

## Attorney General tells court No political motive behind Ershad case

Attorney General Aminul Huq Wednesday ruled out any political motive behind instituting the case against former President HM Ershad and categorically stated that the corruption case against him was taken up much before the present government came to power, reports BSS.

Refuting observations of the defence that the present case is a "battle of throne" and also a "battle between ambition and beauty", the Attorney General asserted that the case was in fact a legacy being carried by the present democratically elected government.

Since the case had begun before the present government took over, it cannot be treated as politically motivated, Huq said.

The Attorney General was presenting his final arguments in the corruption case on the fifth and concluding day of the arguments. Earlier, Chief Defence Counsel (CDC) Serajul Haq had put forward his arguments to prove his client's innocence in the charges brought against him.

The former ruler has been charged on two accounts - misappropriation of gifts valued over Tk 11 lakh and amassing wealth over Tk 2.21 crore beyond his known source of income.

Taka 1,90,81,565 which was found in cash in Ershad's Senabhaban is the main element in this case. In all, 58 witnesses, including 48 from the prosecution side, testified in the court.

Referring to defence's accusation that legal sanction was not there to prosecute the former president, the Attorney General said law has been changed and no sanction was required. Despite this, sanction was taken, the Attorney General said and added that, therefore, the allegation of mechanical or purposeful application of law by defence was not sustainable.

On defence's objection former president cannot be tried as per law, the Attorney General said this exemption was applicable only when he is in office. He said after the earlier trial of Khandakar

## ALPP expresses doubt about sincerity of ruling party

Awami League Parliamentary Party held a meeting at the Sangsad Bhaban Wednesday afternoon with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair, reports BSS.

The meeting, lasted an hour, discussed the current session of the Jatiya Sangsad with particular reference to several contemporary national issues.

Party Whip Azizur Rahman told BSS that the meeting expressed concern over the recent border incursion by the Myanmar security forces also the situation prevailing in the Chittagong Hill Districts.

The ALPP also discussed the issue of Indemnity Repeal Bill and expressed its "doubt" about what it termed the "sincerity" of the ruling party in placing the bill in the House.

## Three muggers with Tk 1.58 lakh held

By Staff Correspondent.

A group of armed muggers looted about Taka 1,58,000 from the employees of a pharmaceutical company, leaving them injured in front of the Ramna branch of Agrani Bank at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city on Wednesday morning.

When four employees of Fisons Bangladesh Limited ASM Arif, Atiquzzaman, Yakub Hossain and Rahmatullah - got down from a car in front of the bank to deposit the company's money at about 10.45 am the muggers numbering five or six exploded crackers, stabbed the employees and snatched away the money kept in a bag, witnesses said.

The hawkers and passers-by on the spot caught three of the muggers while the others escaped with the money by an autorickshaw.

The apprehended muggers Abdul Hossain alias Selim, Shaiful Alam and Khalilur Rahman alias Raju were later handed over to the Motijheel police.

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Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Abdus Samad Azam addressing a rally of homeless people in the city yesterday.

## Try Golam Azam

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yesterday.

Tofael Ahmed, Abdur Razzak and Mohiuddin Ahmed of AL, Sheikh Ansar Ali and Ruhul Kuddus of Jamaat and Abdul Latif Miah of ruling BNP among others took part in the discussion.

Expressing surprise over the election of Golam Azam as the chief of Jamaat Shamsul Haque wanted to know how a foreigner could be elected the chief of a party involved in the political process of Bangladesh while government went for legal action against other foreigners desiring the same.

It was further surprising, he continued, the government was overlooking a foreigner's becoming a party chief who was involved in the genocide during the War of Liberation.

Taking the floor Rashed Khan Menon accused Jamaat of violating the Constitution of the country by electing Golam Azam as its chief.

He said, it was not only a constitutional question, it also involved a crucial political issue too. He maintained Golam Azam was rightly denied his citizenship of the country as he had not only actively opposed the War of Liberation, he had also been campaigning against the country for a long period even after the Independence.

Menon argued Golam Azam, a Pakistani citizen, formed the 'East Pakistan Restoration Committee' after the independence of Bangladesh and applied all means in pursuing some foreign countries to refrain from Bangladesh as an independent state.

