL, BNP clash in Jamalpur:

From Our Correspondent

JAMALPUR, Dec 3: The Awami League and the BNP supporters clashed in the town for the third day today leaving at least 15 people injured.

The clash began when an Awami League rally came under BNP attack at the local Shaheed Minar premises in the evening.

District Awami League organised the rally to protest the attack on its workers, ransacking of the local AL office and setting fire to Sramik League office allegedly by BNP supporters on Thursday.

20000 mothers die a year

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population had been well documented and internationally recognised.

"I am impressed by the sustained progress of population activities in this country and Bangladesh programme on improving family planning information and service is entirely correct," she said praising the programmes as "bold initiatives and innovative schemes."

In Bangladesh, the UNFPA chief executive noted, most young women who become pregnant are married. But "that does not reduce the risks, they run without safe-guards, marriage itself must be considered high risk behaviour for women under 18."

She said despite a 30 per cent fall in the number of teenage pregnancies and a rise in the average at marriage from 16 to 18, the birth rate among women aged 15-19 in Bangladesh today is still four or five times higher than in Europe and North America.

Nafis Sadik observed the interval between marriage and first pregnancy had actually become shorter in Bangladesh, but child marriage is still common and girls are still pressured to marry and have children as soon as possible.

Referring to the discrimination between boy and girl, she said, "In our region girls have traditionally been treated from birth as second-rate people. Girls are poorly nourished compared with boys."

They are more likely to fall ill than boys, and less likely to

said.

Saifur stressed the need for harmonisation of the policies of the South Asian nations, specially at the macro-economic level and on tariff structure. The Bangladeshi government has been facing serious pressure from the people for this, he pointed out.

The minister also said there are historical inbuilt suspicion among the people regarding some countries and this has been affecting the efforts for cooperation. Such suspicion has to be removed through the process of cooperation, he felt.

Saifur also referred to the Asian Clearing Union (ACU), a union of the central banks of some Asian nations including Bangladesh, and said the ACU came into being at a time when the foreign exchange situation in the country was very bad. Bangladesh was in constant deficit of forex during the time, which was managed through swap arrangement by the ACU, he said.

"We have now convertibility of our currency in current account with a formidable reserve of forex," Saifur said, adding convertibility in the capital account, however, cannot be made immediately, as the country is not yet in a strong position to face the consequence of hot capital outflow and inflow at this moment.

Presided over by Prof Rehman Sobhan, Executive Chairman of the CPD, the inaugural function was also attended by Dr SS Colombe, Director of Statistics of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry SM Inam, MCCI President Latif Rahman, bankers and high officials of various ministries and government bodies.

Degree exam dates shifted

The degree pass and subsidiary examination 1994 under the National University scheduled to be held on December 7 and 8 have been shifted, reports UNB.

The examinations has been deferred due to unavoidable circumstances, said an official handout yesterday.

The examination of third paper of Political Science, Political Science course 305, third paper of Rajnitibigyan and Soil Science will now be held on January 24, 1995.

The examination of first paper of Geography, English Literature, Accountancy and Bima will be held on January 25, 1994, the handout said.

The dates and schedules of other examinations will remain unchanged.

122 DU teachers protest DUTA statement

By DU Correspondent

Some 122 teachers of the Dhaka University yesterday protested the statement of the Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA) in which it condemned a recent comment of the Prime Minister.

Two executive members of the DUTA also disagreed with the statement of the DUTA which was published in some national dailies on December 1.

The joint statement of the DU teachers also stated that the DUTA statement was served without considering the teachers' opinion.

The teachers' statement was signed, among others by Prof Emajuddin Ahmed, Prof Anwarullah Chowdhury, Prof Abul Kalam, Prof M Ershad Baril, Prof Anwara Begum, Dr Anwarul Islam, M Shahjahan Mina and Dr Moslehuddin Ahmed.

The two executive members who disown the DUTA statement are Prof Z N Tahmid Begum and Prof Yusuf Haider.

