

PW-1 tells court

Corruption case against Ershad not aimed at stopping JP activities

The government has neither brought corruption case against deposed President Hussain Muhammad Ershad, nor had illegally locked the House No 104 in the Road 3, Dhanmendi Residential Area to stop the political activities of Jatiya Party, the Special Judge's Court trying the former president in JP Office Case was told yesterday, reports BSS.

Kartik Chandra Das, prosecution witness PW-1 in the Special Case No 50 of 1993 (better known as the JP Office Case) in response to a suggestion from defence said it is not true that the present government brought this corruption case against Ershad to humiliate him politically. During cross examination by Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, chief defence counsel of Ershad, Das, who is the informant and investigating officer in this case, said it was not true that the house in question was put under lock and key to stop the activities of Jatiya Party.

Das, an officer of the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, was examined yesterday as an informant and will be cross examined at a later stage, defence lawyers said.

Two prosecution witnesses were examined yesterday. But the examination of the second one remained incomplete when the court was adjourned till August 16.

Former President Ershad and two others including a former minister was indicted early this year on charges of abusing their official positions in spending government money amounting to about Tk 82 lakh for renovating and refurbishing an abandoned house which was used as the Jatiya Party office till the first week of December 1990. Former Works Minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former acting works secretary Abdur Rouf are the co-accused in this case.

Jinai Ara, the First Additional District and Sessions Judge, was the presiding judge.

Shahid Uddin Ahmed, Superintendent Engineer, Housing and Settlement Directorate, is the PW-2 in the case who was partially exam-

ined yesterday.

In response to defence query Das said the former president supervised the renovation and refurbishing work of the house done at government's expense. PW-1 in reply to another query mentioned that he did not find any instruction or signature of Ershad in any document or paper seized in relation to the house. He further said that estimate, tender and works order for the renovation and refurbishing of the house were executed by government employees, but none were named in the first information report. Ershad was the lone accused in this case as mentioned in the FIR, he added.

Das, who was also examined by Yusuf Hossain Humayun, defence counsel of former works minister Mostafa Jamal Haider, said he was aware that both the Awami League and BNP have their offices in abandoned houses in the capital. He replied in the negative when asked whether there was any mention of Haider's name in any paper that had been investigated before lodging the FIR. He remained silent when asked whether there was any prima facie case against Haider.

When asked by T M Akbar, defence counsel of Rouf, the PW-1 said the accused's (Rouf's) name was not there in the FIR. Since the preliminary investigation had no mention of Rouf's name, FIR did not contain that name, Das told the court.

Prosecution witness no 2 Shahiduddin Ahmed during cross examination informed the court that departmental proceedings were drawn against him for not violating rules, but for spending excess money for renovation and refurbishing the house in question. He said design, estimate and other works for the house were duly processed and approved by the officials concerned and stressed that funds were properly spent.

When asked whether renovation and refurbishing had helped raise the valuation of the house, the PW-2 answered in the affirmative. He, however, said what procedure was followed in doing so has to be looked into.



The SAARC Programming Committee meeting at a city hotel yesterday.

— PID photo

SAARC

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Secretary B P Trikalaratne, Nepalese Foreign Secretary Kedar Bhakta and Indian Additional Foreign Secretary Dev Mukherjee, who formed the Standing Committee, arrived in the city yesterday for the meeting.

Bangladesh Foreign Secretary M R Osmany, chairman of the Standing Committee, the third tier of SAARC, will preside over the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Programming Committee, the fourth tier of SAARC, in its meeting yesterday made up recommendations on action programme to be submitted to the Standing Committee.

It proposed calendar of activities for the Standing Committee's approval.

The programming committee also took stock of the present status of efforts for the establishment of the SAARC Regional Fund (SRF). The SAARC Audio Visual Exchange (SAVE) programme was also reviewed.

The committee also examined the budget of the SAARC Secretariat for 1994 and proposed budget estimates for 1995.

The programming committee submitted specific recommendations for consideration by the standing committee.

Warrants of arrest against Taslima, two others

From Our Correspondent
SYLHET, July 26: Chhatk Thana Magistrate, Mohammad Ali has issued warrant of arrests against writer Taslima Nasreen and two others in a case filed against them nine months ago.

