

Janata Tower case

'Nirman MD got Tk 10cr from Ershad, Raushan'

A prosecution witness told the special court that he received Tk 10 crore for construction of Janata Tower at Kawan Bazar from former president Ershad and Begum Ershad who were prosecuted under the prevention of Anti-Corruption Act, 1947, reports UNB.

The witness, Kamal Ziaul Islam, Managing Director of Nirman International, during examination by Attorney General Aminul Haq said his construction firm received Tk 3.5 crore in four cheques issued by Begum Raushan Ershad, chairman of Janata Publishers.

Of the remaining amount the prosecution witness said Tk 75 lakh in cash was received in three instalments from Col Sharif Aziz by the end of 1989. He and his two Directors of Nirman International—Khadiza Islam and Shawkat Hossain Chowdhury—collected Tk 5.75 crore in cash on different dates from Lt Col Saiful Haq, Private Secretary to President Ershad, from his office at the President's Secretariat.

The former president was accused of two charges: 1) illegal order for allotment of RAJUK land to some co-accused and soon got the land transferred to Janata Publishers, thus inflicting a loss of Tk 5.5 crore to RAJUK, and 2) paid Tk 6.5 crore from his own possession for construction of Janata Tower which is beyond known sources of his income.

Ershad, Raushan Ershad and most of their 18 co-accused in the case appeared before the court when the trial began.

Replying to prosecution queries, KZ Islam said officials of his construction firm were contacted by Major (Rtd) Saleh Rahim of Janata Publishers for construction of the Janata Tower at Kawan Bazar. The agreement was signed between Chairman of Janata Publishers Raushan Ershad and Director of Nirman International for construction of 15-storied

building at Tk 13,59,42,140. The prosecution witness said the payment in cheques was received through Lt Col Saiful Haq, Private Secretary to President Ershad. He identified a forwarding letter with cheque signed by Col Saif.

The money paid in cheques (Tk 3.5 crore) was borrowed from Uttara Bank. KZ Islam identified cheques, money receipts, credit vouchers, cash books and such other documents produced in the court by the prosecution relating to financial transactions with Janata Publishers.

The prosecution also produced in the court a photostat copy of magazine The Mirror of 1956 published from Karachi in which post-marriage photograph of Ershad and his wife was printed.

There Raushan Ershad was named as Khurshida. Production of the paper evoked objection from defence counsel who in a chorus observed it has no relevance with the case.

The production of the paper ostensibly to show that Raushan Ershad conveniently took different names at different times.

Earlier, the defence made repeated attempts to stall examining the prosecution witness. Ultimately a petition was submitted seeking transfer of the case from the special court of Mohammad Ismail Mia. The judge rejected it outright.

Hearing will resume Monday (June 1).

Drama artiste

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Police said that the body was sent to the Dhaka Medical College hospital morgue for post mortem examination.

But police declined to comment on the motive of the suicide. "We are investigating the matter", a police officer said.

Meanwhile, a relative of Dalia commented that the death was a 'mystery'. But he did not elaborate.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia lays wreath at memorial to freedom fighter MK Gandhi in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP photo

Khaleda, Shukla talk Chakma, ULFA issues

NEW DELHI, May 27: Indian Home Affairs Minister GC Shukla and Water Resources Minister HV Chavan separately called on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the South Drawing Room of Rastropati Bhaban today, reports BSS.

The Indian Home Minister discussed with Begum Zia the influx of Bangladeshi Refugees to India, Chakma, and ULFA issues.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister said there was no influx of people from Bangladesh. She said Bangladesh was always ready to receive back the Chakmas. She called for sending them back home.

Mentioning the handing over of three members of Monipuri Liberation Front on May 20 to India, Begum Zia said "this shows that Bangladesh does not harbour any terrorists."

The Indian Water Resources Minister discussed matters of common interest with the Bangladeshi Prime Minister.

Indo-Bangla talks

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matic enclave for constructing a permanent chancery in the Indian capital.

