

Introduce rationing system for the poor as prices spiral

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday underscored the need for immediate introduction of rationing system for the poor people to relieve them of the price hike of essentials.

They also emphasised on increasing buying capacity and creating employment opportunity of the people especially for the poor and low-income group.

"It is very essential to start rationing system for limited income group, no matter what the World Bank and IMF suggest," said former VC of Dhaka University Prof

AK Azad Chowdhury at the roundtable on 'Budget and situation of essential goods' organised by Bangladesh Consumers Society (BCS) at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Expressing his dissatisfaction over the caretaker government, Awami League president member Suranjit Sengupta said, "What I will express in my budget reaction where about three crore people were forced to live under poverty line only within one and a half year of the non-political government and where the price of fertiliser was increased just after announcement of the bud-

get."

He said the country had lots of potentials which were destroyed whimsically.

Suggesting to take massive development activities through the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in the budget, Jatiya Party Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam said it is imperative to increase the income of the people and also to increase their purchasing capacity.

Former president of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Kazi Rafique, while presenting a keynote paper, said the price of rice has been increased over 100 per-

cent due to failure of increasing buffer stock.

Underscoring the need for introducing rationing system and food for work, Rafique said India is fighting against price hike of essentials through rationing system and food for work programmes at different states of the country.

BCS Executive President Dr Anisul Haque demanded steps to provide subsidy to the farmers for fertiliser and pesticide and also to reduce import duty of essentials.

The roundtable was presided over by BCS President Kazi Akram Uddin.

BAT starts free sapling distribution programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With a view to encouraging the city dwellers to plant trees, British American Tobacco (BAT) Bangladesh launched a free sapling distribution programme 2008 at Krishibid Uddyan Nursery at Agargaon in the city yesterday as part of its annual afforestation programme.

Environment and Forest Secretary AHM Rezaul Karim formally inaugurated the programme as the chief guest.

A total of one lakh saplings of fruit, timber and medicinal plants and other saplings will be distributed this year from the nursery in the city, said the BAT Bangladesh officials. People can collect the saplings from the nursery till June 22.

AHM Rezaul Karim appreciated BAT Bangladesh's contribution for the countrywide afforestation campaign for almost three decades now.

Reiterating the need for afforestation to protect the country from natural disasters, he said this programme complement the government's national drive of tree plantation.

Eaz Ahmed Chowdhury, head of leaf, BAT Bangladesh said, "Our afforestation program is designed to address the socio-economic needs of the society as well as overall environmental perspectives."

Golam Mainuddin, deputy managing director of BAT Bangladesh, said they have planned to distribute 42 lakh saplings throughout the country this year. BAT distributed more than 5.5 crore saplings since 1980.

Later, the secretary distributed saplings to different organisations and individuals.

Sikhs protest at MTV advert, vandalise office

AFP, Mumbai

At least 70 people from the minority Sikh community have been arrested for vandalising music channel MTV's office in western India during protests against "offensive" content, police said yesterday.

They were arrested Monday on charges of "unlawful assembly and rioting" at the satellite TV channel's office in India's financial and entertainment hub of Mumbai, a police spokesman said.

The group pelted stones, broke windows and damaged furniture during the protest against "On the Job 2 - Jobs your parents won't understand" -- part of MTV's programming on unconventional job opportunities.

The campaign deemed offensive features a girl giving a young man a massage with her Sikh father eyeing the couple through the door.



Environment and Forest Secretary AHM Rezaul Karim, 2nd from left, distributes a sapling after inaugurating the free sapling distribution programme 2008 at Krishibid Uddyan Nursery at Agargaon in the city yesterday.

Road show caravan reaches Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The 'road show' with the slogan 'let us build Bangladesh' reached in Khulna city at noon yesterday from Jessore.

Khulna Deputy Commissioner SM Feroze Alam and Police Superintendent YM Belal Rahman along with other officials and large number of people welcomed the caravan of road show at collectorate compound.

Participants of the road show paraded main roads of the city braving torrential rain. Later, they assembled at the picture palace cinema hall square.

