

Defence counsel tells court

'Ershad is victim of political situation'

Allegation of corruption against the leaders when they lose power is a usual feature in developing countries, and H M Ershad is victim of such a situation, chief counsel for the former President told a Special Court yesterday, reports UNB.

Citing an example of political victimisation in Third World countries, the counsel said that in Pakistan, Asif Zardari, husband of Benazir Bhutto, was thrown into jail after they fell from the power. But now with political change Zardari rose to power overnight.

Refuting the prosecution argument in the Janata Tower case in which former President Ershad was charged with corruption, defence counsel Khandaker Mahub Hossain said many allegations were brought against him (Ershad) with the political change in December 1990. "There were wide allegations of his funneling abroad 40 thousand crore dollars but it could not be proved."

In the present case, the counsel added, the former President in his recommendations had asked RAJUK, to allot land to the "highest bidders among those affected".

It is natural and humane for a president of the country to

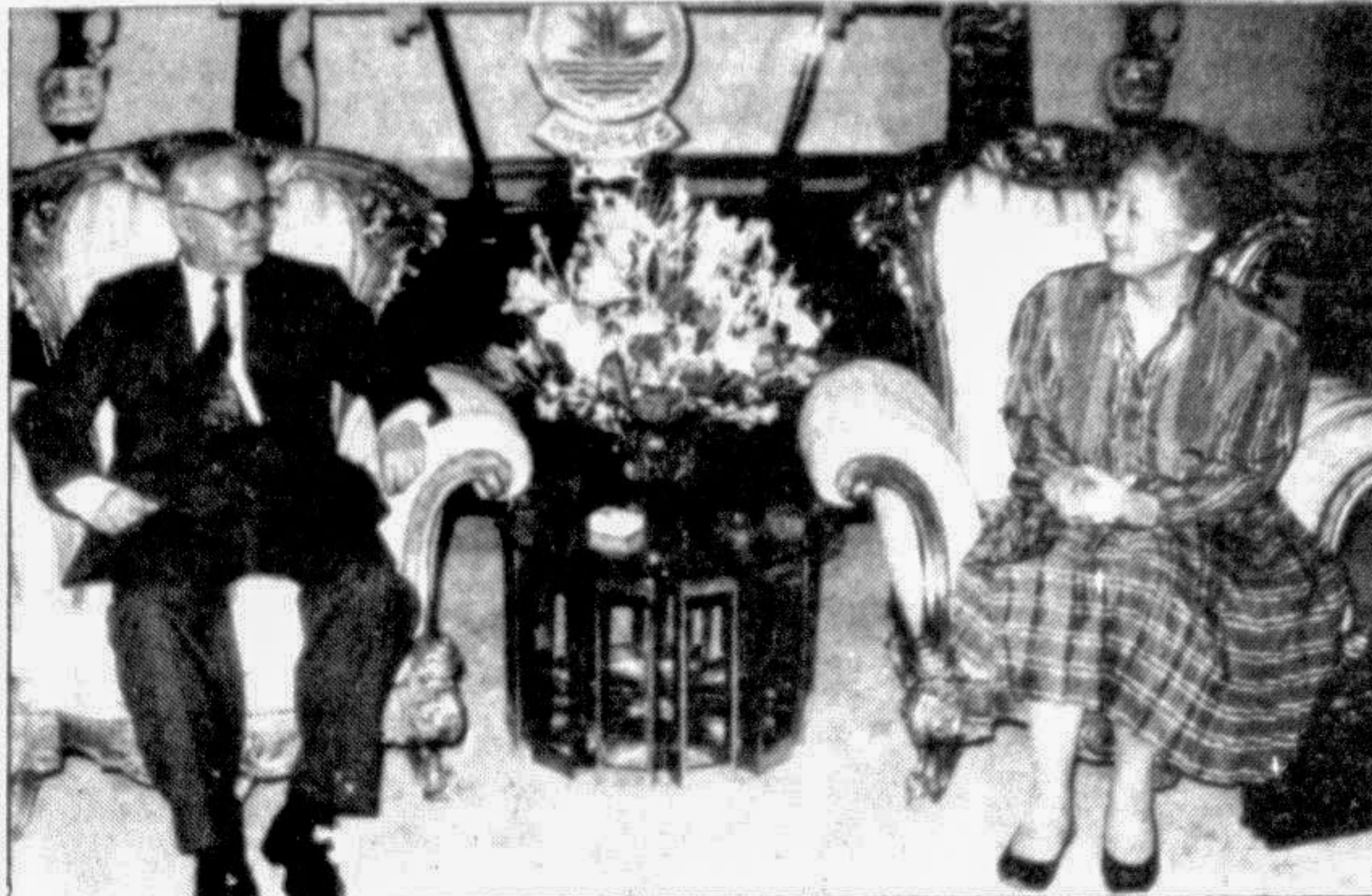
recommend the case of affected people. The land in question at Kawran Bazar was allotted in accordance with the rules, the defence counsel said, denying that Ershad had collusion with anyone in the deal.

