

Japanese boat purchase case Ershad defied expert opinion: Witness

A senior civil servant yesterday told the Special Judge's court trying to depose president Hussain Muhammad Ershad in the Japanese relief boat purchase scandal that because of the directives of the former ruler, expert opinion on the purchase of boats was ignored, reports BSS.

Home Secretary Azmuddin Ahmed, testifying before the court of Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge, Dhaka Mrs Zinat Ara, said that Ershad had directed that all boats be of fibre-glass and be procured from Japan.

Japan provided 2.5 billion yen to procure relief boats in the aftermath of the unprecedented floods in Bangladesh in August-September, 1988.

Ahmed, who was the Relief Secretary from March to November, 1989 when the boats were purchased, is the sixth prosecution witness in this Special Case Number 19 of 1993, better known as the Japanese Relief Boat Case.

Ershad and a Japanese national stand indicted. The prosecution charges that Ershad, by misusing his official position, caused a loss to the state exchequer to the tune of Taka 33 crore.

A technical committee set up by the authorities for the procurement of the boats had recommended steel-body craft in view of the physical conditions of the country. The rules also stipulated that the boats would have to be procured from countries other than Bangladesh and the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development).

PW-6 Azmuddin Ahmed was also a member of the committee constituted for the procurement of boats in consultation with relevant ministries.

"All boats will be of fibre-glass and be procured urgently," was the Directive of Ershad, written on a small piece of paper under his signature. Ahmed testified yesterday.

When asked by the judge whether the witness is acquainted with the handwriting of the former ruler, Ahmed nodded and replied, "Yes."

At this stage Ershad, who has 400 lawyers for solution to crisis thru' talks

Over four hundred lawyers belonging to Supreme Court Bar and Dhaka Bar associations have called for a solution to the present political impasse through dialogue, reports BSS. They also demanded holding of the next general elections after the completion of the tenure of the present Parliament.

In a joint statement here yesterday, they rejected the contention of some lawyers regarding the validity of the Jatiya Sangsad and the cabinet after the resignation of the Opposition members.

Destruction of Shah Khurram College: 4 held

From Staff Correspondent SYLHET, Jan 8: Four people were arrested for their alleged involvement in the destruction of Shah Khurram College in Tukur Bazar area under Sadar thana.

All the arrested persons are day labourers. The 120-foot tin-shed structure and a under-construction building were razed to the ground by a gang of miscreants Friday midnight.

A case has been filed against 40 people with the Kotwali police.

PM's public meeting

From Page 1 Col 3 eriment spent such a huge sum for Chittagong, she said.

Making a dig at the Awami League but without naming, Begum Zia said they forged an alliance with the autocratic forces in their desperate bid for power.

She pointed out that all the political parties in Parliament had adopted the 12th Amendment of the Constitution to run the country with the elected representatives of the people at every level.

An elected government that is accountable to Parliament cannot be removed by any unconstitutional means, she said.

Refuting the Opposition allegation that fair election is not possible under the BNP government, Begum Zia said elections of union parishad, pourashava and city corporations as well as many by-elections of Parliament were conducted freely and fairly under her government.

Although in power, the ruling party candidates suffered defeat in the city corporation polls in Chittagong and



Elvis Presley impersonator Fred Wolfe of Detroit (C) talks with sisters Lyn (L) and Cheryl Van Swol of Chicago Saturday prior to an Elvis impersonator contest in Memphis, Tennessee, USA. A celebration of the late singer's 60th birthday was held yesterday at Presley's Graceland mansion. — AFP photo

OIC calls on Moscow 'Stop indiscriminate use of force in Chechnya'

DEHAJ, Jan 8: Fifty-one Muslim states grouped under the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) called on Moscow today to end its attacks on the breakaway republic of Chechnya, reports Reuters.

An OIC statement accused Russia of breaking international law by indiscriminate use of force against civilian centres.

The OIC Secretary General urged the government of the Russian Federation to reconsider its position, end the military offensive and create conditions conducive to the opening of a serious dialogue with the Chechen leadership, it said.

