

Ershad's appeal for quashment rejected

A High Court Division bench yesterday rejected a prayer for quashment of the charges against former President H M Ershad and former Works Minister Mostafa Jamal Haider, in a criminal case for spending government money for the renovation of an abandoned house which was used as the Jatiya Party office, reports BBS.

The bench comprising Justice A K M Sadek and Justice K M Hasan, in its judgement said the trial court, if it finds any error in the framing of charges, can alter the charges but the proceedings cannot be quashed.

The charges against Ershad and Haider were framed in late January this year in a special tribunal in Dhaka. The quashment petition was filed thereafter and on the basis of that prayer the High Court issued the rule.

The accused persons have been charged with spending nearly Taka 82 lakh government money for the renovation of an abandoned house in the Dhanmondi residential area in

the capital which was used as the Jatiya Party's central office. They were also accused of failing to pay over Taka 30 lakh due as rent for the government building.

Deposition by the prosecution witnesses began in February last. Upon an application of another co-accused A Rouf, a High Court bench comprising Justice M. Badruzzaman and Justice Syed J R Modasser Hossain on March 10 passed an order that the case be transferred from the court of the Senior Special Judge, Dhaka, to the senior-most Additional Sessions Judge, Dhaka, the ex-officio special judge, for trial.

Moudud Ahmed pleaded for H M Ershad while former Attorney General M Nurullah appeared for Mostafa Jamal Haider.

Attorney General Aminul Haq, Deputy Attorney General A F M Shahid and Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Assistant Attorney General Syed Motiul Islam and Mir Hasmat Ali appeared for the state.

BSF attempt to erect fence near border

From Our Correspondent

SYLHET, Apr 6: A tense situation has been prevailing in the Tahirpur border in Sunamganj district following a BSF attempt to erect barbed wire fence and build road close to the zero land.

A special contingent of BDR has been deployed on the Bangladesh border.

The Indian authorities attempted to construct the road opposite to the Baliakandi and Charagao border outpost in Tahirpur.

The BDR protested the move several times in writing as any kind of construction within 150 yards of the zero land was internationally prohibited.

An Indian private firm began the construction work under BSF supervision two weeks ago.

Police deployed at PID

By Staff Correspondent

The authorities have deployed police at the office of the Press Information Department (PID) in the wake of fresh agitation by the BCS (Information) officials, witnesses said.

The BCS (Information) Officers' Association, a body of 195 cadre members, started a total non-cooperation with the Principal Information Officer (PIO), demanding his removal since he is a non-cadre appointee.

A group of 70 officers yesterday went to the PID inside the Secretariat to protest alleged authoritative harassment of those employees who supported the anti-PIO campaign.

The association also condemned the deployment of police at the office premises.

PIO Abdul Rahim, however, attended office in the morning.

Health Day

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"It's essential to build up an energetic and disease-free manpower for the socio-economic development in the country," said the Prime Minister.

The government is continuing its efforts for expanding and recasting health service to meet the growing demand of the people, she said.

Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina said healthy citizens were the pre-requisite for building the nation on a sound footing.

She said, considering the present health-care situation in the country, her party had given emphasis on building one health centre in each union.

The Ministry of Health chalked out elaborate programmes including a rally to be brought out today at 7.30 am from the Manik Mia Avenue which will end at Bijoy Sarani. At the International Conference Centre the day's programme will be inaugurated at 10 am by President Abdur Rahman Biswas. Important road islands will be decorated with Yestoons, banners and posters and essay competitions will be organised at different educational institutions.

Radio and television will put up special programmes, and newspapers will publish special supplements.

An exhibition on oral hygiene will be arranged at the Osmani Auditorium on Friday. It will remain open from 10 am to 5 pm for the visitors.

The teachers and students of the Dhaka Dental College will organise special programmes on oral hygiene on Friday and Saturday in some schools of the city.

According to the WHO officials in Dhaka, chewing tobacco and smoking cause oral cancer and the percentage of oral cancer is alarming in Bangladesh.

Matin hopes

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League and Jatiya Party.

Earlier, the Home Minister held a nearly two-hour meeting with top officials of the police administration. It is believed that the police strategy to tackle the opposition's planned siege figured prominently during the meeting.

Police sources said the authorities would step up security measures to ward off any troubles during the siege programme.

The main opposition Awami League has planned to lay a siege to the Secretariat from 10 am today while the Jatiya Party of deposed President Ershad — second largest opposition in Parliament — to the Election Commission Secretariat.

Both announced the programme to press for the resignation of BNP government and early parliamentary polls under a neutral caretaker government.



Students of the five new medical colleges of the country held a rally in front of the National Press Club yesterday demanding implementation of their 12-point demands. — Star photo

Opposition's siege today

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The ALCWC discussed in detail the party's next course of action, especially in the wake of today's possible developments.

AL chief Sheikh Hasina, however, asked her colleagues in the meeting not to disclose anything to newsmen.

However, sources close to the leaders attending the meeting told The Daily Star late last night that the party had planned three alternative sets of programmes including a nation-wide strike, holding of a grand rally some time next month and a siege of the capital.

