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Hearing of writ petition 'Indemnity ordn itself an evidence of crime'

By SC Correspondent

The Indemnity (Repeal) Act, 1996 is not creating a new law, rather it is a declaratory statute which is restating the law that the Indemnity Ordinance was never a law, said Barrister Amir-UL Islam as an amicus curiae in the hearing on the writ petitions filed challenging the Act in the High Court Division yesterday.

Barrister Amir-UL Islam will continue his argument today before the division bench of the HC comprising Justice Md Mozammel Haque and Justice Md Abdul Matin.

Senior Advocate Khandker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, another amicus curiae, could not make his submission yesterday as he was out of Dhaka.

"Since the legislators cannot possibly declare any law void or ultra vires to the Constitution, now this remains for this court to complete its task by declaring the ordinance as stillborn which never acquired the status of a law at any moment," observed Barrister Amir-UL Islam.

Referring to the status of the Indemnity (Repeal) Act, he said, "The Parliament has done their part of the job by repealing the ordinance and they have done so in a manner adequately expressing their mind that then the ordinance was repealed ab initio."

Explaining the status of the JS obituary reference

The House yesterday unanimously adopted an obituary reference commemorating some outstanding personalities died in between the second and third sessions of parliament.

They were M Khademul Islam MP, former minister and MP ASM Mostafizur Rahman, former MPs M Azharul Islam, Jahangir Kabir and Alhaj Sheikh Muhammad Abul Hossain, former member of Pakistan National Assembly M Mokhlesuzzaman Khan, former members of Provincial Assembly Dr Munsur Ali and Shamsu Mia Chowdhury, former Water Resources Adviser of the president BM Abbas AT and former Adviser of the 1991 caretaker government Chowdhury A K M Aminul Haq.

Speaker moved the obituary reference in the House which stood one minute in solemn silence to show respect to the personalities. State Minister for Religious Affairs Moulana M Nurul Islam offered the munaajat.



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Prime Minister and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina presiding over the party's Parliamentary Party meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan yesterday.

PM: Evaluate my govt

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It is you and people who will evaluate it.

"Compare the activities of my government with those of the previous governments. I am sincerely trying to build a self-reliant country," Hasina told the senior journalists.

With a note of optimism the Prime Minister said: "If we properly use our resources, we can come out from the level of least developed countries."

Responding to a query, the Prime Minister said the main problem she is facing was slow pace of work. Work is not progressing at a desired pace, she observed.

She said her government was taking decisions speedily and putting in efforts to implement those, which she observed, was unusual in the past when files were not moved dully. "Slowdown in file movement in the past was a common phenomenon."

Regarding law and order, the Prime Minister said the situation had improved. "To improve law and order was my pledge and I had repeatedly said none would be spared even if the criminal belonged to my party... I kept my word."

But she hinted at "conspiracy" of a vested quarter to create chaos. "Such attitude is not good... Whatever we are doing for the people and the country."

Turning to the economy of the country, Hasina said: "It is moving, and there is a stability. Our efforts helped recover and brighten the country's image abroad."

Referring to opposition BNPs' political stand, Hasina said they abstained from attending Parliament sessions to avoid the passage of Indemnity

ALPP meeting

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duced a positive outcome resulting in return of BNP MPs to the Jatiya Sangsad.

Among others, Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, Water Resources Minister Abur Razzak, Md Shahjahan MP and Bir Bahadur MP also spoke briefly at the ALPP meeting.

Sheikh Hasina said that law and order had improved and asked her party MPs to help the government in further improving it. She warned that terrorists, no matter which party they belong to, would not be spared. She also expressed the hope that her party members would not shelter any terrorist.

She briefed the party lawmakers about the recently concluded Ganges water treaty, visits of British and Indian prime ministers and good responses being received from various countries in the field of foreign investment, the sources said.

JS obituary reference

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DSE index

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previous days position of Tk 13,364.66 crore.

The price index and other major market indicators started falling since the beginning of this month from 2450.58 points on January 2.

During the 12 days dull period the market capitalisation of the bourse lost about Tk 4,356.24 crore and declined to Tk 13,364.86 crore from Tk 17,720 crore.

Meanwhile, the 72-hour ultimatum announced by Bangladesh Small Investors Forum (BSIF) expires today.

The ultimatum was given by the BSIF from a rally on Monday protesting the continuous fall in prices of most of the issues. They threatened that a continuous sit-in programme would be started in front of the DSE building from Saturday next.

They also vowed to force the closure of share trading on the DSE floor during the sit-in programme.

A BSIF leader informed this correspondent that the Forum members would meet today to take a final decision in this regard after evaluating the overall market position.

Robin Raphael due Jan 23

US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphael will visit Bangladesh January 23-28, reports UNB.

Raphael, in charge of South Asian desk at the State Department, will arrive here on January 23. She will leave Dhaka for Calcutta the same day in the evening and come back to Dhaka next morning.

She will attend here a two-day conference of the heads of US diplomatic missions in five countries in the region, including Bangladesh. Besides the US envoy here, American ambassadors to India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka will attend the conference scheduled for January 25-26.

