

Counsel says charges against Ershad mostly circumstantial

Khondkar Mahub Hossain, chief defence counsel of deposed President H M Ershad, yesterday stated that "no direct evidence" was found against his client to the effect that he (Ershad) had paid Taka 6.5 crore to the Nirman International for the construction of the Janata Tower, reports BSS.

"Whatever has been stated about my client was mostly circumstantial and that cannot be taken as proof of the grave charges brought against my client," Hossain told the Special Judge's court trying Ershad in the Janata Tower case.

Twenty persons are accused in this case including Begum Raushan Ershad, former minister M A Sattar and former chairman of Rajuk M Rahmatullah. Three of the accused are absconding.

Begum Raushan Ershad is the chairman of Janata Publishing Limited which owns the multistoried Janata Tower at Kawranbazar Commercial Area in the city.

Ershad and Rahmatullah are the principal accused while in this case and the rest are abettors.

Presenting his arguments for the third-day yesterday, Khondkar Mahub said despite the fact that the payment of such a huge sum being such a big charge against Ershad, was not contained either in the FIR or in the chargesheet. Even the supplementary charge did not speak of it, the counsel stated. This demonstrated that the allegations were the result of afterthought to achieve a specific objective, Hossain said.

The chief defence counsel of Ershad said neither K Z Islam of Nirman, the chief beneficiary of the transaction, nor the important witnesses like Brig Sharif Aziz and Col Saiful Islam had deposed that they got the money from Ershad. Inference should not be drawn in such a case and the witnesses should have testified to receiving money from Ershad, he remarked.

Khondkar Mahub said the prosecution wanted to file a case of amassing wealth against Ershad disproportionate to his known source of income, so they did it.

Regarding the reference to cash book, credit voucher and

income tax return brought by the prosecution in support of its case against Ershad that he gave Taka 6.5 crore to Nirman, Khondkar Mahub claimed those exhibits could be 'manufactured'. He asked why there was an inordinate delay in seizing documents from Nirman — more than three months after the lodging of the FIR. The delay was necessary for preparation of documents in favour of the prosecution case, the counsel observed. "Those are concocted papers," Hossain claimed.

About the recommendation of Ershad to allot plots to some 13 persons, all accused in this case, Khondkar Mahub said bringing charges of wrongdoing and passing illegal orders against fallen or ousted political leaders are nothing new in this part of the world. He cited the example of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman after the fall of the United Front government in the late Fifties.

The counsel said recommendation for allotment of plots to Sukkur Pradhan and others and procurement of land by Janata Publishers were a mere coincidence. He said in the light of the immense power that his client used to exert during his presidency, recommending a plot for some affected persons was very insignificant.

Khondkar Mahub appealed to the presiding judge, Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge Ansuruddin Sikder to take into consideration all aspects of the case before giving the judgement.

M A Malek, defence counsel for Rahmatullah, stated that his client merely carried out the order of the all-powerful President, and that, too, after official formalities.

He stated that the prosecution could not prove beyond reasonable doubt that his client had committed criminal misconduct. The pecuniary benefit that has been alleged against Rahmatullah could not be established, he said.

On the question of transferring the Rajuk plot, Malek said his client gave the order on the basis of authority conferred on him and also after receiving the requisite fees. He said both the allotment of plots and permission of transfer, the subject of this case, were processed in the normal course.

Malek said whatever his client did in respect of allotment of plots to Sukkur Pradhan and others were done in good faith and not for deriving any pecuniary benefit. He said even after his client was relieved, Rajuk allotted plots to persons having similar positions of Sukkur Pradhan and 12 others, accused in this case.

About the loss suffered by Rajuk because of the allotment made by his client, Malek said such loss was 'imaginary'. He said the prosecution could not prove the loss; it was a mere assumption, not supported by documentary evidence.

Malek concluded his arguments by stating that there can't be a case against Rahmatullah who only complied with the order of the highest authority.

Ramzan Ali Khan, appearing for Sukkur Pradhan (a beneficiary of allotment of plot), said his client got the land because he fulfilled the requirements of Rajuk.

The argument for the defence remained incomplete when the court rose for the day to meet again today.

14th century

From Page 1 Col 4 Social Welfare and Women's Affairs to celebrate the Bangla year 1400, the last year of the century.

Social Welfare Minister Tariqul Islam and State Minister Sarwar Rahman were present as special guests at the seminar chaired by Women's Affairs Secretary Inamul Haq. Begum Salima Rahman, MP, chairperson of the Mahila Sangstha founded by late President Ziaur Rahman, delivered the address of welcome.

