

Sharif to accept SC verdict, prepare for elections

ISLAMABAD, May 8: Deposed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed confidence in the impartiality of Pakistan's judiciary as the Supreme Court today resumed hearing a petition against his dismissal by the president, reports AP.

In a packed court room 11 of the country's top judges started hearing Sharif's constitutional petition challenging President Ishaq Khan's April 18 order dismissing Sharif's government and dissolving the National Assembly.

Security was tight around the court and entry restricted through special passes.

Riot police guarded the nearby parliament building as Sharif has asked the court to restore the lower house.

Chief Justice Nasim Hassan Shah has promised to try to reach a decision in a week.

Before leaving for Islamabad to attend the proceedings Sharif told reporters in Lahore that he would fight an individual's decision to dissolve the assembly in the court whose "credibility is beyond any doubt."

"I have full confidence in the impartiality and independence of the judiciary", the 43-year old industrialist turned politician said.

Asked what he would do if the court's decision went against him, he replied "I will accept the court's verdict whole heartedly and prepare for the general elections."

Ishaq Khan promised elec-

tions for July 14 after firing the Prime Minister after a bitter three month tussle during which Sharif had attempted to strip the presidency's sweeping powers.

There was speculation that if the Supreme Court declared Ishaq Khan's action illegal and restored the assembly, the president would engineer a vote of no confidence against Sharif.

Such a move, Sharif observed, would constitute an- other conspiracy against the nation.

He said the dismissal of his government had not only "tarnished" the country's image abroad but also impeded national development.

Holding the President responsible for political turmoil and the deteriorating economy, Sharif called it the nation's "hard luck" that foreign investors had started wind- ing-up businesses following the ouster of his reformist gov- ernment.

Through his reforms, he said Pakistan was being turned into an "Asian tiger" adding that the president's action had pushed the country's devel- opment back five years.

The caretaker government of Balikh Sher Mazari Friday unveiled the first case of "corruption" against Sharif, accusing the deposed premier of manipulating a reduction in import duty on scrap metal for the benefit of his family's steel industry.

Janata Tower Case

May 11 fixed for argument

Deposed president Hussain Muhammad Ershad yesterday pleaded "not guilty" to the charge of misuse of official position to earn pecuniary benefit for himself or for others in the Janata Tower Case, reports BSS.

Ershad was accused of al- lotting plots through illegal means which caused RAJUK a loss of Taka 5,48,70,900. The charge-sheet further alleged that Ershad and his wife Raushan had handed over cash and cheques amounting to Taka 10 crore to Nirman International Limited for construction of the Janata Tower.

Making his statement under Section 342 of the Criminal Procedure Code in the Special Judges Court, Ershad said the case is motivated with the ob- jective of maligning him in the eyes of the public.

The deposed president said this when the Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge Md Anwaruddin Sikder, after reading out the contents of the deposition made by the prosecution witnesses supported by the FIR and charge-sheet, sought his opinion about the charges.

Ershad is the principal ac- cused in this case and accord- ing to the judge he is punish- able under Section 5 (1) (D) of the prevention of the Anti- Corruption Act of 1947 and under Section 5 (1) (E) of the Act 2 of the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) of 1947.

Twenty persons have been accused in this case, including Begum Raushan Ershad, former minister MA Sattar, former RAJUK Chairman M Rahmatullah and former parli- ament member Al-Haj Abdul Wadud Khan. Three accused persons are absconding.

Begum Raushan Ershad is the chairman of the Janata Publishing Limited which owns the Janata Tower.

Statements of the accused over, the judge fixed May 11 for argument.

Making his statement, Ershad said he was sanguine that the lands were handed over after fulfilling necessary formalities. He denied that the allotment of plot had any con- nection with the Janata Publishing Limited (JPL).

He denied allegations of paying Taka 6.5 crore in cash to the Nirman International for the construction of the Janata Tower. He said had he wanted to pay any money to KZ Islam, Managing Director of Nirman, he could have given that di- rectly and not through junior officers, as has been alleged.

He appealed to the judge to consider all aspects of the case in the interest of justice and pleaded himself innocent.

Begum Raushan Ershad re- plying to the allegations, said she had neither influenced nor abetted her husband or the former RAJUK chairman Rahmatullah of anybody for al- lotment of the plots at Kawran Bazar Commercial Area or its transfers.

Raushan Ershad stated that she had used her certificate name Raushan Ara Begum in the application form in good faith so that none could be in- fluenced by her husbands name and address. She claimed herself as the chair- man of a legal, bonafide com- pany which was duly regis- tered as a joint stock company. The land on which the Janata Tower has been built was pro- cured by JPL as per law after paying appropriate price, she stated.

