



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia placing wreaths at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur in the city yesterday. — Star photo



Awami League president Sheikh Hasina and senior leaders placing wreaths at the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur in the city yesterday. — Star photo

Show Cause on govt

Prisoner in *danda beri* for 33 months!

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court yesterday directed the government to show cause as to why the restraint of a convicted prisoner in bar fetters (*danda beri*) at the Dhaka Central Jail should not be declared to be without lawful authority.

The court further directed that the prisoner be produced before the court within two weeks. The rule was issued by a Division Bench comprising Justice Mahmudur Rahman and Justice K M Hassan, said a press release of Dr Kamal Hossain and Associates last night.

Raju Ahmed Pannu, a convicted prisoner in Dhaka Central Jail, has allegedly been shackled in bar fetters since March, 1993, for a continuous period of 33 months.

The bar fetters consist of two iron rings riveted to each ankle, from each of which an iron rod extends up to an interlocking iron ring at about the mid-thigh level. The fetters prevent Pannu from walking or lying down without continuous pain and discomfort.

The Prisons Act, 1894 permits the use of fetters as a punishment for jail offences, or as a form of restraint in cases where this is considered to be necessary for the safe custody of the prisoner.

The Jail Code specifies as maximum period of three months is the case of imposition of bar fetters and for the provision of gaiters to protect the skin against abrasion.

Appearing for the petitioner, Dr Kamal Hossain argued that the shackling of this prisoner in bar fetters amounted to cruel, degrading and inhuman punishment or treatment and was manifestly violative of both the constitution and the Jail Code. He further submitted that the laws permitting the use of fetters are unconstitutional and violative of international human rights standards.

The petition was filed on behalf of Ain-o-Shalish Kendro by its Executive Director Salma Sobhan. The respondents are the Government of Bangladesh, the Inspector General of Prisons, the Superintendent, Jailor and Medical Officer of Dhaka Central Jail.

72 to be freed on Victory Day

The government will set free 72 accused persons detained on minor offences on the eve of the Victory Day. They will be released on special consideration, reports BSS.

EC decision

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ing will be held at 10 am at the conference room of the National Economic Council (NEC).

Justice Sadeque had earlier said that the election schedule could be re-fixed provided all political parties want it.

When his attention was drawn about the major opposition parties' unwillingness to attend today's meeting, the CEC said "though they (major parties) were not meeting us in formal talks for may be some political reasons, but they always keep close contact with the EC."

Justice Sadeque went on to add that on many earlier occasions the major opposition parties did not respond to his invitation for a meeting, but there always existed some sort of communication.

"Before we go for any decision, we must hear everybody. And in any case if they (major parties) do not come, we have to listen to those who will take part in today's discussion," explained the CEC.

In response to this correspondent's question about any scope of the EC playing the role of a negotiator, Justice Sadeque made it clear that EC could not play any role to broker a settlement between the ruling party and the Opposition.

Martyred intellectuals

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political and socio-cultural organisations visited the memorial and paid homage.

In observance of the Day, the National Flag was kept at half mast while black flags were hoisted atop public and private buildings.

Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh aired special programmes while newspapers brought out special supplements on the day.

Teachers, students and employees of the Dhaka University brought out a silent procession on the campus and placed wreaths at the mass grave at the Jagannath Hall premises.

The DU authorities also organised a discussion at the TSC.

Leaders of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday unveiled a plaque bearing the names of the journalists killed by the occupation forces and their infamous collaborators Razakars, Al-Badars and Al-Shams.

In Chittagong, teachers and students of Chittagong University placed wreaths at the Intellectuals Memorial and observed a one minute silence.

In Rajshahi, Rajshahi Sahitya Parishad, Sammilita Sangskritik Parishad, Joy Bangla Oikya Parishad and other organisations observed the Day by organising meetings, discussions and cultural functions.

Meanwhile, series of pro-

PM's Award for Afforestation '94

The government has declared the "Prime Minister's National Award for Afforestation-1994" for individuals and organisations engaged in the campaign for afforestation, reports UNB.

Twenty-seven organisations and individuals in nine categories will get the award in June 1996. State Minister for Environment and Forest Gayeswar Chandra Roy told a press conference at his ministry yesterday.

Out of the 27 awards, the highest number of 12 went to Rajshahi division while Dhaka and Barisal got one award each for the year 1994.

The nine categories are: Primary schools/madrashah, high school/madrashah, college and university, religious institutes, union parishad, pourasava and corporation, ministries/departments/sect or corporations/defence and law enforcing agencies, NGOs/club and voluntary organisations, and individuals and nurseries.

The awards for afforestation campaign was introduced in 1993. The first prize comprises a gold medal and Tk 5,000, the second prize a silver medal and Tk 4,000 while the third prize a bronze medal and Tk 3,000.

