

# Say good-bye to IMF

Speakers urge govt

UNB, Dhaka

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday urged the government to "say goodbye to IMF" and not to sign any agreement that would go against the interest of the country.

They also called upon the government to place the proposed Policy Support Instrument (PSI) in front of the public before signing it.

Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) President Quazi Kholiquzzaman emphasised that the country must be freed from the clutches of IMF. "We don't want the IMF at all, they can leave the country tomorrow," he said.

About the PSI agreement, he said the government must let the people know the conditions laid by IMF.

Dr Atir Rahman said it is the high time to think about throwing IMF out of the country. "We don't need another PRGF agreement as this type of agreement compromises the sovereignty of a country to take policy decision," he said.

"The government should discuss more to make the PSI treaty transparent," said Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaking at the roundtable titled 'IMF policy and Bangladesh' at Jatiya Press Club.

Media Foundation for Trade and Development and Young Entrepreneurs' Forum of Global-Bangla Foundation jointly organised the roundtable.

Prof Muzaffer, also chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), suggested a thorough discussion on the PSI agreement in the media in the absence of parliament.

He said the objectives of the IMF are now under question for it has deviated from its initial objectives.



Namaz-e-janaza of ASHK Sadeque, former education minister and Awami League leader, was held at the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

## US report on religious freedom

UNB, Dhaka

A US report has said while Bangladesh government publicly supported freedom of religion and there was traditional inter-community amity, "attacks" on religious and ethnic minorities continued to be a problem.

"Religion exerted a significant influence on politics, and the government was sensitive to the Islamic consciousness of its political allies and the majority of its citizens," said the International Religious Freedom Report 2007 in its Bangladesh chapter.

The report released by the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour on September 14 said protests demanding that Ahmadiyas be declared non-Muslim and instances of harassment continued sporadically, but the government generally acted in an effective manner to protect the Ahmadiyas and their property.

It said citizens were generally free to practice the religion of their choice; "however, government officials, including the police, were often ineffective in upholding law and order and were sometimes slow to assist religious minority victims of harassment and violence."

The report noted that the government and many civil-society leaders stated that violence against religious minorities normally had political or economic motivations and could not be attributed only to religion.

It cited reports of what is dubbed as societal abuses and discrimination based on religious belief or practice during the period covered by this report.

"Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist minorities experienced discrimination and sometimes violence... Harassment of Ahmadiyas continued along with protests demanding that Ahmadiyas be declared non-Muslims," the report said.

It said the US government discusses religious freedom issues with the Bangladeshi government as part of its overall policy to promote human rights.

"Publicly and privately, the embassy denounced acts of religious intolerance and called on the government to ensure due process for all citizens," the report said.

It said the US ambassador made several visits to minority religious communities around the country. In

mentality."

Economist Abu Ahmed wanted the PSI to be informed to the people before signing any agreement with IMF. "IMF wants to sell loans to us as our present policy makers are weak-hearted... IMF is not at all a donor agency."

"People of this country are ready to extend loans to the government through capital market and that may help overcome its problems," added Prof Abu.

Interest of the country must be preserved in entering into any agreement with donor agencies and countries, he added.

Prof Muzaffer was highly critical of the bureaucrats. "The bureaucrats always tend to take decision quietly, hiding the intricate issues from the economists lest their intention is exposed."

He added, "Many of the ministers of Ershad regime were appointed in the World Bank and for that they could not get out from that

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At present, the 'price syndicate'



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## WEATHER TODAY

UNB, Dhaka

April 2007, she visited the Roman Catholic mission in Madhupur to meet the Garo community after the death of one of their leaders.

Religion exerted a powerful influence on politics, and the government was sensitive to the Muslim consciousness of its political allies, the Jamaat Islami and the Islami Olyka Jote, as well as the majority of its citizens, the report said about the past scenario.

In December 2006, the report said, the Awami League upset many of its minority and liberal supporters when it signed an electoral pact with Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis.

"The agreement committed a future Awami League-led government to recognising some fatwas and an official declaration that the Prophet Mohammad is the last prophet, a direct challenge to the Ahmadiyya community," it observed.

Ahmadiyyas and liberal Bangladeshis criticised the agreement as politically expedient and inconsistent with core party principles.

It said following this criticism and

open rebellion among senior party leaders, the Awami League quietly allowed the agreement to lapse after imposition of the state of emergency.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs administered three funds for religious and cultural activities: the Islamic Foundation, the Hindu Welfare Trust, and the Buddhist Welfare Trust.

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The report said major religious festivals and holy days of the Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian religious groups were celebrated as national holidays.

The Bangladesh Christian Association lobbied unsuccessfully for the inclusion of Easter as a national holiday.

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddique, Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Education Adviser Ayub Quadri, former speaker Abdul Hamid, former chief whip and BNP secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain, former opposition chief whip Abdus Shahid, former ministers and MPs attended the namaz-e-janaza.

They also prayed for the salvation of the departed soul.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar and Deputy Speaker Akhter Hamid Siddique placed wreath on the coffin of Sadeque.

Earlier in the morning, the body of Sadeque was brought to AL central office at Gulistan where different parties including AL and its front organisations paid tributes to their leader.

The coffin was covered with national and AL party flag.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Motia Chowdhury, Hasanul Haq Inu, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Mukul Bose, Abdul Matin Khasru, Habibur Rahman Siraj, Advocate Sahara Khatun, Nurul Islam Nahid, Prof Nazma Rahman and Dr Dipu Moni were present on the occasion.

A namaz-e-janaza was also held there.

The ex-minister died of cardiac arrest at his village home in Keshabpur upazila in Jessor on September 9.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:01pm today and rises at 5:45am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town Temperature Humidity in celsius percentage Max Min Morning Evening

Dhaka 31.1 26.7 76 92

Chittagong 31.7 27.0 76 84

Rajshahi 33.0 26.7 73 83

Khulna 33.7 26.2 83 92

Barisal 32.2 26.0 76 95

Sylhet 28.5 24.5 97 86

Cox's Bazar 33.0 25.5 77 83

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