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Saifur sees nothing wrong with 'pro-poll' budget

By Staff Correspondent

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday defended the just announced budget for the 1995-96 fiscal as being good for the people and the economy.

"What is wrong about a budget which is good for the people and the economy, and if it is termed a pro-election budget," he said while responding to criticism that the budget tilted towards political expediency in the light of the upcoming general elections.

The finance minister was addressing a post-budget press conference at the Jatiya Sangsad conference room. State Minister for Finance Mojibur Rahman, State Minister for Planning A Moin Khan, Governor of Bangladesh Bank Khurshed Alam, Finance Secretary Nasimuddin Ahmed, NBR Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan and ERD Secretary Lutfullah Majid also attended the press conference.



Saifur at post-budget press conference. — Star photo

He was critical of the comments made by some economists who, he said, held "socialistic views", saying that the budget only provided lip-service to poverty alleviation programmes.

A Tk 1,531 crore budget allocation has been made for various targeted poverty alleviation programmes, including vulnerable group feeding, food for work, test relief, food for education and a number of micro-credit programmes, the minister pointed out.

"But durable poverty reduction can only take place with a durable development process," Rahman said. It will "only take place through employment creating, sustainable and pro-poor growth."

The finance minister also responded to a query by a noted economist as to why a lump sum allocation of Tk 3,190 crore was kept separate.

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JCD leader shot dead in city

By DMCH Correspondent

A JCD leader and student of Titumir College was shot dead at Nayatola in the city Thursday night by some unidentified miscreants.

The armed miscreants waylaid at Nayatola and shot Shariful Islam, 22, a BA student in the chest from close range while he was returning to his Mohakhali house, police said yesterday.

Fatally injured Sharif, son of Shamsul Alam, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital by people nearby but doctors there declared him dead.

Family sources said Sharif, former AGS of Titumir College, was a central leader of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal. The sources could not give any clue to the murder.

Police said they were investigating the murder.



Relatives of Shariful Islam wailing after his killing yesterday. — Star photo

Restore discipline in health sector, PM tells docs

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday emphasised the need for the restoration of discipline and accountability in the health sector to ensure treatment of common man, reports UNB.

"We have to remove all mismanagement from the hospitals by taking strict measures", she said when some 1,000 physicians of the Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB) called on the Prime Minister at her Hare Road office last night.

Begum Zia said the physicians of the country have a reputation for their dutifulness and those are working abroad have earned a lot of praise.

The Prime Minister said her government has given due importance for meeting the five basic fundamental rights of people. The government has given top priorities to the education and health sectors, she added.

Begum Zia said the BNP See Page 12 Col 3

Budget suited to time Budget lacks direction

By Staff Correspondent

The country's top business leaders yesterday welcomed the proposed budget as suited to the needs of the time. Some economists were, however, critical of the lack of direction towards achieving the goal of a robust economy.

Welcoming the budget, the Executive Committee of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) said it was largely in keeping with the needs of the time.

An emergency meeting of the committee, chaired by its president Salman F Rahman, noted that the budget proposals were pro-private sector development and would be helpful in boosting industrial production and export, according to a press release of the FBCCI.

The meeting said a 'good feature' of the budget was the

trend that the revenue receipts were outpacing the revenue expenditure and that the growth rate of development expenditure was higher than that of revenue expenditure.

Terming the further reduction of import tariff 'a step in the right direction', the FBCCI, however, said 'unless adequate measures were taken by the government to safeguard the interests of the domestic producers to enable them to operate in a level playing field, the objective of realising an export-led growth would remain elusive.'

Pointing to the finance minister's 'recognition of the mismanagement' of state-owned utilities and enterprises and wastage in the government system, problems caused by the laxity and inefficiency in administration, the

FBCCI said: "Given the urgency of attaining high growth rate, it was disappointing to note that the budget proposals did not contain any solution to problems identified by the finance minister."

Welcoming the reduction of the corporate tax rates and introduction of significant reform measures, the federation said that the apex body had always advocated reduction of tax levels but widening of the tax net while reforming the tax collection administration.

Without a sustained growth of agriculture, high growth rate of the economy is inconceivable, the FBCCI said, adding "unfortunately the budget does not seem to address the issue adequately."

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BNP hoodlums wanted to kill Hasina: Zillur

Leaders of the Awami League yesterday warned that the ruling BNP would meet the fate of past autocrats for resorting to repressive measures against political opponents to cling to power, reports AFP.

