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PHILIPS

## 2 lawyers quit as judge 'imposes ban' on Sharif's evidence

LAHORE, Feb 27: Two lawyers representing deposed Pakistani prime minister Nawaz Sharif at his trial withdrew from the case today, criticising a court order which may impose a reporting ban on their client's evidence, reports AFP.

Ajaz Battalvi and Khwaja Sultan said they could no longer represent their client.

"We are withdrawing from the case," they said in a joint statement at a news conference here.

"This is ridiculous. We cannot contest the case when such measures are taken by the court hearing a historic case," they said.

Sharif, his brother Shahbaz and five other officials have been charged with hijacking, abduction, attempted murder

and terrorism in a case based on the night of the country's military coup on October 12.

All the accused have pleaded not guilty but face the death penalty if convicted.

The two lawyers were the most senior of the nine-member defence team and represented both Sharif and his brother.

Prosecutors last week asked the anti-terrorist court hearing the case to hold sessions in private when Sharif and his co-accused gave evidence, fearing the premier's testimony could breach national security.

On Friday, Judge Rehmat Hussain Jafri ruled Sharif could give evidence in public, but that he would decide what could be reported.

"We also protest that a for-

mer prime minister of the country was tried in such a manner and in a court which was created to deal speedily with terrorism cases," the two lawyers said.

Battalvi said it was the first time he had pulled out of a case.

A senior lawyer, he represented the prosecution in the trial of another former Pakistani premier, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was sentenced to death and hanged in April 1979.

"Can I defend my client when he has been denied that freedom of speech which law gave him," Battalvi said.

For me as a counsel of Mian Nawaz Sharif the last two days have been a period of acute anxiety and tension."

He said the judge had stepped beyond the law in his decision.

"I say it with great respect that law has not given him any such authority nor has law fixed any parameters by which the statement of the accused can be scissored by the judge," he said.

"To say the least, this is not justice."

One of Sharif's remaining lawyers, Nihal Hashmi, said the withdrawals showed their client was not getting a fair trial.

"It is a serious blow. The resignations show that the trial is not fair," he said.

"Now when his turn comes they are depriving his right and the right of the masses to know about the real picture on the day of October 12."



BNP brought out a procession in the city yesterday evening in support of the Opposition called dawn-to-dusk countrywide hartal today.

— Star photo

## Food security: Accord with EC soon

By Staff Correspondent

The government and the European Commission (EC) is likely to sign an agreement shortly on the EC's future food security programme in Bangladesh.

"We are preparing a draft of a formal proposal in this regard, which would be submitted before Bangladesh government after approval from the EC head office," said Paul Webber, director general (development) of the EC headquarters, yesterday.

Without giving any specific date for sending the proposal to the government, he said, "We are going to submit the proposal within two to four weeks."

Webber is on a visit here as part of a five-member delegation led by EC commissioner Paul Nielson to assess the EC role in the development of Bangladesh. Nielson left Bangladesh last week.

The EC officials said around 80 million euro would be provided to Bangladesh in the next three years under EC food security programme that will start this year after signing of the agreement.

Under the proposed agreement, the EC is supposed to increase cash aid instead of providing food from this year as part of its changed food security programme.

The EC officials said that the government agreed in principle on getting cash instead of food.

Webber and some EC officials attended a seminar in the EC headquarters on the new food security programme.

He also chaired a working session of the two-day seminar on "Integration of the cash payment system in food security programmes of Bangladesh", at the IDB Bhaban and answered questions concerning the issue.

The new EU food aid strategy which shifts the emphasis on the cash from food would provide greater flexibility in the choice for Bangladesh and eventually will be more beneficial.



Police examining the broken locks of shops at Hasina Yasin Electrical Goods Market in old Dhaka where a robbery took place on Saturday night.

— Star photo

## US itself plagued with HR problems: Beijing

BEIJING, Feb 27: Turning the tables on its accuser, China scoffed today at the United States' human rights record, saying America is plagued with racism and other problems and should not pass judgement on other nations, reports AP.

The accusations, contained in a government report, "US Human Rights Record in 1999," was China's response to the US State Department's annual human rights report, which criticised Beijing.

