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Experts suggest at BISS seminar Trim defence budget, let vital sectors grow

Suggesting the need for a transparency in defence expenditures, speakers at a seminar yesterday called for containing the ever-increasing military budget to allow other vital sectors to grow, report agencies. Such views were expressed by some of the experts at a seminar on 'National Security of Bangladesh in the 21st Century' at the BISS auditorium in the city. Most of the speakers at the seminar, organised by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), said the defence budget should be minimised to divert more funds for development activities and poverty alleviation. In his paper, Group Captain Ishfaq Ila Choudhury said there was need for people's participation in the policy making of the defence. Arguing that defence expenditure should remain at its present level over the next decade, he said: 'After all it is people's money and they must decide how best to spend it. Ishfaq Ila's idea of setting up a Joint Forces Headquarters to co-ordinate the operations of the three forces got support from most of the participants, including military experts present at the seminar. Ila further suggested for putting in place a unified command and control structure for the forces. Finance Minister Shah AMS Kibria stressed economic growth and poverty alleviation to consolidate national security. Security concept has many facets and dimensions today, it is not just the military hardware,' said Kibria. The finance minister said an unimpeded and stable economic growth, social cohesion, eradication of poverty and a strong leadership will be the determinants of Bangladesh's future security aspect. Defence Secretary Syed Yusuf Hossain, who chaired the inaugural session, said the concept of national security has changed over the years. 'Today's prime concern is to identify the sources of new threats and find out ways to overcome those.' National security today lies in strengthening economic and social progress, he said. Col (Retd) Shaikat Ali, a ruling party MP, said there should be one operational headquarters for the armed forces. He also pointed out the absence of transparency in the defence budget, saying, 'Even being a member of parliament we come to know very little about the defence expenditure from the budget speech and other documents. Major General (Retd) Syed M Ibrahim, Bir Pratik, in his paper said cross-border insurgency was a threat for national security. While Bangladesh should impress upon India that it has no hand in any insurgency in the seven northeastern states of the neighbouring country, 'so that we can ask India not to support any insurgency inside Bangladesh.' BISS Director General Brig Shaheedul Anam Khan said five major areas of security threats may be military, political, social, economic and environmental. Market economy may lead to conflicts due to tough competition and imbalance in resource allocation among the countries, he said. Counting the possibilities of conventional military threats will be misleading, he said and pointed out poverty as the main security threat for developing countries. Insurgency, terrorism, and arms and drug trafficking are the internal security threats where the regional countries need cooperation among each other, he said.



Chancellor of the Rajshahi University President Shahabuddin Ahmed addressing the 7th convocation of the university yesterday. — PID photo

President

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Why will they go for the rocky way of acquiring knowledge while they can get wealth, even MP and minister by resorting to terrorist student politics? 'I have been making frequent calls to the political parties to free the students from their control and bury their relations with the students and academic institutions. Otherwise, we have to face a dark future.' He also urged the participants to be prepared for the 21st century and added, 'We must acquire knowledge in all fields, especially in science and technology. Otherwise, we would be branded as a poor, dependent and beggar nation.' The president also underlined the need for implementing family planning programme and urged all including political leaders, workers, students and teachers to make it a success. He stressed the need for turning huge population of the country into human resource through application of science and technology. Earlier, the president took part in the convocation rally and inaugurated the convocation. Former RU vice-chancellor Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid acted as the Convocation Speaker. Education Minister AHSK Sadek, Political Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr SM Malek, State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Prof Zinnatun Nisa Talukdar, RU Vice-Chancellor Prof Abdul Khaleque and Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof Sayedur Rahman Khan were among those who spoke. University Grants Commission Chairman Prof Yaz Uddin Ahmed, vice chancellors of different universities, diplomats and teachers were also present. Meanwhile, different student organisations protested the president's comment on student politics. They included pro-BNP Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal, Bangladesh Chhatra League (C-K), Bangladesh Chhatra Union, Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri and Jatitya Chhatra Samaj.

