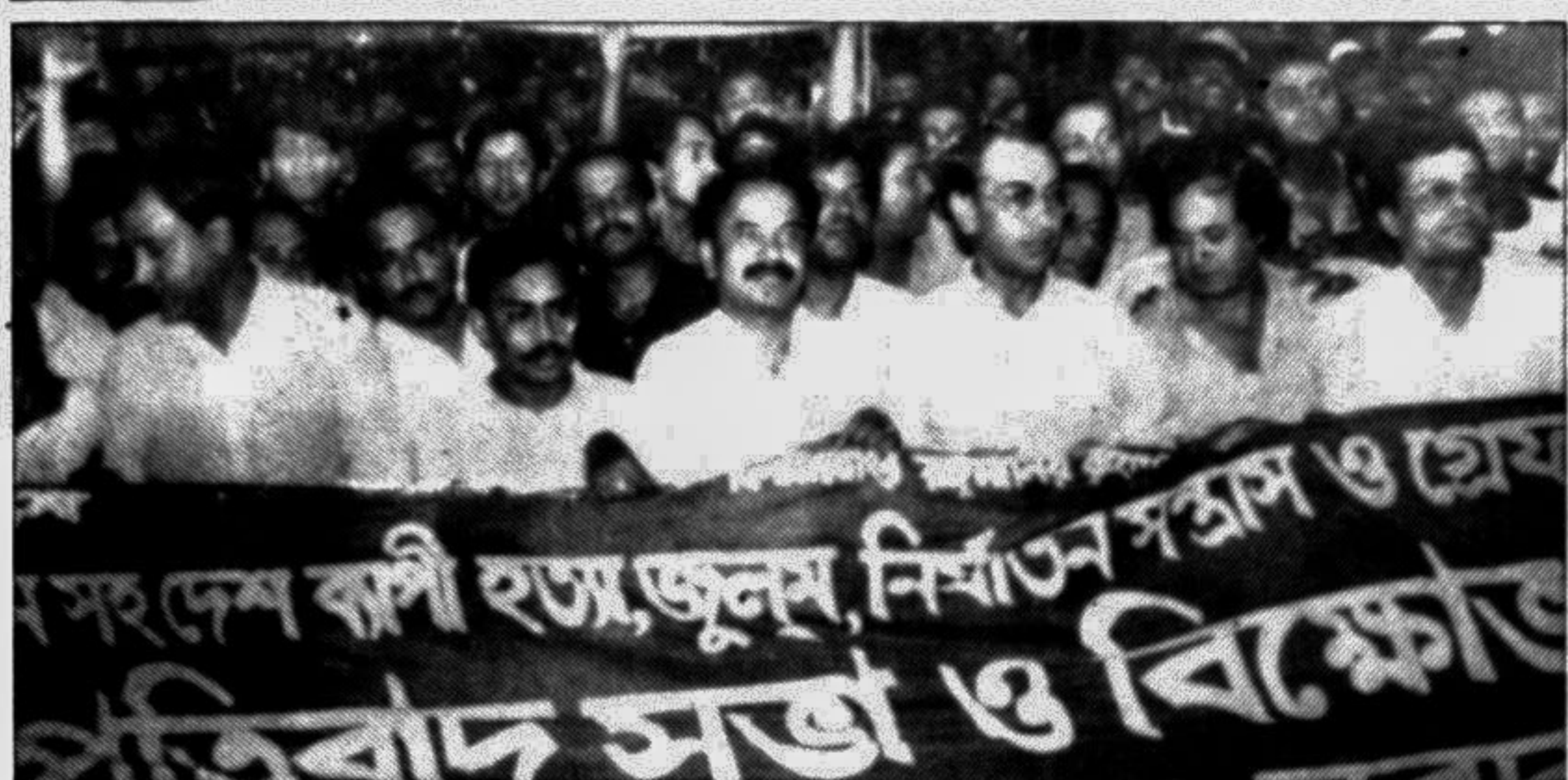


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The World on Time



The Jatiyatabadi Juba Dal brought out a procession in the city yesterday protesting what they called repression on its leaders and activists. —Star photo

Budget discussion ends

From Page 1

The past BNP government for its failure on different fronts, mainly in power sector and in reform agenda.