Dr Shahida Rafiq, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Physics and Electronics, Dhaka University presented the key-note paper.

Prime Minister Begum Zia graced the function by her unannounced presence for about an hour.

Three papers — by Farida Rahman, MP, Zubaida Gulshan Ara and Khorsheed Alam — were presented in the second session of the seminar which was open to free discussion.

The seminar declared Begum Zia as the 'greatest lady of the century' but all the speakers including the President also lauded the role of Sheikh Hasina in the political arena.

Dr. Rafiq said in her keynote paper that there were only 400 educated women in the region until the Bangla year 1308 but Begum Rokeya Sakhawat's crusade for women's education had opened the eyes of the Muslim women.



Civil Aviation Employees' Association brought out a procession in the city yesterday to press for regularisation of services. — Star photo

Prof Yunus gets CARE award

WASHINGTON, May 16: Internationally acclaimed economist of Bangladesh Prof Muhammad Yunus and the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson were presented awards on behalf of CARE by the US Secretary of State Warren Christopher for their humanitarian achievements, at a function on Friday last, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday, reports BSS.

Honoured at a State Department luncheon were Irish President Mary Robinson and Professor Muhammad Yunus, the Managing Director and founder of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh.

CARE, the world's largest private relief and development organisation, presents the awards to individuals and groups that have contributed significantly to the improvement of life in the developing world.

Charles Sykes, CARE's vice president for public policy, noted that both recipients of this year's awards exemplify "caring and concern for all our global citizens," observing that "each has worked hard to help make life better for millions of desperately poor people worldwide."

CARE's citation notes that "in October of 1992, Robinson became the first head of state to visit Somalia. She toured the worst affected areas, personally appealed to the warlords to put down their weapons, and hand-fed starving children."

The citation for Professor Yunus notes that he had found it "impossible to teach" economic theory inside the classroom while people outside were living in dire poverty. Yunus pointed out that the ability to start businesses is

Yunus notes that under his direction "Grameen Bank has provided millions of dollars in small loans to Bangladeshi women, the most disenfranchised members of that society." It added "The example of Grameen Bank is being followed in areas of poverty throughout the world" and that "a Grameen Bank replication was also established in Arkansas during the tenure of Governor Bill Clinton."

Speaking at the awards ceremony, Secretary of State Warren Christopher noted that "At a time when our attention is riveted on international atrocities... when hunger and starvation steal the future from millions of children around the world... we need to remember those who are helping to lift peoples' lives by providing the means and skills for economic advancement."

He praised the CARE organisation for helping "to bring the (Somali) tragedy to world attention as it brought relief to the Somali people."

The Secretary also praised CARE for "good logistics... effective, reliable means of delivering services... a sustained commitment to empowering people" while "giving them the tools and training that they need to move from dependence to independence."

Accepting his award, Yunus explained he had found it "impossible to teach" economic theory inside the classroom while people outside were living in dire poverty. Yunus pointed out that the ability to start businesses is

"based on collateral. That... principle of all our financial institutions is universally accepted and taken for granted." "It says, the more you have, the more you can get. If you don't have anything, you don't get anything."

His loan programme to help destitute women start their own businesses, he explained, is an attempt to break out of this cycle, and it has worked for many recipients.

Robinson called for a "people-to-people approach supplementing and influencing governmental and institutional responses," to worldwide hunger and misery.

She noted "A striking feature of our modern world is the potential level of communication and interaction which could be harnessed to resolve problems... We have the potential to create informal, flexible networks of support as channels of communication, practical aid and technical assistance."

Robinson said she wished to "pay tribute to the role played by the United States in Operation Restore Hope (in Somalia). The operation has ensured that food supplies get to those in greatest need, and has curbed the display of weaponry." She also stated "I commend... CARE for the hope it has given to millions of invisible men, women and children."

According to information provided by CARE, the organisation today provides nearly 400 million US dollar worth of assistance to 30 million impoverished people worldwide.

The Midnight File

Demirel elected president

ANKARA (Turkey), May 16: Premier Sulayman Demirel on Sunday became Turkey's ninth president, elected by a simple majority in a third round of parliamentary voting. He succeeds Turgut Ozal who died of heart failure last month. Demirel, 69, received 244 votes in the 450-member legislature, 18 more than the minimum he needed. In earlier voting this month, he failed to receive the two-thirds majority, or 300 votes, set by the constitution for the first two rounds of parliamentary balloting, reports AP.