Govt to shun ploythene units, ban 2-stroke engines gradually

The government has decided not to permit new ploythene industries, reports UNB. A meeting of the National Environment Committee also agreed to ban in phases the import of two-stroke engines, which emits black smoke into the atmosphere, as part of a set of anti-pollution measures. Officials said the environment committee took the decisions in its executive body meeting yesterday with Environment and Forest Minister Sajeda Chowdhury in the chair. The meeting had a detailed discussion on production and limited use of ploythene, controlling black smoke and environment pollution by tannery industries. It requested the ministries concerned to take measures for increasing use of jute and clothes to obviate the adverse impact of ploythene on the environment. It also decided to gear up the drives at different points to stop emission of black smoke from vehicles. The meeting requested the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and refineries concerned to take necessary measures for the sale of fuel in lid containers to ensure lead-free fuels. The environment minister sought coordinated approach from ministries concerned to ensure ecological balance. The meeting discussed how to prevent water pollution in the Buriganga and evict illegal occupation. It suggested that the Land Ministry, Dhaka City Corporation and BIWTA could take a lead in this respect. The meeting resolved that necessary steps should be taken immediately to clean the environment being polluted by tanneries in the city's Hazaribagh leather hub. It decided that Dhaka City Corporation and other municipalities would take independent programmes to clean up dirt from their respective areas.

BNP threatens to seek legal action against BTV

BNP leaders yesterday threatened to seek legal action against Bangladesh Television unless it stops what they said canards and vilifications that surpassed 'Goebblesian' propaganda techniques against them. 'Since this government came to power it is using the TV and Radio not only for its partisan campaign but also for tarnishing the image of the Opposition although it had pledged autonomy for the electronic media in its election manifesto' BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiya said yesterday. He told a press conference at BNP central office that the TV recently ran three interviews with certain persons to vilify three party leaders, Sadek Hossain Khoka MP, Amanullah Aman MP and former MP Salahuddin Ahmed. 'In one such programme on Saturday night, it was stated that a person was taken into custody with a gun in Pabna. The arrested man said on TV that he was a 'resident' of Keraniganj and an 'admirer' of Amanullah Aman and that he was sent to Pabna by him to create 'terror' before the by-polls there. Mannan said the man was arrested from a BNP meeting without any guns. Later it was stated that he was taken into custody from an Awami League meeting and sent to Pabna to foil the bypolls. It shows that the ruling party is creating grounds to unleash terror before the byelection in Pabna. He reiterated his warning against tailoring poll results and threatened to launch a vigorous movement to topple the government. Aman, who also spoke at the press conference, said it was designed to tarnish his image publicly. Sadek Hossain Khoka, said sometime ago, the television presented a person describing him as his bodyguard. 'I never appointed anyone as my bodyguard. I never felt the need of a bodyguard as every one knows me very well. Even when I was a minister, I never allowed police guards in my small tin-shed residence', Khoka said. Salahuddin Ahmed, former BNP MP from Demra, also complained against the BTV that it showed two boys with 'Scot and Wemby' revolvers a day after BNP's 60 hour hartal earlier this month. It was stated that I gave them the guns to 'damage vehicles'. But residents of the locality told me later that about 14 were caught with a pipegun while they were preparing for a caucus. 'I never knew them. The TV ran their 'confessions' but did not feel the obligation to run a protest note I sent to them. I am waiting for their reply. If they fail, I am going to sue them', Salahuddin said.