Artists of various cultural organisations, students from different educational institutions and NGO activists at different points on way to Khulna city also welcomed the caravan of road show.

The purpose of the road show is to inspire the people to boost production and fight out corruption.

'Not-for-sale' medicines worth Tk 50 lakh seized 13 traders arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members seized a huge quantity of 'not-for-sale' medicines worth about Tk 50 lakh during a raid on wholesale drug stores at Babubazar in the city yesterday and arrested 13 traders.

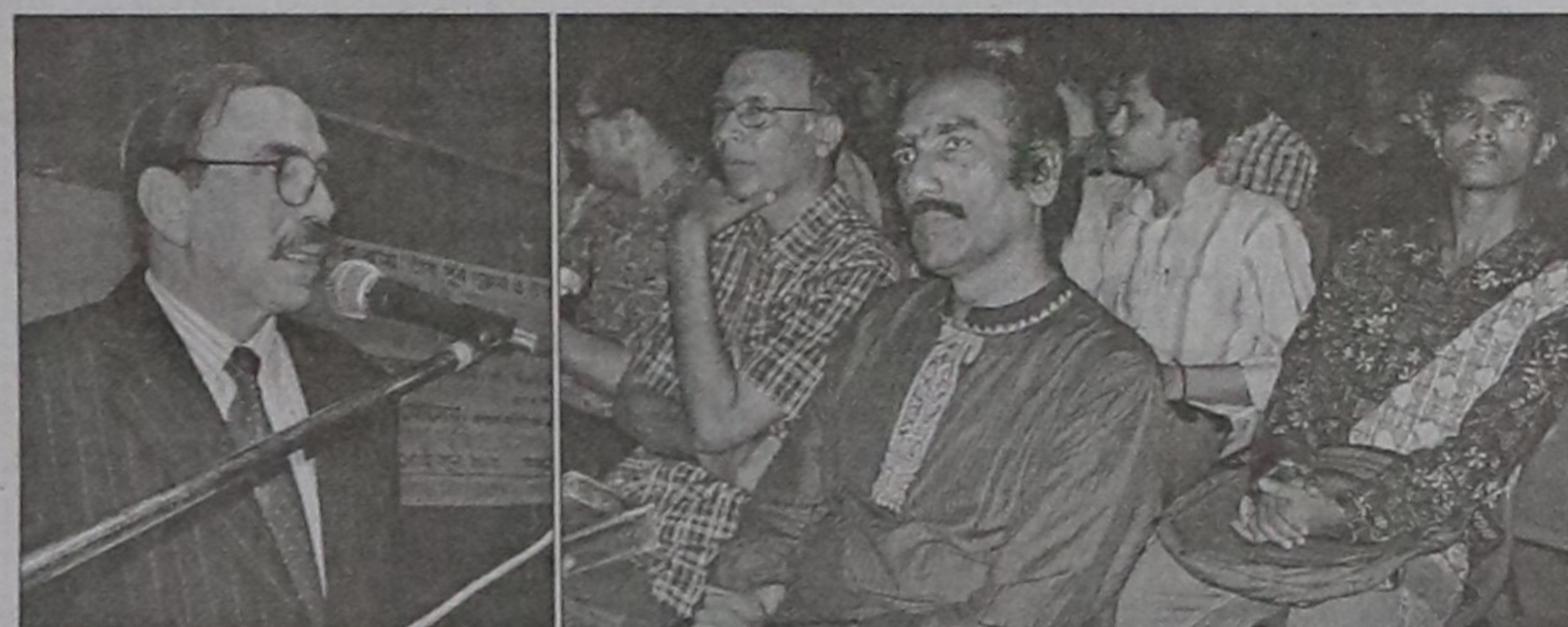
The medicines are meant for free distribution among the patients in government hospitals but find their way to the market as some government employees sold them to drug stores.

Sale of these medicines, mostly donated by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Unicef,

in the market are totally prohibited and this is a punishable crime, said Lt Sultan Hossain Nurani, wing commander of Rab-3.

"These drugs are meant for distribution among the poor people. We have information that some government officials and unscrupulous traders have been carrying out such illegal activities in the area for long," he said.

