PRESS NOTE

'200-line red phone exchange unearthed at Ershad's house'

The following is the remaining portion of the Press Note issued by the Government on Saturday on Jatiya Party Acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury's public statement in Rangpur on February 20:

This fact was borne out from his own statement to S.B officers on duty in which he said that he had got half an hour's time he could not have been taken out of the Cantonment.

Mizanur Rahman's statement that ex-President could have flooded the country with blood by using the armed forces, BDR, police and the Jatiya Party has now clearly proved the calamity which was apprehended genuinely by the Government for his immediate detention on 12 December, 1990.

The allegation that he was given only one hour's notice is false. He was given two hours 45 minutes time. The detention order was served at 10.15 am and he came out of his house with the police at 1 p.m.

The allegation that the ex-President and his son were not given any food after he was put into the house of his detention is not correct.

By the order of Government the food for him and his family was brought from Bangabhaban at about 1.30 p.m. and since then, 12 December 1990, food was supplied regularly from Bangabhaban in a befitting manner.

From 21 December 1990, his brother-in-law, Mustafizur Rahman, offered to supply the food daily from him and his family. The authorities agreed and supply of food by Mustafizur Rahman continued upto 3 February 1991.

But when the civil surgeon, who attended him and his family daily, opined that the food supplied by Mustafizur Rahman was of inferior quality and inadequate, food for the ex-President was being supplied from 4 February 1991 from the Dhaka Central Jail. In addition, Mr. Mustafizur Rahman and other relations of the ex-President, with the permission of the authorities, have been supplying him food.

Two attendants, one from Dhaka Central Jail and one from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, have been engaged to attend the ex-President.

Immediately after his detention in the Gulshan house, he sought permission to allow 27 persons to visit him. Some of those were not his relations, such as Enayettullah Khan of the UNB, and Golam Morshed of BCCI Bank, London branch.

Authorities permitted 8 of his near relations including Mustafizur Rahman from the beginning to visit him twice weekly. Later on, 4 more relations were added to the list of visitors.

His two lawyers, Barister Shadat Hossain and Advocate M.R. Mazumder, were given permission to see him, now almost daily, in connection with the cases filed by him as well as against him.

Six daily newspapers are being supplied to him according to his wishes. Besides, he brought with him his own radio and television. He also brought from the Senabhaban two big suitcases and one briefcase with him. The allegation that he was not allowed to being more than one wearing apparel is not correct, for, besides the things and articles in the suitcases, his brother-in-law Mustafizur Rahman was attending him from the very beginning and he could have supplied additional clothes, if urgently required. In fact, shortly after December 1990 as many as 13 apparel's, 43 women's apparels, 66 pieces of children wear, 128 apparels for the adults and 10 pairs of shoes were handed over to the ex-President through his brother-in-law Mustafizur Rahman.

Some of his relations made complaint to some Congressmen in the United States alleging that degrading treatment was being meted out to the ex-President which constituted violation of human rights. In that connection, clarification was sought by the State Department from our ambassador in Washington.

After ascertaining all facts, it was found that ex-president was being treated in a manner befitting his status and dignity as ex-president.

The Government had no intention to start any specific case of corruption before these allegations were examined by the commission but certain matters, unexpectedly revealed, led to institution of criminal cases. His cantonment house was kept under lock and key, guarded by a military contingent, and inventory of the articles in the house was made by an eight-member committee headed by the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate. The committee also included Mustafizaur Rahman, the ex-Presidents' brother—in-law. Among the articles found, there was a cash amount of Taka one crore 91 lakh, kept in 25 trunks. Sixteen fire-arms 8 with licence and 8 without licence, along with a huge quantity of ammunitions were also found. At that time, a country-wide drive was being carried out to recover unauthorised fire-arms, and the Arms Act was amended providing for deterrent punishment for possession of unauthorised arms to facilitate holding of a free and fair election. Secondly, possession of one crore ninetyone lakh Taka in cash was obviously disproportionate to his known source of income.

In these circumstances, two specific cases were started, which are now pending. But people in general and students in particular started strong agitation demanding the shifting of the ex-president to the Central Jail from the Gulshan house, which was previously the residence of the British High Commissioner. People also demanded his open trial in the court of the Session Judge, Dhaka. The government did not agree to these demands. The venue of the trial was fixed in another house in Gulshan, in which only a small number of visitors including pressmen could be accommodated. On the date fixed for trial of the arms case, the accused ex-president did not appear citing the ground of his illness.