Plot to kill Bush: 12 face trial this month

KUWAIT CITY, May 16: Eleven Iraqis and a Kuwaiti accused of plotting to assassinate former US President George Bush will face possible death sentences when they go on trial here later this month, Attorney General Mohammed Al-Banai said today. Two men accused of harbouring them and drug smuggling could face up to five years in jail. All 14 have been indicted and were referred to the State Security Court Sunday. They will go on trial after the court reviews their cases, which will take 10 days, reports AFP.

Aurango's case transferred JU JCD begins hunger strike

By Court Correspondent The Registrar of the Supreme Court (High Court division) Sunday referred the DGF Natk Ali Azam murder case to the court of the First Additional District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka.

Awami League MP Hema-yatullah Aurango was arrested for his alleged involvement in the murder of Ali Azam and put on trial in the court of the District and Sessions Judge, Dhaka.

Hotel owners begin 72-hr strike today

By Staff Correspondent Bangladesh Hotel Restaurant Owners' Association has called for a 72-hour strike from today throughout the country demanding withdrawal of VAT (Value Added Tax) from the ordinary restaurants.

The association brought out a procession in the city yesterday in support of the strike.

Farakka issue

From Page 1 Col 5 Speaking at a discussion meeting, NDP leader Anwar Zahid said the Farakka problem threatens the very existence of the country. He called upon the national forces to unite for resisting the aggression. "The problem cannot be solved by a single political party," he said.

He said India did not want that Bangladesh should survive as an independent country. That is why India is unilaterally withdrawing the Ganges water and thus crippling Bangladesh economically.

Organised by the Movement to Resist Farakka, the meeting was also addressed by JAGPA leader Shafiq Alam Prodhan, Daily Meilat Editor Chowdhury Md Farooq, Alamgir Mojumder, Khandkar Golam Murtaza and Noor Mohammad Kazi.

A Chapanawabganj report says: Workers Party leader Rashed Khan Menon, addressing a public meeting here yesterday, called upon the people to launch a united movement for realising just share of the Ganges water.

He demanded a permanent solution of the problem which had rendered a vast area of the country into desert. The entire northern districts were facing acute water crisis. The GK project was shut down and the salinity has increased, turning cultivable lands barren, he added.

Local BNP leaders said Moshir Rahman Sohel, president of the Sadar thana unit of the Juba Dal, along with some of his followers, attacked Secretary of the Pabna Poura unit of the BNP Taufiq Habib near New Market at around 9:30 pm.

AL-BNP clash

From Page 1 Col 7 Dal, the peasant wing of BNP, has also called a public meeting at the same venue and the same time.

District AL president Waji Uddin Khan alleged that BNP workers attacked their activists while they were returning from campaigning and wounded three of them.

On the other hand, district BNP president Abdur Rouf Abed said the Awami League workers were injured when their own bombs went off in the jeep.

Another report adds, a local BNP leader was assaulted, allegedly by some activists of the Jatyatabadi Juba Dal, the youth front of the ruling party, in the town Saturday night.

Local BNP leaders said Moshir Rahman Sohel, president of the Sadar thana unit of the Juba Dal, along with some of his followers, attacked Secretary of the Pabna Poura unit of the BNP Taufiq Habib near New Market at around 9:30 pm.

Seminar on global refugees concludes

A poor country like Bangladesh has sheltered a quarter million Myanmar refugees on humanitarian ground, a fact which has caused it heavy financial strains, Information Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda said yesterday, reports BSS.

"In spite of difficulties, we have been striving hard to provide shelter, food and temporary abode to these homeless uprooted people," Huda told the concluding session of a two-day seminar on "Global Refugee Issues".

Organised by Media Development and Consultancy Centre and sponsored by UNHCR, the seminar was inaugurated by President Abdur Rahman Blesaw at a local hotel. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata who paid a four-day visit to Bangladesh also addressed it as special guest Saturday.

The Minister lauded international agencies, particularly the UNHCR, and donor countries for extending great help in this humanitarian effort.

"Refugee issue is a global issue, a refugee problem a global phenomenon," the Minister said, adding this problem is particularly felt acutely in Bangladesh where it has surfaced over and over again in a cyclical manner."

Asia, Europe, Africa, America and the Pacific — all corners of the globe — are affected by this perennial problem, the Minister said.

The seminar concluded with adoption of a 10-point recommendations, including a

call for the highest degree of cooperation among the nations to stop emergence and recurrence of refugee problems.

It also called for intensifying all efforts towards safeguarding human rights through executive, legislative and judicial process.

The seminar recommended that the UNHCR be given the authority to take penal measures against the offending countries and the refugee issue must be treated as disaster threatening peace and security of human-beings.

