

### Japanese boat purchase case Ershad's minister Matin testifies in court

A former home minister, who served deposed president Hussain Muhammad Ershad, appeared in a special judge's court yesterday to testify against his one-time boss in a corruption case involving the purchase of relief and rescue boats from Japan, reports BSS.

Prof M A Matin, former deputy prime minister (DPM), who held the Home, Health and Youth portfolios at different times was one of the three prosecution witnesses who made their deposition yesterday.

Prof Matin is also one of three former ministers under Ershad named as witnesses in the Special Case No 19 of 1993, better known as the Japanese Relief Boat Case.

Ershad and K Inoyama, a Japanese national, are the two accused in the case. The trial started without Inoyama, an employee of the Marubeni Corporation, who has been hiding.

Ershad is charged with abusing his official position in procuring the boats under a 2.5 billion Japanese yen grant, thereby causing the state to suffer financial loss to the tune of Taka 33 crore.

The depositions of three witnesses over, Zinat Ara, Additional and Sessions Judge (first court), Dhaka and Special Judge adjourned the trial till January 25.

Prof Matin (PW-7) was the convenor of the cabinet sub-committee on purchase from 1986 till 13th August 1989.

PW-7 testified that he was present in the committee meeting on June 21, 1989 which dwelt on matters relating to the purchase of boats. He identified the proceedings of the meeting and affirmed that a recommendation was sent to the then head of state (Ershad) after detailed discussions.

Matin said the meetings proceedings mention the directives of the president and the specifications of the boats. The committee suggested that the president's directive be

carried out immediately he said, and added that the committee later sent its recommendation to Ershad. Ershad approved the proposal of the committee and put his signature thereon, which Prof Matin identified.

During cross-examination, Matin admitted that there was an apprehension of a flood in 1989 similar to that of the previous year and that the cabinet sub-committee on purchase received a recommendation from the Relief Ministry to purchase the boats. He also said that it was the directive of the president that the boats be purchased immediately.

The two other witnesses who made their depositions included a deputy chief in the Economic Relations Division of the Finance Ministry and a police official.

Divisional special PP Ashraf Ahmed assisted Razzak Khan.

### 10 hurt as rivals clash in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Jan 18: At least ten persons were injured in a clash between two rival groups at the Station Road of South Surma area of Sylhet at about 8:15 pm today over the municipal elections scheduled to be held on January 22.

The people of South Surma, which had been included in the Pourashava for the first time this year, are divided over joining the pourashava. A good number of people are campaigning against the election while others are in favour of the polls. A number of candidates have withdrawn their candidatures while the camps of some candidates were also attacked by the angry people.

The people of South Surma boycotting the polls have also called a 48-hour hartal on January 21 and January 22.

### NSC lottery

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while State Minister for Sports and Youth Sadek Hossain the special guest.

NSC's Sports Development Fund president and Water Resources Secretary Mohammad Nazrul Islam chaired the function where a large number of people were present to witness the draw.

Fourth prize winning numbers are:

Ja 0080365 Ga 0463382 Ga 0424265 Uma 0053743 Ka 0428716 Ka 0494093 Ja 0135883 Uma 0132870

Fifth Prize winning numbers are:

Csa 0187710 Ka 0328533 Uma 0107269 Ka 0431309 Ka 0179787 Kha 0448139 Csa 0193790 Ja 0210085 Ga 0415345 Ka 0452102 Cha 0057011 Cha 0452574 Ja 0110392 Ga 0206045

The NSC also announced the winning numbers for other prizes of the lottery.

Distribution of prizes will begin from January 28 on the basis of written claims to the NSC.

### Zia's birthday

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National and party flags will be hoisted at the BNP's central office and all party offices throughout the country.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will place wreaths and offer *jaucha* at the mazar of her husband at 9 am. She will be followed by ministers, her party leaders, workers, supporters and followers.

The Prime Minister is also expected to attend a discussion meeting at Shilpakala Academy at 4 pm which will be followed by a musical soiree.

Beside, some recorded speeches of the late president will be played over loudspeakers from the party offices.

Meanwhile, a three-day fair styled 'Zia Mela' began at the Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

The Zia Shishu-Kishore Sangathan has organised a children's painting competition to mark the birth anniversary of the Shabeed president.