"No autocrat could stay in power through repression and the BNP will have to accept the same fate... It did not take lesson from history", AL general secretary Zillur Rahman told a protest rally in Dhaka yesterday.

City Awami League organised the rally at Bangabandhu Avenue to protest Thursday's bomb attack on a party procession in the city. It was presided over by party leader Rezauddin Ahmed.

The AL general secretary blamed the ruling party for the attack, saying "the BNP hoodlums wanted to kill Sheikh Hasina" while police played a silent role.

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UN okays RRF in Bosnia

UNITED NATIONS, June 16: The UN Security Council approved early today a resolution authorising the deployment of a Franco-British rapid reaction force in Bosnia to bolster UN peacekeeping troops there, reports AFP.

Voting 13-0 with two abstentions, the Council gave the go ahead for the deployment of the 12,500-member force, but set aside the question of how it will be financed. Russia and China abstained.

The Security Council decided to authorise an increase in the UN force personnel, 'acting under the present mandate' by up to 12,500 additional troops, resolution 998 said.

AP says: In one of the biggest offensives of the war, Bosnian government forces attacked rebel Serbs around

Sarajevo Friday in a battle to crack the three-year Serb siege of the city.

Serbs retaliated by firing on Sarajevo. Two male patients were killed and six wounded — including women and children — when a shell slammed into the Kosevo hospital.

Meanwhile, Bosnian government radio reported a second day of shelling of Gorazde, an eastern Bosnian Muslim enclave, in which three people were killed and one was wounded.

In Sarajevo, five French UN soldiers and three civilians were wounded. One of them was seriously wounded by shell fragments in his head.

Two large artillery rounds also smashed close to the Bosnian capital's presidential building.

Speaker cancels hurriedly called press conference

By Staff Correspondent

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali yesterday called a press conference but abruptly cancelled it without giving any reason.

The press conference was scheduled to be held at 7-30 pm.

Some of the newspapers even did not get the invitation for the hurriedly called press conference.

Parliament sources said that at around 11-30 am, the Speaker told his staff that he wanted to meet the press.

Subsequently, the Public Relations Office of the Parliament Secretariat conveyed the invitation to some of the leading newspapers between 12-30 pm and 2-30 pm.

But the Speaker later changed his decision and cancelled the scheduled press conference. He regretted the inconvenience caused to newsmen who went to his office at around 7 pm.

Shaikh Razzak Ali, however, told the newsmen that he would soon invite them to a press conference. He did not elaborate.

Last chance for solution to crisis in JS may fade away: Rafiq

A senior government minister yesterday said the road to resolution of the present political crisis through discussion in Parliament might be blocked if the Opposition did not turn up on June 19.

The opposition lawmakers who are abstaining from the House to press for elections under a neutral caretaker government will complete the constitutional limit of 90-day absence on June 19.

Talking to UNB, Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia said, "the last chance for a solution in Parliament may fade away if they do not turn up on that day and their seats are declared vacated as per Constitution."

Barrister Rafiq, a member of the BNP Standing Committee, the highest policy making body of the party, said if the seats of boycotting MPs are

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Rajshahi Govt College closed

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, June 16: The Rajshahi New Degree Government College was declared closed till June 24 and the election to the students union has been postponed.

The college staff council in an emergency meeting on Thursday night took the decision for closing the college to avert fresh violence following the internal conflict of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) over the election.

The students union election was scheduled to be held on June 26.

News Analysis Budget: Pros & cons at a glance

By S Y Bakht

The proposed budget for fiscal 1995-96 appears to please almost everybody in the business world. But the big question is, will it suit the economy? And more importantly, will it accelerate the much needed GDP growth rate?

Well, the performance of the economy throughout the next fiscal will be the final benchmark to measure the efficacy of the proposed budget. Till then, the verdict is out.

A preliminary review of the Finance Minister's budget speech, however, reveals some positive as well as a few negative aspects. Some of the positive points even appear to have certain inherent flaws.

By and large the budget proposals should help activate the private sector, both in the industrial and agricultural

fields. Tax slabs for corporations and financial institutions are being lowered, import duty on agri-inputs is being sharply reduced and in some cases withdrawn and duty on import of 1,028 intermediate raw materials are also slated to be lowered.

These measures will help enhance the competitive edge of the existing industries and increase the investment rate while providing the agriculture and agro-based industries sector a much needed boost.

