

# Metropolitan

## Orientation programme for MPs on proposed budget begins

Minister for Agriculture and Food Motia Choudhury yesterday described farmers as the greatest economists who ensured quick return of the government incentives by boosting agriculture productions this year.

She said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had rightly perceived the importance of agriculture in the national economy and that was why she had provided various incentives, including subsidy, for this sector.

"All these incentives as well as hard toil of the farmers came out as a big boost in the agriculture sector," she said while delivering her introductory speech at the 2nd session of the orientation programme for Treasury Bench members on the proposed budget for the fiscal 1997-98.

Suranjit Sengupta, MP, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs, was in the chair during the session, held at the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday afternoon. Whip of the Jatiya Sangsad Md Abdus Shahid conducted the session.

Eminent economist Dr Atur Rahman explained the pros and cons of the proposed budget to the Treasury Bench during the session which was followed by a questions and answers.

Motia Choudhury thanked the farmers of the country saying that they, through their hard labour, increased the rice and wheat productions during the current season by properly using the incentives provided by the government.

"Wheat productions this year surpassed 15 lakh tonnes, the highest in the last 10 to 12 years," she said adding that the farmers were also sure of getting the due price of their hard labour from the government.

She said there was no dearth in food supply even during the drought or lean season as the government had ensured availability of food through its various programmes all over the country.

Motia Choudhury said the agriculture sector was left into a mess over the last 21 years through mismanagement and wrong policies which had given rise to various problems including acute food crisis year after year.

Suranjit Sengupta in his presidential speech said that the MPs attending the session would be able to enrich themselves by taking part in an open discussion on various allocations made in the agriculture sector through the proposed budget.

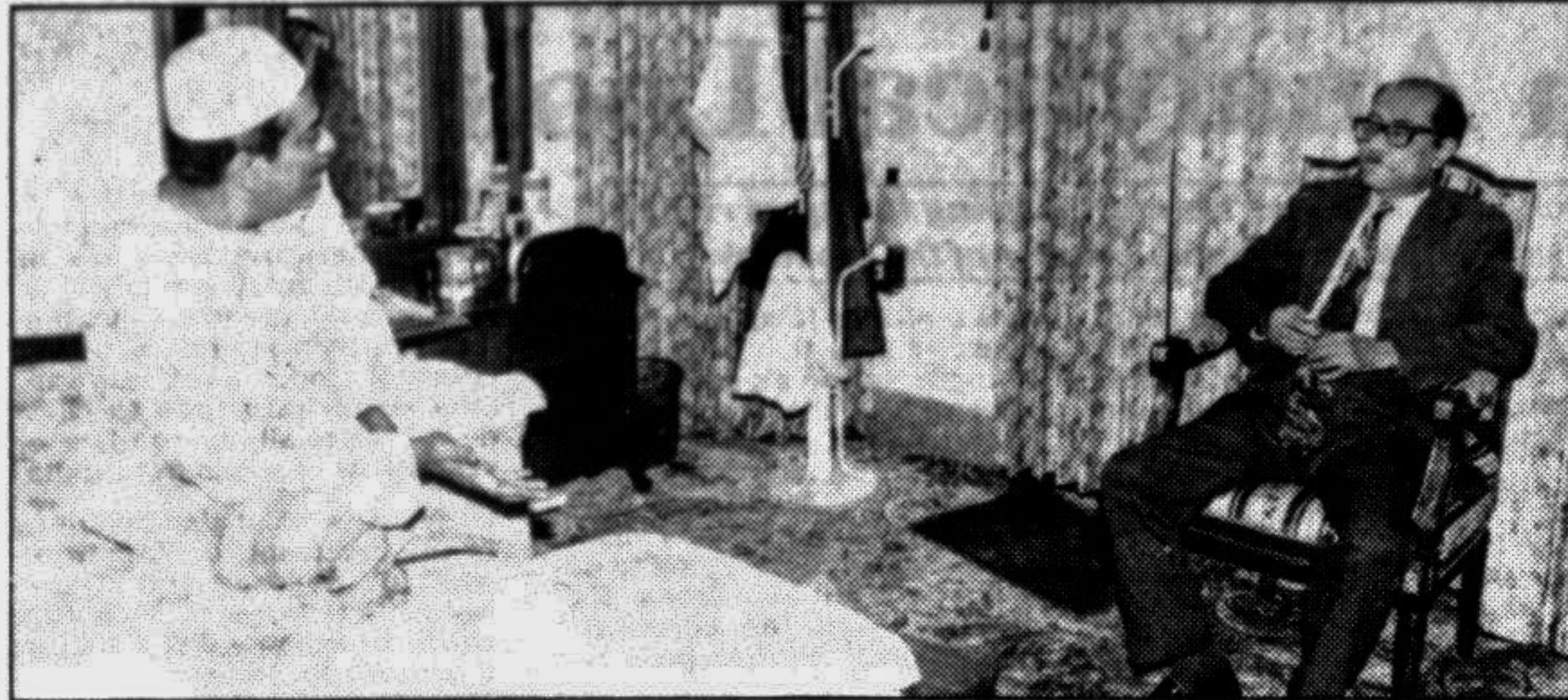
He said such elaborate discussion on a budget under parliamentary system of democracy in the sub-continent has not take place before.

