

# Revenue target a challenge

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"The BNP is hardly influenced by poll politics. We are overwhelmingly guided by fiscal and monetary policies," he said.

Dissatisfied with poor implementation of the annual development programme (ADP), the minister mentioned: "There are lapses in implementation. We did not have an institutional framework and the ministries lack dynamism."

Despite all limitations, the government is shoring up the monitoring mechanism to implement the ADP, he said, adding: "I am convinced that reform will help bring a significant change."

On the budget termed ambitious, Saifur defended the ADP size: "The ADP of Tk 22,000 crore is not enough for 140 million people. It is rather scarce."

New procurement guidelines and other steps to integrate project proposals and project concept papers will help quicken ADP implementation, he said.

The budget outlay gave additional allocation to law-enforcement agencies, as law and order downside seriously affected the economy, Saifur said.

"I allocated more funds to the law-enforcement agencies as part of our efforts to improve the situation. It is very difficult to improve the law and order situation if confrontation politics continues."

Saifur warned that uncertainty will loom in the post-MFA (multi-

fibre agreement) period and Bangladesh may suffer short-term strains. A fund of Tk 20 crore has been allocated to retrain readymade garment workers, he said. "It is possible to increase the amount and we hope we will be able to tackle the situation."

The main objectives are to cut poverty, creating employment, encouraging women's education and increasing social welfare, he emphasised, adding: "But our resources are limited. The government tries to involve women in development work."

Former finance minister SAMS Kibria's remark that budget presentation deceived people, Saifur said the word has been inappropriately chosen. "I would not like to use such a word in criticising anyone."

The budget may be unrealistic for him but not for us. It is the reality for the BNP government. We did not destroy the capital market by stupidity he did."

On Kibria's another remark, Saifur said the village-centric development policy did not get priority in his plans overnight. "I tried to do it from my budget presentations in the 1980s."

"We don't believe in confrontational programmes unlike the Awami League. Introducing old-age allowance was a programme of the BNP government when it was in power in the earlier term. But we could not implement it, as we could not come to power in the 1996 polls. The Awami League

government did it," he said.

On village-centric development programmes and agriculture, he said modern technology in irrigation, fertiliser and other areas of agriculture should be encouraged when the per capita land is on the decline.

"Rabi crop output is on the decline and the country meets the requirement by importing from different countries. If we want to increase the domestic production, we have to help farmers. We hope the budget proposals will help increase not only production but diversified crops." It is also necessary to increase expenditure in infrastructure, he observed.

Innovative aspects of the budget are to allocate a fund of Tk 100 crore for disaster management, provide an annual festival allowance for retired government employees equivalent to one-month salary and medical vouchers for women to reduce high mortality rate before and after pregnancy, Saifur said.

The industries that were given protection failed and the industries now being set up are of international standards, he said hoping they can compete on the global front. The government helps entrepreneurs get massive loans with low interest rate, he said.

Speaking at the briefing, Local Government and LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said the budget was laid out to maintain financial discipline.

## AL to enforce half-day hartal in Bogra today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A person who earns Tk 9 lakh or any amount above than that will be taxed Tk 1,27,500 against Tk 1,52,500 in FY 2003-2004, marking a slide of Tk 25,000 or 16 percent.

According to finance minister's budget proposal till May 2004, total registered taxpayers numbered at 15,50,000. In 2004-2005, which was earlier Tk 39,500, registering a decline of Tk 4,500 or 11 percent. The income tax has been proposed for a dip by Tk 9,500 or 16 percent for individuals earning Tk 5 lakh but not exceeding Tk 6 lakh.

One person who earns Tk 6 lakh but below Tk 7 lakh will see an income tax cut by 15 percent or Tk 12,000 under the proposed system. An individual earning Tk 7 lakh but not above Tk 8 lakh will see a drop by Tk 15,000 or 15 percent in income tax payment.

An individual earning Tk 8 lakh but not above Tk 9 lakh will have to pay Tk 1,07,500 as income tax while the same was Tk 1,27,500 in FY 2003-2004, a decrease of Tk 20,000 or 16 percent.

## Income tax

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year will be taxed Tk 20,000 under the proposed income tax structure, marking a 17 percent decline. The amount was Tk 24,000 in FY 2003-2004 budget.

A person with an annual earning of Tk 4 lakh but not beyond Tk 5 lakh will have to pay Tk 35,000, which was earlier Tk 39,500, registering a decline of Tk 4,500 or 11 percent. The income tax has been proposed for a dip by Tk 9,500 or 16 percent for individuals earning Tk 5 lakh but not exceeding Tk 6 lakh.

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Bogra town unit of the Awami League (AL) and its front organisations have called a half-day hartal in the district for today protesting the arrest of district Jubo League President Manzurul Alam Mohon.

Police arrested Mohon early yesterday in Shibatti area of the town for his alleged involvement in the killing of Jubo Dal leader Abu Thandu.

Thandu, general secretary of Jubo Dal town unit, was killed in an armed attack on February 20 this year.

Unit of the AL and District Jubo League jointly announced the hartal programme at a press conference at the local press club yesterday.

The AL and Jubo League leaders threatened to launch an agitation programme in the district if the arrested Jubo League president was not released within the next 24 hours.