"The final decision would depend on the situation today," the source said. A top-ranking AL leader, on the condition of anonymity, told this correspondent, "the Leader of the Opposition would announce a package of agitational programmes today."

On the question of making today's planned siege of the Secretariat — seat of government — the party activists would try to proceed towards the destination from four directions.

According to another source, the AL chief, while addressing the working committee meeting, termed today's siege the beginning of an "all-out agitation" for deposing the government.

The leadership also decided to hold an extended meeting of the ALCWC during the first week of next month to ensure the approval of the district committees for an all-out campaign against the government.

Meanwhile, the policy-makers of the ruling party met last night to review the situation.

According to meeting sources, the Prime Minister

Workers' Party

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The World Bank and the IMF.

Earlier, party leader Fazle Hossain Badshah announced a six-week-long action programme beginning with a black-flag demonstration across the country on April 15 against formal signing of the GATT agreement.

The programmes also include a mass demonstration day on April 21, and a campaign on the basis of its 11-point demands across the country from April 22 to April 30.

The party will start a month-long mass signature campaign from May 1, observe Farakka Day on May 16 with gherao of all thanas, land offices and banks.

It will gherao the district administrations, banks and land offices on May 29 and organise a march towards Parliament on June 29 with the mass signatures in favour of its demands.

Pattern of protest

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ensure a congenial environment and facilities in real terms," the FBCCI chief said.

The members of the Bangladesh business delegation did the salesmanship in this context.

He said the Japanese have shown keen interest about Bangladesh as a potential investment site for relocation of their sunset industries in view of saturating investment levels in the ASEAN countries and growing labour costs in many other Asian economies.

"To attract such FDIs (Foreign Direct Investments) in real operational terms, we will have to streamline things on many fronts to bridge the gaps between the government's stated liberal policies and their implementation," Mahubur Rahman said.

The country's environment would have to be improved further to demonstrate its socio-political stability.

Mahubur Rahman said the Japanese have appreciated the present investment opportunities now being provided in Bangladesh and there are reasons to be hopeful about the FDI flow into the country if the socio-political and law and order situations remain satisfactory.

Mahub said the visit to Japan of the 30-member business delegation with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has laid the foundation for mutually beneficial links between the private sectors of the two countries. Any spurt in Japanese investments in Bangladesh from its existing level of 132 million US dollars in total (except KAFCO) and in the bilateral trade between two countries would, however, largely depend on effective follow-up actions, particularly by Bangladesh, he added.

PM opens Dhaka Dental College compound in Mirpur

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated a permanent compound equipped with all modern medical and technical facilities for the Dhaka Dental College at Mirpur in the city, reports UNB.

The college was established in 1961 on a temporary premises at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The total estimated cost of the new premises of the college at Mirpur is 12.57 crore plus.

The Prime Minister said the opening of the new college compound realised a long-cherished dream. "I am sure, the Dhaka Dental College will become an ideal medical institute in this area."

She hoped that the new college building would provide modern training to the dentists and students who will play an important role in maintaining oral and dental health of the people.

Begum Zia said that a 200-bed dental hospital would be established at this college in the second phase of the project.

Referring to absence of post-graduate dental education in the country, Begum Zia said her government was hopeful to establish a full-fledged dental college.

The Prime Minister said that the government would consider for holding a special BCS examination to fill-up the vacant posts of dentists in government hospitals.

She also assured that the government would provide transport facilities and construct residential hostels for the dental students soon.

The inaugural function was also addressed by Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Deputy Health Minister Sirajul Huq and project director of the Dhaka Dental College Prof Ashraf Hossain.

Lawyers concerned at today's siege programme

Lawyers of the Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar, Dhaka District Bar and the Taxes Bar Association, yesterday expressed deep concern at today's programme by the opposition saying that rule of law and democracy could be upheld only through mutual tolerance, reports BBS.

In a joint statement issued yesterday evening over two hundred lawyers, belonging to these bar associations, called for discarding the politics of agitation in order to consolidate the hard-earned democracy. They urged the people to unitedly resist any attempt for creating anarchy when Bangladesh was going through a process of consolidation of democracy and was trying to build up the economic infrastructure shattered by the autocratic rule.

The signatories to the statement, include advocates Abdur Rab Chowdhury, Ziaur Rahman Khan, A K Mujibur Rahman, Syed Abu Qaesar, Joyntul Abedin, Mohammad Syedur Rahman, Mir Hashmat Ali, Mohammad Feroz Shah, Mohammad Khorsheed Alam, Syed Shamim Ahsan Habib, Mohammad Afzal Hossain and Suraya Begum.

PM reviews

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the ruling party's front organisations.

The source declined to elaborate.

Party Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukder, Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Communications Minister Oli Ahmed, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Foreign Minister Mostafizur Rahman, Labour Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam attended the meeting.

When contacted by telephone Salam Talukder told The Daily Star that the government should ensure law and order for the sake of peace and development of the country.

And if the opposition parties claim themselves to be responsible organisations they should register their protest peacefully.

Talukder said the opposition had been blaming the government for its failure in various development programmes, including the economic reforms. But as opposition parties, they too, have some responsibility towards making the country prosperous, he added.