Foreign Secretary Reaz Rahman and Indian Foreign Secretary J N Dixit signed the agreement on behalf of their respective governments.

Under the agreement on the cultural and academic exchange programme, in the field of education art and culture health and tourism and sports India will provide 110 scholarships each year to Bangladesh while Bangladesh will provide 20 scholarships each year to India.

Besides there will be exchange of visits by scholars, writers, cultural troupes and media men.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to India Farooq Sobhan and Indian Cultural Affairs Secretary Bhaskar Ghosh signed the agreement on behalf of their respective government.

Bangladesh and India also exchanged instrument of ratification of the convention between Bangladesh and India for the avoidance of double taxation.

An agreement to this effect was signed here last year between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries.

Additional Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh A H Mahmood Ali and Indian Additional Secretary, Ministry of Finance, signed the exchange notes.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and members of delegation of both the countries were present during the signing ceremony.

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North Bengal bandh opposed

'BJP instigating people in border areas'

SILIGURI, May 27: The North Bengal district units of the Congress-I, CPI-M and SUC have opposed the BJP sponsored dawn-to-dusk North Bengal bandh tomorrow, party sources said here today, reports PTI.

The call for bandh has been given by the West Bengal unit of the BJP in protest against leasing of the Tinbigha corridor to Bangladesh.

Kamal Guha, the suspended Forward Bloc leader, however, said that he would neither support nor oppose the bandh.

The Chairman of the ruling left front in West Bengal, Sallen Dasgupta has urged the people to foil the North-Bengal bandh called by the BJP.

In a statement issued today, Dasgupta said that though all other political parties have supported the agreement, the BJP was trying to 'instigate and incite' the common people.

The left front Chairman said all confusion regarding India's sovereignty over Tinbigha, the security of the local people and the judiciary, had been removed and matters made clear in the recent exchange of letters between the two countries.

Action not words

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cooperation between the two countries and further details on this plane would be discussed at the joint commission meeting scheduled to be held in October.

Replying to a query about the prospect of allowing transit facilities to India through the Chittagong port, the Prime Minister said, "It's a big issue which can be discussed later".

Touching on the problem of smuggling, the Prime Minister said that the two countries have nearly 4,000 kilometers of common borders. "We have taken steps against smuggling on our side. But it can't be a one-way traffic... It needs co-operation from the other side as well."

Referring to allegations made in some Indian press reports about Bangladeshis crossing into India, she said, "Our stand is clear... we don't accept it as a fact that people arrive here from Bangladesh."

When a correspondent asked her whether she was afraid of being branded as "pro-Indian", Begum Zia said, "We are a nationalist government. Our responsibility is to safeguard the interests of our people and our country."

Begum Zia described her visit as a goodwill one and said the media could create an atmosphere to promote bilateral relations. She said the talks with the Indian leaders were "very positive... we are hopeful about the outcome."

The Bangladesh leader said SAARC should be further strengthened to establish peace and stability. In this context, she added that poverty alleviation should get top priority among the SAARC nations to ensure peace and stability in the region.

BSS adds: Regarding local newspaper reports on talks of common rivers by both the sides yesterday, the Prime Minister said that during the talks only the sharing of Ganges water was discussed.

On the question of the Myanmar refugee problem, the Prime Minister said Bangladesh and Myanmar had signed an agreement to take back Myanmar refugees to their country. She expressed her hope that the Myanmar authorities would keep their commitment.

Regarding her government's programmes, the Prime Minister said poverty alleviation and economic development were the main objectives of her government. She said, "We want to attain self-reliance by initiating politics of production."

He also expressed the hope that people having good sense would not yield to provocation.

50 hurt as AL, BNP activists clash at Sirajganj

SIRAJGANJ, May 27: At least 50 people were injured in a clash between activists of ruling BNP and opposition Awami League in the town today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said supporters of the two parties fought with sticks and stones for about 45 minutes near the Bhasani auditorium where Awami League was holding a conference of its district unit.

The chase and counter-chase continued until police intervened and brought the situation under control.