Vice president of Chhatk Thana unit of Khalefah Majlish, Moulana Abdul Hafiz filed a case against Taslima, Mujibur Rahman Khoka and Samar Majumder — writer, publishers and printers of a book 'Jabo Na Keno Jabo' — on charge of hurting the religious sentiments of the people and threatening the sovereignty of Bangladesh on November 1, 1993.

4 killed in Ctg

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and APSU have blamed each other for the incident and called half-day hartal here Thursday.

Police picked up 18 persons from the spot.

Earlier, several hundred APSU supporters at a rally at Bipani Bitan crossing have demanded trial of Golam Azam and other 'war criminals'.

The rally presided over by Mofizur Rahman, president of Chhatra League city unit, decided that APSU supporters would march to Lalidighi maidar to hold its scheduled meeting simultaneously, but they could not reach there as they were intercepted by police.

Immediately after the police intervention, the attack with bombs and gunfire started.

It lasted one hour and a half till the Jamaat meeting ended at 6.30 pm.

The APSU had earlier called a dawn to dusk hartal here today but it was not a success except in the Bipani Bitan area. Life was as usual in all other areas of the city despite a tense situation. Vehicles plied and shops and offices remained open.

In a joint statement in Dhaka, Jamaat leaders Abbas Ali Khan and Matlur Rahman Nizami, condemned the 'attack' on the public meeting of Jamaat in Chittagong in which, they claimed, two Jamaat workers and one Shibir worker were killed. They demanded immediate arrest of the attackers.

Jamaat has also decided to hold a protest rally Wednesday in the capital near the Baitul Mukarram Mosque at 5.30 pm and observe a prayer day in Chittagong on Friday.

Russian troops to leave Estonia by Aug 31

MOSCOW, July 26: The presidents of Russia and Estonia signed an agreement Tuesday calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops from the Baltic republic by August 31. President Boris Yeltsin told the ITAR-Tass news agency, reports AP.

Yeltsin and Estonian President Lennart Meri also agreed at a Kremlin meeting on social guarantees for Russian military pensioners equal to those given Estonian citizens, the report said.

The troop withdrawal and social guarantees were the key sticking points in relations between the two former Soviet republics. Estonia was the only one of the three former Baltic republics that had not reached agreement with Russia on removing the ex-Soviet troops.

Yeltsin called the negotiations 'rather difficult.' ITAR-

Dr Kamal

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committee will inform the people of its proceedings over radio and television. All actions of the body will be aimed at making Parliament meaningful.

Asked if the proposed committee will induct MPs from the Jatiya Party and Jamaat, Dr Kamal evaded a direct answer. "The government and the Opposition will decide it."

In a written statement, he said the country was heading towards a complex political crisis in the wake of aggressive activities of communal and fundamentalist forces and the continued boycott of Parliament.

Gano Forum, said the party president, believes that there is no alternative to democracy and parliamentary system of government.

Asked if he demands immediate resignation of the government for "protecting Golam Azam's meeting" by the BDR and police in Chittagong, Dr Kamal said the "role of government in very condemnable." He also questioned the role of pro-liberation parties on the issue.

The press conference was also attended by Pankaj Bhat-tacharya, Zahurul Islam and M Shamsuddoha MP.

Attackers of NGOs

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the government leaders to send a 'powerful message' in support of NGO activities.

The participants at the meeting included Home Secretary Azimuddin Ahmed, Secretary at the Prime Minister's Secretariat Dr. Kamal Siddiqui, Director General of the NGO Affairs Bureau, Managing Director of Grameen Bank Prof Md Yunus, SM AL-Hussaini of Proshikha and Khushi Kabir, chairperson of ADAB.

The NGO representatives at the meeting agreed that the incidents of attacks on NGOs have spread across the country during the past few months while the earlier incidents mostly remained localised.

They added that the attacks are a "well-orchestrated and politically motivated campaign" designed to sabotage the development process.

Earlier, opposition to NGO activities remained localised but now the attacks are being instigated at a national level and that is what concerns us," Prof Yunus said.

SM AL-Hussaini pointed out that the attacks were being instigated by vested quarters whose influence was being eroded by the increased consciousness and empowerment of the poor and women in the rural areas.