Raphael will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She will also call on Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad.

Raphael will hold official talks with Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan on bilateral matters as well as regional and international issues of common concern.

Trade, investment and economic policies of the newly installed government will be the main agenda of the meeting," said a senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday.

Raphael's visit is seen here as significant as it will be the first trip of a senior US official to Dhaka after the Awami League came to power second time.

Some employees involved in thefts at ZIA: 5 suspended

By Staff Correspondent

The authorities at Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday identified a group of employees allegedly involved in various thefts inside the airport lounge, according to an authoritative source.

"We suspended five of them today," said the source adding confidential cover trolley men, sweepers and other lower class staff deployed inside the airport lounge have confessed their involvement in various thefts.

The gang was identified when a search for the missing gold chains was mounted at the lounge yesterday. The chains belonged to a woman passenger of the Saudi Arabian Airlines.

"Within 45 minutes of the theft, the gold chains were recovered from the drawer of a driver of an intelligence agency deployed inside the lounge," said the source adding at least 25 persons were involved in the racket.

BDRCS lottery draw

Ticket No Ga 663352 wins first prize

The draw of the 13th lottery of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) was held yesterday in the BA Siddique Red Crescent Nursing School auditorium of the Holy Family Hospital in the city, reports BSS.

The first prize goes to the holder of ticket number Ga 663352. While the second, third and fourth prizes go to ticket numbers Ga 376044, Gha 125081 and Ka 072578 respectively.

A five-member judges committee headed by Professor AK Azad Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of the Dhaka University, conducted the draw.

Woman commits suicide in city

By DMC Correspondent

One woman allegedly committed suicide in the city, according to hospital sources.

Nurunnahar, 22, wife of one Abdur Rahim of Fakirerpool committed suicide at her house in the morning. She was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 11.15 am where doctors declared her dead, hospital sources said.

Oil exploration

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be open for international bidding after holding of two more roundtable conferences in London and Houston, likely by March.

Meanwhile, high officials of leading multinational oil companies continued coming to the capital to collect data on hydrocarbon prospects from the Petrobangla.

Some of these companies, besides their desire for exploration in blocks, have also expressed interest in extending technical help to improve the condition of Bakhrabad gas field, the sources said.

Gas in Bakhrabad field is depleting alarmingly, resulting in severe shortfall in supply to Chittagong.

A geo-physical supervisor of Shell is now in the city to review and study the condition of Bakhrabad gas field. Gas extracted from the Bakhrabad well was found mixed with sand, the sources added.

Multinational company Mobil and British company Cairn have also expressed their interest in helping the Petrobangla improve the condition of Bakhrabad gas field. Some executives of Mobil are expected to arrive in the city later this month for discussions with the government regarding exploration in blocks.

A high level delegation of French oil giant Total is expected to arrive in the city in the last week of this month. Total has expressed its interest in blocks no. 9, 10 and 11.

Another delegation of Exxon Esso of USA will arrive in the capital on January 28. The company has applied to the Petrobangla for purchase of data worth 6 million US dollars.

JS session

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Matin Khashru placed in the House four ordinances promulgated by the President between the second and third sessions of parliament.

The ordinances included Artha Rin Adalat (amendment) Ordinance, 1996; Rangamati Hill District Local Government Parishad (amendment) Ordinance, 1997; Khagrachhari Hill District Local Government Parishad (amendment) Ordinance, 1997; and Bandarban Hill District Local Government Parishad (amendment) Ordinance, 1997. The ordinances as separate bills, would come up for discussion later.

The House then unanimously adopted obituary reference on 10 distinguished persons including a member of the present Sangsad, who died after his second session. The Speaker read out the biography of the MP Khademul Islam AL. The others on whom obituary reference was adopted included former foreign minister A S M Mostafizur Rahman, Azharul Islam, Jahangir Kabir, Sheikh Mohammad Abu Hossain, Mokhlesuzzaman Khan, Dr Mansur Ali, B M Abbas AT and Chowdhury A K M Aminul Islam.

Continuation of democratic process

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government commission had already been constituted. Necessary steps will be taken on the basis of the Commission's recommendations.

Foreign policy

Focusing on the new government's foreign policy maneuvering, President Ahmed praised the Indo-Bangladesh Ganges water-sharing treaty. "It was possible to find a long-awaited solution to this intricate problem within the shortest time because of the government's sincerity and bold endeavours."

After assuming power, the present government concentrated its attention on outstanding bilateral problems with Bangladesh's close neighbours, he said.

Besides, the solution of the Ganges issue, he said, diplomatic initiatives are on the preparative stage. The relations with the Chittagong Hill Tracts and complete the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. The relations with other neighbouring countries are improving for reactivating the programmes of SAARC. Outside the SAARC, the Prime Minister visited China and other ministers made some important tours of Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea to strengthen the relations with countries in this part of the globe.

The present government is now pursuing a foreign policy with "economic diplomacy" at its core to boost Bangladesh's trade with and manpower export to foreign countries as well as attract foreign investment, he said.

Economy

The President remarked that the overall economy is doing well, but cautioned a loan default culture may jeopardise the financial and banking system.