Among the injured were former state minister Abdul Momin Talukder of Awami League and 15 activists of BNP.

Awami League sources said supporters of BNP attacked the conference from its district office near the auditorium without any provocation.

BNP denied the charge, saying they only protested an indecent remark on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia made by Awami League leader Abdul Rahman, MP at the conference.

Awami League leaders, including Abdul Razzak MP, opposition chief whip Mohammad Nasim and Abdul Momin Talukder, left the venue of the conference soon after the clash erupted and took shelter at the residence of district AL President Motahar Hossain Talukder.

The two-day conference ended abruptly on the inaugural day with Awami League leaders condemning the attack of the ruling party.

Relief in Delhi

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did not spell out what the two have agreed upon but it was apparent that the crust of misunderstanding between them has been broken and some broad parameters have been agreed upon to sort out the two issues.

The quantum of water released through Farakka Barrage has lost the urgency because as a Bangladeshi official put it, the monsoon has set in to break the lean season in his country. However, both India and Bangladesh have agreed to meet in the next few days at official level to ponder over the schemes that will augment water. There will be a time-bound programme and officials will come with such proposals as can be taken up immediately. For the next year, during the lean period, New Delhi has given an understanding of releasing more water than before. However, a firm agreement is yet to be worked out and it is not definite whether the 1977-1982 Agreement will be renewed or something different will be unveiled.

While discussing the Ganga water, officials on both sides will extend their study to the three eastern rivers, Brahmaputra, Teesta and Meghna.

Regarding Chakma refugees, Bangladesh is said to have agreed to take back all of them, nearly 50,000. Bangladeshi officials will visit the refugee camps in India to discuss repatriation arrangements.

In reply to a question whether Bangladesh would take back illegal Bangladeshi entrants into India, Begum Zia said: "There is no illegal Bangladeshi in India as far as we are concerned and the question of taking them back does not arise." Apparently, New Delhi has not pressed her on this point.

Begum Zia had a lively meeting with the Bharatiya Janata Party leaders yesterday where the transfer of Tin Bigha was discussed. The Party is opposed to its transfer to Bangladesh. Begum Zia said that after the talks with her, the BJP leaders were more or less convinced and they would now visit the site and 'hopefully' withdraw their objection." She is said to have had the better of them in arguments and their visit is now only a formality; they too have come around to transferring the territory to Bangladesh.

Our Correspondent adds: Several activists of the ousted group gathered before the residence of the Vice Chancellor of the University, Prof Maniruzzaman Miah, and demanded to resolve the crisis and arrange a police raid at the Zahurul Haq Hall.

At one stage, some unruly students who gathered before the VC's residence pelted stones and damaged it partially.

Police again resorted to baton-charge to disperse the angry students.

Meanwhile the Provost Committee of the university at a meeting yesterday expressed concern over the situation at Zahurul Haq Hall as well as the campus.

At the meeting, the provosts also urged the law-enforcing agencies to take action against those who possessed arms and arrest the outsiders from the hall.

Campus sources said the

The Midnight File

Eight killed in Tamil Nadu blast

COIMBATORE, May 27: At least eight persons were killed in an explosion in the cordite factory at Aravangadu near Udahagamandalam in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu this morning. According to information reaching the police here, 25 others were injured, some of them seriously, in the blast which reportedly occurred in one of the boilers in the factory, reports PTI.

Security Council to retain sanctions on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, May 27: The Security Council decided Wednesday to retain sanctions against Iraq because Baghdad is still not meeting its obligations under Gulf War ceasefire resolutions. The 15-member Council held its regular bimonthly review of the sanctions that ban all trade with Iraq except for humanitarian supplies, and prohibit Iraq from producing chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, reports AP.

ICRC suspends activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina

GENEVA, May 27: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) today announced it was suspending "all its activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina" because of continued fighting between Serbs, Muslim and Croats. Because of the escalation of violence in the former Yugoslav republic, the ICRC was being forced to temporarily withdraw its representatives from the area, the organisation's spokesman Henri Morrad said here, reports AFP.

