



Donor prescription not at country's cost: Saifur

FE Report

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman reiterated his call for evolving a healthy political environment to ensure socio-economic development and said politics of confrontation has been taking heavy toll on the national economy.

"Without political stability economic development cannot be achieved. Political and social conflicts are the major impediment to implementation of development programmes," the finance minister said while speaking at a dialogue on Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) 2003: Civil Society's perspectives Wednesday.

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It is not true that Bangladesh depends on foreign aids, Saifur said adding, "We can develop ourselves with our own resources. We will reform all sectors according to our social conditions and demands."

"We won't accept their prescription, if it does not suit us. Bangladesh will take foreign aids and donors' suggestions as per its choice," the minister said.

Emphasising the need for mobilising the internal resources, he said dependence on foreign aids cannot be reduced unless internal resources are mobilised properly. Terming the entrepreneurs of the new generation more competent and efficient, he said the younger businessmen can challenge any business people in the world.

About the BDF meeting scheduled to begin in Dhaka from May 8, he said the development partners mainly focus on policy and programme, including governance and law and order.

Referring to the socio-economic reforms, Saifur said the government will continue reform in all major areas but what is important is to reach a consensus on reform measures by political parties. Without a consensus, it is very hard to carry out reform in sensitive areas, he added.

Infrastructure development is one of the important issues where the government will continue its support, he said adding that the country needs more investment in infrastructure development in future.

Organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), it was attended, among others, by chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on finance and planning ministry Mushfiqur Rahman, former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, advisor to the BNP chairperson Rezaul Karim, political secretary to the leader of the opposition in parliament Saber Hossain Chowdhury, JSD (Inu) president Hasanul Haq Inu, M Saiduzzam, Ataus Samad, Sultana Kamal, Ali Ashraf and

Shilpa Bank chairman Abu Ahmed.

World Bank (WB) country chief Christine Wallich, USAID country director Genev George, Australian High Commissioner Ms Lorraine Barker, German ambassador Dietrich Andreas and Danish ambassador Niels Severin Munk and a representative of European Commission (EC) addressed the dialogue.

CPD executive director Debapriya Bhattacharya presented the keynote paper at the dialogue, held at the CIRDAP auditorium with CPD chairman Rehman Sobhan in the chair.

Christine Wallich said parliament elections in Bangladesh are too expensive as the total election expenditure accounts for about 10 per cent of the Gross Domestic product (GDP). Over Tk 20 million is spent for each constituency during polls, she added.

She said there should be an open dialogue on PRSP and other reform issues and the media can create a scope for such dialogue.

Danish Ambassador Niels Severin Munk said if donors are not

allowed to play their due role, there will be no aid from the Danish government.

German Ambassador Dietrich Andreas said the donors have to answer in the own countries as they donate money of the taxpayers of the respective countries. He said NGOs need regulation but such regulation should not take place for political polarisation.

Amir Khasru said politics are often blamed for violence but there are politicians who never patronise hoodlums. He suggested that the government should involve private sector in the development of infrastructure, saying that the private sector has been playing a major role in the development of roads, energy and telecommunication in the developed countries.

He was critical about the political role of NGOs, he said NGOs should not involve in politics in the greater interest of the nation.

"Please, don't involve in politics, don't tarnish the image of the country. If any NGO wants to do politics, it should join politics directly," he added.