7 killed in Comilla road accident

At least ten people were killed and 20 others injured in separate road accidents in Comilla, Narayanganj and Jhenidah yesterday, reports APB. Of them, seven people were killed in Comilla, two in Narayanganj and the rest was in Jhenidah. In Comilla, seven people, including a woman, were killed and 20 others injured when a bus collided with a truck on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Chandina yesterday. The Sonagazi-bound bus from Dhaka collided with a truck coming from the opposite direction at Keronkhal at about 3-45 pm. Both the vehicles overturned and plunged into a roadside ditch. Police said four people died on the spot while three others succumbed to their injuries on way to hospitals. Two of the dead were identified as Shamsunnahar, 45, and Alamgir, 21. Police said the victims were travelling by bus. Local people rescued the injured people and sent them to Comilla Medical Hospital at Comilla and Chandina Health Complex. Police seized both the vehicles, but the drivers fled away. Traffic movement came to a halt for more than an hour on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway after a woman and her daughter were killed in a road accident near Kanchpur bridge in Sonagazi thana under Narayanganj yesterday morning. Police said Monowara Begum, 28 and her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter were crushed under the wheels of a speeding truck near the bridge while she was crossing the road at about 9 am with her baby in the lap. Immediately after the accident, witnesses said, several hundred agitated people gathered at the scene and put up barricades on the road. Siddhirganj police rushed to the spot, seized the killer truck and cleared the highway for traffic movement. The driver managed to flee. In Jhenidah, a middle-aged housewife was killed in a road accident at Tetultala on Jhenidah-Jessore highway yesterday. Witnesses said Noorjahan Begum, 45, of village Mayadharpur in Kotwali thana, was crushed under wheels of a microbus while she was crossing the road. After the incident, agitated people put up barricades on the road for three hours disrupting traffic movement. They also damaged four buses and trucks.

Govt arresting partymen ahead of by-election, alleges Minu

From Our Correspondent
PABNA, Nov 29: BNP Organising Secretary and Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu today alleged indiscriminate arrest of party workers and harassment of supporters ahead of Pabna-2 by-polls on December 10. At a press conference at Pabna Press Club this evening said some 800 BNP workers were arrested. He also accused the ruling party of threatening the UP chairman belonging to the party, using illegally the government offices for election purpose, and sending police to terrorise voters. Citing examples, Mizanur Rahman said Surat Ali, Shaifur Rahman and Raihan Mollah of Tanjipara, Sujana Mollah were picked up from their homes. When challenged police could not show arrest warrants. He also accused Telecommunication Minister Mohammad Nasim and State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed of gross violation of election rules by campaigning for the ruling party candidate by abusing official power and park, according to UNB.

Abuse of power under Sec 54 Showcause on govt

By SC Correspondent
The High Court yesterday ordered the government to show cause as to why it should not be directed to refrain from 'unwarranted and abusive exercise of power' under Section 54 or seeking remand under Section 167 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The HC also directed the respondents to show cause as to why they shall not be directed to strictly exercise power of arrest and investigation within the limits established by law and the constitution and in particular, the constitutional safeguards contained in Articles 27, 31, 32, 33 and 35 of the constitution. A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice A M Mahmudur Rahman and Justice Mohammad Muzammel Hossain further directed the respondents to show cause as to why they should not be required to comply with the guidelines such as those set in the petition. The Court also ordered the respondents to show cause as to why they shall not be directed to make monetary compensation to the families of victims of custodial death, torture and custodial rape. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) represented by Dr Shaheedul Malik, Ain-O-Salish Kendra represented by Salma Sobhan, Shammita Shamajik Andolon represented by Jarique Ali, Sabita Rani Chakraborti wife of late Arun Chakraborti who died in police custody, Alhaj Syed Anwarul Haque, Sultan-uz Zaman Khan, Ummin Naser-alias Ratan Rahmatullah and Moniruzzaman Hayat Mahmud as petitioner filed the writ petition. The Secretary, Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, the Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and the Inspector General of Police were the respondents in the writ petition. Dr Kamal Hossain in his submission drew attention of the Court to the report of the Justice Habibur Rahman Khan. The commission recommended fulfillment of a number of requirements by police to ensure transparency and accountability. The Judicial Inquiry Commission was formed following the death of Rubel in police custody.

Undertrial prisoner commits suicide

From Staff Correspondent
SYLHET, Nov 29: An undertrial prisoner committed suicide in the Sylhet Central Jail this afternoon, official source said. Jamshed Ali, 45, of village Akilpur under Biswanath thana hanged himself from the water pipe at Ward number 11 at about 3-55 PM. He was rushed to the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead. Jamshed had been in jail for the last five months, official source said.