The court gave four days adjournment and asked a three member high-level medical board to examine the accused ex-president.

The medical board gave report that the ex-president was fit to appear in the court. The ex-president then got his trial stayed by the High Court Division. The order of stay was later vacated by the court on hearing both parties. The accused then went to the Appelate Division for further stay of the trial.

But all sections of people including students and lawyers were blaming the government for delaying the trial intentionally. And even political leaders were criticising the government for such delay.

While preparing the inventory as referred to above, the inventory committee which included in officer of the T and T board discovered a 200-line red telephone exchange, installed in the ex-President's house through which any person both within the country and abroad could be contacted.

But only two numbers of that exchange were used. One such set bearing number 1211 was installed in the ex-president's room and the other set bearing No. 1214 was installed in the residence for Musarraf Hussain, the then Secretary, Ministry of Industry. No other line, excepting the aforesaid two numbers, was allotted to anybody. This additional red telephone exchange was meant for the army headquarters, but nobody else knew about it. Since this matter was very complicated and connected with another project, VVIP Exchange, the government did not think it proper to deal with the matter at that time, but kept all connected papers for future consideration.

as downright falsehood and politically motivated.

'Mizan inciting civil war'

The First Acting Secretary of Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal and Coordinator of the Central Five-Party Alliance, Nirmal Sen has demanded trial of Jatiya Party Acting President Mizanur Rahman for giving false statement to foil the 27 February polls, reports BSS.

In a statement in Dhaka on Saturday Sen alleged that when the nation, after the fall of autocracy, was heading towards holding election under free and fair atmosphere, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and his gang, knowing their sure defeat, were indulging in loose talks and hatching conspiracy to foil the elections.

He called upon the Government to take legal action against such conspiracy and falsehood. He cautioned the people to remain alert against the evil design of the ousted autocracy.

Nirmal Sen said the parties and forces that had fought against autocracy noted with deep concern and indignation the statement of Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury which he made implication the role of Armed Forces.

Chowdhury was inciting civil war in the country by giving such a statement, he alleged.

He called upon the Acting President to issue strict directives so that the members of the law enforcing agencies, to be posted at the polling centres, should refrain from taking any provocative actions, superseding the local administration.

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Five Sri Lankans, members of the SAARC Poll Observes Group, arrived in city on Saturday.

Dateline Khulna

AL in rough weather in Khulna : Hasina due today

From Syed Isa

KHULNA, Feb 24: Awami League chief Sk. Hasina in the last leg of her election campaign is scheduled to address a number of public meetings at different places of Jessore, Khulna and Bagerhat districts today. The constituencies included those of her party candidates Sk. Harunur Rashid and Advocate Manjurul Imam at Khulna—1 and Khulna—2 respectively.

All eyes are now set on her election campaign tour to the south-western region today which might change the local electoral scenario in favour of her party candidates. The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) candidates has thrown a major challenge to the AL contenders in these constituencies. This has shaken the morale of the AL workers there.

Due to an intra—party squabbles at Batiaghata—Dakope constituency of the district most of the Awami League workers and leaders were working there for the CPB candidate Prof. Achintaya Biswas. Prof. Biswas who is apparently going strong with the electorate over his AL rival may face debacle following the visit of AL chief to Batiaghata.

Political circles here believe that the local leaders and workers of Awami League who were not happy with Sk. Harun would be handled by Sk. Hasina personally during her visit to Khulna and especially to Batiaghata.

In Khulna—2, the CPB candidate Advocate Firoz Ahmed is reportedly under heavy pressure from Awami League and his own party central leaders to withdraw from the race at Khulna old city seat to facilitate the return of AL candidate Advocate Manjurul Imam.

Resistance committee meet today

'Resistance Committee against imperialist aggression in Gulf will hold a meeting at GPO gate today (Sunday) at 3 pm, a press release said.

Seminar on drip irrigation today

By Staff Correspondent

A seminar on the 'development of bamboo drip irrigation system' and 'post harvest losses in rice and their prevention in Bangladesh' organised by Agriculture Engineering Division of the Institution of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) will be held today (Sunday) at 5.15 pm in the seminar hall of IEB, a press release said.

