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The Daily Star

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Ershad will be moved to central jail



By Staff Correspondent

Both Treasury and Opposition Benches in Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) on Wednesday expressed their unequivocal support amid thunderous clapping to transfer former President H M Ershad to the central jail from Gulshan sub-jail.

This was the first broad agreement between the ruling party and the Opposition, reached in the fifth parliament.

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Begum Khaleda Zia in her winding up speech after a lengthy heated debate on the situation prevailing in country's jails declared that the former President would soon be transferred to the central jail. She thanked the members for their 'unanimity' on the issue of transfer of Ershad to the central jail.

At this stage, members of Jatiya Party, of which Ershad is chairman staged walkout to register their protest against the announcement of the Prime Minister.

Earlier, participating in the discussion, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina reiterated the demand of fellow members to send Ershad to a jail proper to the situation.

Jatiya Sangsad (Parliament) ended on Wednesday its heated debate on the jail situation with an assurance by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia about Government's effective efforts to prevent recurrence of prison riots.

The House went into almost four-hour-long discussions, spread over morning and afternoon sittings, on the jail situation.

The proceedings of the Sangsad were not covered by newsmen because of a three-hour token strike observed in response to a call given by Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ).

The Opposition members in their discussions in the afternoon sitting expressed their grave concern over the situation prevailing in the jails. It is the fundamental responsibility of Government to ensure safety and security of the jail inmates, they said.

Initiated by Jamaat leader Maulana Mattur Rahman Nizami, one dozen members took part in the discussions. The participants included Mohammad Nasim, Begum Matia Chowdhury, Col (ret'd) Shaukat Ali and A Matin Khasru of Awami League.

Shahjahan Siraj of JSD, Abdur Razzak of Baksal, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of National Democratic Party, Rashed Khan Menon of Workers Party and Fazole Rabbi of Jatiya Party.

From the Treasury Bench, Jahanara Begum and Mia Mansoor Ali also took part in the discussion.

Deputy Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali was in the chair in the afternoon sitting.

The Opposition members made strong pleas for setting up a parliamentary committee, representing all parties, to probe into the situation prevailing in the jails and suggest ways and means to overcome the problem. They said, the jail inmates are being denied of minimum amenities. The deprivations for long have forced them to protest the prevailing situation, they stated.

The Opposition members also made demands for repeal of the Special Powers Act and other repressive laws. The morale of the officials involved in jail administration has degraded to a very low level and this is no less responsible for the jail riots, they noted.

Participating in the discussion, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina said, the entire

nation is suffering from a sense of insecurity because of the prevailing situation in the jails. She noted that every one is equal in the eye of law and the culprits must be punished. But no one should be subjected to insecurity and particularly those who are in the custody of the government, she said.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the jail killings on November 5, 1975, in which four prominent national leaders were killed in Dhaka Central Jail. Those who were not arrested and punished, she added. That was the beginning of insecurity in the jails and the situation has now aggravated to an alarming proportion, she observed.

Winding up the discussions on the jail situation, Leader of the House Begum Zia said the situation in the jails was the outcome of accumulated problems over the years. Things have come to an awful mess because of misrule and widespread corruption under the autocratic Ershad regime, she added.

The Prime Minister said, the accumulated problems cannot certainly be solved by the Government overnight.

She sought the cooperation of all to deal with the situation effectively.

She said most of the jails in the country are overcrowded. She mentioned about Narshingdi jail and pointed out that there are 450 inmates in the jail while the capacity is only for 85 prisoners.

She said that lethal weapons used by prisoners were not supplied from outside but forcibly collected from workshops and construction sites within the prison.

Begum Zia mentioned about the post-independence Awami League rule. "Those who were entrusted to rear the new-born nation throttled it," she said. She also referred to the killings of Siraj Sikdar and many other political workers by the then government.

The Leader of the House said, BNP has formed the Government with the mandate of the people. "We have the popular support and we have not formed the Government at the mercy of any one," she added.

The Prime Minister said, the Government will deal effectively with all the pressing issues of the country with unqualified support and cooperation from the people.

