

Possibility of inflation going down slim

Says Dr Akbar Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan said people of fixed income group will continue to suffer in the coming days as possibility of decrease in inflation is slim.

"The government did not pay enough attention to inflation and price hike of essentials in the last five years," he said at a seminar titled 'Price Spiral: Ways to Contain', jointly organised by Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Media Initiative for Public Policy (MIPP) at the Press Institute of Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

Meanwhile, BDR, which is now working on price of essentials, clearly said BDR alone will not be able to control the price hike.

Emphasising formulation of consumer protection law, Dr Akbar also suggested increasing supply of food stock and providing free food to the poor people.

He said "Some poor people would be benefited by the initiative of BDR but it will not influence the market as well as the economy".

BDR Director General (DG) Major General Shakil Ahmed presided over the seminar, which was moderated by Farid Hossain, convener of MIPP while Colonel Mujibul Haque of BDR and Dr Mustafiz Rahman of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) delivered the key speeches.

Major General Shakil said "Rice

and lentil are the fundamental rights of people and the government should ensure that people get them at fair price,"

"We have submitted a proposal to the government for approval to allocate them land to set up an independent market place on a permanent basis", he said.

Dr Mustafiz said a market surveillance department should be formed under the commerce ministry.

Describing the import situation, he said only five importers control 96% sugar, 31% onion and 38% rice, adding that there is a tendency to dominate the market due to lesser number of importers.

Colonel Mujibul said mismanagement in different markets, including Karwan Bazar and insincerity of the concerned authorities to control the market is responsible for price hike of essentials.

"In Karwan Bazar, there are 11 associations and most of them do not have business activities but are super-active in collecting tolls from the market," he said, adding that different political parties and corrupt people are assisting these associations for their vested interest causing price hike in the market.

A handful of big business are controlling the market, so the government should encourage small traders to come to the market, which will help keep the price under control and ensure quality of products as well," he said.

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Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Media Initiative for Public Policy (MIPP) jointly organise a seminar titled 'Price spiral: Ways to contain' at the Press Institute of Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

Future US-Bangla relations hinge on CG's success

Former US ambassador Milam tells seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former US ambassador William Milam yesterday said Bangladesh's future relations with the United States hinge on whether the caretaker government (CG) is successful or the military takes over in future.

"We are in a critical period in US-Bangladesh relations, there will be improvement (in the relationship) if there is a return to a revived democratic system, if it does not work then relations will not be good," said Milam while speaking at a seminar organised by Bangladesh Enterprise at its office in the city.

"It is noticeable in Washington that there has been a chorus of concern, especially from think tanks, whether (in Bangladesh) there has been a military takeover in disguise or it is a military rule in disguise," said Milam, adding, "There have been reports of human rights violations and abuse of civil rights."

"The general mood in think tanks is of 'wait and see' and let them (the caretaker government) have a chance of working it out," said Milam, ambassador to Bangladesh between 1990-1993, while asserting that he was speaking as a private citizen as he is no

longer a civil servant.

Milam said the government needs to give a specific timeline of a more detailed agenda and it is quite natural for Bangladeshis to finish this as quickly as possible.

"The way I look at this, you are witness to a very interesting experiment and we hope it will work," Milam said, adding, it is uncertain whether Bangladesh will follow a Turkish model where the military helps the government return to democracy or the Pakistani model, where historically, the military has come to power and remained there for a number of years.

"What we are seeing is an attempt to build a solid foundation and better form of democratic system," he said, adding, "You are building from a collapsed structure, people in Washington are not clear about where this is going to go."

He said if the caretaker government is successful, "It would be unique because the history of military intervention in any form is almost always bad."

Earlier, Milam met with Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office where he said America considers Bangladesh a key international player.

Answering to queries from waiting reporters after the meeting, Milam said, "I don't know whether it (transition) will be difficult or not. I hope not. It sounds to me like there is a very good plan and process."

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