Opposition MPs

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the Opposition Mohammad Nasim said.

According to Nasim, the opposition parties would give an ultimatum to the government on December 6 about its demand for holding next general elections under a non-partisan caretaker government.

If the ruling party fails to meet the deadline set by the Opposition, we shall resign immediately," the Opposition chief whip added.

Another AL leader told The Daily Star that the deadline should not cross 31st December this year.

Meanwhile, a non-Awami League leader of the Opposition camp told this correspondent yesterday, on condition of anonymity, "although we are firm to resign to press home the demand for a caretaker administration, it is yet to be decided concretely whether December 6 is the most suitable date for making the announcement of the deadline."

The Opposition leaders would seriously examine the pros and cons of the date tomorrow evening, the leader added.

Ansars Academy

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Gazipur police control room sources told UNB that BDR men who were put on alert at the Gazipur district headquarters moved to Shaftipur yesterday afternoon.

Till the writing of this report at 8:30pm, no action had been taken against the rebellious Ansars, also blocking traffic on the Dhaka-Tangail highway since Thursday noon to press their demands for regularisation of jobs of the battalions besides pay hike.

There are about 3,000 Ansars at the academy. Authorities, however, disbursed them Thursday evening after they rose in a revolt against their officers and regular staffers.

In the capital, the agitating Ansars also remained entrenched in their headquarters at Khilgaon for the third day of their revolt.

Our Staff Correspondent adds: In the city, the Ansars personnel were seen announcing over microphones "We will accept assurance only from the Prime Minister herself."

They were seen guarding their Khilgaon headquarters in the city carrying rifles. Since the Ansars force was raised in 1976, by the then president Ziaur Rahman it was their first agitation for job confirmation, said a battalion commander adding, "Though they have been asking for it for a long time."

Several contingents of police were patrolling the Khilgaon area to avert any violence.

Meanwhile, the Ansars personnel at their headquarters premises yesterday formed a movement committee comprising 20 Ansars men. But they refused to disclose the names of the Ansars in the committee.

She described the regional approach to population programmes as an effective measure.

The press conference was also addressed by UNDP Resident Representative Eimi Watanabe.



A wheel-chair rally was arranged in the city yesterday by the Ministry of Social Welfare on the occasion of the International Day of the Disabled.

— Star photo

Help the disabled: Khaleda

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per cent of the total population of Asia-Pacific region are disabled.

She was addressing a function in observance of the "International Day of the Disabled," organised by the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Bangladesh Disabled Welfare Association at the Osmani Memorial auditorium in the afternoon.

The Prime Minister declared that alike non-government primary school teachers, Tk 500 will be provided as monthly salary grant from the government to the teachers of private schools for the disabled.

The Prime Minister later inaugurated an exhibition of handicraft made by the disabled of different organisations. Begum Zia went round the 16 stalls.

MIGA plans to promote

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— for investments from developing countries to the developing nations or even for investments from one member developing country to another, as a move to promote South-South cooperation in investments, he added.

The MIGA provides three types of non-commercial risk coverage: protection against government action of expropriation, which may reduce ownership rights and which also includes "creeping expropriation" — series of acts which may result in expropriation over a period of time."

The other type provides coverage against war and civil disturbances, which also provides protection against physical damage to assets and for business interruptions.

The third type of coverage that MIGA provides involves currency convertibility and remittances. "We provide long-term political risk coverage for 15 to 20 years in duration. Once the contract is signed, MIGA cannot terminate it but the client can do it during annual renewals," Yusuf said. The premium rate depends on a project to project basis, he said, and there are no separate country rates. There is a 50 million dollar coverage limit per project and a 150-million dollar country ceiling, which was recently raised to 175 million dollars.

"Having MIGA involved in a project provides confidence to the investors and we use out limited capacity for key projects," he added.

During his stay in the capital, he is scheduled to hold meetings with government officials, private sector representatives and foreign investors.