Mojaddedi rules out polls in 6 months

ISLAMABAD, May 27: The turbaned president of Afghanistan's new Islamic government, Sibghatullah Mojaddedi, on Wednesday dismissed an agreement between rival rebel chiefs calling for elections within six months, reports AP.

In an attempt to resolve Afghanistan's political crisis, renegade rebel leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar on Monday signed a peace pact with his bitter rival, Ahmed Shah

Mizan presses for Ershad's release by June 30

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, May 27: The Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury today resented what he said the government failure in running the country and demanded fresh polls.

Addressing the biennial conference of the local unit of Jatiya Party (JP) at he Fatullah DIT ground here this afternoon, he also demanded immediate release of deposed president Ershad by June 30.

Otherwise, Jatiya Party would launch a countrywide movement, warned the acting chief of JP.

Chowdhury resented what he termed the kowtowing foreign policy of the present government and said that the proposal of water sharing by India would be harmful to the country.

He termed the visit of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to India as "unplanned and disorganised" and said that the nation could not accept such proposal of water sharing.

Chaired by local JP leader MA Hossain Syeed, the conference was also addressed, among others, by president of Narayanganj district unit Jatiya Party Nasim Osman and President of Adamjee Jute Mills Workers' Union Siddik Ahmed Sarder.

Hasina

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uddin Chowdhury, Khorsheed Alam Surjan and Mohammad Gani.

Kalpa Ranjan Chakma, MP, Aminul Haq, MP, Mostaq Ahmed Chowdhury, MP, and Ishaq Mia were present in the meeting.

Bitterly criticising the BNP government, Hasina alleged that the government's failure to initiate correct policy and economic programmes deepened the crises in socio-economic life.

"The non-political attitude and steps of the government are responsible for aggravating the overall situation", she said.

The ruling party has resorted to extreme autocracy, she charged, instead of following the parliamentary norms and practice.

Despite protest against continued terrorism, Hasina said, the government remains "a mere onlooker". She alleged that branded terrorists are released on Ministers' telephone calls.

The Awami League President asked the people to unitedly resist the killers of '71 and '75 who, she said, have united on a single platform against the pro-liberation forces.

On her way from Chittagong to Bandarban, Hasina addressed as many as 15 wayside rallies, including those at Patiya, Dohajari, Moulati Bazar, Keranir Bazar, Kalias and Reichha.

Masood, calling for a cease-fire and elections in six months.

"As far as the election and other things it is the decision of the Afghan people," Mojaddedi told a news conference at Pakistan's National Assembly or law-making Lower House of Parliament, just hours before leaving Islamabad for Kabul. He was winding up a two-day visit to the Pakistani capital.

"Maybe there is an agreement between those two, but we need the agreement of the Afghan people and that will come later," Mojaddedi said.

He said Afghan has to heal some of the wounds of 14 years of war before organizing polls.

AL council

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about a dozen of the party's district units.

Moreover, drafting of some major amendments to both the party constitution and the manifesto to be proposed in the council session is yet to be finalised, Sajeda and her associates said in favour of their views.

Party chief Sheikh Hasina, on the other hand, is reportedly in favour of holding the council session on the scheduled dates.

Sources close to Hasina say that she maintains that the shifting of the schedule of the council may give birth to frustrations among the party workers all over the country.

And above that the leadership conflict in the district-level organs of the party would remain even if the council session was deferred by two or three weeks, sources further say.

Sheikh Hasina is to leave the country on June 8 for Saudi Arabia to perform Haj.

Persons close to say that Sheikh Hasina wants to consolidate her leadership in the party further through the council session of the AL before her departure.

Today's Working Committee meeting along with reviewing preparations to hold the party council on the date fixed earlier, will discuss the situation arising out of Zohra Tajuddin's controversial remarks at the Dhaka district unit council session of the suspended AL leader Montu-led faction on May 22.

The AL Working Committee is to approve the new committees formed at recent council sessions of the district units of the party.

