

# Plot for Rajanigandha Inn Ershad faces another corruption case

Former President H M Ershad in collusion with others leased out a land owned by a statutory body to a private company before the company came into existence by flouting rules and causing financial loss to Rajuk (former DIT), prosecution yesterday charged, reports BSS.

The land measuring 3.82 acre and situated opposite to Dhaka Sheraton Hotel was leased out to Bengal Trading and Industrial Company Ltd (BTIC) for the construction of Rajanigandha Holiday Inn, a hotel owned by International Hotel Holdings Ltd.

Special court chaired by senior special Judge Nasiruddin Ahmed heard charges brought against Ershad and three other co-accused out of five persons who have been charge-sheeted. Fifth person, Abul Bashar, former chairman, DIT, expired in the meantime.

Former Vice President Moudud Ahmed, one of the co-accused appeared for the first time in this case. Other accused are Shaful Ghanai Swapan, former Works Minister and Abul Khair Litu, Bangladesh sponsor of the hotel.

The hearing remained incomplete and judge fixed March 4 for the next hearing of the case.

While bringing the charges Public Prosecutor Abdur Razzak Khan said the former head of state and three others (including late Bashar) leased out the land five months before BTIC was floated violating existing rule of Rajuk that caused the statutory body to suffer a loss of over Tk 13.4 crore.

As per law all commercial plots, such as the land in question, needed to be leased out through public auction and that information to be made known to all through newspaper advertisement.

While leasing out the land, the accused person (except

Abul Khair) violated Rule 14 and 20 of Rajuk Rule, PP charged. While Rule 14 relates to awarding land to the highest bidder and Rule 20 refers to mode of transaction (maximum 4 instalments with interests). Earlier the Attorney of accused Moudud Ahmed prayed for adjournment of hearing on the plea that they were yet to get some relevant papers.

The court disallowed the prayer and directed prosecution to proceed with its submission.

Khan said there was no auction and the land was leased out at Taka 50 lakh less per bigha than what had been fixed by DIT long ago (total land was over 11.5 bighas). Besides leasing out at a much cheaper rate, unusual concessions to pay in 12 instalments without interests not permitted by law was allowed which caused financial loss to DIT.

The former president and the then DPM in charge of the Ministry of Industries Moudud Ahmed gave the allotment of land and by violating the rule knowingly committed offence under Section 409 and 109 of Cr PC and 5 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act. PP said in the charge hearing. He said evidence showed former Works Minister Shaful Ghanai Swapan was in collusion with the two in awarding the land contravening law.

Abul Khair Litu, the Bangladesh promoter of the Hotel was charged of abetting the three accused in causing financial loss to Rajuk. The land in question was previously owned by US Embassy who later exchanged it with government plot at Baridhara.

PP said correspondence for procuring the land began in January 1987, much before sponsor company came into being. He said Shariful Haq alias Dalim, the then trade

commissioner in Hong Kong wrote a letter to Industries Ministry on the possibility of such a hotel and Abul Khair Litu, brother-in-law of Dalim applied to the Industries Ministry for the plot in the name of BTIC even before it was born.

The prosecution said Abul Khair Litu who was not in the BTIC from the beginning as per document, finally entered it in March 1988 by replacing Shah Syed Kamal, one of his employees, when the holding company had its first board meeting. In support of his contention that Litu financed everything for BTIC and was behind it from the beginning, PP read out money receipts and other papers.

The foreign sponsors in the holding company are Property Administration Ltd of Hong Kong and Cadina Company Ltd also of Hong Kong. The share of the holding company was apportioned equally among the sponsors-9999 shares to each.

Giving a history of the holding company — International Hotel Holdings Ltd — for whose benefit the plot was allotted, was incorporated into Bangladesh on 12.11.1987 and started functioning from first February of the following year.

The PP said while okaying the deal, Ershad, however, put certain conditions that included construction of a one thousand persons capacity convention centre.

Khan appealed to court to frame charges so that trial could start soon.

