

Money for 28 F-16 fighters

Pakistan warns of legal action against US

ISLAMABAD, Jan 24: Pakistan said today it would consider legal action if the United States failed to refund 658 million dollars paid for 28 F-16 fighter planes withheld since 1990 due to US suspicion of Islamabad's nuclear plans, reports Reuters.

Defence Minister Aftab Shaaban Meerani told parliament the two sides would discuss the issue again in a Pakistan-US consultative group expected to meet in March.

"If the 658-million dollar is not refunded, we will look into all the options, including going to courts," he said in reply to a question from an opposition deputy in the National Assembly (lower house).

The United States stopped all military and economic aid to Pakistan in October 1990 over the nuclear issue. The US Congress agreed last year to a one-time waiver of the ban on military sales to Pakistan to allow delivery of millions of dollars

worth of US equipment, but not the F-16s.

The plan authorised the US administration to sell the planes elsewhere and reimburse Pakistan, but no third-country buyer has yet come forward.

Meerani insisted that Washington must return all the money, paid to US aircraft-maker Lockheed, which says it fulfilled its contract by manufacturing the F-16s.

"Our consistent and principled stand has been that since the US government has failed to deliver the aircraft, it is bound to reimburse in full the amount paid with interest," he said.

The 28 planes were part of a total of 71 Pakistan ordered in the late 1980s at a cost of 1.4 billion dollars. None was delivered because of the ban on military sales that took effect when then-president George Bush failed to certify that Pakistan was not trying to make nuclear weapons.

Islamabad denies possessing nuclear bombs though it

says it had developed the capacity to make them. Meerani said Pakistan bought 11 planes on a credit of 205 million dollar while a cash payment was made for 17.

Asked if Washington had found new buyers for the F-16s, Meerani said the Pakistan-US consultative group had agreed in May to resolve all foreign military sales issues, including the disposal of F-16s, in a separate programme management review. This meeting is now tentatively scheduled to be held in March this year, he said.

The 1985 Pressler amendment bans military aid to Pakistan unless the US president can certify to Congress that Islamabad has no nuclear weapons and is not trying to develop them.

Pakistan says its nuclear work is peaceful but it will not sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty until its arch-foe India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, does the same.

The Midnight File

Arafat-Peres meet held

EREZ (Gaza Strip), Jan 24: Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres met Yasser Arafat today for a first summit since Arafat was elected Palestinian president. The PLO head swept a poll on Saturday to head a self-rule government for the next three years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip while negotiating a final end to the conflict with Israel, reports Reuters.

Hasina's statement untrue: Talukdar

BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukdar yesterday contradicted the statement of Awami League chief and former Leader of the Opposition describing it as total untruth and devoid of political decency, reports BSS.

In a statement, the BNP secretary general said: "We expect from the former Leader of the Opposition political opposition but not untrue statement, aspersion or imaginary allegations."

Referring to the statement of the former Leader of the Opposition as published in some newspapers, the BNP secretary general said by going through the statement in some newspapers he (Salam), along with the conscious citizens of the country, was surprised.

Talukdar pointed out that on December 28, 1994, before the submission of a mass resignation by the opposition MPs at 9 pm at the waiting room of the Speaker at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, he (Salam) along with former Deputy Leader of the House, AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, Communications Minister Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed had read out our written proposal on behalf of the Prime Minister to the former Leader of the Opposition. In that written proposal, the question of resignation of the Prime Minister

er 30 days before the next parliamentary elections was clearly stated.

At that time, besides the Speaker and the Leader of the Opposition, former deputy leader of the opposition Abdus Samad Azad, Tojael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Moudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Matru Rahman Nizami, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and some other parliament members were present. On the following day, our proposal was published in the newspapers in detail. On December 29, 1994, the Prime Minister had only repeated the proposal of the previous day.

The BNP secretary general referred to the continued launching of imaginary allegations that the Prime Minister was violating the Constitution and described it as an evil design aimed at misleading the people. The former Leader of the Opposition should have understood the fact that such evil design would not mislead the people, he observed.