"I will try to make them aware that there is an agency called MIGA that provides investment guarantee for political risks and will promote foreign investments into Bangladesh," he said about the agenda of his visit. "We hope to work as a catalyst for the flow of FDI into the country."

UNFPA chief for SAARC meet

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of the SAARC Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today to utilise the strength of regional cooperation by holding the conference.

She noted that while the SAARC countries shared common problems in the health, education, family planning and other social sectors individual countries also had success stories in their development programmes which could be successfully shared.

The SAARC summit will also help create consensus on the outcome of the Cairo conference and frame guidelines on empowerment of women, placing population programmes as development issues and promoting people's participation in the population programmes," she said.

She described the regional approach to population programmes as an effective measure.

The press conference was also addressed by UNDP Resident Representative Eimi Watanabe.

Majed, Shahid elected BMA president, secy

By SSMCH Correspondent

Prof. M. A. Majed and Qazi Shahidul Alam have been elected unofficially the president and the secretary general respectively of the Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA).

Prof. M. A. Majed and Dr. Qazi Shahidul Alam contested the December 1 BMA polls from two separate panels.

The final results from all 67 centres are expected today.

Jute mills workers urged to call off strike

By Staff Correspondent

The Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA), has expressed dismay over the recent trend of work abstention by private jute mills workers to press for higher wages from the government.

A statement of the BJMA issued last night said the private mills were only responsible to a forum of the private sector jute mills, pay the wages of their workers and the government bore no responsibility for them.

The recent Wages Commission awards were meant only for the public sector enterprises and that too for those units which could afford. It said the private jute mills were trying their best to reduce costs and improve their overall efficiency to meet the goals of the World Bank supported programme and attain competitiveness in the new global scenario of open market economy.

She said there was no specific allegation against her excepting some unspecified charges. "There was no interpretation as to how the internal party conflict was created or how I have committed corruption and nepotism."

It also called upon the trade unions of the private jute mills not to destroy their livelihood and greater interest of the nation by disrupting production.

Heroin worth Tk 2cr seized: 3 held in city

By Staff Correspondent

Police seized two kilograms of heroin valued at Taka two crore from the city's Mohammadpur area and arrested three persons in this connection yesterday.

They also recovered Tk 60,000 from Abdul Quayum, one of the arrested who is allegedly a heroin dealer, during a raid on an apartment at the Pisciculture Housing Society at Mohammadpur around 2:30 pm.

The money is believed to be the sale proceeds of heroin, according to police.

The two other arrested persons were identified as Abul Kalam Azad and Nurul Gazi.

They were arrested from the same area following a confidential statement by Quayum.

The police raided the area acting on a tip-off.

Police say, all three persons are the members of an international heroin-racket.

"We have recovered bank-documents that show transaction of a huge amount of money," said a police officer.

Police also recovered two walkie-talkie sets and other valuables from their possessors.

All arrested persons were detained in the Mohammadpur police custody.

Lankan FM

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Besides, he will hold wide-ranging talks with his Bangladesh counterpart ASM Mostafizur Rahman, which will cover the entire gamut of the bilateral relations, regional and international issues of common concern.

The letter said that the meeting will be held between representatives of the ruling party, the opposition parties and the federation, making it a tripartite discussion meeting," the minister explained.

One executive committee member of the federation, when contacted, expressed surprise at the change of the format of the proposed meeting.

"I am surprised. The FBCCI president did not inform us about this second letter and about the change in the format. I contacted several other EC members and they were also equally surprised," said A. Ghafur, a member of the newly-elected FBCCI executive committee.

He said that the issue of changing the format for the meeting was not even raised at the EC meeting held last Friday.

FBCCI chief blames govt

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'intense' pressure from its constituents to apprise the political leadership of the 'disastrous' consequences of the stand-off on the economy and hence the executive committee had decided to invite both sides to a meeting, which was to take place today, he said.

Initially, he said, positive response was received from both sides. The Opposition sent a letter on November 30 confirming its participation and on the same night, he said, a senior cabinet minister had informed him of the government's intention to participate over