The smugglers and their supporters' on the Indian side attacked the border patrol with machetes, United News reports. The BSF opened fire, wounding two of the smugglers. A BSF soldier also sustained injuries.

Several tons of river fish is smuggled daily from Bangladesh to the northeastern Indian state of Tripura, where it fetches a higher price. But violent clashes are rare, according to reports.

But on Wednesday, a Border Security Force patrol stopped two scooter-riders which were being used to smuggle the fish, United News of India reported from Agartala, capital of Tripura state.

The smugglers and their supporters' on the Indian side attacked the border patrol with machetes, United News reports. The BSF opened fire, wounding two of the smugglers. A BSF soldier also sustained injuries.

They were held simultaneously at a number of makeshift stages named after freedom fighters, in the Dhaka University area.

A book fair and two exhibitions, one on war documents and photographs, at the TSC, and the other on the role of Bangladeshi women in movements from 1952 to the present day, at the Zainul Gallery, form part of the festival, which runs through Dec 16.

Meanwhile, Shangkritik Jote will bring out a grand Victory Day rally tomorrow at 9:00 pm from the Shaheed Minar.

Also, there has been a significant leap in the collection of supplementary duty which soared above the target by more than Tk 75 crore to Tk 721.30 crore.

A powerful hand bomb was exploded in front of the Dhanmondi residence of former BNP MP Nurul Islam Moni yesterday morning.

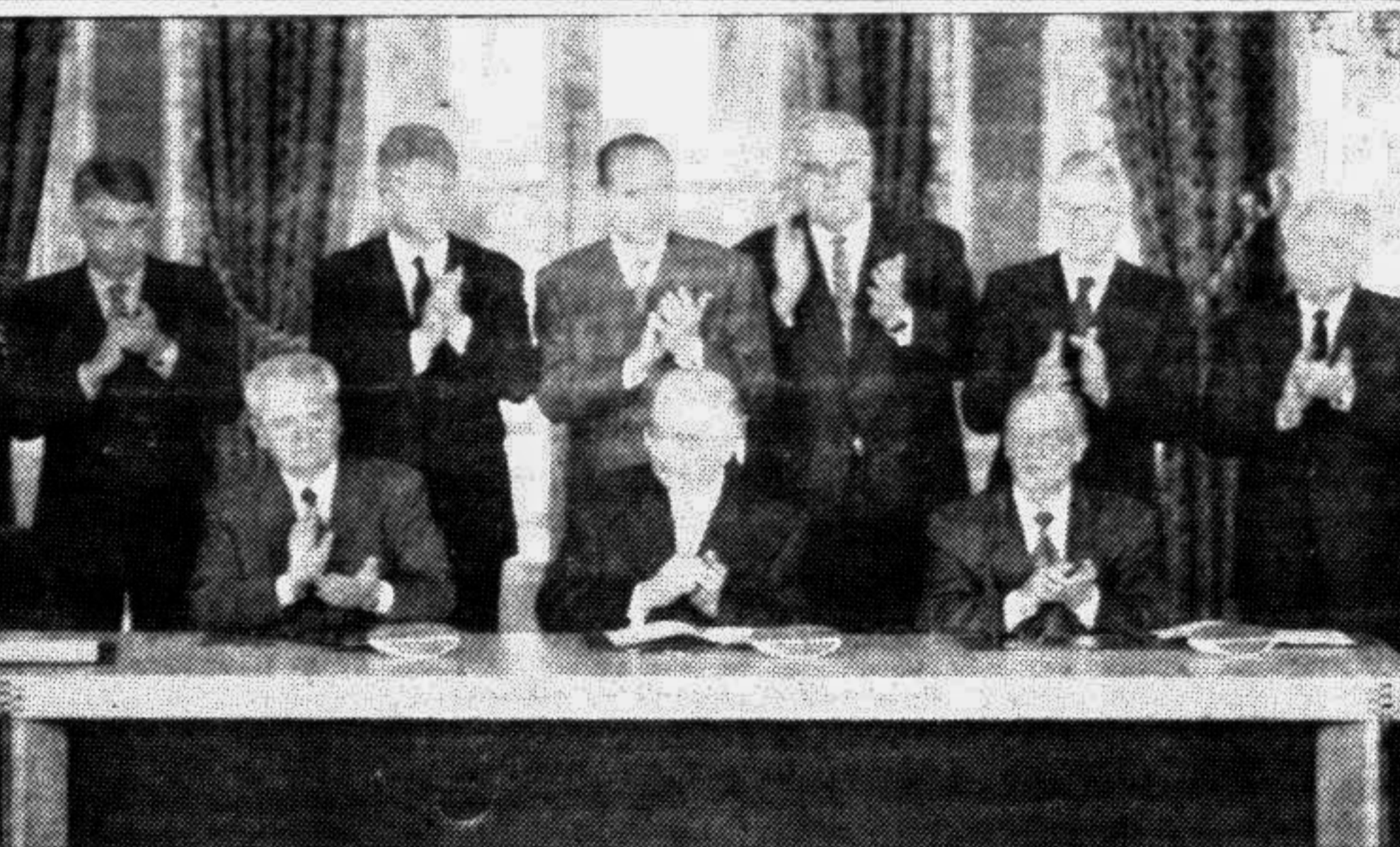
According to inmates of Moni's residence at Dhanmondi Road 9/A, two youths came near the house with a motorbike at about 9:40 am and fled the scene after blasting the bomb. None was injured.