## Hasina

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her political rival Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to resign immediately and hold general elections. "Take a fresh mandate of people if you (Khaleda Zia) have enough confidence on them. People will reject you like they did in Munshiganj-1 by-polls," said Hasina.

She said despite no growth in agriculture, industry and other sectors the finance minister raised the national growth to 5.52 percent from 4 percent of the previous fiscal year (FY).

"Such growth will bring no good to people when inflation is almost double to it," she pointed out.

During the previous AL rule, the average growth was over six percent and the average inflation rate below two percent, Hasina said.

She said the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition in its third budget has some ideas of the past AL government. "At last, they have realised that without following the Awami League government's strategies it's not possible to bring positive change in rural areas, Hasina said pointing to the proposed subsidy on agriculture sector.

On tax reduction on some items, the AL chief alleged the budget proposed tax cuts on those items, the business of which is controlled by ruling alliance loyalists.

Korban Ali Joarder, who joined the AL yesterday, contested the last by-polls of Kushtia-1 as an independent candidate and lost it to a BN candidate.

AL leaders Abdul Jalil, Tofael Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Obaidul Kader and party advisory committee member Barrister Amir-ul-Islam were present.

## Untreated sewage

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It was to have its first encounter in the Saturn system on Friday, hurtling within 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) of the outermost moon, Phoebe, at 2056 GMT. The tiny moon is just 220 kilometers (137 miles) across. Saturn, in contrast, is nearly 120,695 kilometers (75,000 miles) in diameter.

During the previous AL rule, the average growth was over six percent and the average inflation rate below two percent, Hasina said.

On the joint US-European space-craft, which also carries a probe to explore the moon Titan, was launched in October 1997. NASA built the plutonium-powered space-craft; the European Space Agency contributed the Huygens (pronounced Hoy'-genz) probe.

Prices of soyabean oil, onion, ginger, baby food, spices, vegetables, fish and fruits were found

# Farmers poorest

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technical people and only 4.9 percent among people in administrative and managerial positions.

The report also highlighted the growing income divide between the richest five percent and poorest five percent of the population.

The income share of the poorest segment of society came down from 0.88 percent in mid-'90s to 0.67 percent in 2000 while the share of the top five percent rich soared from 23.62 percent to 30.66 percent during the same period.

With farm subsidy, farmers may now expect lower input costs in terms of urea and seeds but a range of their questions on gaining better market access, just price of their produce and preservation facilities remained to be answered.

Experts said after the rise in farm subsidy, both finance and agriculture ministries should sit together to make best use of the allocation.

In his post-budget briefing, the finance minister also indicated greater fund release even beyond the budgetary allocation, if need be, for development of the agriculture sector.

While increased farm subsidy as proposed in the 2004-05 budget came as a solace for economically hard-pressed 11 million farmers, the share of resources given to agriculture does not justify the contribution it made to the GDP.

According to the review, agriculture's contribution to GDP is projected to be 17.68 percent (crop sector 12.94 percent, livestock 2.90 percent and forest resources 1.84 percent) and if the fisheries sector is included, the contribution of agriculture to GDP is 22.83 percent.

But Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman proposed to allocate only 6 percent of overall budget outlay to the vital sector.

While Saifur proposed a straightforward doubling of the farm subsidy from Tk 300 crore in the fiscal 2003-04 to Tk 600 crore in the fiscal 2004-05, he did not unveil the plan how the enhanced subsidy would be channelled.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Agriculture Minister MK Anwar termed the rise in farm subsidy as a 'positive step' and added, "now the challenge is to reach the subsidy benefits (to farmers) promptly and effectively."

Debapriya Bhattacharya, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), a leading civil society think-tank, yesterday expressed doubt whether the allocation of Tk 600 crore would

ultimately reach the farmers.

The budget did not spell out any mechanism to channel the allocated resources to the farmer level, he added.

Binayak Sen of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) appreciated the rise in subsidy, but cautioned that mere rise did not necessarily guarantee the benefits would reach the poor and marginal farmers.

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## 60 owners asked to demolish vulnerable bldgs in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

City Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman has asked the owners of 60 buildings to demolish them in three weeks as they are highly vulnerable and may collapse any time.

The mayor has issued notices on the owners of these buildings under Article 108 of City Corporation Ordinance, said Liaquat Ali Sharif, chief engineer of Khulna City Corporation (KCC).

A nine-member team headed by the chief engineer has been formed to implement the mayor's orders if these vulnerable buildings in the city are not demolished within the specified time.

The other members of the team are executive engineers Nazmul Islam, Abdul Hannan, Liaquat Ali Khan, Abdul Aziz and Zahid Hossain Shaikh, Estate Officer SK Tasaduzzaman and two sub-assistant engineers.

When asked the mayor said the vulnerable buildings include Khulna District Jail, MPG Colony, seven buildings at Khulna Bazaar and a five-storey building at Khalishpur Housing Estate.

He has sought cooperation of Khulna Development Authority (KDA) and Public Works Department (PWD) in the implementation of his decision to demolish the vulnerable buildings.

Police said the accident took place at about 9:00am when a minibus, collided with a Barisal-bound microbus from Munshiganj, carrying 11 officials and employees of Usha Poultry Farm.

Microbus driver Faruk, 50, and an employee of the poultry farm, Mosharaf, 28, died on the spot.

The injured are the staff of Usha Poultry Feed. They were admitted to Manikganj Sadar Hospital. Four of them were later shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

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