The 63-year-old former President faces twin charges — abuse of power by giving illegal allotment of 12 katha commercial land to Janata Publishers of which his wife Raushan Ershad is chairman and payment of taka 6.5 crore, beyond known sources of his income, for construction of the multi-storied Janata Tower.

The charges may earn a maximum of 7 years in jail for the deposed President, already serving 10 plus 3 years for keeping unauthorised arms and possession of taka 2.92 crore unearned money.

The defence counsel was yet to argue on the second charge when special judge Anwaruddin Sikder adjourned the hearing till Saturday.

Earlier, concluding his argument, Attorney General Aminul Haq said that Ershad had failed to explain how he acquired Tk 6.5 crore he paid to Nirman International for construction of the Janata Tower. Therefore, it can be safely presumed that he was in possession of the money.



Dr Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas at Bangabhaban yesterday. —PID photo

Dhaka, UNHCR sign MOU

From Page 1 Col 7 durable solution to the problem through the dignified and safe return of the refugees and ensuring that the influx does not recur, as in the past.

The presence of the High Commissioner and signing of the MOU will go a long way towards ensuring that," he added.

Referring to the 14 bilateral meeting held with the Myanmar side on the refugee problem, Rahman said that Bangladesh received "reasonably good cooperation" from Myanmar in determining the conditions for the return of the refugees.

However, he acknowledged that "as far as the international community is concerned, it does not have impartial UN presence" in Myanmar to determine the prevailing conditions there.

Bangladesh seeks UN presence inside Myanmar territory for the safe and voluntary return of the refugees to their home, he said.

The MOU stipulates that the UNHCR would assist Bangladesh in the smooth repatriation of refugees "who opt to return on the basis of their own judgement of the situation in their country."

It also added that "the two sides shall cooperate with each other to prevent any attempt by any side to interfere with the exercise of freedom of option by the refugees."

A refugee wishing to return to Myanmar, the MOU said, can do so at any time, and none can prevent him from

exercising this right, while, likewise, no refugees would be forced or coerced to leave Bangladesh. And the UNHCR would assist those who would like to return voluntarily.

According to the terms of the MOU, the government would ensure the safety and security for the refugees and would not allow armed elements in the camps nor possession of arms, ammunition and explosive devices by them without proper permission of the competent authority.

The agreement lays down that the refugees must not get involved in any criminal activities including violence, rioting, possession of arms and ammunition which would be prejudicial to the public order and national security of the host nation.

Persons arrested or detained under the laws of the host country from the refugee camps would be able to avail legal assistance provided by the UNHCR or would be released in accordance with relevant procedure.

Under the accord the government, in association with UNHCR, would hold periodic information sessions in various camps to raise the level of awareness of the refugees of their options and responsibilities.

The UNHCR, under the accord, would undertake promotional activities to motivate refugees to return home and would provide assistance for repatriation.