OISCA executives

Sarwarjan Chowdhury and Benajir Ahmed were elected Chairman and Secretary General respectively of the Organisation for Industrial Spiritual and Cultural Advancement, International (OISCA), Bangladesh Chapter at its Executive Committee meeting held in Dhaka recently, says a press release.

Other office bearers of the organisation are: Vice Chairman, S. G. Rasool, A.K.M. Emdadul Huq and Zaker Ahmed, Treasurer — Mrs. Farida Moni; Joint Secretary General — Mr. Wahiullah and Mr. Manzoor Ahsan, Joint Treasurer — Mr. H. A. Chowdhury; Publication and Cultural Affairs Secretary — Mr. Azizul Haque, Education and Training Secretary — Mrs. Munira Khanam; Youth and Affairs Secretary — Mrs Mahmuda Huq

Ekushey fair awards for book stalls

By Staff Correspondent

Bangla Academy awarded three book stalls participated in the Ekushey book fair at the academy premises for their artistic presentation and decoration.

'Gana Unnaun Granthagar' was selected for the first prize which carries Tk 5000 while 'Bisha Shahitta Kendra' and 'Granthaloke' earned second and third prizes respectively. The prizes are valued at Tk. 3000 and 2000.

The Director General of the Bangla Academy formally handed over the prizes to the book stalls' owners on Saturday.

KMP ban on firearms

KHULNA, Feb 23: Khulna Metropolitan Police Commissioner in an order issued here today imposed ban on the use of any crackers, bombs, lethal weapons, explosive materials and licenced firearms within the Khulna Metropolitan city area until further order.

The KMP has sought cooperation in this regard from all quarters in the interest of maintaining law and order situation.

Vested quarters trying to sell freedom: NAP

By Staff Correspondent

National Awami Party (Bhasani NAP) Prof Nur Mohammad Kazi said that vested quarters were "trying to sell our independence to a neighbouring country".

He was addressing an election meeting on Saturday at Nilkhet Babupura, a press release said.

He urged all to foil conspiracies against the country.

Obituary

Mohammad Mokbul Hossain, Chief Controller of Delta Life Insurance Company Ltd. died of heart attack in Dhaka on Friday (February 22). He was 53.

The namaj-e-janaza of the deceased was held on Saturday at Baitul Mokarram Mosque after Asr prayer. He was buried at his village home at Munshiganj.

He left behind his wife, two sons, parents and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

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Dateline Chittagong

Arms recovered, 41 arrested

CHITTAGONG, Feb 23 : Police recovered 161 firearms and 230 rounds of ammunition and arrested 41 persons from different areas of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Feni districts from January 1 to February 21, police said today, reports BSS.

A total of 65 fire arms including three sten guns and 121 ammunition were recovered and 27 persons arrested in Chittagong district.

Patiya and Hathazari police recovered 17 and 13 fire arms respectively. Hathazari police also arrested 17 illegal arms holders.

Twentysix fire arms and 60 rounds of ammunition were recovered and three persons arrested in Cox's Bazar district during the period. Moheskhali and Ukia police recovered nine and seven fire arms respectively.

Seventy fire arms and 49 ammunition were recovered and 11 persons arrested in Feni district.

The arms were displayed at Halishahar firing range on Friday morning. DIG Chittagong Range, Mr. M.A Khaleque was present.

He briefed the local journalists on the arms recovery drive of the police.

Oikya Jote

Gonotantrik Oikya Jote leaders Saturday called upon the voters to elect patriotic and honest candidates in the February 27 election, a Jote press release said.

Addressing a projection meeting at Mirsarai Pilot High School maidan in the afternoon, they urged voters to exercise their right of franchise without fear and resist those, trying to terrorise them at the poling centres.

Chittagong-1 Constituency (Mirsarai) Gonotantrik Oikya Jote candidate Mr. Dilip Barua, labour leaders A.T.M Nizam Uddin, Anwar Kabir and Nurul Kader Chowdhury addressed the meeting.

One man, aged 50, was burnt alive and six dwelling houses were gutted when a fire broke out at Uttar-Maiddha Halishahar here early Saturday, fireman said.

The fire originated in the flame of a lamp, they said.

Biman Managing Director Mofazzal Karim among Biman officials and employees seen placing wreaths at Central Shahid Minar at minutes past 12 on February 21.

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