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Former MP Advocate Shamsul Alam of Siraganj presenting a bouquet to BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia at her Minto Road residence marking his joining the party yesterday.

— Star photo

Court ruling vindicates decision to remove Benazir govt: Leghari

ISLAMABAD, Jan 30: President Farooq Leghari, the man who fired Benazir Bhutto for running a corrupt regime, said today that he was vindicated by Pakistan's highest court which backed his decision to remove her government, reports AP.

In his first interview since the Supreme Court judgment was handed down a day earlier, Leghari told The Associated Press that it was a "landmark judgment" that should be taken as a warning by the next administration.

"It was the first time that the Supreme Court has held that large-scale corruption in government can also be the basis for dissolution," said Leghari. Using a controversial constitutional amendment, Leghari dismissed Benazir's government last November 5 on a litany of charges that read like a criminal rap sheet.

He accused her of running a

Rly wagons

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Among the 1079 wagons 894 wagons were loaded with fertilizer, 104 tank lorries with diesel, 55 wagons with wheat and the rest with other essential items. Some 835 wagons are stranded at different points of Dhaka division and 244 in Chittagong division.

On the western side some 1403 wagons loaded with food grains, jute, stones and other goods have been waiting for transshipment to the east.

Of these, some 1139 wagons were loaded with food grains, 105 with jute, 47 with stones and the rest with other items. Some 495 wagons are stranded at Parbatipur, 409 at Bonarpura and 343 at Bharatkhali.

Meanwhile, supply of these commodities has fallen sharply in the markets of the 16 northern districts, pushing up prices abnormally.

Jute dealers said they might incur a heavy loss due to delay in transshipment.

Sangsad snippets

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The Opposition MP continued, "Instead of 'Daal-free', we now hear 'Bhaat-free' (rice at free of cost)."

Food and Agriculture Minister Begum Matia Chowdhury ridiculed Alam by saying "Lakhs of thanks to Allah that rice is now offered at free of cost. If so happens, people of the country will offer their heartfelt 'do'a' for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina."

During a lively exchange on BNP's rejoining different parliamentary committees, Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim said, "I'm confident of resolving all problems had the Chief Whip of the Opposition (Khandakar Delwar Hossain) agreed to sit with his head cool."

Deputy Leader of the Opposition AGM Badruddoza Chowdhury promptly took the floor to tell the bald minister, "the head of the Opposition Chief Whip is cool enough since he has much hair on his head."

No sooner Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid returned to the House after the break for Zohr prayers, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Badruddoza Chowdhury took the floor to tell the Chair, "You've come 10 minutes after you were informed of the quorum. We feel bad about the wastage of time on private members' day."

Retorting to the Opposition Leader, the Chair said, "I also feel the same when I continue ringing the bell and you people don't turn up..."

A smiling B. Chowdhury rose again to acknowledge the Chair's comment.

BNP deputy Alamgir Kabir

Bridge in Tangail collapses again, road links with Dhaka disrupted

TANGAIL, Jan 30: The Sholakura bridge on Tangail-Mymensingh road collapsed again disrupting communication in nine routes linking Mymensingh and Dhaka for a second time in two days, reports UNB.

Official sources said some wooden planks of the bridge in Kalihati thana, broken on Sunday, was repaired on emergency basis but some more planks gave in again on Tuesday.

Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on Wednesday on both sides of the bridge causing untold suffering to the passengers including women and children.

Road communication between Tangail and Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Nandina, Mandalanda, Shariabari, Kendua, Gopalpur and Baalla have been totally disrupted.

Tangail Roads and Highways Department said repair work resumed immediately on the old and dilapidated bridge but, they said, the bridge must be reconstructed to avoid frequent break-downs. The bridge had to be repaired at least ten times in the last six months.

Garments shop looted at Banani Bazar

By Staff Correspondent

A number of shopkeepers closed their shutters at Banani Bazar following an attack on a garments and tailoring shop in the area under Gulshan thana in the city last night.