Coincidentally, a Japanese delegation is starting its visit to Bangladesh from today to see for itself the investment atmosphere in Bangladesh.

"If it is a responsible opposition it should help maintain the peace," Talukder said, adding: "If they want to embarrass the ruling party it would be in the long run, also be ruinous for the country."

The Midnight File

Artillery duels in S Lebanon

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon, Apr 6: Iranian-backed guerrillas and Israeli-allied militiamen fought artillery and rocket duels in South Lebanon Wednesday. Security sources said one militiaman and seven civilians were wounded. The fighting began at mid-afternoon, when Hezbollah guerrillas fired mortars at a South Lebanon Army outpost in the village of Beit Leif on the edge of the Israeli-occupied zone. One SLA member was wounded, security sources said, reports AP.

Algerian troops kill 16 Muslim militants

TUNIS, Apr 6: Algerian security forces today killed 16 armed Muslim militants, bringing to 36 the number of Islamists killed in five days, Algeria's APS news agency reported. APS, monitored in Tunis, quoted security sources as saying 43 militants were also arrested by supporting or belonging to armed groups, reports Reuters.

Sylhet divn movement

From Page 1 Col 7

people of Sylhet are not campaigning for a divisional commissioner and a DIG. They are struggling for a strong local government," Nurul Islam said.

He said there was no harm to have a separate identity, in the UK everyone holds a British passport but there are Irish and Welsh people. "Being Sylhetis we have district culture and identity, but above all we are Bangladeshis."

Alhaj Mubaswir Ali, president of Brihathar Sylhet Ganadabi Parishad, which has been campaigning for a 21-point demand since 1987, said that the acrimony between the Sylhetis and non-Sylhetis was because of the demand for a Sylhet division.

The Sylhetis were segregated in different government offices but once upon a time 11 Deputy Commissioners out of 17 were from Sylhet.

This deliberate segregation has had an ominous impact on the minds of the Sylhetis.

Former MP Ashraf Ali, who is the secretary of the parishad, said, "if this continues, the Sylhetis may retaliate and the relationship between Sylhetis and non-Sylhetis may worsen."

More than 90 per cent of the 50 thousand rickshaw-pullers here are non-Sylhetis and a large number of people from other districts were engaged in various businesses in Sylhet.

Talking to The Daily Star, a cross-section of Sylhetis voiced their demands but non-Sylhetis kept their lips tight.

Babur Hossain Babul who was elected pourashava chairman for two terms and is now leading a movement "Jago Sylhet" (Wake up, Sylhet) said the reasons for their movement are "disparity and exploitation."

He alleged that some 20 lakh to 25 lakh non-Sylhetis had been settled in the hilly regions of the greater Sylhet district but so far it had not created any CHT-like situation.

Incumbent municipality chairman A F M Kamal, who does not belong to any of the political parties but joined the division movement, told The Daily Star that Dhaka was being made a mega city whereas, Sylhet had the ability to become a metropolitan city.

"We are handicapped by poor funds and less authority," he said.

In reply to a question on why all the groups are not standing on the same platform, most of the group leaders said this was due to the leadership factor. The separate platforms, however, did not hamper the movement, they added.

Varsity employees' strike ends

Classes and administrative work in the Dhaka University could not be held yesterday as the Inter-University Employees' Unity Council observed a two-day strike in all the universities of the country from Tuesday, reports UNB.

New fertiliser

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"Invention of Sarna is a follow-up of Prof Bremer's research and the new fertiliser will help a tree to absorb the natural ingredients of soil," Dr Khaleque added. He said he has tested the fertiliser in different districts.

Prof Bremer was awarded Knighthood by the Queen of Britain in 1992 for his research work in Bangladesh.

Dr Khaleque, who is still a student of the University of London, now on leave for research work, has established a mini factory in Chittagong for commercial production of Sarna.

The present capacity of his factory can meet one to two per cent of total fertiliser requirement for 22 million acres of country's agricultural land. On the other hand, 70 per cent ingredients of Sarna is imported. If he gets proper sponsorship, it is possible to increase the production and reduce the import of ingredients, Dr Khaleque added.

The Agro Trading Syndicate took the charge of marketing the product through the Federation of Rural Cooperative Societies which has 75 thousand branches at the village level.

"He should know that the

Loans for agro-based units

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Reviewing the disbursement position of the NCBs during the last six months of the current fiscal, Rahman said significant rate of GDP growth could not be achieved through such investment.

"The trend is good and the figures are also encouraging. But it is not enough, we have to increase investment," he said asking the NCBs to disburse more loans to the industrial sector in the absence of development financing institutions.

The Finance Minister noted with dissatisfaction that huge amounts of equity remained unutilised in the banks when entrepreneurs were not getting credit due to 'dilly-dally' by a section of bankers.

These days people are very much annoyed with the banks, he said adding, "I'm facing severe criticism from various quarters due to your failure in lending money to many genuine loan seekers." The minister advised the bankers to do demand-based banking.

Rahman said the bankers might be feeling shy in lending money as a backlash of the default culture that developed in the 80s. But for any sins of the

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