

Janata Tower case: Hearing of charges ends

## Ershad helped Raushan get land from allottees as bribe: AG

The hearing of charges against former President H M Ershad and 19 others for alleged illegal transfer of a commercial plot in the city and possession of wealth disproportionate to his income as public servant concluded yesterday, reports BSS.

Attorney General Aminul Haq defended the charges brought against the former President and others who included Raushan Ershad and M A Sattar, a former minister. A large number of counsels defending the accused persons denied the charges brought by the prosecution and prayed that their clients be discharged of the accusations.

With Wednesday the hearing of charges continued for three days.

After hearing both sides, Special Judge Md Ismail Miah fixed May 4 for order whether charges could be framed against the accused persons or not.

Like Tuesday, Raushan Ershad failed to appear in the court yesterday and her attorney Sarfuddin Ahmed Mukul informed the court that her client was still unwell. Former minister M A Sattar was also not present and a medical certificate stating his sickness was produced.

The Attorney General who brought the charges against Ershad and others on the first day of the hearing (April 22), while refuting the contentions of the defence lawyers, said the former President not only allotted 2.1 acres at Kawan Bazar to a group of people at a price much less than market price, but also colluded so that his wife gets 12 katha of land as "bribe" from the allottees. Through his action in land allotment, Ershad had caused Rajuk to sustain a loss of Taka 5.48 crore, the prosecution charged.

Besides, Ershad paid Taka 6.5 crore, an amount which is greatly disproportionate to his income, to a company for the construction of a multi-storied building on the said 12 katha plot, the Attorney General said. The building belongs to Janata Publishing Company Limited whose chairman is Begum Raushan Ershad.

About Raushan Ershad, the Attorney General charged that by hiding her actual name and using influence, she got the plot illegally. Documents show that the former President's wife used her name as Raushan Ara.

The Attorney General said former chairman of Rajuk M M Rahmatullah being a responsible government official, had abetted the principal accused in illegal work and thereby caused a big financial loss to the state.

The other accused persons were charged with getting allotment on submission of false statements. They also committed punishable offence by bribing Raushan Ershad with 12 katha land.

Khandakar Mahbub Hossain, defending the former President, stated that as head of the government, Ershad had the jurisdiction to recommend any prayer of a citizen or citizens. Recommendation itself cannot be definitely called ill motive, he said.

Putting arguments in support of his contention, Hussain said the allotted plots were sold at prices higher than the highest auction bid arranged by Rajuk.

About the accusation of disproportionate wealth of his client, Khandakar Mahbub Hussain said though investigations in this case were carried more than once, this particular case was not mentioned. It was also not contained in the FIR or charge sheet, he said adding at this stage such accusation is not acceptable as per law. Moreover, the provision enabling the accused to give explanation of wealth (Taka 6.5 crore) was also not followed.

Raushan Ershad's lawyer Mukul said his client committed no crime by lawfully purchasing a property. He further said Begum Raushan Ershad purchased land at a price higher than the adjacent plot. About the accusation of getting graft, the lawyer said there is no documentary evidence in support of that.

M A Malek, defending former Rajuk chairman, said his client Rahmatullah only carried the order of head of the state as a government servant. He said whatever he did, he did officially.

About Rahmatullah's collusion in allotment of plot, Malek said no prosecution witness had testified before the investigating officer to that effect.

On the basis of their submissions, all defence lawyers prayed for discharging of their clients from the case.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia inspecting flood control embankment under construction at Kutubdia, yesterday. —PID photo

## PM in coastal areas

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The Prime Minister said the Rohingya refugees who had taken refuge in Bangladesh would now return to their homes with dignity as per agreements between Dhaka and Yangon.

This is the success of the democratic government which adopted a sound diplomacy in tackling the crisis, she said.

Earlier, Begum Zia visited Dakkhin Dhurong at Kutubdia to express her sympathy to the relatives of the cyclone victims. She also addressed a rally at the island.

She said the BNP government had been earnestly trying to fulfil demands of the people and had undertaken various rehabilitation programmes.

Begum Zia also saw progress of work on the coastal embankment being constructed with Saudi assistance at a cost of Tk 50 crore.

On arrival at Kutubdia, Chief Engineer of Water Development Board A Baset Sarker briefed the Prime Minister on the ongoing project.

On completion of the 190-kilometre embankment, crops in about 14,000 acres of land will be saved from tidal surge.