A group of about 10 people allegedly ransacked and looted the garments shop at about 8 pm. Later, the shopkeepers brought out a procession and held a rally in the Bazar area to protest the incident, local people said.

The reason behind the attack could not be known immediately. Gulshan police said that they had deployed extra police forces in the area and assured the agitated shopowners of taking action against the attackers. Later, the shops were opened at about 9:30 pm.

BCL activists

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their hide-outs, police said.

The arms recovered from their possession include one sawed off rifle, two foreign made pistols, two foreign made revolvers and some ammunition, police said.

The arrested were identified as Masum, Borhan, Jamal, Kaosar, Sarforaz Newaj, Tutul, Saifuddin, Taher and Ayub.

Maximum power for MPs

From Page 1

the bill to the committee, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the House Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury took the floor and requested the Chair to fix a time-binding for placing its report on the bill.

The Speaker read out Article 209 of the JS Rules of Procedure that says any report on private member's bill is required to be placed before the House within one-month if the time-limit is not fixed otherwise.

Badruddoza then said, "We don't want it to remain in cold storage" (about the bill).

At this stage, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru rose and urged BNP members of the committee on private members' affairs to participate in its meetings so that it could function more speedily.

Badruddoza said, "We are eager to participate but, remove the problems first."

House yesterday. One resolution moved by Haji Mohammad Selim of Awami League, demanding setting up of a technical

More ADB aid for local govt bodies, urban dev assured

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will provide increased sustainable technical assistance and project aid to Bangladesh for developing infrastructure, preserving environment and alleviating poverty in the rural areas, reports UNB.

This was communicated to LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman when the visiting high-powered ADB mission, led by Navid Hamid, called on him at his Sangsard Bhaban office yesterday.

The new assistance will enhance ADB's investment in the rural areas and create employment opportunities for the rural poor.

Lauding the government steps to bring about a radical change in the local government structure, the ADB team assured the minister of providing technical and project aid for strengthening local government bodies.

The ADB mission told the minister that the bank was ready to provide technical and project aid to coordinate the development activities of the service-oriented organisations of Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna cities under the City Government Structure.

The Bank will also extend large-scale technical and project assistance under its Urban Infrastructure Development Programme to provide the increased population with civic amenities.

Under the programme, the ADB will provide assistance for

constructing fly-over and roads, developing drainage and sewerage system, increasing drinking water and power supply in the big cities.

The ADB, under its priority programme, showed interest in transforming Dhaka into one of the beautiful cities in Asia.

Besides, the Bank will provide necessary project aid for developing the pourasavas and human resources in the country.

Welcoming the bank's present working plan, the LGRD Minister said this programme will play a significant role in improving the living standard of the people in Bangladesh.

He told the delegation that local government institutions are being strengthened to involve rural people in economic activities and establish genuine leadership of public representatives in every tier of the administration.

A qualitative change is being brought about in the local government structure to remove poverty, illiteracy and malnutrition, create employment opportunity, build up strong rural physical infrastructure and ensure participation of local people in the development process.

He said the present government within its seven-month rule constituted a high powered Local Government Commission with public representatives.

The Commission will submit a report on local government structure with recommendations to the government today.

39 die in Chinese hotel fire

BEIJING, Jan 30: A fire that swept through a hotel in central China early Wednesday, forcing some guests to jump from their windows, has killed 39 people, a local official said Thursday, reports AP.

The blaze broke out at 4:50 am (2050 GMT Tuesday) at the Yanshan Hotel in Changsha, the capital of Hunan province. It started on the second floor and quickly spread to the seventh floor, blocking all exits on six floors, Xinhua News Agency reported.

By Thursday afternoon, the initial death toll of 30 had risen to 39, according to an official at the provincial foreign affairs office, who said his surname was Huang.

The fire took two hours to extinguish, and more than 100 people were taken to a hospital, Xinhua said.

It said the cause of the blaze was under investigation.

Food procurement drive

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was scheduled to be completed today (January 31).

Replying to a starred question by BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam, the minister informed the House that till January 28, a total of 63,303 metric tons (MT) of paddy and 89,328 MT of rice were procured by the government attaining 53 per cent of the set target.