"We could have achieved more and would be a rising tiger if all the economic programmes and reforms initiated during the last regime could be finished properly. We won't be ludicrous," he said.

But the last government has failed to do many things during its five years of rule for the development of the country and the present government has to bear the consequences of their failure, the finance minister told the House.

Referring to the subsidy on agriculture, the Finance Minister said the government allocated a fund for subsidy as it was an election commitment of Awami League.

Moreover, he said, agriculture is the foundation of the country's economy. The condition of the sector was so miserable that the growth in agriculture was negative.

"We have no hesitation that we are reflecting people's hopes and aspiration by giving the subsidy. We don't fear any bloodshot eye of anybody in providing such subsidy if the people want that emphasis be given on agriculture," he said.

Beside a Tk 100-crore fund, he said, another Tk 100 crore was allocated to direct poverty-alleviation programme. Tk 100 crore for small credit scheme and another Tk 100 crore for employment generation.

Furthermore, allocation for agriculture under the annual development programme was raised by Tk 528 crore and allocation for rural development rose to Tk 974 crore this year from last year's Tk 742 crore.

Pointing at the reform programmes, the Finance Minister said the previous government carried out reforms. But as there was no public support to the programmes, they faced different problems during their implementation.

Although all the reform programmes were below the mark, only the import liberalisation was carried out fast. The country rushed into import liberalisation which resulted in the closure of mills and factories.

Injunction

From Page 1

A division bench comprising Justice Mohammad Mozammel Huk and Justice Mohammad Abdul Matin on August 19, 1996 discharged the writ issued earlier on a writ petition challenging the election of former Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed as the President of Bangladesh.

Abu Baker Siddique, an advocate of the Supreme Court, filed a writ petition early this month challenging Shahabuddin's election and contending that a retired chief justice was disqualified to hold the office of the President as it violated Article 99 (1) of the Constitution of Bangladesh.

Bacteria

From Page 1

The DOE conducted the bacterial tests of tap water at seven households and a Pre-Cadet School at J-block of the Pallabi extension in Mirpur and found presence of Coliform, a faecal contamination, in three of them. Also in Manipurpara, water in one household out of eight was found contaminated by the same bacteria, according to DOE.

At the school in Pallabi and two other places in H and J blocks upto 200 counts of Coliform was found in 100 ml of water, the DOE chemist said.

They pointed out that the city water pipe network, maintained by the WASA, was exposed to easy contamination everywhere. "As WASA has failed to repair its pipes in the city, it is expected that it should use Chlorine, a disinfectant, in order to supply safe drinking water to its customers," a chemist said.

He also added that many schools, colleges, government and private institutions, public places and households do not clean their underground or overhead water reservoirs for years together, unknowingly allowing to develop bacteria there.

All sorts of water reservoirs should be bleached at least twice a year to ensure safe water within the premises," he added.

he said.

Some five thousand mills and factories either were closed or became sick and the sickness has been transmitted into the banking sector, he said.

Kibria said India and other countries allowed their domestic industries to adjust with the new competitive situation. "If we had liberalised import regime with the pace of Manmohan Singh of India, 50 per cent of mills and factories could be saved," he maintained.

In power sector, the minister said, corruption and inefficiency have plunged the entire sector into deep crisis and salvation of the sector became difficult.

He said the government had taken steps to streamline the sector to improve its performance. The much-needed foreign investment would also be ensured for the capital-hungry sector, he added.

Steps have also been taken to develop telecom sector and the nation would see the results shortly, the diplomat-turned-finance minister told the House.

Criticising the former BNP government, the finance minister said it had made ineffective the Board of Investment and Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) by not holding meetings regularly.

He said the present government decided to allow private-sector EPZs which is an exceptional move. "We know that right decision will have to be taken for the benefit of the economy, even if the path is risky,"

Responding to the allegations that the budget did not give any guideline for the privatisation, he said the programme would be strengthened ignoring all the risks and sought cooperation from the opposition to implement the plan.

