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Saifur takes a swipe at dev partners

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday hit out at development partners for their barrage of criticism during the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF) meeting, saying that 'his elected government is not bound to oblige to what donors say.'

"We are not here to please the donors. We have placed our plans and programmes before the donors. They are free to accept or reject them. We don't work for the satisfaction of the donors but the people," he told journalists during session breaks of the three-day meeting.

The minister was also highly critical of the donors' criticism about human rights violation in Bangladesh. "You can all see who are violating human rights," he said hinting at the shocking prisoner abuse in Iraq by the US and British troops.

"How an elected government should operate is up to us to decide. It does not depend on the donors," said Saifur, who is leading Bangladesh team at the meeting.

On dismal law and order state, he said, "Murders or rapes happen also in America. Its (American) newspapers print those on the back pages.

But our newspapers splashed that kind of news items all over the front pages," he said. "Our population density is very high and we have inadequate number of policemen."

Institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank have been established by us, he pointed out. "Their job is to support the member countries. It's not their job to raise questions on governance or corruption. Bilateral donors can raise these questions."

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed also echoed the voice of his cabinet colleague.

"Where would you not find a bad law and order situation?" he asked. "In New York, there are 52,000 policemen. Whereas, in a country of 14 crore people, we have only 1.05 lakh policemen. But, we admit that we have to improve our law and order further."

On the corruption spree, the law minister said, "In Bihar, there are allegations of corruption against 70 percent of the MPs."