As per the procurement target, Tk 325 crore was earmarked earlier to procure 1.5 lakh MT each of paddy and rice through designated procurement centres opened for the first time at the thana level. Motia Chowdhury told the Jatiya Sangsad that previously procurement centres were opened at the district level.

Procurement rates for paddy and rice are Tk 6.70 per kilogram of paddy while Tk 10.50 for per kg of rice.

The food minister also replied to a number of question relating to present food situation in the country. Some MPs belonging to main opposition BNP said that farmers were not getting a fair price for their produce.

In a supplementary question Shahidul Islam said that farmers were not being able to sell their produce due to the conditions set by the government and wanted to know whether the government would make those conditions more flexible.

In reply, Motia Chowdhury said a set criterion of 14 per cent moisture, 4 per cent unproductive grains and so on had been maintained from British

period and added that, "we can't afford to off-take rotten rice from godowns."

When BNP deputy Moshir Rahman raised a question of alleged malpractices by a section of Food Department officials, the minister said, if the allegations can be proved, actions would be taken against the corrupt officials.

Begum Motia Chowdhury informed the House that till January 16, a total of 5,71,741 MT of rice and 3,90,044 MT of paddy were in stock in the government godowns. She, however, said that government had no plan to increase procurement prices of rice and paddy now.

About the uptrend in wheat price, Motia Chowdhury said the government would import one lakh MT of wheat during the current fiscal while more wheat would be procured by private importers.

The projected target of food grain production was 207 lakh MT in 1996-97 fiscal year, said the minister adding that a shortfall of 17.34 lakh MT would be made up through imports.

As some lawmakers drew her attention that people were not willing to take rice instead of wheat due to the price factor, Motia Chowdhury said, the government was offering rice for schemes under Test Seed (TS) and Food-For-Work (FFW) as there was sufficient stock in the godowns. She, however, added that rice and wheat would be allocated in a 50:50 share for TR and FFW.

by individual lawmakers, will come up for disposal when the House will resume after the Eid-ul-Fitr.

Requesting Selim to withdraw his resolution, State Minister for Labour and Manpower M A Mannan told the House that there were 11 technical training centres in the country under government management contemplating setting up of 12 more including one exclusively for women. He also assured that technical training centres would be established in each thana in phases.

Earlier, the House resumed at 11:56 am with Deputy Speaker, Advocate Abdul Hamid in the chair. Yesterday was a private members' day in the House.

The day's business also included, one-hour question-answer and disposal of private members' resolutions.

Before adjourning the session, the Speaker conveyed Eid greetings to all members of the parliament who also reciprocated.



Young man stabbed to death in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was stabbed to death by an unidentified gang near a club at Khilgaon under Motiheel thana in the city last night.

Siddiqur Rahman alias Shipon, 25, sustained fatal injuries when the gang stabbed him with sharp weapons. Shipon succumbed to his wounds at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at about 9 pm, police said.

The cause of the killing could not be known immediately. Police were yet to identify the killers.

The victim, son of Ramzan Ali of Khilgaon Bagicha area, went out of his house when some people called him at about 7 pm. Later at 8:30 pm, he was found lying dead near the South Khilgaon Social Welfare Council, police said.

Local people took him to the DMCH where doctors declared him dead. The body was sent for autopsy.

Boy burnt alive in Ctg slum fire

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 30: A 12-year-old boy identified as Jashu was burnt alive in a fire that gutted at least 20 shanties at a slum at Pora Colony in Babubazar area of the city this afternoon, fire brigade sources said.

The fire originated from an oven at 4:20 pm and spread to the other shanties. The fire fighters brought the blaze under control after an hour.

Tax officials

From Page 1

office suddenly at around 11:30 am the same day and used abusive language. Ruhul Amin alleged that Moni also assaulted him.

The other FIR in this connection was lodged by Kabirul Yazdani Khan, Assistant Commissioner (Taxation), Tax Area-1, Dhaka.