He said the country lost its credibility to foreign donors as the last BNP government failed to maintain many commitments which caused suspension of fund for the Public Sector Adjustment Credit Programme.

The past BNP government had agreed to extend the value added tax (VAT) net but didn't match the commitment with action. As a result, the country lost a fund of 150 million US dollar from donors. A 75-million dollar fund for setting up an LPG plant was also could not be utilised.

Pointing at the doubts aired by some MPs that the government will not be able to generate an additional revenue of Tk 1700 crore, the minister hoped the fund would come from growth in national income, increased imports and through simplification and increased efficiency of the tax administration.

In his speech, the finance minister announced duty reduction or withdrawal from the three items, including ships below 3,000 tons and natural marbles.

Referring to the allegation that the budget is backward-looking, he said: "Look forward turning yourself, you will see Bangladesh marching toward prosperity in the 21st century."

Calling for cooperation from the opposition in implementing the privatisation, reforms in power and financial sector, Kibria said, "We should extend our hands so that Bangladesh can attain a growth with equity like other Asian countries for a prosperous future."

2 killed in city road accidents

By DMC Correspondent

Two persons were killed in separate road accidents in the city yesterday.

A pedestrian Shahidullah, 30, was killed when a minibus ran over him near Mohakhali bus terminal under Tejgaon thana at about 11 am, police said.

In another incident, a speeding bus hit one Abu Yusuf, 32, while he was crossing the road near Syadabad bus terminal under Demra thana at about 4 pm. Yusuf succumbed to injuries on way to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), hospital sources said.

The bodies were sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Monument will be built at Suhrawardy Uddyan: JS told

Minister for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs Obaidul Kader informed the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the government was actively considering building a beautiful monument at the Race Course Maidan (now Suhrawardy Uddyan) where the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had given the call for independence, reports BSS.

In a written reply to a question from Prof. Panna Kaiser, he hoped that the implementation of the project would be taken up soon after completion of all formalities.

Replying to another question, Obaidul Kader said the government had no plan at the moment to erect any monument at Rayer Bazaar and other places where the people were executed during the 1971 Liberation War.

Sr officials at EC Sect trying for new postings

Star Report

Senior officers sent to the Election Commission (EC) secretariat on deputation three months to one year before the June-12 general election are trying to get postings elsewhere, according to official sources.

The secretary of the EC secretariat, along with the additional secretary, two joint secretaries and one deputy secretary were posted at the EC on deputation.

Faizur Razzak, the EC secretary, who returned from the United States only a couple of days ago, is now trying for a new posting, while the posting of the EC additional secretary, M A Mannan, as the Economic Minister in Geneva has been finalised.

According to officials the proposal for Mannan's posting in Geneva has already been sent to the Prime Minister for approval.

Before going to the EC secretariat, Mannan had served as DG at the PM's office.

Chinta Haran Shaha, joint secretary (admin) is likely to go back to the finance ministry from where he came on deputation to the EC. The other joint secretary, A Salam, is due to retire in December this year.

The Deputy Secretary (law) of the EC Ikudiar Ahmed has already been posted as the Director of the newly set up Judicial Training Institute, where he is likely to join sometime next month.

Medicines seized at ZIA

By Staff correspondent

Customs officials at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday seized banned medicines worth about Tk 10.42 lakh from the luggage of a passenger from Karachi.

Army officials

From Page 1

Secretary of District Ainjibi Samity.

The accused are: Col (ret'd) Farooq Rahman, Col (ret'd) Abdur Rashid, Maj (ret'd) Khairuzaman, Col (ret'd) Shahriar, Maj (ret'd) Bazul Huda, Maj (ret'd) Shariful Alam Dalem, Maj (ret'd) Noor, Maj (ret'd) Mahiuddin, Maj (ret'd) Aziz Pasha, Maj (ret'd) AM Rashid Chowdhury, Maj (ret'd) Shariful Islam, Maj (ret'd) Nazmul and Maj (ret'd) Kismat.