Cong won't destabilise

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Several senior party colleagues of Vajpayee attributed the drubbing of BJP at the hustings to the unprecedented rise in prices of essential goods particularly that of onion. Soon after the electoral results began pouring in last night, the Prime Minister had a 40-minute meeting with President K R Narayanan for what was officially described as a 'routine' exercise. Sources in BJP maintained that Vajpayee had not tendered the resignation of his council of ministers. While the left parties and other anti-BJP groups once again asked the Congress to take initiative to form an alternative government at the centre, Sonia Gandhi's party chose to maintain restraint asserting that it would not destabilise the Vajpayee government. The Congress, however, made it clear that it would not shy away forming the government if the BJP-led coalition ministry collapses on its own after the election results in the four states. According to results announced so far, the Congress secured three-fourth majority in Rajasthan bagging 150 as against 33 of the BJP out of 197 besides maintaining lead in a few other constituencies. In the capital Delhi, out of 69 seats where elections were held BJP got only 15. The Congress also achieved a surprise victory in Madhya Pradesh belying the pollsters prediction. Out of the total 320 constituencies, ruling Congress secured 173 seats. In Mizoram, the Mizo National Front (MNF) and Mizo People's Conference (MPC) bagged 33 seats while Congress only six out of a total 40-member assembly. The BJP chief ministers of Delhi and Rajasthan, Sushma Swaraj and Bhairon Singh Shakhawat have resigned from their posts after the party's debacle in the elections. Outgoing Mizoram chief minister Lal Thanhawla and his council of ministers also resigned today. The future of India's shaky coalition government hung in the balance today following a humiliating defeat for the ruling Hindu nationalists in key state elections. Analysts and newspapers warned of political instability and fresh parliamentary elections after the rout seriously undermined the coalition government. The government will have little time to lick its wounds, with parliament opening its winter session tomorrow. The next course of action by the BJP and its allies on the hand and Congress and other opposition parties on the other would be known by tomorrow as the highest decision-making bodies of the two sides meet. Of special interest will be the meeting of Congress Working Committee as all parties opposed to BJP favour the Congress to take the lead in forming an alternative government. The electoral outcome in four states could also give BJP a tough time not only from its own ranks but also from allies. A meeting of the Coordination Committee of BJP and allies is scheduled for tomorrow. AIADMK supremo Jayalalitha and Trinamool Congress leader Momata Banerjee have decided against attending the meeting tomorrow indicating that all is not well in the ruling alliance. '78 verdict

Beximco: Banks get raw deals

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ities in loan sanctioning by IFIC and AB. The team could not find anyone in the addresses given for the loan accounts. Upon further inquiry, the Beximco Group owned up to Tk 72.19 crore loans against 69 false accounts with AB Bank against 118.46 crore taken against 112 false accounts with IFIC Bank. The banks concerned told Beximco that they would be given a maximum of four years time to repay these loans, to which it had agreed. At that time, Beximco also pledged in writing that it would be obliged to repay the whole amount in one instalment if it failed to pay even one instalment as per the schedule. Beximco failed several times to repay the instalments and, mysteriously enough, was not compelled to keep its commitment of paying in full. 'In consequences of their recommendations, IFIC Bank advanced various credit facilities to such parties,' Beximco claims adding that the plaintiffs (Beximco Holdings Limited, ASF Rahman and Salman F Rahman) never had any personal interest in the loans advanced to the said parties. However, its claims are contradicted by Sohel Rahman's own letter to IFIC Bank of December 12, 1993 about one of its front organisations, Baghkhali Fisheries against which fictitious loans had been taken. In his letter, Sohel Rahman admitted that 'the directors and shareholders of Baghkhali Fisheries Ltd are professionals working for the Beximco Group'. 'Accordingly as per our discussions we are pleased to confirm to you that we are agreeable to guarantee the repayment of the outstanding amount of Tk 10.68 crore as on September 30, 1993 against Baghkhali Fisheries Ltd's account with Motijheel Branch of IFIC Bank Ltd,' the letter further said. 'As regards the guarantee of Tk five crore given on behalf of Patuakhali Foods Ltd, as you are aware, the same has been stayed by the honourable court. We are however prepared to give a counter guarantee to you subject to the final verdict of the courts'. 'We are also prepared to provide the personal guarantees of our directors. A list of our directors and shareholders and another list is also given.' Earlier, an investigation by vernacular daily Bhorer Kagoj on Beximco's IBP scandal also found that two shady companies - Mallik Exports and Baghkhali Fisheries - were being used by the company to carry out its cheque purchase ventures. 'Some former senior officials of Beximco Fisheries and Baghkhali Fisheries told