"Budget is not a document that it will remain limited within the finance minister and his aides or routine actions and reactions," he said.

He said most of the MPs were from rural areas and that was why farmers' interest should get priority to carry forward the agriculture sector, the biggest employer, towards the cherished goal for the gradual growth in the national economy.



Finance Minister SAMS Kibria addressing a dialogue on 'the state of the Bangladesh economy and the role of the budget in stimulating economic activity', organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue at the CIRDAP auditorium in the city yesterday. —Star photo



President Shahabuddin visiting ailing Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah at his residence yesterday. —PID photo

### What's on today . . . .

**Folk theatre festival:** Ruposhi Opera of Comilla will present 'Kajal Rekha'. Venue: Shilpakala Academy auditorium. Time: 7 pm.

**Children's rally:** Primary and Mass Education Directorate has organised a children's rally on the occasion of National Primary Education Week '97. Venue: Osmani Memorial Hall. Time: 9:15 am-10:30 am. Chief guest: Education Minister ASHK Sadeque.

**Zahir Raihan Film Society:** 'Un homme amoureux' (A man in love) by Diane Kurys will be screened as part of a retrospective of contemporary French women filmmakers. Venue: Alliance Francaise, Dhanmondi. Time: 6 pm.

**Rotary Club of Dhaka Midtown:** The weekly meeting will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 5:30 pm.

**Rotary Club of Gulshan:** The weekly meeting will be held. Venue: Sajna Restaurant, Gulshan. Time: 5:30 pm.

**Rotary Club of Greater Dhaka:** The weekly meeting will be held. Venue: Officers' Club, Baily Rd. Time: 5:30 pm.

### President, Speaker visit ailing Chief Whip

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed visited ailing Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah at his Sher-e-Bangla Nagar residence yesterday, reports UNB.

He stayed there for some times and enquired about his treatment. The President wished him full and early recovery. Whip Prof Rafiqul Islam was also with him.

Hasnat is suffering from heart problems and arthritis, said an official handout.

Meanwhile, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury also visited Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah at his official residence yesterday.

He stayed there for some time and enquired about his health.

### Workshop held

A day-long workshop on "designing a special curriculum and syllabus in secondary level for the hearing-impaired students in Bangladesh" was held in the city yesterday, reports UNB.

Prof Mohammad Shamsul Huq, Chairman of the National Committee for Education Policy, inaugurated the workshop at the auditorium of National Federation of the Deaf.

Prof Muhammad Ali, a member of the National Board for Curriculum and Syllabus, chaired the closing session of the workshop. Eminent educationist Prof Anwar Ali was present as special guest.

A total of 37 specialists from 14 government and non-government organisations participated in the workshop, aimed at identifying the problem areas in the present curriculum and syllabus, and made recommendations.

### Sajeda back home

Minister for Forest and Environment, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury returned home yesterday from Honolulu after attending a three-day international conference on "Environmental changes and regional security," reports BSS.

The conference focussed on the emerging environmental role in traditional security issues.

### 10 lakh telephone lines in country by turn of century

The government has plans to increase the number of telephone line across the country up to 10 lakh under its expansion programme by the turn of the century, reports BSS.

The Bangladesh Economic Survey for '97 released on Thursday said the number of telephone line may go up to 5.35 lakh at the end of this year from the present 4.92 lakh.

The survey said the nation wide dialing (NWD) area is being extended under the expansion programme. The number of NWD circuit for internal communication will be 19890 by 1997 from the current 11,410 circuits, the survey said, adding in case of external communication, the number of circuit will be increased to 1950 by the end of the current year from 1645 to meet the additional traffic demand.

The survey said the card phone system established in 1992 will also be expanded to every district headquarters including thana and growth centres to give the telephone facilities to the non-subscribers. The number of card phone booths will increase to 1400 by the end of the year from the present 1265.

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