Earlier, the Prime Minister addressed a rally in the Sarai Primary School premises at Bashkhali where she flew to sympathies with the kins of the cyclone victims.

Before flying to Bashkhali, Begum Zia made a brief stopover on Laidier Char at Dakkhin Patenga in Chittagong and expressed her deep sympathy for the kith and kins of the cyclone victims.

She told the coastal people that construction of a permanent embankment for protecting lives and property would start in the next dry season.

Meanwhile Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia Wednesday asked the government officials to discharge their duties with sincerity, honesty and dedication.

She was addressing the officials at the local Circuit House here this afternoon.

## TV blacklists 30 artistes

Authorities have banned radio and television performance by artistes involved in the Gano-Adalat that held public trial of Prof Golam Azam.

Television performer Syed Hasan Imam told UNB Wednesday that he was barred from taking part in a drama rehearsal.

He said BTV at the instruction of the authorities, had blacklisted at least 30 artistes who had link with the "People's Court".

He, however, could not name all the artistes facing the taboo. Asaduzzaman Nur, Ali Zaker, Kalim Sharafi and Tarik Anam are among them.

OIC pledges

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Of the agreement signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar on repatriation of the refugees, Dr Hamid said, "we will cooperate with the government of Bangladesh, if and when required, in facing the refugee problem."

He said in the event of any problem arising in the implementation of the Bangladesh-Myanmar accord, OIC would see what role it could play.

Dr Hamid said OIC would also continue to create world opinion in general and the opinion of the member states of OIC in particular for continued assistance for the refugees.

Earlier, Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong Omar Faruq briefing the visiting delegation said so far 2.29 lakh refugees had taken shelter in 12 camps in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban Districts. He said over 1600 refugees crossed into Bangladesh on Tuesday, the day Bangladesh-Myanmar accord on repatriation of refugees was signed.

Faruq said so far 487 refugees have died while 735 babies were born.

He said supply of house building materials, and logistic support including transports and money were urgently needed for the refugees, 95,000 of whom were yet to be provided with anything above their heads.

Some women who were allegedly raped by the Myanmar troops were also shown to the visiting OIC delegation. They narrated nightmare experiences of torture and forced labour prior to their migration to Bangladesh. Some refugees with marks of injuries on their persons also narrated their stories of woes to the OIC team.

OIC Assistant Secretary General Mohammad Mohsin, accompanied the Secretary General during the visit.



Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf flanked by UNICEF Executive Director James P Grant inaugurating Nabi Salt Iodizing Plant at Keraniganj, Dhaka yesterday. —PID photo

## Poverty alleviation

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Besides overall strategies and principles, the NPA also revealed that elaborate strategies to achieve the goals in particular issues like women and children communication and community participation, education, health and nutrition and disaster preparedness.

The strategies focus on both preventive and promotive measures to achieve the goals.

The NPA focusses on disaster preparedness with elaborate strategies as almost every year Bangladesh was being affected by cyclones and other natural calamities.

Actions on the matter were, however, divided into three phases: pre-disaster, disaster and post-disaster.

The objective of the general education project, mentioned in the NPA were to: increase equitable access to primary and secondary schooling, improve the quality of education at the primary and secondary levels, strengthen the management capacity of the primary and secondary sub-sectors, prepare future policies and programmes to reform the structure and finance higher secondary and post-secondary levels.

(Related story on Page-7)

Times-Bangla Trust hailed

The Dainik Bangla unit of Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) Wednesday hailed the formation of 'The Times-Bangla Trust' for improving the management of the state-owned Bangladesh Times.

The Dainik Bangla, the Weekly Bichitra and the Ananda Bichitra, reports BSS.

The report on NPA titled 'Progoti' (the progress) also revealed the previous successes in some aspects like Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), water programmes and said that the factors behind the success would be utilised in making other programmes taken under the guideline of the NPA succeed.

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 29: At least five people including a one and a half years old child were killed and another two injured in a road accident at Ramu Upazila, 20 kilometres from here, at around noon Wednesday.

Manwara, Sultana, 35, Abdullah, 1, Shahana Akhler, 13, Jahura Khatun, 12, and Amanullah, 50, died on the spot.

## The Midnight File

### Sierra Leone govt ousted

FREETOWN, Apr 29: A five-man military junta said today it had taken control of Sierra Leone and ousted the government. The statement, which was broadcast on a private radio station here by Captain Valentine Strasser, said they want to change the "oppressive misrule" of the ruling All People's Congress party (APC) government, reports AFP.