Nation suffers from a sense of insecurity : Sheikh Hasina

All steps to prevent recurrence of jail riots, PM assures JS

By Staff Correspondent

Nor'wester lashes country : 5 bodies recovered from debris of Sripur textile mills

100 feared killed in roof collapse

By Staff Correspondent

Nearly 100 people were feared dead when the roof of an under-construction textile mills building at Gilarchala village of Sripur upazila under Gazipur district caved in Wednesday afternoon.

Rescuers of the Fire Service and Titas Gas recovered five dead and 14 injured persons till 11.00 pm last night. The rescue operation was continuing till filing of this report late last night.

According to the witnesses, the roof of Mita Textile Mills collapsed at about 4.30 pm immediately after a nor'wester lashed the area. Over 100 labourers who were working on the roof got down when the rains with gusty winds started at about 4 pm. The labourers took shelter under the roof. About 25 of them came out as the rain stopped. Moments after, the roof caved in with a loud crash trapping the rest of the labourers under it.

Local people rushed the spot. They found the trapped persons shouting for help. But they were helpless because they could not reach the people trapped under the debris. Heavy pillars and rods covered the labours. Three units of Fire Service from Sripur, Gazipur and Dhaka reached the spot after an hour, a heavy crane of Titas Gas also rushed there and started the rescue operation.

Delwar Hossain, one of the

labourers who managed to escape the disaster told The Daily Star that he saw spark of fire near one of the pillars soon after he came out from the under-construction mills. The roof then broke down and fell on his fellow workers who were still waiting there. The construction of the roof began only two days ago. He predicted nearby 100 people were trapped under the debris.

Of the recovered bodies, three were identified as Mannan, Mostafa and Sattar.

The injured labourers are Nurul Huda, 23, Alauddin, 30, Abul Kashem, 25, Mokhter Ahmed, 24, Monir Uddin, 36 and Aatur Rahman, 30. The wounded persons were sent to different hospitals of Sripur, Gazipur and Dhaka.

The local people said that there were two graves on the site of the mills. The owner of the mills Mostafizur Rahman started construction on the spot defying the objection from the local people, they added.

Fire Service authorities requested the army to join the rescue operation at mid-night Wednesday night.

The Deputy Commissioner of Gazipur reached the spot after six hours of the incident occurred.

The owner of the mills, was learnt to be out of the country. But his relations visited the

See Page 10 Col. 2



Body of a victim of Wednesday's nor'wester being rescued from the debris of an under-construction building of a textile mills at Gilarchala in Sreepur upazila of Gazipur district. — Star photo

Ershad's trial adjourned till April 21

'Case not an act of political vengeance'

By Staff Correspondent

A prosecution witness in Ershad's arms case trial Metropolitan Magistrate A.K.M. Ismail yesterday denied that the case against Ershad was an act of political vengeance.

He was replying to the cross-examination by the Defence Lawyer at the Special Tribunal trying deposed Pres-

ident Ershad. The Tribunal was adjourned yesterday for 10 days.

The adjournment order came after the cross-examination of two more prosecution witnesses, the ballistics expert of the police Fakhr Saleh Mohammad and the

See Page 10 Col. 5

Shifting likely today

By Staff Correspondent

Deposed President Ershad, who is now detained in Gulshan sub-jail, may be shifted to the central jail today, according to an official source.

Prime Minister Begum Zia told parliament on Wednesday that Ershad will be transferred to the central jail after for-

See Page 10 Col. 4

US warns Iraq to cease action

WASHINGTON, Apr 10 : The United States has warned Iraq that it must cease all military action near areas where Iraqi refugees have fled, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said today.

Fitzwater said the warning applies to "all air and ground forces" of Iraq, also said the Bush Administration would seek additional funding from Congress for relief efforts.

Earlier US warned Iraq not to use any aircraft in its own airspace north of 36 degrees

latitude, a senior US official said in Cairo today.

The line is about 30 km (20 miles) south of Mosul and takes in most of Iraq's Kurdish area.

The official accompanying Secretary of State James Baker on his Middle East tour told reporters the warning was passed to Baghdad through diplomatic channels earlier this week.

The 36th Parallel cuts a swathe across the northern-most corner of Iraq.

