

Hotel land case

Allotment was to promote foreign investment: Moudud

Former Vice-President Moudud Ahmed, Ershad's co-accused in the corruption case Wednesday told the court that allotment of land to a five-star hotel was a policy decision of the government to promote foreign investment, reports UNB.

Former President Ershad and four others were accused of giving RAJUK's commercial plot adjacent to PG Hospital to International Hotels Holdings Limited at low price and thus sustaining a loss of over Tk 13 crore to RAJUK.

Pleading his own case on permission of the court, Moudud submitted that constitution had provided that the President shall make rules and every policy decision was to be approved by him (President).

The charge hearing of the case was concluded yesterday and judge of the special court Nasruddin Ahmed set March 17 for next hearing.

No executive of the country will be able to function if this case continues and the whole administration will collapse, Moudud observed.

He said with sarcastic tone, the Prime Minister who is now the executive head of the government has to consult the Bureau of Anti-corruption before taking a decision and signing a paper.

Giving at length the background of allotment of land, he said the decision was in line with the government investment policy to attract foreign investment. The proposed hotel is wholly a private one and whatever was done for it was in the interest of the country.

Again, Moudud submitted neither, he nor Ershad fixed the price. They only gave the decision and the rest was done by the relevant officials in accordance with the government "Rules of Business".

"This is no case, but intended to political victimisation... the nation knows why the case was brought against us", said Moudud concluding his argument.

Earlier, chief defence counsel of Ershad quoting relevant documents, submitted that the plot given for the proposed hotel was not a commercial one. The classification has been waived by the RAJUK Board of Trustee. The provision of sale through auction was also waived.

On the accusation of low price, the counsel contended that it was not less than what was asked for. The interest for payment in 12 instalments was not changed for the owners of the hotel instead agreed to construct a 1,000 capacity convention hall inside the hotel.



Public-Work Department Employees' Union holding a grand-rally in front of the National Press Club to press for its demands Wednesday. —Star photo

PM orders strict action against price hikes during Ramzan

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia Wednesday ordered stringent legal action against those who would be found involved in artificial price spiralling of food and essentials during the month of Ramzan, reports UNB.

Her directives came at a high-level meeting which also took a number of decisions to ensure supply of food and essentials and control their prices during the holy month of fasting.

The Prime Minister presided over the meeting held at her Secretariat yesterday afternoon. Market demand, supply and prices of essentials were also reviewed at the meeting.

According to the directives, the Food Ministry will take necessary steps for open market sale of rice, and flour will be sold at Tk 10.40 per kg in trucks in all cities in the country.

The Ministry of Commerce will take adequate measures for ensuring sales of Soyabean oil at Tk 36 at the maximum and also for reducing prices of sugar, onion, salt, ginger and pulses.

Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation will increase its fish supply besides taking necessary steps in reducing its price.

Dhaka City Corporation will fix the maximum prices of meat for ensuring fair-price supply for buyers.

The National Board of Revenue will extend time for importing fruits at reduced price by a week.

The Home Ministry will direct all concerned local administrations for ensuring uninterrupted, smooth and speedy supply of essentials.

The Communication Ministry will arrange additional BRTC buses, if needed, to keep transport fares within the limit.

Begum Zia sought cooperation of all businessmen, transport owners, workers and members of the public at all levels in reducing prices of foodstuff and essentials during the holy month.

Ministers for Communications, Commerce, and Food, Dhaka City Corporation Mayor, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister and concerned secretaries and high officials were present at the meeting.

Ramadan

Outside Dhaka, the timing will be from 10 am to 4 pm with the Zohr prayers break from 1-15 pm to 1-30 pm.

However, banks, post offices T&T, Railways, hospitals, state-owned industrial units and other emergency services will follow their own timings.

UNB adds: Banking hours in country's all scheduled banks, including Bangladesh Bank, during the holy month of Ramadan were announced yesterday.

The changed office time will be from 9 am to 3 pm with 15-minute break for Zohr prayers from 1-15 pm from Saturday to Wednesday. On Thursday, banking hours will be from 9 am to 12-30 pm.

Transactions, however, will remain as earlier, between 9 am and 1 pm, from Saturday to Wednesday and 9 am to 11 am on Thursday.

The new timing will be in force in the month of Ramadan only, and normal time schedule will be followed after that period, said a Bangladesh Bank press release.