When accused Moudud Ahmed said the prosecution under section Cr PC 241 (A) was bound to supply all documents, judge observed that the particular rule is not applicable in Bangladesh. The judge asked Monday to put up his case when the court next meets on March 4.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia addressing the concluding session of the two-day extended meeting of BNP at Sugandha yesterday. —PID photo

## Khaleda : Zia's policies

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programmes of the government could succeed if the organisation was strong. "As a ruling party you have a greater responsibility towards the people for their socio-economic emancipation", she observed.

With reference to Jatiya Party (JP) politics, Begum Zia observed that some of JP sympathisers were funneling funds to destabilise the government.

"We want to make the hard-earned independence meaningful and consolidate sovereignty. It can be achieved by forging meaningful and effective national unity imbued with the spirit of patriotism," the meeting said in a resolution.

Presided over by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, chief of BNP, the meeting called upon all political parties and professional groups to consolidate democracy.

The meeting said the chronic losses suffered by sector corporations, railway, road and highways, banks and other financial institutions had created adverse impacts on national economy.

Stressing the need for developing cordial employees-management relations, the meeting strongly pleaded for increasing productivity to reduce wastage and losses in all sectors.

The meeting said it was the imperative need to uproot corruption created at all levels of society by the autocratic regime, if the nation wanted to continue its advance march stated by the present government.

It stressed reducing expenditure in unproductive sectors, increasing industrial production and taking steps for eradicating terrorism in the educational arena.

The meeting also underscored the need for creating

more employment opportunities by setting up new industries, reducing the price of diesel, fertilizer and insecticides for boosting agricultural production.

The meeting observed that the people had installed the BNP to power with the objective of establishing a self-reliant nation, institutionalising democracy at all levels and bringing about economic emancipation.

The government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has taken sincere efforts to overcome all crisis for fulfilling the people's expectations, the resolutions said adding the government had already taken a number of people-oriented programmes.

The meeting listed a series of achievements of the BNP government during the last few months. These included exemption of agricultural loan upto Taka five thousand, waiving of tax on agricultural land upto 25 bighas, establishment of a sovereign parliament, ensuring freedom of the press, establishing an accountable government, announcement of a new industrial policy, formation of wages commission and reintroduction of canal digging programmes.

The meeting said the defeated forces of autocratic regime, taking the advantage of democracy, were out to hinder the efforts towards fulfilling people's hopes and aspirations.

Another political force has been raising some political issues, already rejected by the people, to create unrest in the country, the meeting said.

The meeting also paid tributes to the party leaders and workers who died since the last extended meeting held on March 15 last.

The meeting called for international help to check the influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and steps for their quick return.

It pleaded for early solution of all bilateral issues with India including the sharing of the Ganges water, the handing over of Tinbigha corridor and Talpatty in a spirit of understanding and cordiality. It favoured cooperation and friendship among the SAARC countries on the basis of mutual respect.

The meeting, in its resolution, said it was essential to strengthen organisational structure of the party by holding conferences at all levels to fulfil its electoral pledges to the nation. It also favoured restructure of the local government bodies and congratulated the government for dissolution of the upazila system.

More than 140 central and local leaders addressed the two day meeting. Besides, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, LGRD Minister Salam Talukdar who is also Secretary General of BNP, Tanvir Ahmed Siddiky, Amanullah Aman MP, Farida Rahman MP, Zahid Hossain Chunnun, Fazul Huiq Milon and Mozammil Hossain addressed the meeting.

Witnesses said supporters of the two rival groups armed with hockey sticks and ram dao fought pitched battles throughout the day and exploded more than a hundred crackers as the college reopened after a month-long unscheduled closure.

## The Midnight File

### Four killed as Mujahideen fire rocket into Kabul

KABUL, Feb 26: Guerillas fighting the Afghan government fired four rockets into the capital Kabul today, killing four people and wounding 12, government officials said. Witnesses said the dead included a woman and her 11-year-old child killed by a rocket that destroyed the top story of a house in a an overcrowded poor district near the city centre, reports Reuter.