On the contrary, Talukdar said, the Prime Minister had not fallen into the trap of the Leader of the Opposition and her new allies who wanted the government and the majority party in the Sangsad to go for extra-constitutional activities. The Prime Minister has sustained the constitutional rule and democracy in the country.

Hasina

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The Awami League chief said opposition parties demanded election under a non-party, neutral caretaker government like that of 1991 to ensure people's freedom of choice through impartial voting.

She alleged the BNP was isolated from the people because of its "corruption, terrorism and misuse. So, it has taken to the undemocratic path of one-party election under a blueprint."

The meeting was attended by Prof Muehsuddin Chowdhury, Dr MA Qadri, Dr Mirza Abdul Jalil, Dr Amirul Islam, Abu Hena, Prof Zahirul Haq, Dr Kazi Abu Yusuf, Dr Kazi Shahidul Alam, Prof Nazrul Islam, Dr Abdur Razzak, ASM Saleh, Mohd Nuruzzaman, Sirajul Islam, Dr Abu Bhuiyan, Dr Sharfuddin Ahmed, Dr Rashidul Hasan, Mohd Ishaq (Bir Pratik), Sohrab Uddin Bhuiyan, Dr Golam Mostafa, Mohammad Ali, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Abdus Sabur.

'Asia industrial park' to be set up in Ctg

Manufacturing giants of three countries including Bangladesh are planning to set up the 'Asia Industrial Park', an industrial zone in Chittagong, to accommodate foreign investors, reports UNB.

Sigma of South Korea, Tadmansori of Malaysia and the local Concord, which have got proper registration from the authorities concerned, are now searching for site for the planned industrial estate. The 'Park' which will be set up in one of the three thanas — Anwara, Patiya and Mireswarai — will sell in phases 1,000 plots to investors from different Asian countries.

4000 quit BNP

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Along with some other leaders of BNP and its front organisations, they protested some party nominations for the ensuing polls and submitted their own nomination. They, however, withdrew their candidatures later.

The mass resignation of the BNP leaders and workers created a crisis situation in BNP politics in Rajshahi.

EC replies today

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been very happy if the Opposition had participated in the polls.

Justice Sadek said, he had taken all possible measures to hold free, fair and impartial elections. He said he had given enough opportunities to both the ruling and the opposition parties to arrive at an understanding. "There is no more scope for further extending the dates," he said adding if there were I would have done it." He said he has no option but to adhere to the Constitution.

Replying to a question whether he was concerned about the outcome of the polls, the CEC said he was not concerned at all. "It is the political parties who should be concerned about it," he said.

Justice Sadek said the Election Commission would not allow stuffing of votes as in 1988.

He told another questioner that the credibility of the Election Commission would not be hampered by holding the next elections. "Why shall we be discredited for our action to hold free and fair elections," he wanted to know.

Asked whether it would have been a greater act of honour if he had resigned than carrying on with this responsibility, Justice Sadek said "I find nothing unpatriotic in carrying out a sacred responsibility." He said: "I shall resign only when my resignation will benefit the nation."

Continuing, he said, if he did not hold the elections any one can file a complaint against him in the supreme judicial council for violating the constitution.

On the other hand, he said, any failure to holding the elections on the stipulated date would invite a serious constitutional crisis. "I cannot be a reason for such a crisis," he said.



US President Bill Clinton motions for quiet to the combined bodies of the US Congress before he begins his state of the Union address, Tuesday. Vice President Al Gore (L) and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich are behind him. Story on page 8 — AFP/UNB photo

Anti-Sikh riots in '84
Ex-Indian minister
Bhagat arrested

NEW DELHI, Jan 24: A former Indian cabinet minister was arrested and brought to court today in connection with the anti-Sikh riots which swept through the capital following the 1984 assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, reports AFP.

H K L Bhagat, 74, who held various cabinet posts in the governments of Indira Gandhi and her son, Rajiv Gandhi, arrived in court amid tight security to answer charges of murder, rioting and looting.

However, while the court was hearing the charges, Bhagat complained of breathlessness and was taken to hospital.

Sikh groups have campaigned for a decade to bring him to justice in connection with the deaths of nearly 3,000 Sikhs in New Delhi following the assassination of Indira Gandhi on October 31, 1984.