Shishu Park

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recreation rides," he said.

DCC officials suggested piece by piece maintenance of the machines and non-destructive tests (NDT) for identifying structural faults.

Shishu Park, which earns about Taka 60 lakh a year, is run by 83 staff.

The park is open to all five days a week except on Thursdays when it is open to the under privileged children free of cost. On Sundays it remains closed for maintenance.

Sources at the park also alleged that about one third of the total earnings from the fun rides go straight into the pockets of a section of dishonest employees.

They allege that the employees collect cash instead of tickets from the visitors who intend to take a ride.

Some of the visitors do not buy tickets from the entrance for individual rides but grease palms of some of the unscrupulous employees of the park depriving DCC of the revenue.

Entrance fee to the Shishu Park is Taka three and for each fun ride it taken taka two.

KNM production cost

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sold at Rs 1100 per ton. The price rose to Tk 2150 per ton in 1973-74 and Tk 3200 per ton in 1974-75.

The price further rose to Tk 13750 per ton in 1988 against the price fixed at Tk 11000 in October 1987.

The latest increase in the price of the newsprint effective from last year is 18000 per ton, 60 per cent higher than the last price.

According to sources, cost of newsprint production has soared to about Tk 24950 per ton since months ago from Tk 19368 in 1991 due to price hike of various inputs and increases in wages and salaries of 2829 mill employees. Nearly 300 workers and 20 officers are known to be in surplus of the approved setup.

The price of the imported pulp which accounts for about 20 per cent of the production cost increased to over 42000 per ton in 1990-91 from Tk 41570 per ton in 1989-90. The price of the chemical pulp per ton was Tk 16659 in 1982, Tk 1576 in 1973-74 and Rs 1088 in 1968-69.

Nearly 6000 tons of imported pulp are required annually by the mills for its capacity production of 48000 tons.

The price of the fuel which makes up about 34 per cent of the production cost has remained more or less unchanged since 1987-88.

If the mills is permitted to pay the price of fuel at the imported price as is given to other mills in North Bengal then the production cost will

automatically come down, the sources opined. Annual consumption of fuel is around 60000 tons.

The price of the geoa wood which forms only eight per cent of production has been increased to Tk 15 per lakh cft from paisa six only.

Financial benefits of the mills employees have substantially increased over the years. Total annual wages and salaries which constitute 14 per cent cost of production are Tk 10 crore at present while the expenditure under the head was Tk 2.72 crore in 1982-83, Tk 74 lakh in 1974-75 and Rs 45 lakh in 1968-69.

Increased prices of several other items including alum, soda ash, sulphur and imported spare parts and bearing cost of soft water have contributed substantially towards the rising cost of production. In spite of the repeated losses since 1985-86 BCIC has given 'Profit Bonus' to the Mills employees every year.

The BCIC is contemplating enhancing the price on a plea that the forest ministry enhanced the geoa wood, but it would be unwise to enhance the price more than 8 per cent, the sources disclosed.

The government subsidy should also be given to the mills to keep the price at a reasonable level in the domestic market.

Meanwhile to recoup the losses, the mill management is enhancing the prices of news print at intervals affecting the newspapers and publishing industries in the country.

JCD expels 2 activists

Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal yesterday expelled its two activists on charge of humiliating and assaulting the Dhaka University correspondent of a newspaper, reports UNB.

The expelled activists are Jiban and Biplob. A JCD press release said they were directly involved in the incident.

JCD, the student wing of ruling BNP, also served show-cause notice on Gulzer Hossain for his indirect role in the terrorist act, asking him to reply by May 29.

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JUCSU polls: 14 elected unopposed

Fourteen of the candidates contesting the June 3 JUCSU and hall union elections were declared Wednesday elected unopposed, reports UNB.

All 14, elected uncontested to different hall unions, are from the Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) panel, JU officials said.

The declaration came after the last date of withdrawal of candidature for the Jahangirnagar University Central Students' Union and hall union elections passed on Tuesday.