The OIC also urged the United Nations to help find a peaceful solution to the conflict in the mainly Muslim republic.

Trying new tactics in their nine-day assault, Russian forces systematically pounded central Grozny with rockets and mortars today trying to scatter the Chechen defenders and make room for infantry, AP from Grozny said.

But the effort seemed only partially successful against outnumbered but spirited defenders, who have been able to sneak around the Russians to counter-attack from behind.

Russian troops were positioned in a rough arc in the city running from northwest to northeast of the prized presidential palace, in central Freedom Square.

The barren, multi-story building has taken several direct hits and has been gutted by fire on its top floors, but rebels still held the palace.

A lone helicopter at one point hovered over four large plumes of black smoke at the Lenin oil refinery, burning in the northwest of the city since the invasion began.

Chechen witnesses said the factory complex had been rocketed by helicopter gunships early in the morning. They also reported one bombing raid in the morning.

Akheri Munajat today

From Page 1 Col 8 light drizzle caused much inconvenience for the devotees, specially those staying under the open sky. Many of them faced difficulties in cooking their food because of the rain and the biting cold.

All inter city trains, excepting the Mahanagar, will stop at the Tongi stations for two minutes to enable devotees to go to the Ijtima venue. The BRTC and the private bus owners' associations have also arranged special services for the pilgrims.

UNB adds: The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has advised vehicles headed for the Ijtima tomorrow to park at fields adjoining Jasimuddin Sarak at Uttara Sectors 3, 6 and 9, the Rabindrasharani, Haji Camp field and open spaces at Sectors 11, 12 and 13.

All vehicles on the Mohakhali-Joydevpur route have been asked to use alternate routes via Mirpur-Gabtal-Savar-Nabinagar-Kaliakoir from 6:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Meanwhile, police arrested 26 pick-pockets in two days from the Ijtima site.

Today's cold conditions and

Zahir murder

From Page 1 Col 5 said that he was present on the scene when the young man fatally shot Zahir.

As the killer was fleeing, Hossain said, he cried for help and some people from the Kalabagan playground chased after him and his accomplice, grabbing one of them with a revolver in his possession from near the Magdonals' Chinese restaurant.

Humayun Zahir, a well-known businessman, was murdered on April 8, 1993. An Awami League MP — Akhtaruzzaman Babu — has been accused of the murder. Babu has been absconding after jumping bail.

Two witnesses have been examined so far. Alhaj Zahurul Haq, father-in-law of the victim, was examined on October 9 last year.

Ctg comes under digital phone network

CHITTAGONG, Jan 8: The country's commercial capital, Chittagong, was brought under modern telecommunication network today when Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurated the 22,000-line digital telephone exchange here, reports BSS.

The opening of the 22,000-line digital telephone exchange at Nandankanon here is the first phase of the 30,000-line digital project.

The rest 8,000 lines of the project will be installed by next June.

The Prime Minister inaugurated the new digital telephone exchange by talking to Post and Telecommunications Minister Tariqul Islam, here.

Begum Zia also talked to Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdulla Al Noman. The Prime Minister congratulated the residents of the port city on the occasion of bringing the country's port city under the digital telephone network.

She said the introduction of modern telecommunication system would help all, particularly the businessmen. It would, she said, facilitate the trade and business activities in the port city as well as in the whole country.

The French government financed Taka 108.07 crore in the Taka 235.51 crore project while the rest was funded by the Bangladesh government.

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Gas well

From Page 1 Col 2 went into operation formally on September 24 in 1991.

She said it is undeniable that energy like gas plays a substantial role in the overall development of the country and thus the government has given due emphasis on finding newer sources of energy.

In the meantime, Begum Zia said, the work on the Baropukuria coal-mine had started. The government has also signed agreement with foreign companies for spotting new oil and gas fields and their extraction.

"It is my firm belief that there are adequate reserves of gas and mineral resources in the country. We have to find out the deposits for using in socio-economic development of the nation," she told the function.

The Prime Minister said the government had undertaken two projects to meet the growing demand of gas for industrialisation and socio-economic development.