She was gunned down by two of her Sikh bodyguards to avenge the Indian army's storming of the Golden Temple, the holiest shrine in Sikhdom, to flush out armed Sikh separatists.

A new case was recently filed against Bhagat by a judge who heard testimony from a 35-year-old Sikh woman who

said the politician was at the head of a mob of Hindus who murdered her husband on November 1, 1984.

Bhagat and several other members of the ruling Congress(I) party alleged to have been involved in the anti-Sikh riots are believed to figure high on a hit list drawn up by Sikh militant groups to avenge the 1984 riots.

Bhagat served as Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Information and Broadcasting under Indira and Rajiv Gandhi.

Star staffer
mugged

By Staff Correspondent

A staff of The Daily Star was mugged on Sat Masjid Road near the Zigarola crossing when she was returning to her residence at Dhanmondi yesterday evening.

A gang of muggers in an auto-rickshaw snatched her handbag while she was travelling in a rickshaw at around 8:30 pm.

She had valuable documents and cash in her bag. An auto-rickshaw came near her rickshaw and drove off after snatching the handbag.

Bombs hurled
at ex-minister's
house

By Staff Correspondent

Incidents of bomb explosions were reported in different places including the residences of two political leaders and the Election Commission office in the city yesterday evening.

Two crude bombs were hurled at the Dhanmondi residence of former industries minister Shamsul Islam Khan at around 7:30 pm yesterday.

Family members said that one of the bombs exploded inside the boundary wall while the other was thrown in front of the house at road No 15, Dhanmondi. None was, however, injured.

In another incident of explosion in front of the residence of a BNP leader, a former Jatiya Party MP, in Gulshan area was reported yesterday evening. However, Gulshan police could not confirm the incident.

Meanwhile, a cracker was hurled on the road near the Election Commission Secretariat at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar at around 6:30 pm.

Tegajan police said that they had heard about the incident but did not receive any information from the office of the Election Commission. A senior official of the EC, however, said that they did not have any information in this regard.

Chechen rebels
release 45
hostages

MOSCOW, Jan 24: Chechen rebels today released 45 hostages seized in a raid in the Russian region of Dagestan, Itar-Tass news agency said, quoting a Dagestan official. Buses with 45 hostages crossed the Chechen-Dagestan border at around 1700 Moscow time (1400 GMT) in the direction of Khasavyurt. It quoted the head of the administration of the Khasavyurt district as saying, reports Reuters.

Khulna

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Abul Kashem. Meanwhile, local administration and different wings of the ruling BNP are preparing for making the Prime Minister's tour a success.

The Prime Minister will inaugurate district judge's court building and Collectorate building in Bagerhat and lay the foundation stone of proposed STAL airport at Rampal on Saturday. She will also address some public meetings.

Begum Zia is scheduled to make night halt in Khulna city and the following day (Sunday) address some other public meetings in the district.

Boon retires

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named in the squad for the upcoming World Cup, but he scored a century in the second Test against the Sri Lankans in Melbourne in December.

He scored 21 centuries in amassing 7,344 runs in 106 Test appearances for Australia after making his debut against West Indies in 1984-85.

His Test average stands at 43.71 and he has averaged a century every 8.95 innings.

The chunky Boon played 181 limited-overs internationals, scoring five centuries and 37 half-centuries among his 5,964 one-day runs — a total that places him sixth on the all-time list.

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Gold, medicine
seized at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Customs officials at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) seized gold and banned medicine items worth Tk 12.91 lakh from an Emirates flight yesterday morning.

The customs surveillance team found banned medicines worth around Tk 6.73 lakh in three unclaimed bags inside the Lost & Found Section.

They suspected that some passengers of the Dubai-Karachi-Dhaka flight (EK-610) which arrived at ZIA at around 9:30 am left the baggage in order to arrange the collection later. They also found garments worth about Tk 18 thousand.

Besides, the customs team recovered banned medicines including injections and tablets worth Tk 3.56 lakh from a passenger, Nurul Amin, of the same flight. He came from Karachi, airport sources said.

Meanwhile, the surveillance team seized 54 tolas of gold worth Tk 2.62 lakh from another passenger of the flight. The passenger SM Shahabuddin came from Dubai, customs sources said.