He demanded the government try Golam Azam as a war criminal.

Charged with emotion Abdul Miah said it was very unfortunate for him as well as for the Speaker that they had to discuss such an issue.

Referring to the Article 38 of the Constitution he said, the right for forming association and unions is guaranteed only for the citizens of the country. As Golam Azam is not the citizen of the country, the question of his involvement in the country's political process does not arise at all, the AL MP said.

Tofael Ahmed, referring to Golam Azam's pioneering role in the formation of al-Badr which had indulged in killing thousands of Bangladeshis, said he must be expelled from the country.

Tofael said amnesty in 1972 was not applicable for those involved in arson, loot and rape.

It was unfortunate that Jamaat did not dare to provide Golam Azam its membership even during the reign of autocratic Ershad, said Tofael adding it has dared to do it under the democratic rule of Khaleda Zia.

He was very critical of late president Ziaur Rahman for his attempts to rehabilitate the anti-Liberation forces in politics. Zia betrayed the spirit of Liberation War, he said.

Abdur Razzak said that the Golam Azam issue involved not only the legal question, it had a genuine emotional aspect too.

The government must clarify its stance on the issue, Razzak said.

"He urged the government to try Golam Azam as a war criminal since he is now within our reach."

## Absence of ministers

countable to the JS.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azam expressed concern at the absence of the senior Treasury Bench members. He maintained that the cabinet members should be present as they were individually and collectively accountable to parliament.

Opposition members, while noting the absence of the Foreign Minister and the Home Minister, said that their presence was much needed for the deliberations of the day.

Tofael Ahmed (AL), Fazle Rabbi (JP), Rashed Khan Menon (WP), Shamsuddoha (CPB) and Abdur Razzaka (AL), took part, among others, in the debate.

Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah while contesting the Deputy Leader of the Opposition's statement, said that as an accountable government, the cabinet members have total respect for parliament and its members.

Najmul Huda, Minister for Information, pointed out that there was no rule regarding the mandatory presence of the ministers. While refuting the demand for the presence of the Home and the Foreign Ministers, he added that they might be otherwise preoccupied with more urgent duties of the state.

A motion of thanks on the President's address to the House January 4 was moved by Mia Md Mansur (BNP). As Shahidul Islam (BNP) was not present, when called to second the move, Md Ansar Ali Siddiqui (BNP) later stood up and seeking permission of the chair seconded the move.

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## Ahsanullah Master bailed out

A High Court Division bench of the Supreme Court yesterday granted bail to Ahsanullah Master, chairman of the now defunct Gazipur Upazila Parishad. Ahsanullah, who is the joint convener of the Upazila Chairmen Samity, was arrested on December 8 allegedly on civil disobedience charges and was under detention since then. He was one of the five upazila chairmen who filed the writ petitions challenging the annulment of the upazila system, reports BSS.

The court stayed the judgement of the Bar Council till disposal of the case.

An interim order also passed by the court allowed the petitioner, Moudud Ahmed, to continue his practice as an advocate in the Supreme Court till disposal of the case.

Two more pirates apprehended

KIULNA, Jan 8 : Bangladesh Navy, in cooperation with Kalapara police station, apprehended two notorious pirates of Alipuri under Patuakhali district yesterday.

## Govt has failed: Samad Azad

By Staff Correspondent.

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and president member of Awami League Abdus Samad Azad at a rally on Wednesday said the BNP government must have to resolve all controversial issues with the opposition if it really believed in democracy and wanted to give it an institutional shape.

He was addressing as chief guest a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue organised by the Bangladesh Bastuhara Samity (an association of the slum-dwellers) to press home its 10-point demand.

The Awami League leader criticizing the role of the government alleged that it completely failed to lead the country burdened with 50 lakh educated unemployed people.

He blamed the government for not keeping up its commitment to the people and said, instead of doing good to the people, the government was now trying to make the administration partisan to serve its party interest. But it would not be allowed to do so, he added.

Samad Azad criticized the government for not introducing the Indemnity Repeal Bill in Parliament as yet and said only this bill can stop the unholy move by certain quarters to capture power through killings, coups and terrorism.