### 8 killed in Bosnia fighting

BELGRADE, Apr 29: Heavy mortar fire rocked a strategic town in Bosnia-Herzegovina, killing at least eight, and UN and EC officials scaled back peacekeeping operations Wednesday amid renewed ethnic violence. The fighting continued as the 51-member Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe for Yugoslavia - which is only made up of Serbia and Montenegro now - debated Wednesday whether to expel Yugoslavia because of the violence. After one session Wednesday in Finland, delegates said they hadn't decided whether to go through with the expulsion, reports AP.

## Shantibahini men

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alleged mastans and terrorists and other activists to sell them arms and ammunition at cheap prices.

The Shantibahini men aided by the local mastans and terrorists also collect tolls from land owners and farmers of the hilly villages including Dabua and Yasianagar of Razoan upazila and tea garden owners of Fatikchhari upazila bordering the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the leader added.

He alleged that after the availability of large quantities of arms and ammunition from the Shantibahini the law and order situation in the whole of Chittagong has deteriorated with dacoities and terrorist acts becoming rampant.

The panic-stricken villagers alleged that the law enforcing agencies did little to recover the illegal arms and ammunition as well as to contain the terrorism there. The victims also hardly dare to lodge complaints against the terrorists.

A highly placed source informed that the arms and ammunition procured from the Shantibahini were also being used in campus violence both in Chittagong and Dhaka universities. The supply of arms from the Shantibahini is routed through the northern parts of Chittagong, the source added.

Meanwhile, sources said that the armed Shantibahini had undertaken a fresh strategy to collect the illegal tolls from the people living in the three hill districts of the CHT as the toll collections marked a drastic fall after the government imposed a ban on the extraction of timber and bamboo from the CHT forests.

The tax collection by the Shantibahini came down below one crore a year from about eight crore previously, the sources said adding that earlier they used to collect a big chunk of money against wood and bamboo extractions.

As per a fresh strategy the Shantibahini have imposed a permanent yearly tax on the people of all professions and on all goods including fishing nets, spices, shoes, clothes, construction materials and cattleheads etc; the sources said.

Nothing in the CHT is spread from the Shantibahini tax structure, said the sources adding that such tax collection was hardly followed before the ban on the extraction of timber and bamboo.

### IJC session begins

The 17th session of the International Jute Council (IJC) began in Dhaka Wednesday to review the activities of the International Jute Organization (IJO) and to consider some new project, reports BSS.

IJC is the governing body of IJO which is headquartered in Dhaka.

Jute Minister A S M Hannan Shah inaugurated the six-day IJC session at a city hotel.

### Hekmatyar

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transitional.

Meanwhile Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif presented a cheque of 250 million rupees (10 million dollars) to Afghanistan's interim government during a brief but emotional trip to Kabul today.

Sharif, the first head of government to visit Afghanistan since the Mujahideen formally took over power Tuesday, was warmly received by Mojaddedi while a Mujahideen army contingent presented a guard of honour.

The Prime Minister, who drove straight to the Qasr-e-Sadarat Place after his arrival from Peshawar in Northwest Pakistan, also announced 50,000 tons of wheat and immediate food assistance to Afghanistan.

"This is just the first commitment... many more will follow," said Sharif, whose visit was described by Pakistani officials as a morale-boosting gesture.

Sharif was also accompanied by Saudi prince Turki bin Faisal.

Mojaddedi was visibly moved when he received the cheque, saying in a voice choked with emotion, "We are very humble... we are a very poor country."

Mojaddedi, an Islamic moderate, thanked Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States effectively for their help in the "Jihad" (holy war) against the Kabul regime.

Iran also dispatched two plane loads of aid to Afghanistan, official Tehran radio reported today without revealing the nature of the goods.

Two C-130 Hercules transport planes of the Iranian Air Force carried the aid Tuesday to Mazar-i-Sharif in northern Afghanistan, the radio said, in the latest move of its kind this week.

### South Asian newsmen's conference from May 2

The second regional conference of working journalists' organisations of South Asia will be held in Dhaka from May 2 to May 4, reports BSS.

The representatives of the journalists federations of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal are expected to attend the conference.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia will inaugurate the function as the chief guest.

The status of journalists, safety of newsmen, trade union rights and cooperation among the journalists organisations of the South Asian countries are expected to be discussed.