Fourth Class employees of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital brought out a procession in the compound yesterday protesting the indefinite strike by doctors of the hospital. — Star photo

Hartal in Sylhet

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wards the route of the Prime Minister.

The protesters blasted a number of firecrackers during the clashes. One policeman, Havildar Shahjahan, was also injured with splinters during the day-long clashes.

Police allowed none to approach the route the PM took and arrested four Awami League and arrested four Awami League — Dulal, Kabir, Noman and Dewan Gaus Sultan — during the protests.

Tension mounted in the city since morning as huge police patrolled the city streets, all vehicles remained off the streets, and shops and business establishments were closed responding to a hartal call that paralysed normal life.

The Prime Minister reached the city at about 12:15 pm and left it at 3:30 pm after offering *fateha* at the mazars of Hazrat Shah Jalal and Hazrat Shah Paran and a brief stay at the local circuit house.

At the local circuit house, the BNP chairperson exchanged views with the party leaders on different issues including the party's election campaign for the February 15 Jatiya Sangsad polls.

Begum Zia asked the party leaders and workers to carry out the election campaign in full-swing in favour of 'sheaf of paddy', BNP's election symbol.

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, State Minister for Social Welfare Fazlur Rahman and party leaders including Khandaker Abdul Malek, Fatema Chowdhury, Khaleda Rabbani, Abul Haris Chowdhury, Ilyas Ali, Nazir Hossain,

500 lawyers
demand PM's
resignation

By Staff Correspondent

Five hundred lawyers of the Dhaka Ainjibi Samity in a joint statement yesterday demanded immediate resignation of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and holding next general election under a neutral caretaker government to save the nation from a serious confrontation.

Expressing grave concern over the deterioration of law and order in the country they said the nation had expected that government would accept the Opposition demand, and election would be held under a caretaker government.

"But the country is heading towards a serious crisis due to the arrogance of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia," the statement said.

Among the prominent lawyers who signed the statement are: Faizur Rahman Khan, Altaf Hossain, Sharar Mohammad Shuruzzaman, Rahmat Ali, Abdus Sabur, Kamrul Islam, Khandaker Mehbub Alam, Farid Uddin Ahmed and Sharar Zahid Hossain.

JP office case
Hearing
adjourned
till Feb 11

Deposed President Ershad was yesterday produced before the Special Judge's Court in connection with his trial in the Jatiya Party Office Case but the hearing could not be held because of objections raised by defence lawyers, reports BSS.

First Additional Sessions Judge and Special Judge Akhlakur Rahman, responding to the defence prayer, adjourned the hearing till February 11.

Ershad last appeared in the Special Judge's Court on November 4. He had been afflicted with viral hepatitis.

After recovering from the disease, the former president on the advice of the physicians had to take long rest and as a result he could not be taken to the court.

Former works minister Mostafa Jamal Haider and former works secretary M A Rouf are co-accused in this case which relates to spending public money in renovating an abandoned house for use of the Jatiya Party.

Rule Nisi

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release yesterday.

Dr Farooque moved the petition himself and alleged that the respondents had failed to take efficacious measures in dealing with the radiated milk which was produced in Estonia and introduced in Bangladesh by the Danish Condensed Milk Bangladesh Limited on August 7, 1994.

After testing the samples of the imported milk, Chittagong and Dhaka Centres of Atomic Energy Commission found it containing high concentration of radioactivity beyond the permissible level fixed by Bangladesh.

BNP action

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The rebel BNP leaders, who failed to secure the party nomination, are contesting the election as independent candidates.

These leaders had revolted against the decisions of the party high command by enforcing hartals and other forms of agitations at different parts of the country.

The BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukdar, through a press statement issued three days before the January 23 deadline for withdrawal of nomination papers, called upon the disobedient partymen to withdraw their candidature immediately or face disciplinary action. Salam Talukdar also asked the presidents and secretaries of the party's district, thana and municipal units to ensure that the instruction was carried out.

Cong leader shot
dead in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Jan 24: A separatist militant shot dead a local politician in Srinagar in the northern Indian state of Kashmir today, police said, reports Reuters.