### SC grants Irish girl's appeal for abortion

DUBLIN (Ireland) Feb 26: The Supreme Court decided Wednesday to overturn a lower court order which blocked a 14-year-old girl from seeking an abortion in Britain, the government press office said, reports AP.

## Long marchers

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said. Shamsul Haq Chowdhury in his speech, suggested that security be stepped up along the border and motivational programmes be increased in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

He also suggested round table conference to resolve the tribal problems.

Saiful Islam Dikdar called for immediate steps to stop the indiscriminate killing by the Shantibahini insurgents in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and to restore peace there.

Later, a procession marched towards the Indian Embassy but was halted by police at the Shahbagh crossing.

A delegation of the CHTNCP leaders handed over the memoranda to the Indian High Commission officials and the UNDP representative.

The Home Minister alleged that those willing to return were being barred.

Barrister Nazmul Huda expressed the government's firm determination to preserve the fundamental rights of the country's citizens.

He hoped that the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, proposed by the government, would help solve the Chittagong Hill Tracts problem.

Barrister Huda said that conspiracies were being hatched against the newly-formed democratic government and urged all to resist such move.

"Resist those who challenge the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country," he said.

### Euphoria

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a message of congratulations to South African captain, Kepler Wessels.

"Heartiest congratulations on a glorious victory. We are proud of you. Your victory is a victory for all of us over years of isolation and rejection," de Klerk said.

Cricket and rugby are the most popular sports among whites, though few blacks play or watch either game, preferring soccer and boxing.

In some public schools, word of the win was broadcast over intercoms, and teachers and pupils burst into applause. Some South African fans flew to Australia for the tournament, and many who didn't woke up at 5 am to watch the seven-hour match live on television.

Businesses hired television sets for the day to accommodate cricket fanatics and to reduce the number of employees calling in sick to watch at home. Loretta Loots, manager of Tejoy Flexventure, said the TV rental company had experienced a clear increase in short-term rentals.

Business also boomed at M-Net, the pay TV channel that broadcast the match. "We're keeping with the demand, but only just," said a spokesman.

### Biman

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in flight operations because of the 'so called' work abstention', the source who also preferred anonymity told The Daily Star.

The BAPA source alleged that some of their members, not more than 30, were doing overtime duties violating the BAPA contract and airlines rules.

"They are supporting the authorities which are intentionally delaying the signing of the new contract," the source alleged.

The national airliner now has 115 pilots and four DC-10, two F-28 and two ATP aircrafts flying in 26 international and seven domestic routes.

The BAPA source said that a draft copy of the year 1991-93 was submitted on March 7, 1991 to the authorities proposing a 30 per cent raise of pay and allowances, which was due to be signed by June 30 as the previous contract had expired by that date.

"The authorities dillydallied with the matter but on October 3 the concerned minister assured us that the contract would be signed within seven days of announcement of the National Pay Scale, the source said, adding that "you know the National Pay Scale was announced on October 4 but our contract is not yet signed."

### Heroin girl

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was carrying 3,300 grams of heroin worth about Taka three crore hidden inside her attire.

She was due to fly for Zurich, Switzerland, by a British Airways flight.

Eliadah earlier told police that she was a resident of Houston of Texas, USA and came to visit Bangladesh on February 15 on a ticket gifted by one of her friends. During her visit in Bangladesh she stayed at Hotel Purbani and Sonargon Hotel, she added.

Declining the charge that she was a drug-trafficker, Eliadah said that she carried the packets on a request of an African student of Dhaka University. The African student offered her one thousand US dollar to carry the packets to Zurich, but she said she did not know these were heroin packets.

However, UNB reports Wednesday, Eliadah disclosed to the airport security officials that Tony, a resident of Sonali Guest House at Banani, gave the packets of heroin for trafficking.

When contacted by Star correspondent, an official of the US Embassy in Bangladesh declined to comment on the issue.

### Rohingya refugees

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Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman is currently on a several nation European and Arabian tour to primarily discuss the refugee issue.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, who is just back from an overseas trip, also briefed several countries on the plight of the refugees.