The conference is also expected to identify the problems confronting journalists in the region and jointly devising solutions with special emphasis on the struggle for raising their social, economic and professional status, safeguarding trade union rights, protecting the right to collective bargaining, promoting freedom of the press in the countries of the region.

The representatives of International Federation of Journalists, ILO, UNICEF, Red Cross are expected to attend the conference.

### BCI

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central bank sources said.

Informed sources said that the lending, institutions like BCI must keep six per cent in liquid cash and 18 per cent in treasury bill with the Bangladesh Bank.

But the BCI never followed that rule and neither the Bangladesh Bank nor the Finance Ministry took any action against the company earlier, it is alleged.

When contacted over telephone Finance Secretary said that the Ministry was waiting for the audit report of Bangladesh Bank to take further steps.

"I don't know the extent of anomalies the BCI has made," the Finance Secretary said adding that "this will not affect our normal banking functions."

Earlier yesterday morning, the BCI account holders demonstrated in front of its head office, according to UNB.

A contingent of police has been put on guard near the BCI head office at Tarango Complex in Motijheel Commercial Area.

### Adamjee

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believed that the failure of the authorities to purchase raw jute at the proper time was responsible for the present situation and that the Mills authorities had done it deliberately to create a situation suitable to denationalising the Mills.

The Adamjee Jute Mills unit of the Jatiyatabadi Samik Dal, labour front of the ruling BNP, held a rally today with its leader Abul Khaer in the chair.

The leaders speaking in the rally urged the government to take immediate steps to supply the Mills with adequate raw materials and keep it operative.

## Tk 163cr development projects okayed

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) yesterday approved four development projects involving a total outlay of Taka 162.66 crore with a foreign exchange component of Taka 70.92 crore, reports BSS.

The approval was given at an ECNEC meeting chaired by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman at the Secretariat cabinet room here.

Discussing the rehabilitation project of cyclone devastated primary and secondary schools with the assistance of Asian Development Bank (ADB) it was revealed in the meeting that in accordance with the declared policy to give top priority to education sector, particularly to primary and secondary education, the BNP government has decided to undertake a phased programme or rehabilitation and upgradation of eight to nine thousand primary and three hundred secondary schools in the private sector by 1995 beginning from the fiscal year (FY) 1992-93. In FY 1992-93 approximately two thousand primary schools at a cost of about Taka 45 crore and one hundred secondary schools involving about Taka ten crore will be taken up under this programme.

The government also proposed to nationalise at least one secondary school in each upazila after carrying out necessary rehabilitation works and provision of basic facilities.

Besides the project under the Education Ministry the ECNEC meeting approved 750 long kilometre embankment and infrastructure facility construction project for shrimp culture at an area of four thousand acres of land outside Bangladesh Water Development Board polders in Cox's Bazar following the 29 April, 1991 cyclone and tidal bore devastation, and Fridpur-Majikandi-Gopalganj road and Jhenidah-Chuadanga-Meherpur road projects under the Ministry of Communication.

The meeting was attended by Agriculture, Irrigation, Water Development and Flood Control Minister M Majidul Haque, Industries Minister M Shamsul Islam Khan, Post and Telecommunication Minister M Keramat Ali, Commerce Minister M K Anwar, Environment and Forest and Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al-Noman, Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, members of the planning commission, secretaries of other ministries and other high officials.

## Diplomats doubt accord

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Refugee Welfare Organisation.

To this effect, citizenship certificates authenticating our indigenous status must be issued to us before repatriation."

Narrating the long history of persecution of the Arakanese by the Myanmar authorities, the statement said that "we are in utter confusion and apprehension whether the agreement deals with the basic cause of our problems."

The Rohingya refugees insist that the repatriation agreement be based on resolving the crux of the problem which would ensure our indigenous status, full security of our life, honour and dignity and property without any sort of infringements and impediments in respect of our basic human rights and freedoms."

The number of refugees has already crossed 2.25 lakh and they have been sheltered in 12 temporary camps in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban districts.

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman told the press Tuesday that some 97,000 refugees were yet to be provided with roofs over their heads.

### Afghan envoy in Dhaka supports new govt

Charge d'Affaires of Afghan Embassy here Mohammad Nabi has expressed his allegiance to the 51-member interim Islamic Council which had taken over in Kabul.

The envoy told UNB Wednesday that he had sent a message congratulating the head of the Council Sibghatullah Mojaddedi.

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