The budget proposes to lower import duties on raw materials for the textile, ceramic and melamine, leather, cosmetics, electronics, rubber, optical, match and electrical goods industries. Although somewhat belated, these steps will definitely go a long way in diversifying the country's

narrow export base.

The capital market is also going to get a much deserved boost. Exemption of capital gains tax on share transfers, except bonus shares, and raising income tax deduction limits on share dividends have been recommended.

The proposals also include refixing the highest slab of customs duty at 50 per cent from the current 60 per cent in line with the Uruguay Round Trade Agreement stipulations. But some chambers are concerned that not enough attention has been given to protect the domestic industries.

The proposals also favour both the jet-age travellers and visitors alike. The travel quota is being raised to 3,000 US dollars per annum while

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Mother, son die in road accident

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, June 16: A mother and her son were killed and at least 20 others injured in a road accident on Dhaka Sylhet highway here, early this morning.

The accident occurred when a Sylhet bound minibus from Dhaka collided head-on with a truck at Panchrukhi under Araihaaz thana at dawn. Nurunnahar Begum, 43, and her son Apu, 8, died on the spot.

Of the injured, conditions of five persons were stated to be critical and they were rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police seized the minibus and arrested the driver of the vehicle while the truck driver managed to escape.

The bodies were sent to the Narayanganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was registered with Araihaaz thana.

Desertification Day today

The World Desertification Day will be observed today for the first time under the auspices of the United Nations, reports UNB.

In Bangladesh, the Ministry of Environment and Forest has drawn up programmes to observe the day.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas in a message said the observance of the Day carries a special significance for Bangladesh in view of the situation now obtaining in the country's northern region.

He said the primary symptoms of desertification have already appeared in northern Bangladesh, and hoped that scientists, economists, planners and people's representatives would play their respective roles.

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Fertiliser production figure steady

By Reaz Ahmad

Fertiliser production in the country has nearly touched the target for fiscal 1994-95 at the end of the first 11 months.

The six urea producing fertiliser factories run by the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) have produced 18,51,577 metric tons (MT) of urea from July 1994 to May this year against the production target of 19,05,000 MT for the current fiscal that ends this month. Urea production in fiscal 98-94 was 21.85 lakh MT.

Excepting the Jamuna Fertiliser Company Limited (JFCL), all the other five factories — Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Factory Ltd; Zia Fertiliser Company Ltd; Urea Fertiliser Factory Ghorashal, Natural Gas Fertiliser Factory and Palash Urea Fertiliser Fac-

tory — are now on production.

Despite production intermission in the JFCL, the BCIC sources expressed confidence that production would surpass the target as the fiscal end. The JFCL has been out of production since May 28 and would remain so till July 2 for overhauling.

Meanwhile, 73,077 MT of triple super phosphate (TSP) and 75,919 MT of single super phosphate (SSP) were produced in the TSP Complex at Chittagong, the country's lone phosphate manufacturing unit, during the period.

The targeted production of TSP and SSP for 1994-95 is 75,000 MT each.

The BCIC sources said, according to the estimation of Agriculture Ministry the total

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Floods hit 2 dists

SUNAMGANJ, June 16: Some 400,000 people became marooned in seven thanas of the district due to flash flood following heavy rainfall since Thursday, official sources said today, reports UNB.

According to district officials, 50 per cent of homes and roads in the district have gone under three feet water. About 5,000 kutchha houses have been totally damaged, they said.

The affected thanas are: Sadar, Chhatak, Duarabazar, Biswambharpur, Tahirpur, Dharmapasha and Madhyana-gar.

The residences of Deputy Commissioner and District Judge of Sunamganj were affected. Flash flood has also affected the district jail which

has gone under one foot water.

In the municipal area, Sulaghar, Hasannagar, Ukilpara, Nabinnagar, Jail road, Launch Ghat, North Arpinagar, Tegoria, Barapara, Natunbazar, Jamaipara, Wezkhal and Mallickpur were also affected. District officials said the river Surma was flowing three feet above the danger mark.

They feared that road communication between Sunamganj and Sylhet might be disrupted any time. The bridges at Janigaon, Shekneekhara and Joykhalash, and the Bhupakhali sluice gate are also threatened.

BSS adds from Netrakona: Heavy downpour for the last three days and on-rush of wa-

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Transport workers created a barricade with buses on the Jatrabari road in the city yesterday following a clash at the Syedabad bus terminal. — Star photo