

City mayors prefer Pajero to self-reliance
Alleges Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday alleged the country's city corporation mayors prefer to use government sanctions to move about in posh Pajero jeeps to making their offices self-reliant.

"Whereas, as the finance minister I use a car so modest that my head often hits its roof," he said at a meeting with the Economic Reporters Forum (ERF).

He also criticised people who keep on demanding strengthening local government without knowing and considering the financial implications. "You must realise that the Bangladeshi local government bodies do not try to earn anything through local taxes. Instead, they depend on government funding," he said.

"People don't want to pay tax, but they will pay extortionists thousands of taka," he noted, adding.

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Saifur for village-centric reform to bridge gap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to go for a village-centric reform programme to transfer resources gradually from urban to rural areas and reducing the yawning rich-poor gap.

The lessons from the pitfalls of Indian economic reform and its electoral consequences have made the BNP-led alliance government cautious and motivated it to "draw up a caring reform in the next budget," Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman said yesterday.

At a pre-budget briefing, Saifur told the Economic Reporters Forum (ERF) that the Indian reform benefited but a few, helping them get richer. "But, we have to pursue a reform which ensures that resources go to all sections of people rather than get accumulated in a few people's hands."

"The main focus would be on reduction of poverty through generating employment, mainly in the rural areas," he told the meeting.

The reform policy will be consistent with the PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper), three-year rolling plan and a midterm economic development plan up to 2008 to ultimately achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015.

The planned midterm financial structure up to 2008, which will include a guideline for resource mobilisation as well as expenditure, will help ministries and other government bodies to take policy decisions in advance, said Saifur, who is going to place his 10th national budget on June 10.

The minister said the budget would lay stress on decentralisation to stop unethical practice by the local government bodies as well.

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Non-government primary schoolteachers start a fast-unto-death at Mukhtangan in Dhaka immediately after a 72-hour hunger strike demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

Pry teachers begin hunger strike to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Non-government primary school teachers yesterday started a fast-unto-death programme at Mukhtangan following completion of their 72-hour hunger strike demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

"We've decided to go on fast-unto-death as the government continues to pay no heed to our demand," General Secretary of Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association Shamsul Alam told The Daily Star.

The primary teachers will not return home without realising their demand. If necessary, we will die here, said Alam from Mukhtangan.

However, Adviser to Prime Minister

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12 killed as violence rages thru' Iraq

AGENCIES, Baghdad

Militants loyal to radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr clashed yesterday with US forces near a mosque in the holy city of Kufa, and officials said six Iraqis were killed and 40 others wounded.

Violence also continued in Baghdad, with the third fatal car bomb in as many days. A car has blown up in a busy northern Baghdad neighbourhood, killing at least five people and wounding more than 35, including children, police and hospital officials say.

West of the capital, insurgents fired mortars at a police station near the guerrilla stronghold of Fallujah, killing an Iraqi civilian and wounding three people, including a US Marine.

Explosions rocked the industrial sections of Kufa, where Shia leaders have been struggling to save a shaky cease-fire. Many of the

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300 cheated Bangladeshis stranded in Laos

UNB, Dhaka

Some 300 Bangladeshi workers, hooked up by unscrupulous manpower agencies, remained stranded in Laos.

This was disclosed by Khampasong Douangsinh, ambassador-designate of Laos stationed in

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Security scurry ahead of Rumsfeld's visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite official silence on US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld's arrival in Dhaka on Saturday, government officials, security agencies and US authorities are working out security details for the high-profile visit.

Security at international airports in the country have been beefed up on the eve of Rumsfeld's nearly 14-hour visit while State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfulzaman Babar sat with heads of security agencies on Tuesday to review the steps being taken, sources said.

A US security team is also expected to arrive in the capital today to look into the security situation.

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Kidnappers kill 5-yr-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Captors of a 5-year-old boy have killed him after demanding Tk 50,000 to set him free.

Police recovered the body of Nasim Islam, son of Kamrul Islam of village Raja Birat under Gobindaganj upazila, on Tuesday after a case was filed with Gobindaganj Police Station. They sent it to Gaibandha hospital for autopsy.

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Prayer Timing		
June 3		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-45	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Staff of ZIA branches of 3 NCB's changed Links to their underhand forex trading found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The management of three nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) yesterday transferred all officers and staff at their Zia International Airport (ZIA) branches following allegations of their involvement with *hundi* business.

The manager of Sonali Bank's airport branch has been transferred and 12 other officers and staff will be transferred within a couple of days, a bank high official said.

All 15 staff of Janata Bank including its manager and seven of Agrani Bank were transferred yesterday, sources said.

The bank management took the

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Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks to secretaries of different ministries and departments at the cabinet division in the secretariat yesterday.