The Rab-3 members conducted the raid on 24 wholesale drug stores from 11:30am to 7:30pm. Officials of the health directorate were also present during the drive.



Cultural Affairs Secretary Md Sharful Alam speaks at a seminar on "Poet Sukumar Roy: His ancestors and descendants" as the chief guest at Poet Sofia Kamal auditorium of National Museum in the city recently. Prof Abul Khasem Fazul Haque, actor Amzad Hossain, Begum Razia Hossain, Abdul Kahar Akand, Engineer Md Yusuf, Nazrul Islam Misha and Abdul Aziz also spoke at the seminar organised by Sukumar Roy Sahitya O Sangskritik Parishad. Rahima Akter Kalpana presented the key-note paper at the seminar.

Saarc Summit to focus on food, fuel security

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summit will be connectivity among the member-countries for strengthening trade and economic development, Bogollagama said.

During his meeting with Mukherjee, Bogollagama stressed the need to continue the theme of connectivity, which was the focus of the 14th Summit in Delhi in 2007.

Official sources said Mukherjee and Bogollagama also discussed other SAARC-related issues like SAARC Development Fund, SAARC Standards Organisation and South Asia University.

The Lankan minister sought to allay fears about security in the Sri Lankan capital for the coming summit in the wake of escalation of violence in his country saying "isolated" incidents would not be allowed to cast a shadow on the event.

He said the summit would discuss how to deal with terrorism

that is affecting several SAARC countries.

LANKA VOWS SAARC SUMMIT WILL GO AHEAD

Sri Lanka's foreign minister insisted Monday the island would be able to host the next Saarc summit despite a surge in deadly rebel attacks, reports AFP from New Delhi.

The eight-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) is due to hold its 15th annual summit in Colombo on August 2-3.

"We will do everything possible to ensure the correct level of security," Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama said in the Indian capital New Delhi.

His statement came hours after a suspected Tamil Tiger suicide bomber blew himself up outside a police compound in northern Sri Lanka, killing at least 12 police and wounding 40 other people.

Sri Lanka has seen a surge in

violence blamed on the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) targeting buses, trains and politicians since the government scrapped a 2002 ceasefire with the guerrillas in January.

Bogollagama condemned the latest attack staged by a suicide bomber on a motorcycle as an example of the brutality of the LTTE, who have been fighting for an independent Tamil homeland since 1972.

"These isolated attacks are most brutal in their character but will not affect our overall security situation" in holding the summit, he said, adding the island had recently played host to various international leaders.

Bogollagama visited India to personally invite Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to the summit and to discuss bilateral and regional issues with Indian leaders.

New Delhi hosted the last Saarc

summit in 2007 and Singh is due to hand over the Saarc chairmanship to Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa at the Colombo summit.

Saarc is made up of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Also expected to attend as official observers are the United States, China, the European Union, Iran and Japan.

Around 1,000 delegates and hordes of media are expected to pour into Colombo for the summit.

This year's meeting is seen as key as the region faces growing crises over soaring fuel and food prices, which will both be part of the talks, as well as terrorism, Bogollagama said.

Set up in 1985, Saarc has been criticised for achieving little -- mostly because of tensions between key members India and Pakistan, who have fought three wars, two over the disputed region of Kashmir.



Vehicles get stuck in a traffic jam yesterday as Dhaka City Corporation workers repair a big pothole developed in the middle of the Badda-Gulshan Link Road in the city due to torrential rain on Monday night.

Financing budget deficit a real challenge

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FY2006-07 despite Tk 2,000 crore more borrowing from the banks by the government," Mirza Aziz said, denying a possible crowd-out situation for the private sector credit needs.

Responding to a query on poor performance in the energy sector, he said around Tk 800 crore more has been allocated for the sector in the coming year compared to the revised figure of the current

budget.

He said the GDP and revenue growth projected in the budget are not ambitious. "It is by no means unrealistic," he said, adding that 9 percent inflation rate is also a realistic estimate.