Begum Raushan Ershad is punishable under Section 5 (2) of the PCA and Clause 109 of the Penal Code, the judge said.

"Former RAJUK chairman M Rahmatullah while pleading not guilty," said he had only acted as a government em- ployee. He said the land in question was given to the per- sons concerned in compliance with the written order of the then President (Ershad) and with the knowledge of the RAJUK.

He denied having colluded with former President Ershad or with anybody in any manner or abused his official position. He also denied obtaining any pecuniary advantage or inter- fering with or dictating any note to his subordinates in the allotment or transfer of the plot.

The judge said Rahmatullah is punishable under Section 5 (2) of the PCA.

The judge then asked the remaining 14 accused, one by one, to comment on the alle- gations brought against them.

All of them pleaded not guilty.

All the accused including Ershad and his wife declined to bring in any defence wit- nesses.

Thirty-five prosecution wit- nesses (PWs) made depositions in the case. The PWs included four former defence person- nel, employees of RAJUK and senior executives of Nirman International, a construction firm.

After the statements by the accused, Attorney General Aminul Haq submitted a prayer asking the court to make a lo- cal inspection of the Janata Tower.

Khondker Mahub Hossain and Sharfuddin Ahmed Mukul, defence lawyers for Ershad and Begum Ershad respec- tively, objected to it, saying there was no need for such an inspection as they do not deny the existence of the Janata Tower.

The Prime Minister reiter- ated her government's firm commitment to improve acade- mic environment in all edu- cational institutions of the country by stamping terrorism and session-jam.

Terming terrorism as a "vicious malaise" polluting the educational arena, Begum Zia asserted "terrorism and ses- sion-jam have to be uprooted. They cannot be allowed to con- tinue."

She referred to an all-party meeting, discussion between the government and teachers and the recent exchange of views with the guardians on finding ways and means to solve the staggering problems.

The Prime Minister and the convocation speaker were presented with the crest of BUET, Former Ahsanullah Engineer- ing College was upgraded to the present Engineering Uni- versity in 1962.



Buddhist monks demonstrate in the eastern town of Bodhgaya, Patna in India yesterday demanding the handover of a Buddhist shrine under Hindu management. Buddhists say the shrine marks the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment. — AFP photo

FBCCI recommends fiscal incentives

The Federation of Bang- ladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) has recommended a package of fiscal incentives to the exporters, including 100 per cent income tax rebate on export earnings, to boost the country's export, reports UNB.

The 45-pronged recom- mendations of the apex cham- ber are expected to be tabled for a discussion in the 24th meeting of the Export Promot- ion Council, scheduled in Dhaka today.

To compensate the now-def- unct traditional fiscal incen- tives like XPB and XPL, FBCCI advocated an export premium

Nirmul

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Committee convenor Ja- hanara Imam told The Daily Star Saturday night that her committee would go ahead with the sit-in programme and added that it would be a non- violent one.

She urged the supporters to carry out the programme peacefully and said the demonstrators would sit down wherever they faced any obstruction from the police.

Jahanara Imam said that a number of MPs would join the sit-in. The committee would request them to raise its de- mands in parliament.

The committee has been campaigning for the trial of Jamaat-e-Islami chief Golam Azam for his alleged crimes committed during the country's Liberation War.

It also demands banning of fundamentalist politics, and a stop to harassment of the committee's supporters.

Our DU Correspondent adds: Different students' organisations Saturday held rallies at the Dhaka University campus in support of today's sit-in programme in front of the Jatia Sangsad.

The pro-Awami League Chhatra League (M-I) brought out a procession and held a rally in front of the DUCSU building yesterday morning demanding trial of Golam Azam as a "war criminal".

The Ganatantrik Chhatra Oikya (GCO) also brought out a big procession and held a rally at the Aparajeo Bangla yesterday morning, urging the students to make the sit-in a success.

Later in the afternoon the GCO and the Muktiyoddha Chhatra Command brought out processions and held rallies near the Teachers Students Centre (TSC).

Engineers

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the convocation speaker at the function which was also addressed by VC of BUET Prof Mohammad Shahjahan.

On arrival at the University, the Prime Minister was received by the Vice Chancellor and other senior teachers.

Clad in a blue convocation gown, Begum Zia joined the colourful parade of BUET's fourth convocation ceremony. Its first convocation was held in 1972, second in 1976 and the third sixteen years later in 1992.

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JS session from today

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BNP leader Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Farida Rahman, MP of the BNP, Begum Sajeda Chowdhury, MP and Mohiuddin Ahmed, MP of the Awami League (AL) and Shamsuddinoha of the Commu- nist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) were present in the yester- day's meeting of the committee.