Paintings of 3,500 children from 17 countries are on display at the exhibition at the Shishu Academy which will remain open for all from 10 am to 5 pm everyday till tomorrow.

Begum Zia will attend the prize-giving ceremony of the competition tomorrow.

The Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, the Sramik Dal and the Chhatra Dal will separately organise discussions on January 20, 21 and 22.

The Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha (JASAS) will organise a cultural programme today and a *mela* and patriotic songs tomorrow at the Shilpakala Academy.

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar has requested all units of the BNP at district and thana levels to arrange processions, rallies, discussions and *midat mahfils* to mark the birth anniversary of the late leader.



A reception was hosted by A S Mahmud, Managing Director of Mediaworld Ltd, at his residence yesterday in honour of Prof Muhammad Yunus, founder of the world famous Grameen Bank, who was named The Daily Star Man-of-the-Year 1994. Photo shows (L-R) British High Commissioner Peter J Fowler, French Ambassador Jean-Michel Lacombe, A S Mahmud, US Ambassador David N Merrill, Prof Muhammad Yunus and Latifur Rahman, former president of the MCCI and Managing Director of Transcom Ltd. The reception was attended by eminent citizens, journalists, leaders of the business community and senior members of the diplomatic corps. — Star photo

### People fed up with hartals: Khaleda

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given the scope to come under the fold of nationalist politics. Asking her partymen to offset the Opposition's anti-government propaganda through gearing up organisational activities including rallies and meetings, the BNP chairperson advised them to face the Opposition's undemocratic, unconstitutional and disruptive activities politically.

"The people are," she said, "now fed up with the frequent calls for hartals, strikes and sieges since these sorts of activities hinder public life and multiply their sufferings."

The hartals and strikes, she said, were now losing their effectiveness since the development-oriented people did not want any more hartals and strikes. Rather they are inclined to do more work to further improve their lot," she added.

Referring to today's Opposition programme of a 'blockade' the Prime Minister said what the organisers do on the day of such a programme is to block the streets in some parts, causing inconvenience to the people.

Such disruptive programmes, she said, lacked public support since these cannot yield any benefits to the people.

Charging the Opposition MPs with not discharging their duties as entrusted by the people, the Prime Minister

said they would be liable to give proper explanation to the people why they were resigning from parliament before the end of its full-term.

Conducted by Mayor of Rajshahi Mizanur Rahman Minu, the day-long conference was attended by 4,322 delegates from different districts of Rajshahi division.

About 40 unions (thana and district level leaders of Rajshahi division discussed the organisational activities of their respective areas.

"It is now the responsibility of all," Begum Zia said, "to consolidate democracy."

She regretted that two political parties had joined hands with the autocrats to undo the democratic process and disrupt development.

The motive of these parties, the Prime Minister said, was to remove the elected government by any means.

The opposition parties, the Prime Minister said, were not behaving properly as they had earlier declared that they would not allow the BNP to remain in power and work even for a moment.

Blaming the opposition parties for not extending their cooperation to the government and behaving oddly, Begum Zia said that the BNP government had been going ahead with the people's support by facing all destructive activities of the Opposition.

The Opposition had thought, she said, that something would happen after December 28, the day the Opposition MPs submitted their resignations. But the Opposition's assumption did not come true because the people were opposed to all sorts of disruptive activities, she said.

Refuting the Opposition's contention that Parliament had lost its validity after their resignations, the Prime Minister said Parliament is totally valid with the elected representatives.

The Prime Minister also reiterated the government's stand that the country would be run as per the Constitution and the law of the land.

Referring to the various socio-economic development of the BNP government she said these would continue in future.

About the supply of fertilisers, she said, all steps had been taken so that the farmers could get fertilisers directly.

Unscrupulous fertiliser dealers, she said, would be brought to book if they try to create any artificial crisis and sell fertilisers at an exorbitant rate.

There is no shortage of fertiliser and its export has also been stopped," she added.

The government, the Prime Minister said, had also taken all steps to keep the prices of essentials including rice within the buying capacity of the people.

The three opposition parties also observed half-day hartals in the capital on January 2, 3 and 4 and throughout the country on December 29 after the en masse resignation of 147 Opposition MPs from parliament on December 28.

These parties are likely to announce fresh programmes during today's barricade programme.