"Non-repayment of loan in time has emerged as a serious problem in Bangladesh," he said informing the House that the total amount of default loan of the scheduled banks now stood at Tk 12,600 crore.

The President said economic development by and large depends on stable political environment and the government has laid emphasis on attaining consensus on important national issues to ensure political stability.

Ershad

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sues. Among others, city JP president Col (ret'd) Malek, Shamsuzzaman Mintu, Abu Hossain Babla, and Delwar Hossain Raja were present.

Ershad leaves Dhaka for Rangpur today on a two-day visit to his constituency.

The President said rice and wheat production target has been fixed at 2.6 crore tons in the 1996-97 fiscal. In the current session, the production situation of Aus and Aman crops is satisfactory.

He said it is expected that the production of rice and wheat would exceed its target and may rise to 2.7 crore tons. As a result, the food deficit will decrease and stand at 17 lakh tons from 24 lakh tons.

To meet this deficit, Tk 740 crore has been allocated from domestic resources to import foodgrains besides the foreign grant.

Education

President Shahabuddin said the government is pledgebound to remove the curse of illiteracy from the country within next 10 years.

He said food for education programme is being carried out in 1,250 unions of the country and various steps have been taken to improve primary and non-formal education. The government is giving incentives for education, particularly for the female education.

He said a Tk 170 crore project for the development of 10 universities is under implementation while construction work of 2,739 secondary schools, 100 madrasa-cum-cyclone centres and 150 madrasas is going on.

Health

He said the government has undertaken various programmes to ensure health for all by the year 2000.

The government has allocated Tk 1,089 crore for implementing 93 development projects in this sector during the current fiscal year. The amount is about 9 per cent of the ADP budget, he added.

Justice Shahabuddin said the government has taken steps to close down the private clinics set up through irregularities and to stop activities of the institutions built by violating laws of Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council.

Hebron deal signed

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The accord includes a nine-page protocol on the Israeli troop withdrawal from Hebron and a three-page 'note for the record' summarising the agreement on further redeployments.

Other key points of the accord:

- The first of three troop withdrawals from rural areas of the West Bank will begin the first week of March.
- Negotiations on unresolved issues will resume immediately. These include travel routes between the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and the opening of an airport and port in the Gaza Strip.
- Israel promises to release Palestinian prisoners.
- Palestinians promise to strengthen security cooperation, prevent incitement and hostile propaganda, and apprehend and punish terrorists.

The accord left many questions unanswered, including who will control the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, a site holy to both Muslims and Jews. It will remain in Israeli control for at least three months.

There were also loopholes about the extent of further pull-backs in the West Bank, where Palestinians want to create an independent state.

27 per cent of the West Bank, want 80 per cent or more to be in the autonomy zone by the last withdrawal in mid-1998. Israel has given no hint of how much additional land will be turned over, and it could be as little as 10 per cent.

Israel made clear that the extent of the withdrawal will be determined by its government alone and suggested the troop redeployment would be halted if there was new violence by Palestinians.

US President Bill Clinton led international praise of the deal, while Jewish settlers angrily accused Netanyahu of surrendering to Arafat.

Some 400 militant settlers

Inflation rate

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conomic Update' for the forthcoming Independent Review of Bangladesh Economy by the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the low level of investment and economic activities might create a semblance of economic stability, but the real challenge now lies in reactivating the economy."

He warned that the macroeconomic stability was partly a symptom of continuing stagnation in the level of economic activities. In spite of a stagnant level of import in the current fiscal, the pressure on the international reserve was continuing, he noted.

The present level to foreign exchange reserve is around two billion US dollars, according to a BB statistics.

Raqibul Huda

From Page 1

massacre, which is the "most heinous killing in cool brain in the contemporary period".

They argued that police opened fire at the directive of Mirza Raqibul Huda to kill the then leader of 15-party alliance and now Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, and other leaders.

They said the accused was also responsible for torture on journalists at the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka when he was DMP Commissioner.

The lawyers of plaintiff argued that Huda was accused of non-bailable offences in many sections of CrPC like 302 and the highest punishment in such case should be death sentence.

The Magistrate, after hearing both the sides, said according to CID investigation report, at least 25 people were killed in police firing on that day at Lalidighi.

But as all the dead bodies were burnt after the killing, there is no postmortem report, he observed.

In the verdict, he rejected the bail prayer and shifted the case to District and Sessions Judge Court.

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Tangail

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its firm resolve to stamp out terrorism from the society, saying this was its top priority job.

Soon after assumption of office, the Home Minister held a workshop in the city on law and order and expressed his desire to drum up public support to contain terrorism across the country. He also pledged to hold such workshops elsewhere to mobilise public opinion but it has not yet materialised.

Tangail is a classic case of what we now hear as terrorism sponsored by powerful families with high political clout legacy of this menace dates back to days as early as Bangladesh's emergence. The reason is the highly unscrupulous manner in which the administration have gone about their tasks over the years.

Convenience and vested interests are the factors that have come to defeat the cause of justice and duty. This sickening trend should come to an end. And for this to happen, a combination of political will and peoples support is needed.