Stranded Pakistanis demand start of repatriation

By Staff Correspondent The stranded Pakistanis living in the city's Mirpur and Mohammadpur camps brought out a procession yesterday to press for starting their repatriation in the current month.

A press release of the Stranded Pakistanis' General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC) said yesterday that the procession was participated mainly by the 'half-fed and half-clad' children of the stranded Pakistanis.

"The procession was brought out to express solidarity with the refugees of the Adamjeenagar camp who brought out a starving procession in the city on May 8 to press implementation of the joint declaration of the governments of Bangladesh and Pakistan relating to repatriation."

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Daring heist in city

From Page 1 Col 8 27 on Toyneebe Circular Road. They then broke the windshield of the jeep.

Two office assistants of the company, Abdur Rashid and Mahfuzul Ahsan, were going to deposit Tk 1,92,500 in cash and demand drafts of Tk. 20,74,394 to the Janata Bank local branch at Motijheel from a local office of the company at 50/A Toyneebe Circular Road.

Four gangsters emerged from the car brandishing firearms and shot Rashid, who was inside the jeep, on his left hand and snatched the briefcase from him.

Rashid's colleague Ahsan and the driver of the jeep were, however, unhurt.

Ismael Hossain who was passing by, bravely tried to chase the gangsters but was shot by one of the armed gang.

Immediately after the heist the gang fled in their car with hundreds of passersby and some patrol policemen watching with incredulity.

BRTC employees

From Page 1 Col 5 per the provisions of the law. They also alleged that the high-ups of the corporation were pressurising the employees to opt for voluntary retirement by threatening them in various ways.

The Action Committee termed this illegal and sought the intervention of the Prime Minister and Communications Minister in the matter.

The meeting, presided over by Abul Faraz Mollah, also criticised a BRTC circular issued on December 20, 1990, saying it was contradictory to the Public Servants Retirement Act, 1974, and should be withdrawn.

The Action Committee also demanded a proper inquiry and said that the government would be responsible for any untoward consequences of irregularities.

It demanded that the employees be given proper accounts of their dues at retirement.

The meeting was followed by a procession which paraded city streets before dispersing at the National Press Club.

Sarbahara men

From Page 1 Col 8 however, produced little result.

In the amnesty package the government also promised rehabilitation, including jobs and security.

A total of 425 Sarbahara Party-men availed the amnesty and a small number of weapons were laid down in 13 southern districts.

However, informed sources say, many of those who surrendered were either killed or were forced to return to clandestine life because of continuing threats from their comrades who did not surrender.

Meanwhile, a number of leading businessmen expressed their deep concern over the incident.

One top industrialist of the country told The Daily Star last night, "If the law and order situation in the country is such, then how can we expect the foreign investors to come here."

PM : Hartals

From Page 1 Col 7 call for the diploma engineers to come forward in this regard. The Prime Minister noted that technological backwardness is one of the main problems of the country and proper application of technology could reduce unemployment and alleviate poverty to a large extent.

She said the government was considering reforms in technical education for which a high-level committee had been formed.

Referring to the integration of the IDE with the government's Housing Committee, the Prime Minister said steps would be taken to consult the opinion of the organisation in other development programmes.

She said the system loss in the power sector could be reduced to a large extent by using local technology. She also pointed to the prospect of generating power from solar energy and the vast resources of the Bay of Bengal.

The Prime Minister announced an annual grant of Tk 30 lakh for the Institute of Diploma Engineers.

দ্রুত দাবী পরিশোধই
জীবন বীমা কর্পোরেশনের
অনন্য বৈশিষ্ট্য।

১৯৯২ সাল পর্যন্ত নিজস্ব তহবিল থেকে

১৯২৪.৭৩

মিলিয়ন টাকার
দাবী পরিশোধ করা হয়েছে
জীবন বীমার সকল পলিসিই আয়করমুক্ত

সুখী ও দুশ্চিন্তামুক্ত জীবনের জন্য
আজই একটি
জীবন বীমা পলিসি নিন

জীবন বীমা কর্পোরেশন
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অভিজাত আধুনিক প্রকল্প

মহানগর: রামপুরা ওয়াপদা রোডের
শেখ প্রান্তে উলন পাওয়ার স্টেশন সংলগ্ন
২½ এবং ৩ কাঠা পরিমাণের প্লটগুলি
এখনই বাড়ী করে বসবাসের উপযোগী।

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- ✓ নিকেতন: গুলশান মডেল টাউন সংলগ্ন।

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