Both sides also agreed to organise orientation sessions

and training workshops for camp officials and of the government and local officials of the UNHCR and the NGOs.

They also agreed that any difference in interpretation or implementation of the MOU would be resolved amicably through consultations and in failing to do so, both sides reserve the right to withdraw from the agreement by giving a 30 days' notice in writing.

According to the MOU, both sides also agreed not to make any statement on any matter related to the MOU and prejudicial to their relations.

The MOU also noted the willingness of the UNHCR to provide technical assistance and financial support to the communities where the influx of refugees have caused negative impact on environment and other infrastructures and that this would be through appropriate agreement with the Ministry of Relief and the Economic Relations Division of the government.

Prior to the signing of the MOU, the Foreign Secretary and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees discussed different aspects of the Rohingya refugee problem.

The UN envoy was assisted by Werner Blatter, director of the UNHCR regional bureau for Asia and Oceania, and D Bayandur, UNHCR representative in Dhaka, while the Foreign Secretary was aided by Additional Foreign Secretary Mahiuddin Ahmed and Additional Secretary of the Home Ministry Saifur Rahman.

Unscheduled debate

Menon also said that if the finance minister really meant to hold an effective policy debate on the economy, he should arrange for it before placing the next budget.

Abdus Samad Azad, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, vigorously refuting State Minister Fazlur Rahman's allegations against the opposition, said in fact it was the opposition which always pressed for discussion of economic issues on the floor of the House.

Samad Azad, however, offered the opposition's cooperation to the ruling party for identifying ways and means for solving the problems of the people.

Shahjahan Straj of the JSD, however, supported Fazlur Rahman's view but differed with his approach. Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House, while winding up the unscheduled debate, said that the opposition's noncooperation with the government would not help the country to advance economically.

Chowdhury appealed to all concerned to keep in mind the interests of the people whenever a member takes the floor to address the House. The session will resume at four this afternoon.

Yeltsin calls constituent assembly June 5

MOSCOW, May 12: President Boris Yeltsin today ordered the convening of a constituent assembly for June 5 charged with finalizing a new draft constitution for Russia, the President's press office announced, reports AFP.

The assembly would be made up of two representatives from each subject of the Russian Federation as well as representatives of Yeltsin and from the parliament under a decree signed by Yeltsin, the press office said. The decree asserted that holding the assembly was necessary because the Congress of People's Deputies, the conservative-dominated fullscale parliament, had "blocked" plans to hold a national referendum on a new constitution.

It said Yeltsin had ordered the convening of a constituent

Mausoleum visit

Victory Day during his life time.

This convention was being followed, he said adding, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and her cabinet colleagues visited Savar National Mausoleum to pay respect to the martyrs on the Victory Day during last two years in power.

Prof Chowdhury, said, however, a BNP delegation paid a visit to the National Mausoleum at Savar on the Independence Day on March 26 this year and placed wreath there.

Earlier, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in parliament Abdus Samad Azad alleged that for the first time since independence, the President and the Prime Minister did not go to Savar National Mausoleum to pay respect to martyrs of Liberation War on Independence Day this year.

He complained that the government as host of Seventh SAARC Summit did not also take the SAARC leaders to the mausoleum.

Azad requested the chair to allow a full dress discussion on the matter.

Nor'westers

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Chowhali, Belkuchi and Kamarkhand. Among the injured two were admitted to Chowhali Health Complex with serious wounds.

Meanwhile, five people were reported missing after an engine-boat carrying 29 passengers capsized in the Jamuna near Chowhali during the nor'wester. Rest of the passengers, however, swam ashore.

Our Correspondent from Gazipur reports: More than 10 workers were injured when the roof of a garments factory in Tongi collapsed during a storm that swamped over the area around 7 pm Wednesday.

Four persons were admitted to the Tongi Hospital. They are: Shamsul Huq, 40, Rafiq Mia, 30, Mokhesur Rahman, 35, and Shafiqul Islam, 28. The others received first aid.