In his FIR, Kabir alleged that Moni along with at least 10 armed hoodlums entered the office of Delwar Hossain, Commissioner (Taxation), Circle-1, at around 10:30 am yesterday morning. Abusive words were used against Commissioner (Taxation) Delwar Hossain, in presence of Siddik Hossain Chowdhury, Commissioner (Taxation), Appeal area-1, and Md Badul Islam, Additional Commissioner (Taxation).

The FIR also mentioned that Moni threatened to come to the office again the next day. Moni, talking to The Daily Star, denied the allegations brought in the FIR and said that the officials of the Taxation Department demanded bribe. He further alleged that the officials imposed inflated taxes on his business house and kept it concealed from him, while at the same time froze his 10 separate accounts in various banks in the first week of this month.

Signature

From Page 1

ture. Thus, she made the above mentioned note, he said.

"In the ECNEC meetings, officials present us so many papers and documents that if we really read all of those, it would take at least two years to finish," he added.

"This also explains why implementation of a government decision takes so much time," he said. "This system can not be meant for serving the people but ruling the people. I believe this is high time we should change it so that implementation becomes fast and easy."

For faster implementation of a government decision, the telecommunications minister observed that the tender bidding system should go as it often led to procedural delays. "Like in the Philippines, we should also go for assigning a company for big projects like building power plants through simple negotiations. Such selection will, however, be discussed at the parliament to maintain transparency."

Tofael

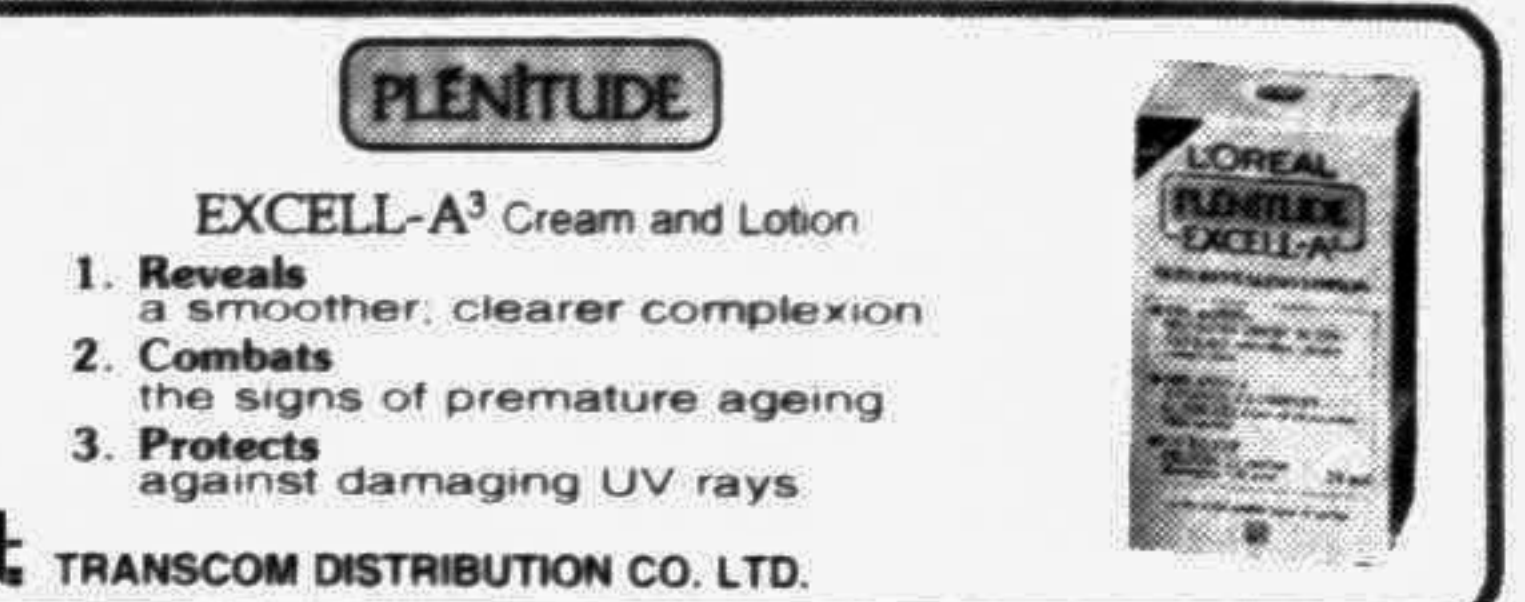
From Page 1

government," he said of the four-member monitoring committee, headed by director general (textiles) of the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