Talking to UNB Nurul Islam Moni who was inside the house during the incident did not blame any quarter directly for the attack. He, however, mentioned that the attack might be related to his statement published in newspapers on Wednesday.

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From left (standing) Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez, US President Bill Clinton, French President Jacques Chirac, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, British Prime Minister John Major and Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin and from left (sitting) Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic applauding after signing of the peace agreement on Bosnia at the Elysee palace in Paris yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

Peace accord

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deputy commander of the 60,000-member NATO force but would retain command of UN units scheduled to leave the former Yugoslav republic, the reports said.

Many of the UN troops from NATO countries such as Britain, France and Canada are expected to be added to the new, US-led command. But Boutros-Ghali said he was unable to say how many would remain under NATO command.

Jamaat activist succumbs to bomb injuries

By Staff Correspondent

Joyal Abedin, 45, an activist of Jamaat-e-Islami, who received fatal bomb injuries in his head died at a city clinic early yesterday.

Abedin of Tejgunipara in the city was injured while taking part in a procession on the third day of the opposition-called hartal on Dec 11. Unidentified persons hurled bombs on the procession near Farmgate, according to reports.

His namaj-e-janaza was held at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram Mosque yesterday. The janaza was attended by the senior leaders of the party.

Customs duty falls short of target

Customs duty collection during the July-November period of the current fiscal year amounted to Tk 1472.88 crore, which is about Tk 76 crore less than the period's target, according to official estimates, reports UNB.

The shortfall in Customs duty was also attributed by the revenue officials to growing bias to imports through Pre-shipment Inspection (PSI).

A senior official of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) said whether the collection of duty would increase or not in the months ahead "depends largely on political situation in the country."

Recent restrictions on imports under PSI were triggered primarily by revenue concern, said the official.

Official estimates, however, shows that despite shortfalls in customs duty and income tax, total collection of tax revenue during the first five months of the current fiscal year surpassed the target by 1.75 per cent to Tk 4249.27 crore.

The tax revenue collection also registered an increase by Tk 427.11 crore or 11.17 per cent over the amount collected during the corresponding period of last fiscal year.

Attack on Faiz Ahmed

By Staff Correspondent

Unidentified assailants attacked eminent journalist and cultural activist Faiz Ahmed on the Dhaka University Campus yesterday.

He was, however, not hurt. Ahmed is the president of the Sammilita Sangskritik Jote.

Witnesses said that three young men entered the tent where Ahmed was talking to Nasiruddin Yusuf Bachchu and attacked both of them.

The other activists of the Jote who were present near the tent, foiled the attack.

The motive behind the attack could not be known immediately.

The Midnight File

Castro's surprise visit to Canada

VANCOUVER, Dec 14: Cuban President Fidel Castro paid a surprise visit to Canada today during a refuelling stop in Vancouver on his way home from Asia. Dressed in his trademark green military fatigues, Castro arrived at Vancouver Airport in heavy rain and was greeted by Canada's Secretary of State for Asia and the Pacific Raymond Chan, officials said, reports Reuter.

Hectic parleys on

From Page 1 sources close to the negotiators of both the sides said.

As part of its continued efforts to break the political stalemate, BNP's joint secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan recently met AL presidium member Tofael Ahmed. This was followed by two rounds of meetings between the negotiators of the two parties — SAMS Kibria and Abdul Momen of the AL and the LGRD Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar and Commerce and Information Minister Shamsul Islam — during the last two days. Besides, the AL leader Amir Hossain Amu met the President Abdur Rahman Biswas on Wednesday. Details of the meeting could not be known.

In their backstage parleys, the mediators of the two parties also discussed another unresolved issue — the head of the interim government after the incumbent PM resigned. The BNP is proposing that a former party MP of the recently dissolved Parliament would resign from the party to head the interim cabinet and he would be enjoying very limited powers and the AL reiterating its demand for a non-party person as an interim PM.

The AL Chief Sheikh Hasina told some reporters at the Awami Foundation office in Dhanmondi last night that the lingering political crisis could not be resolved due to 'obstinacy' of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

There would be much less constitutional complexities than 1991's to form a neutral caretaker government headed by a neutral person. The President could help resolve the crisis by appointing a neutral person as the head of the caretaker government following resignation of the incumbent PM, she said.