Dock workers at Ctg Port call off today's strike

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Nov 29: Dock Srmit Karmachari Parishad has called off its tomorrow's 24-hour strike at Chittagong Port, port sources said. The decision was taken following a fruitful talks between the Deputy Minister for Port and Shipping Saber Hossain Chowdhury and the union leaders at port office this afternoon, port sources said.

Two policemen dismissed in Khulna

From Staff Correspondent
KHULNA, Nov 29: Court Sub-Inspector Majelul Islam and constable Jalaluddin, allegedly involved in the theft of firearms and ammunition from KMP Malkhana, have been dismissed from services.

Shazneen's father cross-examined

From Page 1
Transcom Group of Industries with over 5000 employees, the head office being located at 52 Motijheel. There are a number of general managers in the Transcom Group of Industries. I am the importer and distributor of Paris-based L'Oreal cosmetics and New York-based MAY-BELLINE. I do not know whether there is any showroom of L'Oreal at any five star hotel in the city. My son is the eldest of my children. Then I had three daughters. Now I have two daughters. I am here to seek justice for my youngest daughter who was brutally killed. The full name of my son is Arshad Waliur Rahman Reaz. He is married and lives in a house at Gulshan near my residence. I cannot say the (holding) number of his house. My eldest daughter works as a general manager of Transcom Distribution. My second daughter returned to Bangladesh last year (1997) and joined Transcom Distribution as an executive. My son Reaz also works at Transcom. My house is built on two bighas and 2 kathas of land. It is a two-storied house having five bedrooms with attached bath and dressing rooms, a dining room on the ground floor, a drawing-cum-dining room on the first floor, a sitting room on the ground floor and a laundry room on the ground floor. Besides, there is a kitchen and servant quarters in the compound, connected by a corridor. My residence is located at Road no 83. The road runs north to south. I do not know how many houses are there at Road no 83. There are houses on both the sides of the road. My house is located on the western side of the road. All the seven accused in the case -- domestic help Shahidul Islam, contractor Hasan, guard Humayun, supervisor Badal, carpenter Shani Ram, and two maids Parvin and Minu were brought in the court room during the proceeding. Meanwhile, Hasan's lawyer, Khondkar Bashir Hossain, filed a petition praying for an order for shifting Hasan to hospital for treatment. The petition said that Hasan was suffering from heart disease. The court has yet to give order on the petition.

Onion, the culprit

NEW DELHI, Nov 29: A leader of India's ruling coalition today blamed the soaring price of onions and other staples for the stunning rout of Hindu nationalists in key state elections, reports AFP. 'Indeed it was onions and potatoes,' Defence Minister George Fernandes said when asked to identify the reasons for the defeat. In some parts of India, the cost of onions -- a staple for millions of poor -- rose by 10 times to sell at 60 rupees (1.5 dollars) a kilo. Major Congress rallies featured huge onion-shaped balloons in a bid to mock the government's failure to contain runaway inflation. But Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray said the defeat of the BJP in three states could be attributed to the central government's 'inconsistent stand' on Hindutva, particularly the 'Vande mataram' issue and its attitude to the upcoming tour of the Pakistani cricket team of India. 'The Centre should have taken a bold stand on these issues and lack of it resulted in the BJP losing Hindu votes,' Thackeray told PTI in Mumbai.

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