The AL, the JP and the Jamaat yesterday evening brought out separate torch processions which paraded the city streets to drum up support for today's programme.

### 1-killed, 20 hurt as rival groups clash in N'ganj

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Jan 18: One youth was killed and 20 others were injured in an armed clash between two rival groups in the Bank Colony area of the town today.

The dead was identified as Jahangir, aged about 22, injured by bullet. Jahangir, an inhabitant of Khanpur area, died on the way to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Eyewitnesses said, the clash between the youths of Donchamber and Khanpur started at about 5:30 pm over the possession of a play ground at the Bank Colony under Fatullah thana.

The two groups used sawed off rifles, cocktails and other lethal weapons during the skirmishes which lasted about an hour.

Police from both Narayanganj and Fatullah Thanas rushed to the spot after the clash ended. The warring groups left the place and the injured were admitted to different clinics.

A tense situation was prevailing in the Bank colony.

### PDB punishments

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planations from 695 officials of 153 other supply units under the scheme's summary proceedings to punish them.

According to the sources, the persons called for explanation are additional chief engineers, superintendent engineers, executive engineers, assistant engineers, sub-assistant engineers and other officials of the same status including a large number of meter readers, meter inspectors and other employees.

### Barricade

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tras in different city areas, from separate rallies on January 4.

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The AL, the JP and the Jamaat yesterday evening brought out separate torch processions which paraded the city streets to drum up support for today's programme.

Meanwhile, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in a statement issued last night called upon the people to make today's barricade programme all over the country a success.

### Search still on

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the ruling party accepts the demand for such an advisory council and agrees to go for necessary constitutional amendments.

Another group wanted dissolution of Parliament and early elections under the president. These leaders believe this is possible without any constitutional amendment if both sides sign an agreement promising that the interim tenure of the President would be ratified by the next Parliament.

BNP Secretary General Abdus Salam Talukdar said last night that the negotiation process was still on but was yet to take any concrete shape.

AL leader Mohammad Nasim told The Daily Star that he had no knowledge of any negotiation with the ruling party.

Expressing his pessimism, Nasim said, "Things are getting complicated day by day."

### Fly-overs

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given the responsibility to implement this project on turnkey basis. The per metre cost was estimated earlier at Tk 8.50 lakh, while it has declined to Tk 6.51 in the proposed project of the Roads and Highways.

The proposed fly-overs would be 1547 metre in length and would have a 984-metre ramp and 2982-metre surface road. 80.71 per cent of total cost would go to physical construction.

According to the PCP, the construction would be completed with the use of existing manpower of the roads and highways and their vehicles will also be used for carrying construction materials.

The entire project would be implemented on 0.35 hectare land and there will be no need for appointing foreign consultants. About 50 lakh taka would, however, be needed per annum for the maintenance of the proposed fly-overs.

It may be mentioned that the Mahakhali intersection is one of the busiest areas of the city with some 25,000 vehicles running through its three inter-linking road while Maghbazar is an intersection of four roads without any island in the centre.

### The Midnight File

#### Algerian govt rejects 'peace offer'

ALGIERS, Jan 18: Algeria's government today rejected a "peace offer" made in Rome last week after talks between the religious and secular opposition on ending bloody Islamic insurgency and finding a political settlement. "The Rome contract is not the one. Algeria awaits," government spokesman Ahmed Attaf said in the first official reaction by the authorities. "As for the confusion of ideas this so-called contract is supposed to introduce, we reject them completely and in detail," reports AFP.

#### Yemen won't go to war over border dispute

SANAA, Jan 18: Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has pledged not to use force in a border dispute with Saudi Arabia, even if his country is attacked. "In any case, and even if aggression is committed against it, Yemen will not go to war," the official newspaper Al-Thawra quoted Saleh today as saying, reports Reuters.

### Quake toll now 3,021

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Downstown Kobe looks like, Godzilla went through it," said Kobe native John Lin, a 28-year-old physician raised in the United States.

Hundreds of aftershocks have rattled the region. Fear of more building collapses spurred many to spend the night in the open, huddled in blankets. More than 120,000 people sought shelter Tuesday night.

Police said there was no looting. The quake triggered hundreds of fires, many of them burning out of control into early Wednesday. By afternoon, the wind whipped flames had died — not so much from being extinguished as from burning themselves out.