The rally presided over by Lutful Rahman, President of the Bastuhara Samity, was addressed, among others, by Awami League leaders Abdur Razzak, Mozaffar Hossain Paltu, Mozaffar Hossain Chowdhury (Maya), Advocate Sahara Khatun, Advocate Sirajul Alam, Advocate Quamrul Islam and Bastuhara Samity leaders Quazi Abdul Matin, Nuruddin Khan, Enamul Huq Biswas, Yunus Ali and Abul Quasem.

Abdur Razzak said democracy could not be established in the country unless the heinous Indemnity Ordinance is repealed. He also said that voting against the Indemnity Repeal Bill by the government would be a breach of its commitment to the people and, if it does so, the people would not forgive the government.

The Chief Whip of the ruling party Delwar Hossain, when asked by the Speaker whether the Treasury Bench would say something on this issue, said they preferred to listen to the opposition members. We shall speak on the issue later, he commented.

The three members who staged walkout protesting the Speaker's refusal to let them speak during the discussion were Shahjahan Siraj of JSD, and independents, Nurul Islam Moni and Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed.

Sheikh Hasina, Awami League Chief and the Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, entered the House at 5-15 pm, few minutes before the adjournment motion on Golam Azam was accepted by the Speaker for the debate. She, however, did not take part in the discussion.

The House was adjourned at 6-50 pm yesterday till 3 pm today (Thursday), a Private Members' Day.

## Flag meeting

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BSS Diplomatic Correspondent learnt that Myanmar troops had pulled back one to three kilometres from their earlier positions along the border following the trend of de-escalating the tensions.

Myanmar is understood to have amassed three brigades of troops along the border in the recent time.

UNB reports: The government will apprise the members of parliament the Bangladesh-Myanmar border situation.

"Government will soon make a statement on this", said ruling party Chief Whip Khandokar Delwar Hossain responding to a pressing demand from the opposition.

Expressing concern over the tense situation on the border, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdus Samad Azad said hundreds of people from Arakan have been crossing over to Bangladesh. People in Myanmar have been groaning under a most oppressive military rule. The military junta there did not allow madam Suu Kyi to come to power although she won a landslide victory in the election, he said.

Samad said Bangladesh being a small and poor country cannot provide shelter and food to thousands of refugees coming from Arakan every day.

The issue was raised by Saahuddin Yusuf (AL) who observed that tension on the border is mounting. He said Myanmar posed a threat to Bangladesh's sovereignty and pitied the government for "toeing a subservient foreign policy."

Tofael Ahmed pointed to the press reports and said Yangon demonstrated unwillingness in attending the flag meetings. This gave an impression that Bangladesh has been begging for it.

Earlier, the Speaker deferred admission of adjournment motions on Bangladesh-Myanmar border situation till situation demands for it.

More than a score notices were served to move adjournment motions by members from the opposition benches.

While deferring the admission of the motions, the Speaker said flag meetings were held and the situation seemed to have been brought under control. However, the situation demands, he added.

BSS adds: The district authorities of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban have started work to enlist the names of Rohingya Muslims.

Official sources said the preparation of the list would be completed by January 15.

Meanwhile, a sizeable number of people were said to have died of starvation in Mongdu and other Arakan areas during the past one week, according to reports by Rohingya Muslims, who crossed into Bangladesh through different border points.

CHITTAGONG, Jan 8 : Chittagong port resumed normal activities this afternoon when clearing and forwarding agents and their workers reached an agreement on the five-point demand of the latter, reports BSS.

The port remained paralysed for several days when C and F agents employees went on strike to press for their demands including pay hike.

## The Midnight File

### Birendra to abide by new constitutional monarchy

KATMANDU, Jan 8 : King Birendra, reduced to a figurehead after last year's violent pro-democracy movement, says he now abides by the new constitution guaranteeing multiparty democracy in a constitutional monarchy, a Nepalese weekly reported Wednesday. The 46-year-old king said economic factors and political shifts in Nepalese society that coincided with international developments brought about the change. The Independent said, reports AP.