He said the condition of rules of origin was breached during the past government which did not lobby the EU that Bangladesh does not have ability to meet the condition of three-stage transformation.

Bangladesh will not need any GSP when the European countries would allow products from here a zero tariff as agreed during the World Trade Organisation meeting in Singapore, he said.

"But we have to develop our own textile and backward linkage industries by the year 2005 to maintain our competitiveness in the world market," the minister said.



Leghari: Ties with Dhaka

From Page 1

Pakistan Tuesday last on a two-day visit as a special envoy of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Diplomatic sources in Islamabad gave the impression that Pakistan's 'doubts' over the recent development in Indo-Bangla relationship and the proposed sub-regional grouping seems to have been removed 'to some extent'.

During his visit, the Bangladesh foreign secretary had also audiences with Malik Meraf Khalid, Prime Minister of the caretaker government, Foreign Minister Sahebzada Yakub Khan, Energy Minister, Finance Minister and Information Minister. Besides, Farooq Sobhan had meetings with his Pakistani counterpart, defence secretary and home secretary also.

He also handed over two letters of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to President Leghari and Prime Minister Khalid, another letter of Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad to the Pakistani foreign minister.

During his meetings with Pakistani leaders, Farooq Sobhan explained Bangladesh's stands on various issues like Ganges water treaty and sub-regional grouping among India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

Though government sources here gave the impression that Pakistan was not opposed to regional cooperation, they said that such cooperation (sub-regional) was not possible within the SAARC.

When contacted over tele-

phone Bangladesh High Commissioner in Pakistan, QAMA Rahim expressed the hope that Pakistan would now understand well Bangladesh's position on the issue. "We don't want a misunderstanding on this issue between the two countries."

Besides regional issues, Farooq Sobhan's discussion with his Pakistani counterpart also included the issues of trade and commerce and cultural exchanges. Bangladesh also put up the issue of repatriation of Pakistanis living in Bangladesh.

High Commissioner QAMA Rahim and Deputy High Commissioner Masud Aziz were present during meetings between Farooq Sobhan and the Pakistani leaders.

Farooq Sobhan left Pakistan last night for Washington to join Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's delegation there.

JS session

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The House yesterday disposed of a private member's resolution on the demand for establishing a technical training centre at Kamrangirchar under Lalbagh thana within Dhaka city. Haji Mohammad Selim (AL-Dhaka) who moved the resolution withdrew it on the request of the minister concerned.

Nine other private members' resolutions were also introduced in the House for its consideration on the second day of the private member's day yesterday.

Service tenure

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Some senators expressed concern over degradation of the standard of education and for this they blamed teachers' involvement in politics and their indifference.

The Senate formed a committee to improve academic standard with Prof Mobin Chowdhury as its convener. It formed another committee with M Akhteruzzaman as chief to investigate alleged corruption in the university administration.

The Senate emphasised adequate training of teachers on teaching methods and improvement of their standard in

English language, specially for the freshers. The proposal on training, however, was not accepted.

বিজিএমইএ ফোরাম

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Editor: Mahfuz Anam

Printed & Published by A. S. Mahmud, Managing Director, on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd, 52, Motiheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, from City Publishing House Ltd, 90, Kakrai, Dhaka-1000. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: House No: 11, Road No: 3, Dhanmandi R/A, Dhaka-1205. PABX 500992-4. Commercial 500091 (Direct), Fax No: 88-02-863035, GPO Box No: 3257, Cable: DAILYSTAR, DHAKA. Email: dstar@bangla.net