Their discussions are yielding positive results as different countries and international organisations are showing increasing sympathy with the refugee issue.

Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the United Nations Humayun Kabir also met United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and informed him of the deteriorating refugee problem. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) is now seized with the issue.

Foreign Minister Mustafizur Rahman visited Yangon in November last in the belief that the situation could be controlled through bilateral discussion.

While Bangladesh continues its efforts to resolve the problem bilaterally government felt the necessity of briefing for better appreciation of the issue.

## State Department on Rohingyas US may respond to UNHCR, IFRC calls

The United States is "preparing to respond to appeals" from UNHCR and the International Federation of Red Cross to help the Myanmar refugees who have taken shelter in Bangladesh, reports UNB.

A spokesman of the US State Department, answering questions from reporters concerning the Rohingyas refugees in Washington last week said, "We have raised this unfortunate situation with the Myanmar regime."

The spokesman said that an estimated 60 to 70 thousand Rohingyas Muslims had fled into Bangladesh as a result of recent military action in Arakan state.

The United States also brought charges against Yangon's military junta of letting loose a reign of terror in Myanmar in total violation of human rights.

"Myanmar, long isolated from the international community, continues to repress almost all of the basic fundamental rights of its citizens," the State Department recently said.

The comment was contained in its annual report on the status of human rights around the world which was submitted to Congress.

A special press release issued from the US Embassy in Yangon quoting the report said, "Politically motivated arrests continued throughout the year, particularly after the award of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize to opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyt."

The report said, "Torture, arbitrary detention, and compulsory labour persisted... freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association remain virtually non-existent."

## 8 hurt, 50 shops guttled as fire engulfs market

By Staff Correspondent

Eight people including two firemen sustained burn injuries as a fire broke out at Taltola super market, Khilgaon, in the city Wednesday afternoon.

Around 50 shops on the first floor of the two-storey market were gutted as the fire engulfed the market at about 1:40 pm. Most of the burnt shops were of cushion foam.

Of the injured people, three were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and the rest, including the two firemen, were given first aid.

## Plea to accept deep-sea fishing trawlermen's demands

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of 12 trade union federations of the country have called upon the owners of the deep sea fishing trawlers to accept the "legitimate demands" of the striking workers.

"We demand of the employer to sign an agreement and to fulfilling workers legitimate demands," the leaders said in a joint statement issued Wednesday.

Expressing grave concern over the situation that arose out of the continued strike by the workers of the deep sea Fishing Trawler Workers Union, they also urged the government to take initiative to settle the dispute.

The fishing trawlers workers are on a strike since February 7 demanding increase in wages by 50 per cent, increase in on-board allowance to Taka 1500 from Taka 800 and other allowances.

## Another flag meeting with Myanmar soon

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Feb 26: Another round of talks between the border guards of Bangladesh and Myanmar will take place 'in a couple of days' to discuss the mounting influx of Rohingya refugees.

Sources here said today that the flag meeting will take place in Myanmar territory, opposite to Tumburu border out post of Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar district.

The date for the talks was not immediately available, they said adding that the meeting would be held at Company Commander level between the Bangladesh Rifles and the Lushin border security force of Myanmar.

This will be the fifth flag meeting between the two countries since border tension mounted after a December 21 attack on a BDR out post by a Lushin patrol.

Meanwhile, an Arakan News Agency report said that about 15 thousand Rohingyas refugees crossed into Bangladesh today.



Taltala Supermarket in the city in blaze yesterday. — Star photo

### Clash between JCD, JSD (Rab) leaves 35 hurt

SERAJGANJ, Feb 26: At least 35 people were injured, seven seriously, in a clash between activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and JSD (Rab) at Akbar Ali Government College in Ullapara upazila here today, witnesses and police said, reports UNB.

Of the injured, five were admitted to Ullapara Purnimaganj Health Complex and two sent to PG Hospital in Dhaka.

Witnesses said supporters of the two rival groups armed with hockey sticks and ram dao fought pitched battles throughout the day and exploded more than a hundred crackers as the college reopened after a month-long unscheduled closure.

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