The storm, which blew away a part of the tin-roof of Fortuna Garments at Chhaydana of Tongi also caused disruption in the power supply. Several electricity poles were uprooted during the storm, plunging the industrial area into darkness from 7 pm.

8-hr hartal

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two this afternoon a success.

Opposition party sources said that emergency services including ambulances, fire service vehicles, and newspaper transports would be exempted from the shutdown.

The alliance would hold a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue at 4 pm.

Hasina's call

Meanwhile, Opposition leader and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday requested the people to observe today's hartal to protect their constitutional and fundamental rights and press for the trial of Golam Azam as a war criminal.

In a statement Hasina said the BNP government not only had failed to run the country, it had also "destroyed the spirit and values of the Liberation War by giving support and shelter to the Jamaat-Shibir forces which opposed independence."

"The government is virtually involved in a conspiracy against independence and sovereignty by trying to protect a war criminal," the opposition leader said.

The opposition leader said the country's judiciary has no independence.

Muktijoddha

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retary, the Defence Secretary and the Managing Director of the Bangladesh Muktijoddha Kalyan Trust.

It was informed at the meeting that in the first nine months of the current financial year 11 organisations of the trust had earned profit while eight organisations incurred loss.

The meeting also reviewed the annual financial performance of the year 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 of the trust and the condition of different organisations under the trust.

At the start of the meeting, held at the Prime Minister's office, the managing director of the Kalyan Trust Brig Mohammad Shahidul Islam gave a brief resume of the activities of the organisation. The trust was formed in 1972 with the aim of providing help to the crippled freedom fighters and the members of the martyred families.

Islam said financial assistance had been provided to the crippled freedom fighters and the members of the martyred families till 1980 from the earnings of different industrial units and commercial institutions under the trust.

Later, Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman had introduced state honorarium from the national budget for them following the trusts' inability to provide financial help.

Bangkok toy factory fire toll rises to 240

BANGKOK, May 12: Weary rescue workers continued the search today for the bodies of more people killed in Thailand's worst fire, as the death toll in the Bangkok toy factory blaze rose to 240, most of them young women, reports AFP.

Rahman said that the collection of levy has been stopped from July last but the surcharge was being realised.

The Midnight File

Nepal to stem influx of Bhutanese

KATHMANDU, May 12: With more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees camped on Nepalese soil and more pouring in, the government today introduced its first measures to stem the influx with help from the United Nations, the foreign ministry said here. A ministry Press Note said stringent screening measures had been put into effect today on the Nepalese side of the border with Bhutan, reports AFP.

UN evacuates 37 wounded civilians from Zepa

ZAGREB, May 12: United Nations helicopters evacuated 37 wounded civilians from the Muslim enclave of Zepa today by agreement with rebel Serbs who have been besieging the Bosnian town, UN officials said, reports Reuter.

Govt to follow verdict: Mazari SC to order restoration of NA, hopes Sharif

ISLAMABAD, May 12: Deposed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said in remarks published today he was optimistic that the Supreme Court would order the restoration of the dissolved National Assembly, reports AFP.

Speaking to a crowd in the city of Abbottabad late Tuesday, Sharif attacked President Ghulam Ishaq Khan saying he had done a great injustice to the nation by dissolving the assembly and the elected government.

His petition challenging the president's April 18 actions currently being heard by the Supreme Court which has said it will give a verdict soon.

Sharif said if the courts' decision was not in our favour, his party would reseek people's mandate in elections scheduled by the president for

JMB construction

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lopment Bank and OECF of Japan had agreed in principle to provide Bangladesh with 150 million US dollars each for the construction of the bridge.

Explaining reasons for the delay in the start of the actual construction work of the bridge, the State Minister pointed out that the foundation stone of the proposed bridge had been laid with great fanfare during the past autocratic regime.

But the then authorities had not taken any steps for regularising the project and arranging for the necessary funds for construction work to start, he said.