Speaker Shaikh Razzak Ali presided over the meeting. Rafiqul Islam Miah and Sajeda Chowdhury represented the Prime Minister and Leader of the House Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina respectively.

According to the consensus reached yesterday, the session beginning today would be pro- rogued on the 13th of this month unless any major issue of public interest was raised by either the ruling party or the opposition, Khandaker Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star last night.

"If such a situation arises in the house, the business advi- sory committee would meet again to review whether the prolongation of the session was needed or not," the Chief Whip added.

"If the present situation remained unchanged, the ses- sion would be prorogued on May 13 while the budget ses- sion would begin on June 10," Rafiqul Islam Miah told The Star.

Shamsuddinoha of the CPB told The The Daily Star,

Mostafiz off to Bali

Foreign Minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman left Dhaka yesterday for Indonesia to at- tend the Non Aligned standing ministerial committee meeting on economic cooperation be- ginning in Bali tomorrow, re- ports BSS.

The meeting will consider all economic issues, with par- ticular emphasis on revitalisa- tion of the North-South dia- logue, promotion and streng- thening of South-South co- operation and role of the United Nations in international cooperation and development," he told newsmen prior to his departure.

The tenth NAM summit in Jakarta last year decided that the movement will pay greater attention to international eco- nomic issues and accordingly, the standing ministerial com- mittee on economic coopera- tion which was constituted in the NAM summit in Harare in 1986, was reactivated.

The NAM took this decision in view of the dramatic trans- formations in the international arena, particularly the end of the cold war and East-West bipolarity.

Indonesian Foreign Minis- ter Ali Alattas will preside over the meeting of foreign minis- ters from 37-member countri- es of the committee.

The Foreign Minister said Bangladesh, as a member of the committee, will play an active and constructive role at the conference.

Dhaka will particularly highlight the serious difficul- ties being faced by the Least Developed Countries and re- new its call for full, effective and timely implementation of the programme of action for the LDCs for the 1990s adopt- ed earlier.

The Foreign Minister leads a four-member Bangladesh delegation to the meeting.

The other members are AKM Farooq, Bangladesh Am- bassador in Indonesia, Syed Muazzam Ali, Director General in the Foreign Ministry and Masud Aziz, Director in the Ministry.

Mostafiz is expected to re- turn on May 13.

Bosnia

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Both were among six towns designated by the UN Security Council as safe areas Thursday.

There was no immediate word on Izetbegovic's re- sponse to the proposal on Gorade.

Under the agreement, one company of peacekeepers — about 120 soldiers — and UN military observers would go to Zepa on Saturday.

Previous agreements re- garding Muslim enclaves often have been ignored.

Top economists

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commended and improved upon in the years ahead.

He said the most recent evi- dence for 1992-93 showed that the so-called macro-econo- mic gains derived less from substantive policy reforms than the negative consequence of weak project implementation, change in budget classification methods and the persistence of an ongoing economic recession.

There is no logical basis to argue that import liberalisation by one country, in a world economy in recession, replete with trade distortions, with widely varying supply side re- sponses between countries, will automatically lead to im- proved competitive behaviour by local producers," Rehman Sobhan said, referring to con- tinued argument by the devel- opment partners of Bangladesh for a greater import liberalisa- tion, more privatisation, more depreciation of the exchange rate and a greater capacity to discipline the labour force.

He said neither the WB nor the policymakers of the coun- try had produced one shred of evidence to support the proposition that the much greater degree of economic liberalisation and privatisation registered in the period 1992- 93 improved the rate of manu- facturing investment, growth or economic competitiveness.

O Sadaat defending the po- sition of the development partners, specially the World Bank, said Bangladesh did not, in fact, privatise its enter- prises but in practice had pur- sued a policy of denationalisa- tion. The earlier privatisations, for instance, virtually ignored the standard steps involved in any serious privatisation pro- cess, he added.

He, however, identified five elements which, he felt, should be kept in mind in im- plementing the privatisation programme: (1) the need to develop a clear rationale for privatisation; (2) the impor- tance of ensuring a conducive business environment; (3) the need to manage the process transparently; (4) the vital im- portance of creating a strong institutional capacity to im- plement the programme; and (5) providing clear political commitment.

The Midnight File

Trial of 10 fundamentalists begins in Egypt

HAEKSTAP (Egypt), May 8: Ten Muslim fundamentalists, chanting abuse at the court and President Hosni Mobarak, went on trial Saturday on charges of committing terror at- tacks on tourists and officials. All denied the charges. They could face the death penalty if convicted, reports AP.