On completion of the projects, she said, ten new gas wells will be supplying gas.

Speaker

From Page 1 Col 7 The Speaker said yesterday that the language of the concerned clauses of the Constitution relating to resignation of MPs is slightly different in the English and Bengali versions. Same is the case with regard to the language in the parliamentary rules of procedure.

He said he had no knowledge about any fresh move for talks between the ruling party and the Opposition to defuse the crisis created following the Opposition action.

The Speaker said that there was no time limit in the Constitution for him to give a decision on the resignation of an MP.

"But it is unfair to delay a decision on such a delicate issue," he added.

He confirmed that the resignations if accepted, would become effective from the date the Opposition members submitted those to him.

The Speaker also said that formal "submission" of a resignation and the mere act of "receiving" one by the Speaker is not quite the same thing.

Hurd

From Page 1 Col 7 main in our view the right way to make progress.

A Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman today rejected Hurd's idea of a political process under Indian rule.

"This position is at variance with history, law and the reality in Kashmir," the spokesman said.

Quoted by the official APP news agency, he said the so-called Simla Agreement, signed after the 1971 India-Pakistan war, envisaged a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute rather than a restoration of normality.

The Midnight File

Al Gore to visit Egypt in Mar

CAIRO, Jan 8: US Vice President Al Gore is to visit Egypt in March, US Defence Secretary William Perry announced today at the end of a 36-hour visit here. "This initiative aims to promote economic growth in jobs creation," Perry told the Egyptian-US Chamber of Commerce before travelling to Israel, reports AFP.

Iraq welcomes French decision

BAGHDAD, Jan 8: Iraq today welcomed a French decision to establish a diplomatic mission in Baghdad, but lambasted the US for criticising the French move. State-run newspapers heaped praise on France and scorn on Washington. They said the US had pursued a policy of arrogance towards Iraq, reports Reuter.

Perry warns of nuclear threat to Middle East

Jerusalem, Jan 8: US Defence Secretary William Perry brought a stark warning to the Middle East on Sunday: curb the spread of atomic weapons or face nuclear blackmail by rogue nations or terrorists, reports AP.

Early on Sunday in Cairo, Perry stressed the nuclear threat.

Noorjahan murder

From Page 1 Col 8 cused persons, including the victim's husband, after observing that the police investigations were not conducted properly for mysterious reasons.

A petition submitted before the High Court by the Bangladesh Mahila Parishad said the learned sessions judge did not pass any order for fresh investigation.

Noorjahan, wife of one Torab Ali of village Damuria under Faridpur district, was burnt alive at her residence on May 6, 1993. The murder got wide media coverage.

According to the Mahila Parishad petition, submitted by its vice-president Beila Nabi, the victim's husband Torab Ali went into hiding from day of the gruesome murder and later upon his arrest, reportedly confessed to the police twice, that he had committed the murder.

Despite his confessional statement, Torab Ali was not even made an accused of the case for reasons unknown, the petitioner added.

Following the incident Noorjahan's brother, filed a case against one Farid and six others. However, strangely enough, Torab's name was not mentioned in that first information report.

Barrister Amirul Islam, appearing on behalf of the petitioner, submitted before the court that the offender should not escape the long arm of the law.

He was assisted by senior Advocate Tabarak Hussain, Barrister Tanya Amir and Advocate Shirin Ahmed Chowdhury.

Final warning

From Page 1 Col 4 industrial project which lacks adequate industrial waste treatment facilities.

Yet, new mills and factories came up without such facilities and the number of these industries almost doubled since 1990s.

Meanwhile, the newly-established DOE, which is under the environment Ministry, could not take action against these industries because majority of them belonged to the government, sector corporations or the autonomous bodies, one source said.

The other problem was that there was no law that allowed the DOE to take legal action against the environment polluters.

A National Environment Policy, which was prepared recently and tabled for approval of Parliament, was yet to be passed because of the recent political crisis, sources concerned pointed out.

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90 Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PARR: 500092-4. Commercial: 500091 (Direct). Fax No: 88-02-863035. GPO Box No. 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA