

Farooq Sobhan made Foreign Secretary

The government has decided to appoint Farooq Sobhan, at present High Commissioner of Bangladesh to India, as Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an announcement of the ministry said yesterday, reports BSS.

Sobhan will succeed Mufleh R Osmany, who has been appointed High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Canada.

Osmany was appointed Foreign Secretary on December 19, 1993.

Born on September 17, 1940, Farooq Sobhan obtained his BA (Honours) from Dhaka University and an MA from Oxford.

He joined the diplomatic service in 1964 and was a member of the Bangladesh delegation to a large number of international conferences.

Sobhan was chairman of the Group of 77 at the UN in New York from October 1982 to October 1983.

Sobhan also served as deputy permanent representative to the United Nations in New York from 1981 to 1984.

In January 1991 Sobhan was elected chairman of the UN Commission on Transnational Corporations.

Sobhan was promoted to the rank of Secretary in 1992.

He was appointed high commissioner of Bangladesh to India in May 1992 with concurrent accreditation to Mauritius.

He is married and has two children.

Mufleh Osmany was appointed Foreign Secretary on December 19, 1993.

Born on February 6, 1940, Osmany joined the Civil Service of Pakistan in 1964 after graduating as a civil engineer in 1961.

He served in various capacities as a civil servant until 1975 when he was absorbed in the foreign service.

Osmany served as the chief of protocol, and Bangladesh ambassador to the erstwhile German Democratic Republic and Czechoslovakia and Iraq and permanent representative to the European office of the United Nations in Geneva.

Osmany is a life fellow of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, and a life member of the Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs.

He is married and his wife, Dr Shireen H Osmany, is an associate professor, Department of History, Dhaka University. They have two sons.

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Romana indicted for twin murder

Romana, the sole suspect in the Lalmita twin-murder case, was indicted yesterday.

The investigating officer — Humayun Kabir — of the Detective Branch (DB) prepared the charge-sheet against Romana and submitted it to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) yesterday, according to a DB source.

Nilufar Chowdhury, 50, a teacher of Home Economics College, and her young daughter Mahjabeen Chowdhury Shoma, a second year student of the Mymensingh Medical College, were hacked to death at their Lalmita residence in the city on October 2 last year.

House maid Romana was arrested from a remote village in Manikganj four days later.

Radar purchase case

liament. Rahman argued, he said that until and unless one is qualified to be an MP, he or she is disqualified to be a Vice President under the Constitution.

Therefore, the counsel said, all actions taken by Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed were "invalid, inoperative and not binding and also illegal and unconstitutional."

Interrupting the counsel during his submission, judge Salam commented that the court was not competent enough to dwell on the matter — the interpretation of the Constitution.

Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdur Razzak Khan also objected to Rahman's contention and said the present court was not to deal with lapses of the government as far as constitutional matters are concerned.

Continuing, the defence counsel said that the 11th amendment which gave the actions of Justice Shahabuddin confirmation, ratification and validation, itself speak of the illegality and unconstitutionality. Besides, he said, this was done by the present Parliament which is a creation of the said Acting President. If Justice Ahmed did not enjoy constitutional validity or lacked it, how then could a Parliament created by him give him or his actions validity and legality, the counsel questioned.

Rahman said Ershad's resignation as president, given to Justice Ahmed, was not covered by the Constitution and therefore was "invalid, ineffective and non-existent in the eye of law."

The counsel further said that the successor of Ershad, as per the scheme contained in the Constitution, has not entered upon the office of the President. Therefore, Ershad, as per the Constitution, continues to be the president and as such a criminal case against him is not maintainable, he submitted.

Referring to the relevant article of the Constitution, Mahbubur Rahman submitted that if turned down by the present court the matter would be taken up with the appropriate court for remedy.

He opined that the remedy on the issue lay in the obtaining of consent of the people through a referendum. The

referendum held was for the system of government and that was not "sufficient to cure the unconstitutionality," he said.

"Leading for his client's bail, Advocate Rahman said that Ershad's bail was rejected even though the three co-accused in the case were granted bail. Refusing bail to Ershad would be an act of discrimination, the counsel said.

PP Razzak Khan, opposing the bail, said the accused has been convicted and sentenced in three cases. For the present case, the public prosecutor said, there are documentary evidence pointing to the involvement of the accused who abused his official position to reject a French offer and ordered a deal with an American firm, thereby causing the state to suffer a loss to the tune of over 64 crore taka.

Being an elected president, Ershad ought to have prevented all malafide decisions, Khan said and added that the defence counsel's claim that Ershad was "still president" was "figment of the imagination."

The PP further said that Ershad is the principal accused in this case as the main person to have taken decision on the matter and, therefore cannot get bail.

Stranded Pakistanis demonstrate

Several hundred stranded Pakistanis demonstrated near the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) court in Dhaka yesterday as part of their 'court arrest' programme to press for early repatriation, reports UNB.

"We'll soon cross the international border to reach Pakistan if immediate arrangement is not made for our repatriation," said Nasim Khan, leader of the Stranded Pakistanis General Repatriation Committee (SPGRC).

Police intercepted them at English Road crossing in Nawabpur when they were proceeding towards the CMM court for court arrest.

A delegation led by Nasim Khan later met with CMM Shahabuddin Ahmed who said, "There is no legal provision for such arrest. Magistrate has nothing to do with the problem of the stranded Pakistanis," he added.

However, the bank data indicates that the country's performance lags behind that of other South Asian countries in a number of areas including the savings and investment rates and in current receipts as a share of GDP. While Bangladesh's fiscal indicators, low inflation rate, budget deficit, export growth and balance of payment situation, compares quite favourably with other countries in the region.

The country's gross domestic investment in 1993 stood at a low 13.3 per cent of the GDP while the savings rate was only 7.1 per cent compared to 24.1 and 23.8 per cent respectively in India, 19.8 and 9.7 per cent in Nepal, 20.7 and 14.8 per cent in Pakistan and 25.3 and 15.8 per cent in Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh's savings rate improved from a paltry 2.1 per cent in 1980 and 2.9 per cent in 1990 but the investment rate declined from the 14.9 per cent in 1980.

The World Bank data on sectoral growth shows that the country's agriculture sector growth rate declined from three per cent during 1980-90 to 1.9 per cent during 1990-93 while industrial growth increased from 4.8 to 6.3 per cent and the services sector growth declined from 6.5 to 4.9 per cent during the same period.



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia formally inaugurated the Jamuna Fertiliser Factory at Tarakandi in Jamalpur district yesterday. — PID photo

BFUJ demands formation of 5th wage board

A meeting of the Executive Committee of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) held yesterday at the Jatiya Press Club demanded immediate formation of the 5th wage board for the working journalists, a BFUJ press release said, reports BSS.

The meeting held with acting president of BFUJ Manzur Ahmed in the chair also demanded of the government to declare 50 per cent dearness allowance subject to formation of the wage board.

The meeting directed all units of the BFUJ to observe "Demand Day" on February 7 throughout the country.

ALWC repeats demand for fresh polls

The Awami League yesterday demanded immediate dissolution of Parliament and fresh elections within 90 days under a nonpartisan, caretaker government to resolve the present political crisis, reports UNB.

The demand came from the AL Working Committee meeting held with party president Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

"The present Parliament has no legitimacy after the resignation of the members representing 69 per cent votes of the people," the ALWC meeting observed in a resolution.

Blaming Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia for the staggering political tangle, the meeting alleged that the ruling party, in order to cling to power, was hatching heinous conspiracies and carrying out killings, atrocities, repression and filing false cases against those in the constitutional movement.

Citing the police action on Awami League leaders Begum Matia Chowdhury, MP, and Advocate Sahara Khatun, it observed there was no instance of such atrocities in the world.

Referring to the recent by-elections held in four constituencies, the meeting said the people had boycotted the elections. "Even 10 per cent of the people did not turn up at the polling centres to cast their votes," it observed.

It also blamed the government for rigging the by-elections, boycotted by the opposition.

About the January 31, 1994 Lalbagh massacre, the party resented that the assailants were still at large even a year after the incident. It demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

The Awami League also called upon the people to make the 48-hour countrywide hartal planned for March 12 and 13 a success to force the government to concede to the Opposition demand for early elections under a neutral caretaker government.

3 new Bills placed in JS

Three Bills were introduced in the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, reports BSS.

Two of the Bills — the Ansar Force Bill, 1995, and the Village Defence Party Bill, 1995, were introduced by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury, while the third — the Bangladesh Merchant Shipping Amendment Bill, 1995, was introduced by Shipping Minister MK Anwar.

Earlier, replying to a call attention notice, the Home Minister said the government would provide one pick-up van to each of the 460 police stations of the country in phases.

Hasina for US

who was also invited to attend the prayer, accompanied Hasina.

Sheikh Rehana, Salahuddin Yusuf, Amir Hossain Anu, Mayor Mohammad Hanif, Abul Hasan Chowdhury, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Moutaz Hossain, KM Jahangir, Abdul Mannan, SS Halder, Rahmat Ali and Prof Abdul Mannan saw her off at the airport.

9th nat'l poetry festival begins today

The 9th national poetry festival begins at the TSC of Dhaka University today. This year's slogan of the festival is 'People's right: Commitment of poetry.'

Begum Sofia Kamal will inaugurate the two-day festival at 10am. The National Poetry Council is organising the annual meet.

More than 500 poets from home and abroad are participating in the festival this year.

The programmes include seminars, recitations and prize distribution.

Businessman

was accompanying him.

Witnesses said, Mohiuddin was waylaid by a gang of youngsters wielding daggers and machetes, they hacked him to death on the spot. The killers also exploded a number of crackers to drive away the people.

Mohiuddin's wife escaped unhurt.

After the incident, police sent the body to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Lalbagh police was yet to arrest any of the suspects until midnight last night.

According to a police source, Mohiuddin was wanted in a number of criminal cases.

PM inaugurates Jamuna Fertiliser Factory

TARAKANDI (Jamalpur). Jan 31 Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia here today formally inaugurated Tk 1,262 crore Jamuna Fertiliser Factory saying this huge factory has already been making significant contribution in the economic development of the agrarian areas of the country, reports BSS.

Inaugurating the plant of 5.61 lakh metric-ton annual capacity to achieve the objectives of meeting the increasing demand for urea fertiliser within the country and also to produce exportable surplus, the Prime Minister underscored the need for maintaining the pace of development to help build a happy, prosperous and democratic Bangladesh.

Special body on CHT leaves for Agartala today

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed will leave Feni today by road for Agartala to arrange the repatriation of the remaining Chakma refugees from camps in the Indian province of Tripura, reports BSS.

Officials said that Oli, who is also the convenor of the Special Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts, will lead a three-member delegation during the two-day visit to Tripura.

The delegation will include Rashed Khan Menon, MP and Kaiparjan Chakma, MP, both members of the committee.

At Agartala, the capital of Tripura, Oli will have talks with Governor Ramesh Bhandari and Chief Minister Dharanath Dev to discuss early repatriation of the refugees.

Oli will visit four refugee camps at Sabrum and Amarapur in south Tripura district.

Snatcher held at a city bank

The guard and customers of a bank yesterday caught and handed a man who tried to snatch nearly Tk 100,000 from a Janata Bank branch at Dikusha, reports UNB.

The snatcher, Abdul Wahab alias Hannan, swooped on Ahmed Hossain, a client of the bank, who was counting money after withdrawing Tk 98,828 from the branch, police said.

"Just keep quiet," Hannan told Ahmed Hossain as he snatched the cash and tried to walk out of the bank. But Hossain raised a hue and cry that alerted the customers present as well as the guard who immediately got hold of the snatcher.

The daring snatching attempt occurred at peak business hour at about 11 am when the cash counter was crowded with customers.

US Energy Secy

apprised the US Energy Secretary of the government's liberalisation of power policies and of the decision to allow private sector investment in Bangladesh, particularly in the areas of energy exploration and power generation.

The proposed visit is expected to generate interest among US investors in wide-ranging areas of cooperation and economic collaboration.

Recent interests shown by US oil and gas exploration companies is also expected to receive a further boost among potential US investors.

World Bank praises Dhaka's performance

The country's current receipts as a share of GDP in 1993 stood at 11.4 per cent compared to 22.3 per cent in Bhutan, 22.9 per cent in India, 10.4 per cent in Nepal, 18 per cent in Pakistan and 19.5 per cent in Sri Lanka.

However, Bangladesh seemed to have been successful in restraining current expenditures to 8.8 per cent of the GDP in 1993 as against 17.8 per cent in Bhutan, 22.4 per cent in India, 8.3 per cent in Nepal, 19.7 per cent in Pakistan and 19.9 per cent in Sri Lanka.

The country also managed to curtail the overall deficit to 5.5 per cent of the GDP in 1993, down from 8.3 per cent in 1990, compared to a deficit of 14.4 per cent in Bhutan, 9.5 per cent in India, 11.9 per cent in Nepal, 8.0 per cent in Pakistan and 7.9 per cent in Sri Lanka.

However, the country's net external borrowing in 1993 was the second highest in the region at 5.2 per cent of the GDP behind Nepal's 6.2 per cent.

During the 1990-93 period the rate of inflation in Bangladesh was the lowest at an average of 5.1 per cent compared to 12.9 per cent in Bhutan, 10.7 per cent in India, 12.3 per cent in Nepal, 9.4 per cent in Pakistan and 14.2 per cent in Sri Lanka. And compared to an inflation rate of 1.8 per cent in 1994, India's was 10 per cent, Nepal's 8.9 per cent, Pakistan's 11.2 per cent and Sri Lanka had an inflation rate of 9.0 per cent.

Bangladesh also seems to have done reasonably well in increasing export earnings compared to other regional countries. The country's export growth during the 1990-93 period stood at 11.2 per cent, up from 7.4 per cent during 1980-90, compared to 5.1 per cent in India, 19.4 per cent in Nepal, 10.3 per cent in Pakistan and 12.3 per cent in Sri Lanka.

However, although the country's export earnings as a share of GDP increased from only 5.7 per cent in 1980 to 8.5 per cent in 1990 and 11.7 per cent in 1993, it compares unfavourably with Bhutan's 35.4 per cent in 1993, India's 11.3 per cent, Nepal's 19.6 per cent, Pakistan's 16.2 per cent and 33.4 per cent in Sri Lanka.

Bangladesh's imports as a share of GDP in 1993 stood at 17.9 per cent while Bhutan's was 54.9 per cent, India's 11.5 per cent, Nepal's 29.8 per cent, Pakistan's 22.4 per cent and it was 42.8 per cent in Sri Lanka.

All South Asian countries had a negative resource balance in 1993, the World Bank data shows. Bangladesh's resources balance in that year was (-6.3) per cent of the GDP, down from (-12.8) per cent in 1980, which was somewhat better compared to (-31.6) per cent in Bhutan, (-0.2) per cent in India, (-10.1) per cent in Nepal, (-8.7) per cent in Pakistan and (-9.4) per cent in Sri Lanka.

The regional countries also have a negative current account balance but that of Bangladesh seems to be on the lower side compared to those of others. In 1993, the country's current account balance stood at (-2.2) per cent of the GDP while Bhutan's was (-29.4) per cent, India's (-0.3) per cent, Nepal's (-8.7) per cent, Pakistan's (-7.1) per cent and Sri Lanka's stood at (-4.9) per cent.

Among the social indicators compared in the World Bank study, Bangladesh exactly matches the South Asian average for annual population growth rate at 2.3 per cent and the total fertility rate of four births per woman. However, the country's infant mortality rate at 91 deaths per 1000 live births in 1992, still remains higher than the regional average of 85.

The country's adult (15 years or older) literacy rate at 47 per cent is below the South Asian average of 59 per cent while in 1990 the primary school enrolment stood at 77 per cent compared to the regional average of 89 per cent.

The poverty level in the country also compares unfavourably with the rest of the region, the World Bank study points out. The proportion of poor in the total population in the early 1990s stood at 50 per cent, slightly lower than the 52 per cent in the mid-80s, compared to 39 per cent in India, 31 per cent in Pakistan and 23 per cent in Sri Lanka.

The Midnight File

Egypt rejects US interference in its foreign policy

CAIRO, Jan 31: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said on Monday his country disagreed with the United States on the subject of Libya and rejected all American interference in its foreign policy. Mubarak, speaking to university students, said these differences of opinion must not cast a negative shadow on our relations, reports AFP.

BNP MPs divided in JS

From Page 1 Col 4

leges while keeping another similar notice, from Abu Yousuf Mohammad Khalilur Rahman, pending with him.

Moni's notice under sec 147 of the ROP was enlisted and incorporated in the order of the day on Monday.

But since Nurul Islam Moni was not present at the time the matter was scheduled to be discussed, Speaker Razzak Ali brought the pending notice of Khalilur Rahman for discussion.

Immediately after Khalilur Rahman placed his proposal Abdur Rob Chowdhury raised his objection, citing a clause of the ROP.

But Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain supported Khalilur Rahman and some other MPs seconded Rahman to formally table his notice.

Khalilur Rahman had two options when the notice was seconded by the required number of MPs, he could have either sought a discussion or propose it to be sent to the standing committee. As the House was already divided over the issue, Khalilur Rahman requested the Speaker to send it to the standing committee.

When Nurul Islam Moni's notice came up for discussion, the Minister for Law and Justice Mirza Golam Hafiz objected to it, saying it would be a violation of Sec 148 (8) of the ROP. He also cited a case and ruling of an Indian Court regarding a conflict between the judiciary and the legislature.

On Monday the Speaker adjourned the House, keeping the discussion inconclusive. He said that the matter would come up again after he had studied the relevant clauses.

But Razzak Ali did not chair the yesterday's session. Interestingly, Nurul Islam

Moni's notice was mentioned in the order of the day yesterday.

Sources close to the Speaker said that Razzak Ali was consulting the matter with some of the senior ruling party lawmakers. During the session yesterday, the Speaker was in his Parliament office where a number of party law-makers held meetings with him. The office area was restricted for journalists and other visitors.

Most of the ranking leaders, including Deputy Leader of the House, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury, Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Mia and Abdus Salam Talukder were present in the House yesterday.

A Rob Chowdhury and Barrister Nazmul Huda, who also took part in Monday's discussions, were not present yesterday.

BNP sources said that the decision of such a discussion was taken in a high-level meeting with Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Tejjagoa office on Sunday. But the decision was not conveyed to all the MPs, which created Monday's situation.

When contacted over telephone, Khalilur Rahman also confirmed that he had acted in accordance with the signal of his Chief Whip.

Moni also claimed that the party decision was that the matter should be discussed in the House.

A BNP source said neither the Law Minister nor Rob Chowdhury was aware about the decision, thus creating the whole problem. But some other sources hinted that the situation was created deliberately by a 'certain quarter'. The source did not elaborate.

Most of the leaders are now screaming that the matter should have been discussed in the parliamentary party before being brought up in the House.

Some leaders said the incident exposed a degree of 'weakness and indiscipline' in the party while others pleaded that the BNP had exercised due democratic practice within the party.

Senior BNP leaders hinted that the party may change its decision and may not bring the matter for further discussion. The policy-makers are examining relevant rules and planning for an honourable way out of the situation.

Textbooks

From Page 1 Col 7

February.

Md Harun of Shahitya Academy, a publishing house at Bangla Bazar, the hub of the country's book trade, told The Daily Star that book-sellers from various districts of the country were coming everyday to Dhaka for badly needed buying textbooks.

"They collect their tokens from the samity and come to us for books at a 22.50 per cent discount."

However, some retailers alleged that a few dishonest wholesalers were making extra profit out of the current crisis by stocking books.

Abdul Momen, a guardian, said he had managed to buy at a higher price a complete set of books for his ward reading in Class IX.

Disclosing the secret he said, "I bought some new books from the shops and then went to the roadside sellers for other subjects."

The owner of a printing press at Piyaridas Road in old Dhaka, said they had a difficult time for the last couple of weeks as press workers had to work round-the-clock to cover up the delay caused due to late supply of newsprint.

Unlike other years, most of the textbooks could not be published by December as the KMM failed to supply the paper on time.

Airbuses

From Page 1 Col 5

Michel Lacombe were present on the occasion.

Under the agreement, the newly-acquired airbuses will be delivered to Biman in May and August next year.

Both Biman and the Airbus Industrie has signed a memorandum of understanding on January 12 last for procurement of two airbuses.

Shahabuddin

From Page 1 Col 5

the winners of the table tennis and badminton tournaments at the bar premises.

Later, Justice Shahabuddin and judges of the Supreme Court attended a tea-party arranged by the association.

Habibur Rahman

From Page 1 Col 5

hman was a teacher of history and also law at the Dhaka and Rajshahi Universities.

He served as Assistant Advocate General for sometime in 1969 and was elected a vice-president of the High Court Bar Association in 1972. He became a member of the Bangladesh Bar Council the same year.

He was elevated to the Bench as a judge of the High Court Division on 8 May 1976 and to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on 26 December 1985.

Justice M H Rahman performed the duties of the Chief Justice from 6 December 1990 to 9 October 1991 when Shahabuddin Ahmed headed the country's interim government as Acting President after the fall of the Ershad regime.

Justice Rahman will be retiring from service on 30 April next on turning 65.

According to tradition, the seniormost judge of the Appellate Division succeeds the retiring Chief Justice.

Among the existing three judges of the Appellate Division, Justice ATM Afzal, 62, is now the seniormost. Justice Mostafa Kamal and Justice Latifur Rahman are second and third respectively in terms of seniority.

The Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association will formally bid farewell to the outgoing Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and felicitate the new Chief Justice at a function today at 4:30 pm at the bar association building