The main problem, Dr Kamal Siddiqui said, is that a conservative section of the rural society is refusing to accept the independence of women through credit empowerment and female education. "The attacks are a last ditch effort of this dying class which exploits women."

The Prime Minister's office

Body to probe Faridpur incident

FARIDPUR, July 26: The government has formed a three member committee today to probe into the Sunday's incident at Faridpur General Hospital by some students of the Rajendra University College, reports UNB.

The enquiry committee headed by ADC (general) Ali Akbar Chowdhury, will submit its report within the next 15 days. Other members of the committee are: Abdus Sattar, a first class magistrate, Ruhul Amin, ASP (Sadar Circle).

On Sunday, some students of the Rajendra College, ransacked the Faridpur General Hospital and residences of the Civil Surgeon, Resident Medical Officer and some other medical officers.

The students waged the attack at the death of Nirod Biswas, a teacher of college, who was admitted there when he became seriously sick on Sunday.

Blasphemy law

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sented the key-note speech at the seminar.

Dwelling on the subject of blasphemy law, Barrister Ish-tiaq said, it was a European concept of the middle ages.

The demand for such a law is a conspiracy against the Constitution and the independence of the country and also against the people who had fought for Bangladesh. Barrister Ish-tiaq said adding an identified quarter was raising the demand for blasphemy law.

He, however, said it was not an issue or subject related to law or religion but a political one.

"So it has to be faced politically," Ish-tiaq added.

He spoke of the need for unity to save the country from present volatile situation.

Justice KM Sobhan in his speech said the blasphemy law is unconstitutional.

The major political parties — BNP, Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party — are involved in political game, Justice Sobhan alleged and added the Jamaat and the Jatiya Party were winning in this game.

He urged the people to resist the fundamentalists socially and politically.

Ali Zaker, a noted theatre personality, underlined the need for organising the people for resisting the communal forces.

Mamunur Rashid criticized the political parties supporting the demand for enactment of blasphemy law.

Golam Azam

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for a consensus among the leaders of all political parties to consolidate democracy and ensure development of the country. "Jamaat wants to establish the rule of Holy Quran and Sunnah to bring about economic emancipation of the people," he added.

Presided over by Principal Moulana Abu Taher, Ameer of city Jamaat, the meeting was also addressed by other party leaders.

The resolution demanded resignation of what it said the corrupt, terrorist and vote-bait BNP government for restoration of the values of liberation war, trial of the killers of 1971 and 75, and ensuring people's right to vote and food.

The ALCWC called for fixing the official purchase price of jute at Tk 500 per maund against the existing Tk. 250.

The Midnight File

Damascus silent on Hussein-Rabin accord

DAMASCUS, July 26: Syria's government remained mum Tuesday after Jordan and Israel declared an end to war, but in a break with tradition, Syrians were allowed to watch it on TV. Syria's state-controlled television departed from its long-standing ban on showing Israeli leaders and broadcast Monday's White House ceremony live, including Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's speeches in English and Hebrew, reports AP.

KLM to start flight

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Netherlands keen to develop trade links with Bangladesh and expressed his hope that with the opening of the KLM flights the trade links between the two countries would become stronger.

The 8 to 10 per cent annual growth in passenger traffic has led the two government and the two national carriers — KLM and Biman — to open talks in these regard. Dutch Ambassador H Gajentaan played a key role in signing a liberal bilateral agreement with the Bangladesh government and Biman enabling KLM to start the flights.

The KLM is currently the 8th largest carrier in the world. Its cooperation with Northwest Airlines, however, makes it the third largest airlines in the world serving over 380 destinations in 81 countries.

Steller said, the KLM had been active in Bangladesh since 1960 when it opened its first sales office. Although it remained as an 'off-line' carrier, the airline was committed to this market and had developed ties with Biman Bangladesh Airlines resulting in commercial and technical cooperation. Biman has been

operating to Amsterdam, KLM's home base, since 1978 and is currently operating two weekly flights there.

The KLM, which has an annual turnover of about US 5 billion dollars will also expand its present office in Dhaka and open sales offices in Chittagong and Sylhet.

"We have a long-term vision, unlike other airlines who seek immediate profit. We come to stay. We shall not only help trade links between the two countries but with the help of the Bangladesh government, we shall promote tourism here too in the future," Steller pointed out.