Iraq, its fixed-wing fighter aircraft banned from flying by the US-led allies, has been using helicopter gunships against its Kurds in the north and Shi'ites in the south.

The blanket flying ban covers the northern Iraqi towns of Dahuk, Irbil and Zakho near the Kurdish frontier all of which were held by the Kurds during their month-long revolt.

Mosul, Iraq's third-largest city, never fell to the rebels. See Page 10 Col. 1

India regrets copter incident

By Staff Correspondent

Foreign Minister A.S.M. Mustafizur Rahman informed the House Wednesday the Indian version on the landing of an Indian Air Force helicopter in Bangladesh territory on March 30. The Indian High Commission in Bangladesh has regretted the incident caused due to what it said unavoidable circumstances.

During the afternoon session of parliament Wednesday. See Page 10 Col. 2

Dhaka-Thimpu cooperation reviewed

Bangladesh and Bhutan on Wednesday expressed satisfaction over the steady growth of relations and friendship between the two countries during last 15 years, reports UNB.

Bilateral cooperation between the two SAARC countries was reviewed when visiting Bhutanese Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering met his

See Page 10 Col. 8

Crackdown on dissent saved China : Li

BELJING, Apr 10: Prime Minister of China Li Peng declared Tuesday that a harsh crackdown on dissent had kept China from going the way of Eastern Europe, and said he would not resign, report Agencies.

"It we had not taken the measures that we were forced into taking at that occasion, then China today might be bogged down in economic

chaos and decline, as well as political instability certainly at least as severe as what has happened in some countries that used to practice socialism," Li told news conference.

Li, a main supporter of the army's decision to crush pro-democracy unrest in 1989 with heavy loss of life, did not mention any Eastern European countries by name.

He said the harsh suppress-

ion had saved the nation and declined to rule out the use of force in any future unrest.

Chinese leaders ordered the military to crush mass demonstrations in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June 1989 killing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of protesters.

A similar wave of popular discontent eventually helped sweep away communist govern-

ments in the former East Bloc.

"It at that critical moment, the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government did not adopt resolute measures... China today could not enjoy its present stability or economic prosperity," Li said.

Even the fate of the People's Republic of China would be at stake," he added.

Li spoke after the closing session of the National Peo-

ple's Congress, China's rubber-stamp parliament, which overwhelmingly approved his work report and economic plan for the next decade.

The Premier, target last month of a coded message in the Communist Party's official newspaper demanding he resign, said he and the leadership were fully in control and laughed off attacks on his position.

"I believe that during the current term of tenure of the government I will certainly remain at my post of Premier," he said. The current government's term expires next year.

Li said that contrary to rumours, the next congress of the Communist Party, where decisions on top leadership would be made, would not be held earlier than its 1992 scheduled start.

NEWS BRIEFS

PM talks prison situation with Shahabuddin

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia met the Acting President Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed, at his residence in Dhaka Wednesday night, reports BSS.

During the meeting the Prime Minister discussed with the Acting President the prevailing situation in different prisons of the country including Dhaka central jail, an official said.

Shahabuddin hosts Iftar

Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed hosted an Iftar party at Bangabhaban this evening for high civil and military officials, reports UNB.

Dhaka Central Jail calm

Dhaka Central Jail was calm on Wednesday and there was no incident of disturbance inside the jail, reports BSS.

Eid congregation

The main Eid-ul-Fitr congregation at the National Eidgah this year will be held at 8 am, according to an announcement made by the Ministry of Religious Affairs on Wednesday, reports BSS.

99 detenus' release recommended

The Advisory Board recommended the release of 99 detenus interned under the Special Powers Act '74 on Wednesday. The Board in its meetings held recently with Justice Mohammed Mozammel Haque in the chair reviewed the grounds of detention of 115 detenus and proposed the release of 99 of them, reports UNB.

Sind minister's residence attacked

Gunmen attacked the residence of Tariq Javed, a Sind province Minister Tuesday, killing his bodyguard and injuring his private secretary before escaping, officials said, reports AFP.

Sehri and Iftar timings

Ramadan Day	Last time for Sehri	Iftar
25 Thursday	4.20 am	6.23 pm
26 Friday	4.19 am	6.24 pm