VIRMANI CALLS ON HASINA

IMF help for economic uplift sought

UNB, *Dhaka*

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought assistance from development partners and donor agencies, particularly from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), for economic development of the country.

The prime minister made the request when IMF Executive Director Dr A Virmani called on her at the PM's Office.

Hasina said the economic condition of the country remains strong although the world had faced a serious economic downturn.

However, the nation's economic growth could not reach the desired level due to repeated interruptions in the country's democratic process, she said.

Hasina said the government has enormous tasks ahead to bring about economic development of the country, but the time is short. "We want to develop the country quickly as the people voted this government to do so."

Hasina said her government is working hard to ensure food security and social safety net by alleviating poverty.

Mentioning that her government emphasised improving the power and energy sector, she said she has already directed the authorities concerned for gas exploration and to put utmost importance on power generation.

The PM said the government is very keen for optimum utilisation of the solar energy.

She said she has already started using solar power in her office and urged all to use solar power in their offices as it is safe and cost effective.

Hasina said according to her party's election manifesto, the government has been working for establishing a 'Digital Bangladesh' to face the challenges of the 21st century.

She said her government introduced the Public Private Partnership (PPP) for developing the information technology and social sector.

Hasina attached importance to the regional cooperation and peaceful coexistence of the countries of the region.

Dr A Virmani praised Hasina for successfully overcoming the adverse effects of the global recession.

He said the worldwide economic recession failed to affect the economy of Bangladesh and the present government played the key-role for this achievement.

The IMF official said it was a tough job for the country to advance the economy strongly after recovering from the impact of cyclone Aila and Sidr and the BDR mutiny.

He congratulated the prime minister on her great success.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad briefed reporters on the meeting.

Ambassador at large Mohammad Ziauddin, Principal Secretary MA Karim and Secretary to the PMO Molla Wahedduzaman were present.

PHOTO: PID

IMF Executive Director Dr A Virmani calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday.

By-polls in Bhola-3 likely on Apr 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

By-election to Bhola-3 constituency is likely to be held on April 24, Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohul Hussein said yesterday.

"We are considering April 24 as the Higher Secondary Certificate examinations start early next month," he said after an Election Commission (EC) meeting.

The EC would announce the date next Thursday, added Sohul.

Officials in EC Secretariat said primarily, March 29 was fixed as the last date for seeking candidacy in the by-election while April 24 the polling day.

On March 8, the EC published the final voter list of Bhola-3 constituency, which includes Lalmohon and Tojimuddin upazilas. The number of voters of the constituency is 2.20 lakh.

Earlier on February 3, the EC declared Bhola-3 parliamentary constituency vacant following a Supreme Court verdict.

AL candidate Maj (retd) Jasim Uddin was elected from this constituency in December 29 parliamentary polls. But the SC declared his candidacy illegal as he contested the polls within five years of his retirement from the defence service.

Industrial units to get fire stations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adequate fire service stations would be set up in the crowded industrial units considering the number of labour force working in the sector, says a press release.

The decision was made at the 14th meeting of Social Compliance Forum for RMG sector at the conference room of commerce ministry in the city yesterday.

Commerce Minister Faruq Khan presided over the meeting, which was told that the initiative would be implemented after necessary dialogues with the concerned authorities.

The meeting called on the Fire Service Department for making a proposal to establish fire stations at every industrial unit for easy accessibility and close proximity during any occupational hazards.

It urged BGMEA and BKMEA to take stern action against non-complaint factories.

The time for forming participation committee at every factory has been extended by June 30, 2010 considering the request of BGMEA and BKMEA. Earlier, the deadline for forming the committee was December 31, 2009.

The meeting reiterated the need for forming industrial police immediately, the release added.

It also discussed a number of issues related to reduction of the causes of occupational hazards.

As a number of factories having old structural designs are vulnerable to fire-related accidents, the speakers urged the housing and public works ministry to take strict actions in this connection.

Acting Secretary to Commerce Ministry Md Golam Hossain, Additional Secretary Mostafa Mohiuddin, Export Promotion Bureau Vice Chairman Md Sahab Ullah, Fire Service and Civil Defence Director General Brig Gen Abu Nayeem Md Shaidullah, BGMEA President Abdus Salam Murshedi, BKMEA President Md Fazlul Haq and Jatiya Sramik League President Roy Ramesh Chandra were present at the programme.

Global demand for jute on rise while growers face problems

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jute growers of the country are beset with a flurry of production and marketing-related problems at a time when global demand for the natural fibre is on the rise.

Farmers and experts at a workshop on jute held in the city yesterday echoed the same concerns that if the country misses out the opportunity of tapping current favourable export market for jute due to these nagging problems, its economy will be ultimate looser in the long run.

They listed the problems like crises of quality jute seeds, adulteration in fertiliser and pesticides, problem in rotting jute due to water scarcity and profit mongering of middlemen.

Traidcraft Exchange and TARANGO, two non-government organisations with special focus on jute promotion, organised the workshop at IDB Bhaban to raise awareness of jute and formally launch their five-year 'Golden Fibre' project involving 3,500 beneficiaries of four predominantly jute-growing upazilas in Faridpur and Gopalganj.

Addressing the workshop, Director General of Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI) Dr Kamal Uddin laid special emphasis on becoming self-sufficient in meeting up the country's total jute seed requirements and urged people to increase domestic usage of jute products like India.

KR Hasan, Executive Director of Jute Diversification Promotion Centre (JDPC) under the jute ministry, called on the jute growers to form cooperatives and go for collective jute production system doing away with the fragmented jute tilling lands in the countryside.

Two farmers' representatives, who spoke at the workshop, made special pleas to break the unholy nexus of agriculture extension staffs and adulterers in seeds, fertiliser and pesticides.

Country Director of Traidcraft Exchange Kazi Shahed H Ferdous and Chief Executive Officer of TARANGO Kohinoor Yeasmin also spoke.

Traidcraft Programme Manager Nusrat Jahan presented the 'Golden Fibre' project outline.