He also expressed his hope that the KLM-Biman cooperation would help improve further the automation of Zia International Airport and the Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

Railway

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But, according to relevant sources, the process of settlement of the cases — still remains too slow. In a recent high-level committee meeting, 209 cases of West Zone were taken up for consideration. Of those 50 were discussed while only 14 were settled. Similarly, in another meeting for East Zone, 239 cases were placed of which only 31 could be settled.

Observers maintain that more committees or task forces having special powers should be constituted to clear the outstanding audit cases. "Immediate settlement of outstanding audit cases is essential for better functioning of the Railway," said an expert.

As regards the cases of pre-liberation period, the Railway authorities say it is really difficult to settle these old issues as necessary documents and records were not available.

"Even, in many cases, persons involved were missing or dead, but the cases exist," they said mentioning that a case of only Taka 117 recorded in 1957 still remains in the list as unsettled.

The Public Accounts Committee, at a meeting in fiscal 1978-79, advised the government to take a lenient view about the cases of pre-liberation period. No steps were, however, taken in this regard.

The committee, at another meeting in 1990, expressed the view that the rules of business regarding the Railway should be reviewed for bringing about more discipline in the sector.

Students rally

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Our DMCH Correspondent says, student leader Rupom and a pedestrian Abu Alim, 55, were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The Chhatra Samaj claimed that six other students — Juli, Koli, Ayon, Kafi, Nazrul and Farhad — were also injured in the incident.

Earlier, a group of students damaged a number of vehicles around the Press Club area.

The student leaders at the protest rally alleged that the administration in Chittagong was backing the Jamaat-Shibir activists.

The rally was addressed by Belal Chowdhury and Abdullah Quayum.

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নতুন শিল্প উদ্যোক্তাদের জন্যে ক্রেডিট গ্যারান্টি স্কীম

বল্ল মূলধনের অধিকারী প্রতিশ্রুতিশীল এবং সর্বাধিকায়ন নতুন উদ্যোক্তাদের ক্ষুদ্র শিল্প এবং কৃষি ভিত্তিক শিল্প (বিশেষ করে গবাদি পশু, হাঁস মুরগি ও মৎস্য খামার) স্থাপনের জন্যে ক্রেডিট গ্যারান্টি স্কীমের আওতায় ঋণদান কর্মসূচী চালু করা হয়েছে।

আগ্রহী উদ্যোক্তাদের মাঝে যারা সহায়ক জামানতের অভাবে ব্যাংক ঋণ সুবিধা গ্রহণ করতে পারছেন না, এই স্কীমের মাধ্যমে তারা সহজেই ঋণ গ্রহণ করতে পারেন।

ক্রেডিট গ্যারান্টি স্কীমের আওতায় ঋণ গ্রহণের প্রধান প্রধান শর্তাবলী হলোঃ

- * শুধুমাত্র নতুন উদ্যোক্তাবৃন্দ এই কর্মসূচীর মাধ্যমে ঋণ নিতে পারবেন।
- * উদ্যোক্তার বিনিয়োগকৃত অর্থের সমপরিমাণ অর্থ ব্যাংক জামানত বা গ্যারান্টি হাড়াই বিনিয়োগ করবে।
- * উদ্যোক্তা যে পরিমাণ অর্থ বিনিয়োগ করবেন তার দ্বিগুণ অর্থের (সর্বোচ্চ পঁচিশ লক্ষ টাকা) গ্যারান্টি প্রদান করবে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, যার বিপরীতে সোনালী ব্যাংক সমপরিমাণ অর্থ ঋণ দেবে।

কৃষি ভিত্তিক শিল্প এবং ক্ষুদ্র শিল্প স্থাপনে আগ্রহী নতুন উদ্যোক্তাবৃন্দ ঋণ সুবিধা গ্রহণের জন্যে সোনালী ব্যাংকের বিভিন্ন জেলার শিল্প ঋণ বিতরণকারী শাখাসমূহে আবেদন করতে পারেন। বিস্তারিত তথ্যের জন্যে যে কোন উদ্যোক্তা সোনালী ব্যাংকের নিকটবর্তী রিজিওনাল অফিস কিংবা প্রিন্সিপাল অফিসে যোগাযোগ করতে পারেন।