Storm kills 43 in Beijing

BEIJING, May 8: A fierce wind and sand storm killed 43 people in Gansu province in northwest China, the official television news reported Saturday. It said most of the dead were children who were caught outdoors in the storm, which blew up suddenly Wednesday afternoon in Jonchang, a desert town more than 1,200 kilometers west of Beijing, reports AP.

UN running out of money to clear mines from Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, May 8: The United Nations in running out of money to clear an estimated 10 million land mines from Afghanistan and make the countryside safe for returning refugees, reports AP.

PM seeks consensus

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economic progress last year, Begum Zia mentioned.

The Prime Minister said that the donor countries and the agencies in the recently- concluded Paris Consortium meeting also evaluated Bangladesh's economic position and said, "The present government which came to power two years back with a pledge to introduce market economy and establish social justice and equality has achieved significant suc- cesses."

She also said Bangladesh in 1993 had proved incorrect a statement in 1975 by the London-based Financial Times journalist Kevin Rafferty that "Bangladesh is the end of the great development dream. The country has no future".

The same paper, in an article published on March 26 this year, said the democracy is taking its firm root in Bangladesh and the country could now boast of attaining progress in the field of economic reforms and develop- ment, she said.

She asked the economists to work out strategies for uti- lising Bangladesh's economic prospects and help the gov- ernment's development efforts through their suggestions.

The organisers thanked the Prime Minister for attending the conference. Begum Zia was the first democratically elected head of the govern- ment who attended the conference of the BEA in 12 years since Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman had inaugurated the biennial conference of the association in 1981.

Manju

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he had termed the govern- ment autocratic and said its rule had made public life re- pressive. The government felt this speech had tarnished its image in the country and abroad.

Secondly, Manju was blamed for patronising anarch- ists in the Dhaka University and elsewhere in the country which had affected the law and order situation.

More over, the source added, Manju was accused of defalcation and embezzlement of government funds, for which the Anti-corruption Bureau had begun investiga- tions against him.

However, the order yester- day said, "The government is satisfied to order the release of detainee, Anwar Hossain Manju MP, immediately," said the source.

Meanwhile, the release order has been sent to the jailer of the Rajshahi Central Jail Saturday evening, accord- ing to the source.

Hasina

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mentation of its demand and again entered into another agreement for the implement- ation of that agreement. Several meetings were also held between the SKOP lead- ers and the ministers where pledges were made for the implementation of the agree- ment, she said adding: even the Prime Minister assured of the implementation of the agreement at a meeting with the SKOP leaders.

She said that labour dissat- isfaction and discipline had been deteriorating as the gov- ernment was not coming out with any clearcut statement about the demand of the SKOP which would leave an ominous impact on the socio-economy and industrial production of the country.

Aurango

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Just when defence lawyers were due to conclude their arguments, the judge ordered the postponement of the trial until further instructions from the higher court.

"I have written to the Registrar, Supreme Court (High Court Division) for withdrawal of the case from my file ... So further pro- ceedings of the case are postponed," said Judge Nasiruddin Ahmed in his order.

Naik Ali Azam of the DGFI was murdered in 1980 and Awami League MP, Aurango was arrested after absconding for 12 years for his alleged involvement in the murder.

The case was revived last year and Aurango was arrested from Hotel Purbani in Dhaka on October 24, 1992.

On March 11, a Division Bench of the High Court, on a prayer from the prosecution, set aside an order of the lower court which had granted Aurango bail. The High Court also ordered the District and Sessions Judge to conclude the trial.

Originally, the trial had begun in the court of the Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka, Ibabul Awal, before being shifted after three witnesses had been examined there and Aurango had been granted bail.

Govt-SKOP talks

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meeting with the Adamjee Jute Mills workers' leaders at the BJMC office at the Adam- jee Court building yesterday morning.

The minister invited the Patkal Samik Karmachari Sangram Parishad leaders to a comprehensive negotiation scheduled to take place at the same venue at 7 this evening.

The State Minister for Textiles Major Abdul Mannan (ret'd) has also scheduled his meeting with the textile mills' labour leaders at the BTMC of- fice at 3 pm today.

Both the ministers commu- nicated their decisions to the labour leaders yesterday.

The SKOP and the jute- tex- tile-cotton-sugar-BSEC work- ers called for the May 11-13 strike as part of their on-going agitation aimed at forcing the government to implement a Memorandum of Under-stand- ing (MOU), signed by the government and the trade union federations July 6 last year.

Import policy

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make industrial growth slower and difficult."

BCI directors, including Prof Mazharul Islam, Abdur Rashid, Gazi Golam Dastagir, A M Montruazzam, Col (ret'd) Kazi Selimuddin Ahmed, Golam M Khan, Neaz Rahim and Khurshid Azam, repre- senting different affected sectors, were present at the press conference.

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