On food security, Mirza Aziz said the government has set to create a stock of 31 lakh tonnes of rice for the next fiscal year to address the increasing threats in the food sector.

Fertiliser price is still low considering the international market price and the production cost in the domestic market, he said.

Responding to the criticism that the budget aims at overcoming the short-term crises, he said the government has tried to address some priority areas like agriculture, rural development, energy, transportation, health and education considering medium-term benefits.

Mirza Aziz said measures including tax reduction and tax holiday have been taken to boost domestic industries. He rejected the plea of enhancing the ceiling for tax-free income from current Tk 1,50,000.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud raised a question on the higher price of rice in the domestic market despite a bumper Boro production. He said rice traders are stockpiling the produce thinking it would be profitable.

On the overall budget, he said this is a budget that needs to be reviewed continuously. "There might be a trade-off between public sector investment and additional resources devoted for the short-term measures in the budget," Prof Mahmud said.

Eminent jurist and politician Dr Kamal Hossain asked the government to devise innovative ways to ensure support for the poor in food insecurity. He also asked it to address deficiency in the energy sector.

In his concluding remarks, former finance minister M Syeduzzaman expressed concern over a drop in public investment and national savings. He appreciated the caretaker government for its well-intentioned short-term measures but said the budget is totally silent on infrastructure issue.

CPD Executive Director Prof Mustafizur Rahman presented the keynote paper at the discussion.

Former education minister and BNP leader Dr Osman Faruk, former state minister Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Awami League leader Dr Abdur Razzak, Jatiya Party leader GM Quader, Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, International Monetary Fund representative Jonathan Dunn and the country's leading businessmen also took part in the discussion.

BANGABAZAR INCIDENT Salesman's body exhumed for autopsy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The police yesterday exhumed the body of salesman Aminur Rahman Rana, an employee of SK Traders at Bangabazar Market in the city, for an autopsy to investigate the cause of death.

The death of Rana, who died after alleged beatings by his employers, sparked violent protests in Fulbaria area on Monday. He died on Sunday night.

Sub-inspector Abdul Kaiyum of Shabbagh Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, said the body of Rana was exhumed from Azimpur Graveyard at 4:00pm and sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

"We are now carrying out raids to arrest the accused, but they went into hiding," he added.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Trade Union Federation leaders yesterday protested what they said was the murder of Rana and demanded arrest of the killers.

'Allocate fund in budget for rationing of RMG workers'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra yesterday demanded allocation of fund in the budget for the rationing of garment workers to help them to cope with the skyrocketing prices of essentials.

In a statement, the union Adviser Advocate Montu Gosh, President Idris Ali and General Secretary K M Ruhul Amin also demanded rationing system jointly funded by the garment owners and the government to save the workers and the garment industry as well.

They said the lives of around 25 lakh garment workers who have been playing a vital role in the national economy have become miserable due to price hike of essentials.

They also said the garment workers are struggling hard with their tiny wages and so it is a must to give them wages with the current market price. The workers will have to be provided with daily essentials through rationing, they added.

Indo-Pak anti-terror talks next week

AFP, New Delhi

Indian and Pakistan officials will meet next week in Islamabad to resume discussions by an anti-terror panel on intelligence sharing, the Indian foreign ministry said yesterday.

It will be the third meeting since the panel was formed in 2006 after train bombings in India's financial capital Mumbai killed 186 people in July that year.


India alleged Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence spy agency had a role in the Mumbai attacks. Islamabad denied the claim.

The Indian delegation will be headed by Vivek Katju, a bureaucrat from the foreign ministry, while Masood Khalid, additional secretary (Asia-Pacific) will lead the Pakistani side, the ministry said in a statement.

It did not give details of what was likely to be discussed.

New Delhi accuses Islamabad-backed Islamic militants of waging an insurgency in disputed Kashmir and of triggering attacks in other parts of the country. Pakistan denies it arms or trains the militants.

The Kashmir dispute has been the trigger for two of the three wars between India and Pakistan since 1947.



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Date : 19th June. Time : 11am - 4:30pm
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Please bring all academic papers

For information and appointment on 19 June Seminar:
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