Dispelling opposition apprehensions of further delay in the construction of the bridge, the state minister said there was no scope of failure on the part of the present government.

Responding to another supplementary question from Abdur Rahim (AL), Fazlur Rahman informed the House that Taka 468 crore was realised as levy and surcharge for the Jamuna Bridge project till April, 1993.

Rahman said that the collection of levy has been stopped from July last but the surcharge was being realised.

July 14.

His successor, caretaker Prime Minister Balikh Sher Mazari, has said his government shall follow the Supreme Court's decision. Mazari, in a letter submitted to the court by his counsel Tuesday, vowed to organize elections on schedule and said he had asked the armed forces to provide a supervisory structure to ensure complete fairness.

The nation's attentions riveted to the current legal battle in the Supreme Court with political parties in and outside the caretaker administration awaiting the judgement.

Observers said the court's verdict, expected next week, should remove the prevailing suspense over the fate of the promised elections.

Reported observations by members of the 11-judge bench during the five-day old proceedings have stirred speculation that the assembly could be revived.

HC orders release of Tito

A High Court Division Bench yesterday ordered release of Khaledur Rahman Tito from detention if he is not wanted in any other cases, reports BSS.

The court found that the order of detention against him under Special Powers Act was illegal and without lawful authority.

N-S dialogue

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session the outcome of the SAARC Summit recently hosted in Dhaka.

He met President Soeharto and conveyed to him greetings from Prime Minister Begum Zia and renewed an invitation to him on her behalf to visit Bangladesh. The Indonesian President accepted the invitation to pay the visit at a mutually convenient time.

The Foreign Minister also met his counterparts from Malaysia, North Korea, Palestine, India and Pakistan and discussed with them matters of mutual and regional interests.

ঢাকা ওয়াসা জরুরী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

স্বানিত গ্রাহকবৃন্দের অনুরোধে ঢাকা ওয়াসা ৩১শে মে, '৯৩-এর মধ্যে এককালীন সমুদয় বকেয়া পরিশোধ সাপেক্ষে সারচার্জ ব্যতীত পানি/পয়ঃ বিল পরিশোধের সুযোগ দিচ্ছে।

বকেয়ার পরিমাণ ও প্রকৃত পরিস্থিতি বিবেচনা করে সহজ কিস্তিতেও বিল পরিশোধের সুযোগ দেয়া হচ্ছে।

কিন্তু সুবিধা দেয়া সত্ত্বেও যারা নিয়মিত বিল পরিশোধ করছেন না ভবিষ্যতে তাদের আর কিস্তি প্রদান করা হবে না এবং তাদের সংযোগ তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে বিচ্ছিন্ন করা হবে।

ঢাকা ওয়াসার ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট-এর নেতৃত্বে ডায়ামান আদালত খেলাপী গ্রাহকদের সংযোগ তাৎক্ষণিকভাবে বিচ্ছিন্ন করা ছাড়াও পিডিআর এ্যাক্টের অধীন আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করছে। বিশেষ ক্লোয়াড গ্রাহকের বাড়ী বাড়ী তল্লাশী চালিয়ে খেলাপী গ্রাহকদের সংযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন করছে।

বিল না পরে থাকলে আজই সংশ্লিষ্ট আঞ্চলিক অফিস অথবা ওয়াসা ভবনে বাণিজ্যিক ব্যবস্থাপক (ফোনঃ ৩২৭২৪৫) বা সদস্য (অর্থ) (ফোনঃ ৮১৬৭৯৯)-এর সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

সংযোগ বিচ্ছিন্ন ও আইনানুগ কঠোর ব্যবস্থা এড়াবার জন্য এবং সারচার্জ ব্যতীত বিল পরিশোধের সুযোগ গ্রহণের নিমিত্তে আজই বকেয়াসহ হালনাগাদ পানি/পয়ঃ বিল পরিশোধ করুন।



আপনাদের সেবায় নিয়োজিত
ঢাকা ওয়াসা।

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