The plaintiff complained that the accused killed Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a planned way on August 15, 1975 to accomplish their heinous desire.

On the following day, they forced Mujib's burial hurriedly without performing the necessary rituals. They did not even allow the villagers to attend the funeral.

The complainant said the accused thereby hit the sentiment of the Muslim.

The court requested the Home Ministry to send the detailed addresses of the accused except those of Farooq Rahman, Khairuzaman and Shahriar, who have already been arrested.

Kibria at workshop on rural finance

Public-sector banks lack credibility

Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria yesterday admitted that the public-sector banks were lacking credibility but expressed doubt that their credit programmes could be taken over by NGOs, reports UNB.

"I am doubtful that the government-supervised credit programmes could be replaced by NGOs, although some of them are doing good," he said while opening a workshop titled 'Bangladesh: Rural Finance'.

The Finance Minister, World Bank and Asian Development Bank jointly organised the workshop at the ICDDR,B auditorium where a recent WB report on rural financing was discussed by financial experts.

The Finance Minister said there prevailed an uneasy feeling about the question of 'accountability and transparency' of the NGOs in society and commented that these two issues need to be addressed.

Some NGOs are well managed and regulated by competent people, some may not, he said and observed that introduction of accountability and transparency could make the delivery system of NGOs credible.

He said the public-sector financial institutions of the country had suffered some damages in terms of credibility which, he observed, was caused by repeated remission — a result of populist pressure.

Kibria pointed out that rural financing is an "old and fundamental problem" for Bangladesh's rural sectors. "Channeling credit to the farming community remains a perennial problem."

He said the rural people often faced credit needs due to calamity, and sometimes, inadequate price of farm produce. So the credit should tailor these needs.

Speaking at the workshop, Agriculture and Food Minister Matiya Chowdhury appeared highly critical about the NGOs as they do not provide credit to the marginal farmers, who have been neglected.

World Bank Resident Mission Chief Pierre Landell-Mills said as the government has laid emphasis on rural sector, particularly agriculture development, channeling credit appears as the most important ingredient of the initiatives.

ADB Resident Representative Bhanupol Horayangura, found fault with rural financing as farm productivity in Bangladesh is half than many other East Asian countries.

Commenting on the Finance Minister's budget speech, Saifur said, "It sounds like the Greek tragedy."

Appreciating Saifur's deliberation, Commerce and Industries Minister Tofael Ahmed hoped, "If his (Saifur's) is the BNP stance on the proposed budget then I can assure you Mr. Speaker we'll succeed in pushing the country towards progress with the cooperation of the Opposition."

Finance Minister SAMS Kibria also praised his predecessor for the latter's constructive criticism. Kibria quoted yesterday's issue of The Daily Star to mention the reduction in the agriculture sector during the last five years of BNP rule.

Referring to the controversy on laying the foundation stone of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge (JMB), Saifur Rahman said, "The Jatiya Party government laid the foundation stone without ensuring funding for it. It's like sacrificing a cow before the Eid."

While making a reference to the comment by a ruling party MP, the former Finance Minister admitted, "Whenever I speak of the government, I forget that I'm no more in the government."

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Prof. AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury while speaking of former President H M Ershad's support to the AL government despite the ruling party's calling the last 21 years' rule including the nine years by Ershad as misrule, remarked, "He (Ershad) is a great lover who has endless love... The BNP leader with a sea of humors recited, 'Mereche Kalshur Kona, Tai Boleki Prem Dibona (Pelting of stone cannot stop me from loving her)'."

Referring to a BNP lawmaker who compared his budget with a treacherous lady, the finance minister said, "Both a male and a female can be treacherous. And calling only a woman treacherous is opposing the struggle for women's emancipation."