White smoke rose from the rubble. One central area, stretching for miles has been turned to a giant gray-and-brown field with blackened, ruined structures poking through blackened.

Throughout the city, the sound of hissing could be heard as gas leaked from ruptured pipes. Although most of the fires had burned themselves out, the leaking gas still posed the threat of explosion or fire.

In Kobe's Suma District, 70,000 people were evacuated on Wednesday after gas leaked from cracked tanks at a nearby industrial area.

While the city centre was shattered, parts of Kobe suffered far less damage. At shelters, people blinked in the sooty daylight, waiting for food to be delivered. A few wandered the rubble, poking at still-smoking ruins of their former homes.

AFP adds from Tokyo: The Japanese cabinet adopted an

eight-point plan today to deal with the massive earthquake which ripped through western Japan on Tuesday.

The plan, adopted at an emergency meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, called on the government to mobilise all resources to rescue those still trapped in the rubble of buildings destroyed in the quake, officials said.

Other measures included securing medical supplies and personnel for emergency operations, along with the delivery of food, water, blankets

#### 2 Sarbahara Party leaders held

BARISAL, Jan 18: Galarchips thana police of Pataukhali district arrested two leaders of the out lawed Sarbahara Party from Gazaria Bazar yesterday. They are Sahidul Islam, 28, and Zakir Mahmud 30.

Four of the Sarbahara Party men were holding a secret meeting in a house in the Bazar when police swooped on them. Two of them escaped.

The arrested confessed to their involvement in various crimes.

#### HC issues rule

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on December 28. Advocate Islam submitted that the Speaker has no authority to give any ruling from his chamber. The unusual delay in processing the resignation letters was with malafide intention to frustrate the decision of the 147 MPs," he argued.

Advocate Islam also alleged that the Speaker was misusing the powers vested in him by delaying the process of the resignation letters for which holding of by-elections by the Election Commission within 90 days of resignation would be difficult.

The Election Commission will have to complete 11 formalities to hold elections in the vacant seats within 90 days — but the Speaker has already taken much of the EC's time," he submitted pointing out that the MPs who have resigned have no scope to withdraw the letters.

After issuing the rule, the bench ordered that the hearing on both the petitions would be held simultaneously after seven days.



Small-traders and vendors brought out a procession demanding an end to the politics of hartal in the city yesterday. — Star photo

### Quake's wake

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appeals from people looking for loved ones.

The messages ran for hours late into the night. "Mr Masao Yamashita of Koshien in Nishinomiya, Mr Juniya Yamashita of Shibuya Ward in Tokyo is worried about your safety. Please contact him," went a typical one.

The station couldn't say how many people, if any, were reunited by the service.

Because the quake knocked out many people telephone service and paralysed transport out of Kobe, the western city of 1.4 million that was hardest hit, many quake survivors had no way of reaching loved ones to say they were safe.

Some survivors left notes at the rubble of their homes and businesses in case family members or friends arrived looking for them.



The City Awami League brought out a torch procession yesterday evening to drum up support for today's Opposition programme of a road, rail and waterways barricade. — Star photo

### Small traders take to streets against hartals

From Page 1 Col 5

Hundreds of small traders and businessmen yesterday took to the streets of the capital demanding an end to politics of hartal and siege and a peaceful solution to the political crisis, reports BSS.

The traders, who paraded the city streets chanting anti-hartal slogans, belonged to the Old Dhaka Traders Association, Sadarghat Traders Association, Patuakhali Traders Association and Nayabazar Traders Association.

The procession started from Sadarghat and ended in front of the Janya Press Club.

Speakers said frequent observance of hartals and siege caused immense suffering to the traders, especially the small ones.

They said the protracted political impasse was hampering everyday business and for small businessmen this loss is irrecoverable. As a result, they said, of such "destructive" methods by the Opposition was damaging the national economy as a whole.

They urged the political leaders to find out peaceful way of settling political crisis but not to take the "destructive" path of hartal.

The businessmen were carrying banners which were inscribed with slogans like "Hartal and Siege Destroy National Economy — We are Against These," "We Want Peaceful Solution to the Political Crisis and We do not want Hartal, We Want Food, We Want Food."

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