Raid on Shantibahini hideouts: Three killed

RANGAMATI, Mar 4: Two top leaders of the outlawed Shantibahini were killed and another was captured in a gun-battle with security forces in Manikchhari upazila today, reports UNB.

Security forces also overran the tribal insurgents' sector headquarters on a hilltop there after an hour long encounter since 6:30 am, official sources said.

A large quantity of arms and ammunition, insurgency-related documents and other material were recovered from the dismantled den.

Athol Murma (30) and Ado Murma (35), self-styled Assistant Directors of the sector, died on the spot. This sector is condemned Jessore Sector, the biggest one of the so-called Shantibahini.

Kayazoti Murma (31), also said to be an Assistant Director, was nabbed by the security forces after he was injured seriously during the fight, while others sneaked into jungles after the fall of their sector fortress.

Jessore is one of six sectors the Bahini has reportedly mapped out in the greater Chittagong Hill Tracts as its guerrilla warfare zones. It is situated on Kala Pahar at Moimbat in the upazila of the hill district.

The clash ensued when the security forces raided the sector headquarters early in the morning. The insurgents

fought with deadly weapons.

On the seizure list were one SMC, two 303 rifles, one pipegun with three rounds of bullet, two pistols, two grenades, about 1,000 blankets, 100 maunds of rice and material related to sabotage by the insurgents.

The tribal gunmen, operating from camps across the border, have so far killed more than 5,000 people in the three hill districts and destroyed property worth crores.

Meanwhile, the security forces recovered 61 303 bullets abandoned on the bank of river Karnaphuli in Tabalchhari upazila today.

Another report from Staff correspondent in Chittagong says: Security forces today killed one so-called Shantibahini insurgent and injured another two in an ambush in Khagrachhari district, official sources said.

They also recovered one pistol, one rifle and some ammunition from the tribal rebels.

The sources said that security forces ambushed a group of 25 insurgents at Gurmara of Matrangra upazila of the district at 10 am today.

The forces killed an insurgent in an exchange of fire that lasted an hour. The injured were brought to Matrangra. The other rebels fled into the dense forests, the sources added.

WB meet postponed

From Page 1 Col 7 asks he not be named.

According to the report by the Task Force appointed by the Justice Shahabuddin-led Interim Government,

".....the fixing of low gas price of KAFCO much below the international market price of equivalent imported fuels, even less than the internal market price of gas, indicates that the decision has favoured KAFCO at the cost of national interests".

"So, at the end, the Cabinet members apprehend Bangladesh may end up carrying the dirty towel of repaying KAFCO's export credit of \$230 million", a Finance Ministry official says.

A top KAFCO executive told this correspondent yesterday that the Company (KAFCO) was yet to be communicated any government decision on the project. "But I will expect a decision as soon as possible", said Tore Feuk, the Managing Director, when asked whether there was immediate prospect for a solution.

The KAFCO official also said that the director who had earlier served notice to the KAFCO Board to arrange funds to prosecute Bangladesh Government had already withdrawn his proposal. Earlier a director of the Company (KAFCO) issued notice to the Company Board asking "a sufficient amount of Taka for the sole purpose of prosecuting the said action against GOB be segregated from the other funds of the Company and credited to a separate bank account".

When asked what would be the cost over-run for the six-month delay, the KAFCO chief executive said it was yet to be calculated.

The construction work of the largest foreign-invested project was suspended when Bangladesh refused to issue Letter of Credit.

The KAFCO boss argued that the project could not sustain if the gas price was raised by 0.30 dollar from the already

Row over tickets: Rlymen detain passengers

From Our BAW Correspondent MYMENSINGI, Mar 4: All passenger trains passing through the town were detained this afternoon at the station by angry railway employees protesting manhandling of some rail way men by Police at Netrokona station on the same day.

Earlier, a mobile court led by a Magistrate to apprehend ticket-less passengers found the Mohanganj-bound 43-up local train stationed outside the Netrokona Railway Station at around 2 pm allegedly to allow passengers without tickets to escape.

Police, led by the Magistrate, allegedly beat up the driver, guard, ticket collector and the fireman on duty. Angry railway employees at the Mymensingh Station, after hearing the news, detained all trains passing through the station since 4 pm.

Following intervention by the District Administration and Railway Officials, the protesting employees allowed the Dhaka-bound inter-city Teesta and Ekota Express trains to leave the station at around 9:45pm after over a three hour delay.

However, at least ten other local trains have been detained by the employees.

Cold War

From Page 1 Col 7 forts by regional nations to contain such conflicts as part of a common interest that China shared with the South Asian nations.

He said that there was no possibility of a collapse of socialism in China as it did in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as the Chinese model was "quite different" and that the "reform and open policy" practiced for the last ten years had produced positive results and the economy was getting better every year.

"Politically the socialist road of China is different from the Soviet one and the practice of socialism has proved to be a success in China," he said, adding "thus, China will continue to move on the path of socialism."

He said that the Asian nations must adopt a neutral foreign policy based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence to maintain peace and stability in the region and establish a new order.

The countries of the region should establish relationships based on cooperation for mutual benefits, he said, but with that a healthy competition should also exist similar to that between Japan and the United States.

He, however, ruled out the possibility of China's joining any special regional economic grouping. "I do not foresee such a situation happening for China to unite with specific countries which would go against the interest of other countries in the region."

He said that the big countries in the Asian region could play both a positive role to promote stability and friendship and a negative role to promote a policy of regional hegemony. "But our policy is not to allow the implementation of such regional hegemony," he added.

Replying to a question, he said that the traditional and friendly relationship between Pakistan and China would not be affected by the recent improvement in the Sino-Indian relations.

He said that the time was not yet ripe for India to become a member of the United Nations Security Council and added that the matter should be decided by the UN member countries.

The Midnight File

Shootout at Yemen Presidential palace: Three killed

SANAA, Mar 4: Two guards and a Yemeni army officer were killed in a shootout at the presidential palace here but an informed source today insisted the incident was not political. "It was a simple dispute between two people that degenerated into a shooting," he said, reports AFP.

Pakistan burns world's biggest drug seizure

TURBAT, Pakistan, Mar 4: Pakistan burned the world's biggest drug seizure today, setting ablaze heroin and hashish worth more than its foreign exchange reserves. Narcotics Affairs Minister Rana Chandra Singh lit an oil-soaked rope to ignite a huge pile of drugs seized in Western Baluchistan province last October, reports Reuter.

Begin regains consciousness

JERUSALEM, Mar 4: Former Israeli Prime Minister Menahem Begin has regained consciousness after suffering a heart attack, but is still linked to an artificial respirator, the director at his hospital said today, reports AFP.

4 Sikh militants killed

NEW DELHI, Mar 4: Four suspected Sikh militants were killed Wednesday in Bombay in two incidents, including a bomb blast. Two Sikh separatists riding a motorcycle died instantly in the western Indian city when a bomb they were carrying exploded. Security forces shot dead two hardcore Sikh militants in a raid on their hideout in Ihandup area, reports AFP.

Historic March

From Page 1 Col 8 The events of March 5 night from his residence at Road No. 32 in Dhanmandi.

Even the State Bank, the country's central bank, followed the order by opening in the afternoon and not remitting any money outside Bangla Desh. The spontaneous public acknowledgement of Mujib's authority was so complete that even the Director of the Central Board of Directors of the State Bank, S E Kabir, was reported by the Karachi-based daily Dawn to be "busy with other officials near the counters in supervising the transactions" during the afternoon opening.

The Awami League issued another directive on the day, after consultation with trade union groups, allowing banks to respect cheques exceeding Rs. 1,500, provided it was part of the bearers' salaries. Earlier, Mujib had restricted the amount to be drawn to Rs. 1,500.

Food godowns were also allowed to remain open after 4:30pm if necessary. The same day, the Martial Law authorities announced that all troops were being withdrawn from the city and returned to barracks. At the same time, reports from the districts spoke of hundreds of casualties from army firings. Curfew was imposed on Rangpur and Rajshahi.

The military announcement said, "Following Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's appeal for peace, there has been considerable improvement in the general law and order situation during the past 24 hours."

That was a tacit admission on the part of the army stationed in Dhaka that Mujib was the real authority in Bangla Desh.

Agricultural policy

From Page 1 Col 7 solved soon.

The inaugural session was also addressed by the President of Krishibid Institution, Mirza A Jali and Secretary General Javed Iqbal and Agriculture Extension Department Director General and President of the Preparatory Committee of the convention M Shahidul Islam.

The speakers also highlighted different problems faced by the agriculturists in the country.

Change of Address. New Address: Janata Bank, Domar Branch, Post - Domar, Zilla - Nilfamari, Post - Cod No-5340, Dag No-1534, Khatian No-996, Mouza-West Bora-Gari. Old Address: Janata Bank, Domar Branch, Post - Domar, Zilla - Nilfamari, Postal-Code No. 5340, Dag. No.-2706, Khatian No-1071, Mouza - Domar. The Domar Branch has been shifted to the new Address today the 05th March '92. We draw kind attention of our patrons. Janata Bank Devoted to the service of People. Editor: S. M. Ali Executive Editor: Mahfuz Anam. Published by S. M. Ali on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: PABX- 246023-4, 245061-2. Advertisement: 245063 & Ext. 20. Fax No. 88-02-863035. GPO Box No. 3257. GRAM: DAILY STAR, DHAKA.

EC: Rohingya persecution

From Page 1 Col 5 rate of between 5,000 and 7,000 a day, is reaching crisis proportions, the office for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said Tuesday.

The authorities in Dhaka, already coping with an estimated 90,000 refugees, are facing a "logistical nightmare" UNHCR spokeswoman Silvana Foa said.

The vast majority of the refugees are crossing the Myanmar-Bangladesh border bringing with them little more than the clothes on their backs, she said.

The influx of refugees has increased by a factor of 10 since mid-February, according to UNHCR sources.

The Muslim Rohingya refugees are fleeing what they describe as widespread atrocities by Myanmar troops since March last year. Private agencies have put their number at 100,000.

High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata has drawn 2.7 million dollars from the UNHCR emergency fund to meet their immediate requirements, and an appeal for international aid is to be launched next week.

Around 50,000 blankets and 10,000 rolls of plastic sheeting are being sent by air-plane to the seven camps in Bangladesh where the refugees are being housed temporarily.

"We urgently need material to build shelters for these people", an UNHCR official said. The rainy season is beginning later this month. The facilities in the camps are insufficient. The sides of the roads are overflowing with refugees living in shelters made of leaves and brushwood, with no access to drinking water."

Private sector

Placed by the party's Finance Secretary Kaiser Ahmed, the eight-page draft resolution strongly advocates for strengthening the private sector of the country's economy, sources said.

The party has always spoken for a strong public sector, at least officially. The present draft economic policy, according to sources, maintains that massive private initiative in the industrial sector is imperative for the development of the country's economy.

The draft, however, opposes further disinvestment of the public sector units, sources added.

The meeting began at 12 noon at the central office of the party and was adjourned at 3pm to resume at 7 pm at Sheikh Hasina's Minto Road residence.

Presided over by party chief Sheikh Hasina, the meeting was going on till late last night. Till writing of this report the meeting however did not take any resolution on any issue.

The Working Committee of the party is expected to adopt a number of resolutions on different political, organisational and economic issues today.

UNB adds: Sources said the central committee examined a resolution of Dhaka District Awami League requesting the committee to expel its general secretary Mostafa Mohsin Mantu for activities detrimental to the organisation.

The central committee decided to issue a letter to the district unit of the party to send details of allegations against Mantu.

Blankson sent to jail

By Staff Correspondent Robert Blankson, a South African national, who was arrested in connection with drug trafficking, was sent to the Dhaka Central Jail at the end of his three-day police remand Wednesday.

Earlier, Blankson was produced before the court of first class magistrate Mujibur Rahman Mia of the Dhaka Metropolitan Magistracy where he made a confessional statement yesterday afternoon.

Blankson was also produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court yesterday evening where his bail petition was moved. But the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Alhaj Azzul Haque Bhuiyan rejected the petition.

The Chief Metropolitan magistrate rejected another petition of Blankson's solicitors in which they prayed for second class prisonership for the accused. But the magistrate ruled for a separate arrangement in general custody at the Dhaka Central Jail for Blankson.

Advocate SK Chowdhury moved for the bail petition of Blankson while Court Inspector, Habiur Rahman Bhuiyan appeared for the prosecution side.

Ruhul Amin, an Assistant Commissioner of the Detective Branch (DB), who is the investigating officer of the case, told The Daily Star that Blankson, in a statement to the police during the three-day remand, confessed that he brought 3,270 grams of heroin from Thailand and passed it on to Eliadah McCord, another accused in the case to carry it to Zurich, Switzerland.