Every independence has its price and the martyred intellectuals paid the highest price, said eminent journalist Obaid-ul Huq. He was speaking at a discussion at the Bangla Academy premises.

Professor Emajuddin Ahmed, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor, while speaking at a discussion at the TSC said the dream of the martyrs was to establish real democracy in the country.

Authorities said today they recovered all 49 bodies from a Romanian airliner which crashed into a snowy orchard and went up in flames minutes after takeoff, reports AP.

Malaysia ter in separate meetings with the Malaysian Human Resources Minister Dato Lim Anelik and Deputy Home Minister Dato Magat Junid urged them to expedite the larger flow of manpower export from Bangladesh under newly-introduced government to government system.

Police, however, said that he died a natural death. Abul Hossain was taken Kaliganj Health Complex as he fell sick after being picked up from his house, police added.

The DC and the SP of Jhenidah rushed to Barabazar road where the demonstrators put up barricades and assured them of proper investigation into the incident.

A medical board has been formed by the district administration with the Civil Surgeon as its head to investigate the incident.

BNP nomination Dr Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, Housing and Public Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Forest and Environment Minister Col (ret'd) Akbar Hossain, Science and Technology Minister M K Anwar, ex-Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Siddiqur Rahman, former JCD leader Ilias Ali and industrialist Syed Mohammad Faisal.

Earlier, on Tuesday and Wednesday, the BNP nomination board completed the interview of 655 nomination seekers from 132 constituencies of Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions.

BSS adds: The interview of the nomination seekers from Dhaka division begins this morning at the BNP election office at Kakrail.

State condemns (madames). Researchers opined that prostitution is a well established institution having deep roots in the culture which is organised and managed by the state and the society.

Speaking about their possible rehabilitation in the normal way of life they pointed out that the existing centres and also the jails, where prostitutes and vagrant women are kept have become recruiting places for new entrants, the researchers observed.

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Need of the hour

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that the very position we made powerless should now be approached to put us back on the constitutional rail. However ironic, it is the task of the moment. The shortsightedness of our parliamentary leaders has forced this situation on us.

Mr. President, we ask you to exert your moral authority, to use the non-partisan status and the overwhelming prestige of your office, to bring the opposing forces together. You may not be able to intervene, but surely you are eminently empowered to facilitate. The fundamental question is, WILL YOU?

Just reflect on the situation. Constitutionally mandated election dates are less than 70 days away. The ruling party and the opposition are on a collision course that not only threatens the election process but also the lives of many innocent people who may die due to sporadic violence, not to mention the loss of property.

The nation has already suffered thousands of crores of takas in lost production, and is likely to lose even more if no understanding is reached.

On the positive side, the opposing groups have come quite close to a solution which is now threatened by vested groups on both sides, and also by a lack of communication among the two most important leaders. Imaginary fear of 'loss of face', and the egotistical nature of the two leaders have complicated the matter beyond reason and common-sense.

This is where you come in, Mr. President. Perhaps a little facilitation will assist them both to cross the last hurdle and save us all from chaos, uncertainty, violence, and most importantly, from a subverted election.

What we ask of you is that you invite Begum Zia and Sheikh Hasina to the Bangabhaban and start a discussion. You just say, you want to hear directly from them, as to the issues that are separating them at the moment. You hear them patiently and then

you facilitate a dialogue. You are a lawyer, an older person, and of course the President. You can use all these elements to start a dialogue.

You belonged to BNP, so it is easier for you to gain the confidence of Begum Zia. You will have to be extremely careful and try extra hard to win the confidence of Sheikh Hasina. It will depend on how sincere and forceful your efforts are. If they do not want to sit together at first, then seat them in adjacent rooms and you shuttle back and forth with messages. The rule of the discussion should be as follows: no harking back on the past, no acrimony, no derogatory remarks, no finding faults with each other, but only talk about the latest position of the two sides. Let them say where they stand at the moment. Then you take it up from there.

From what we know, a lot of 'water has passed under the bridge' and that both sides have made significant shifts from their original positions. What remains is very little, compared to what has been already agreed upon. So your task is relatively easy.

The PM cannot turn down your invitation. The AL chief will surely see the gravity of the situation and respond positively. So we come back to the question, WILL YOU? What greater service can you render to the nation at the moment than to try to break the deadlock? Discuss with your legal advisors. Take all the precaution. Act very carefully and wisely. But please, ACT. You have nothing to lose. But we have, the nation as a whole, has.

We are aware of the constitutional limitations of your office. Adhere to them meticulously. We are also aware of the crisis that the national faces, the extra constitutional implications of the continued deadlock, and the moral responsibility of your exalted office to help us steer clear of the crisis. Rise to the occasion, Mr. President, play your moral role, and serve the nation.

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