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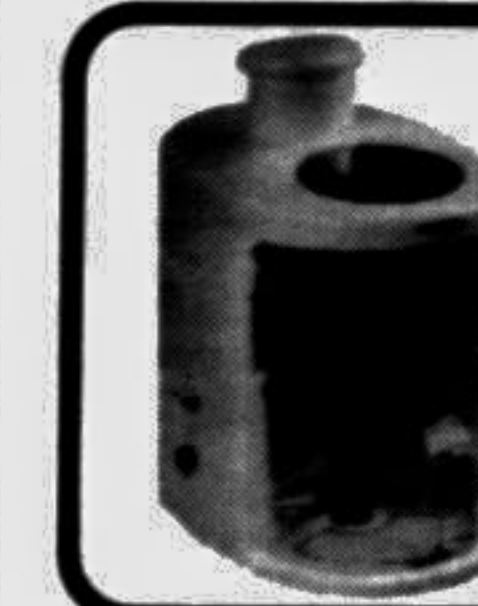
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PHILIPS

Foreign secy briefs US officials about govt policies

Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan briefed senior US officials about the policies and directions of the new government in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

He specially focused on investment and business opportunities in Bangladesh, creation of employment in rural areas, developments envisioned in the social sectors, such as education, family planning, health services.

Sobhan held talks with the senior US officials during his two-day visit to Washington, DC, from August 27. He is paying a four-day visit to the United States.

According to a message received yesterday during his visit to Washington, DC, the Foreign Secretary called on Anthony Lake, US National Security Adviser, Ms Joan E. Spero, Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Mr Robin Raphael, Assistant Secretary of State, and Ms Molly K. Williamson, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organisations, to discuss both bilateral and international issues.

Plan to increase power supply by 360 mw

Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Noor Uddin Khan yesterday disclosed a plan to enhance power supply by 360 megawatt by next April and by 800 megawatt by 1998 as an interim step to meet power shortage, reports UNB.

"The condition of the power sector is miserable, by the government is committed to end the staggering power shortage as soon as possible," he said while participating in the budget discussion in Parliament.

Khan informed the House that the power authority had to loadshed electricity to the tune of 422 megawatt on Tuesday. "Only Almighty Allah knows when the crisis will end," he said.

Khaleda

From Page 1

ery inch of our motherland.

The BNP chairperson said law and order situation in the country has deteriorated alarmingly and during the last two months after Awami League assumed power. "The present scene of terrorism reminds us the days in 1974," she added.

She said Parliament needed such persons who would raise the problems of the people in the House and try to resolve those by coaxing the government. "Barrister Moudud is such a person," she said introducing her party nominee in the coming byelection.

BNP candidate for Laxmipur-2 constituency Barrister Moudud Ahmed, addressing the election rallies, said Jatiya Party had now become "Jatiya Awami Party" by compromising with Awami League and joining its cabinet.

"I didn't leave Jatiya Party, rather the party had left me by joining in the chorus of Joy Bangla and Bangladeshi nationalism. This is why I returned to BNP which believes in Bangladeshi nationalism," said the former Jatiya Party leader and vice-president of the Ershad government.

Beam Zia, the second day of her four-day electioneering tour of Laxmipur and Mirsarai constituencies, addressed a number of public meetings and wayside rallies at Rasulganj, Charbamni, Sonapur, South Raipur and some other places.

ARC: Office of ombudsman

From Page 1

ment colleges and a Department for Madrasah Education.

The Nurunnabi Committee has also called for the separation of audit and accounts under the Comptroller and Auditor General. Departmentalisation of accounts, complete with the needed administrative machinery, has been proposed for proper and timely government accounts.

The Committee noted that there was a good deal of discontent among officers of departments and corporations because of the "overbearing and overcentralising postures" of the ministries and divisions.

It recommended a scheme of delegation of powers to departments and corporations and charted out chain of command, the workload and span of control in the entire government hierarchy.

Recommendation of reduction of ministries to 22 from 35, the Committee noted "fewer ministries and divisions was in keeping with the dictates of economy and efficiency of the government."

The Committee, however, mentioned that it was aware of the political drive for creation of larger number of ministries for accommodating a larger number of ministers in the government. It felt that it was possible to keep the recommended number of ministries and still

appoint junior ministers in large ministries to meet the political compulsions of the party in power. "This policy should have the additional advantage of inducing politicians of different ages in the government and will develop junior politicians for higher responsibilities in the future."

It recommended a