### Indonesian Gen regrets over Timor incident

DILI, Jan 8 : An Indonesian general conceded for the first time Wednesday that soldiers had erred in shooting dozens of anti-Indonesian demonstrators in East Timor in November. "I sincerely extend my deep regret over the incident and ask forgiveness for the shortcomings and mistakes by members of the armed forces, who intentionally or unintentionally have hurt the people of East Timor," said Maj Gen Sintong Pandjaitan, commander of the military region that includes East Timor, reports AP.

### India promises \$ 6 m aid to Russia

NEW DELHI, Jan 8 : India will give 150-million rupees (dhs 5.8 million) worth of aid to Russia to help it face the on-going economic hardships, the Foreign Ministry said Sunday. The aid will be given to the Commission of Humanitarian and Technical Assistance, set up by the Russian government following the breakup of the Soviet Union, ministry spokesman, Aflab Seth said, reports AP.

### Three US-based attackers held, claims Cuba

MEXICO CITY, Jan 8 : Cuba said Wednesday it had arrested three Miami residents who had infiltrated Cuba to carry out terrorist activities. An Interior Ministry statement reported by state-run Radio Havana said the three men were arrested Dec 29 near Jucaro in the coastal region northeast of Havana, reports AP.

## Rush to deposit licensed arms

By Staff Correspondent

The rush to deposit licensed firearms at the District Commissioner's office in the capital tremendously increased in the past three days.

A total of 1550 licensed firearms were examined by the Magistrates on duty at the DC's office during last three days while only 107 were deposited on the first three days, according to officials.

The Magistrates at the DC's office withheld 28 firearms out of the total number deposited during the last three days as the papers were found unsatisfactory while the rest given back to the owners, a Magistrate on duty told The Daily Star Wednesday.

In the initial announcement, the government ordered licensed firearms holders to deposit all arms between January 2 to 15 at the DC's offices all over the country. It was said that the licences found satisfactorily up-dated, would be returned after the expiry of the last date.

Following a public outcry over the long delay in the procedure, another announcement was made January 5 saying that the licensed firearms found properly up-dated would be returned immediately after the examination of the papers.

The maximum rush was witnessed Wednesday as 842 licensed firearms were brought into the DC's office of the day. Following the stupendous rush of licensed firearms

holders on the day another room was opened and seven more Magistrates were engaged in examining licences and firearms while ten Magistrates were engaged in a single room to do the job earlier, officials said.

The Magistrates on duty at the DC's office have so far given back to the owners 291 revolvers, 163 pistols, 209 rifles, 433 double barrel guns and 433 single barrel guns after examining the papers and kept 27 revolvers, 14 pistols, 11 rifles, 30 double barrel guns and 50 single barrel guns at the DC's office, officials said.

Out of the firearms deposited at the DC's office 107 were kept without examination on the first three days following the initial announcement of the government while the rest were deposited as the papers were unsatisfactory, officials said.

A Magistrate at the DC's office said that all of the 135 deposited licensed firearms would be examined and re-examined at the end of the programme and the firearms found unquestionable would be returned to the owners, he added.

Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka K M Nazmul Alam Siddiqui told "The Daily Star" the presence of the licensed firearms holders is satisfactory and it proves that the people are responding to the government.

After the president left the dinner, Mrs Bush made brief remarks. "I can't explain what happened to George, because it never happened before, but I'm beginning to think it's the Ambassador's fault. (Laughter). He and George played the Emperor and the Crown Prince in tennis today, and they were badly beaten. (Laughter.) And we Bushes aren't used to that. So he felt much worse than I thought."

Bush, nearing an end to a 12-day trip to Australia and Asia, attended the state dinner after a long day of tennis, meetings and diplomatic discussions. Japan was his last stop after visiting Australia, Singapore and Korea.

During contentious trade talks, Bush implored Miyazawa to "iron out" trade differences with the United States, but US officials said Japan was "screaming" about pressure to boost sales of American cars and auto parts in Japan.

White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater said the United States and Japan were arguing heatedly about targets for Japanese imports of US cars and parts. Bush, for his part, said, "We're making progress."

"We're pressing them hard. They're feeling the pinch and they're screaming about it," he said. "We'll find out where we are tomorrow."

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