"The United States does not have a good human rights record of its own but likes to play the role of the world's human rights judge," the Information Office of China's State Council, or Cabinet, said in its sharply critical 10,000-word report.

The report was carried by Xinhua, China's government-controlled news agency.

The American government needs to keep an eye on its own human rights problems, mind its own business and stop interfering in the internal affairs of other countries by utilising the human rights question," it said.

The US State Department report, issued Friday, said Beijing's rights situation deteriorated markedly last year. It listed such examples as intensified suppression of dissent and control over unregistered churches, restriction of fundamental freedoms of minority groups including Tibetan Buddhists, and increased manipulation of the press and the internet.

Among its many accusations, the Chinese report reported that the safety of US citizens is threatened by widespread violent crime and a huge number of privately owned firearms. Police brutality is common, child labour is rampant and "the state of children in the US is grim," the report charged.

"In overcrowded American prisons, inmates are mistreated and violence prevails," it said.

The human rights of female prisoners are seriously violated."

It said the shooting of African immigrant Amadou Diallo by four New York City police officers came "to symbolise the violent behavior of the American police. The officers were acquitted Friday of the Rules of Business money bill must be put up through the finance ministry."

But he said Rule-34 speaks about caretaker government, not money bill. In fact, it is the serial-34 of the schedule IV of the Rules of Business that states about money bill or any bill involving public expenditure.

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The officer said: "Secretary (Home) should know that as per Rule-34 (of Rules of Business) money bill must be put up through the finance ministry."

But he said Rule-34 speaks about caretaker government, not money bill. In fact, it is the serial-34 of the schedule IV of the Rules of Business that states about money bill or any bill involving public expenditure.

Other details were not immediately available.

## New 100-taka notes issued

Bangladesh Bank has issued new notes of Tk 100 denomination to the market, reports UNB.

The note with signature of governor of the bank Dr Mohammad Farasuddin is same as the existing one except the signature and embedded security thread, said a Bangladesh Bank press release.

The existing note will remain in circulation along with the newly issued note.

### Jalal murder

The case, in brief, is that the body of Jalal was found in the water tank of D B Office on March 25 last year. The same day a general diary was registered with Ramma police stating that an unidentified body was found in the water tank of their office. On the basis of GD the police lodged FIR on March 26 the same year.

Later, Abbasuddin, son of Jalal, lodged a second FIR with police on April 4 last year. By profession driver of a Rent-a-Car Service, Jalal used to visit D B office to give information about serious crimes. He was called on March 21 last year at 6 am by some persons from the D B office and, thereafter, he was missing till his body was found. Police submitted chargesheets against four persons, including Ziaul Ahsan. The trial court framed charges against them.

Senior Advocate Sirajul Haque appeared for Ziaul Ahsan, while Deputy Attorney General M Faruq and Assistant Attorney General A K M Zahurul Haque appeared for the state.

### Tannery

From Page 1  
nning process are sodium sulfide, dye, resin, finishing materials, fat, liquor, preservatives, chromic powder, solvents and others toxic pollutants.

There are 270 registered tanneries in Bangladesh. Ninety per cent are located on 25 hectares of land at Hazaribagh, in southwest corner of Dhaka. Most of the tannery factories are non-mechanised or semi-mechanised, using old and polluting leather processing methods.

Between 12,000 and 15,000 workers work daily in the peak season, while 8,000 to 12,000 workers work during the low season. About 100,000 people are directly or indirectly involved with these industries.

### Hartal today

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Which was addressed by city BNP convener Sadek Hossain Khoka MP.

The rally over, leaders and activists of BNP and its front organisations brought out a torch procession from party central office at 6.22 pm and paraded Bijoynagar, Paltan, north gate of Baitul Mukarram, Dainik Bangla and Fakirpore areas.

It also organised rallies and brought out several torch processions from different parts of the city in support of today's hartal.

Jamaat and IOJ organised separate rallies at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram national mosque and in front of Purana Paltan mosque in the afternoon.

### Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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### Teachers indeed!

BANGKOK, Feb 27: Six Thai girls drowned after being told by their teachers to walk blindfolded into a pond, police said today, reports Reuters.

The girls, aged between 10 and 12, were on a school outing in Songkhla province, about 1,200 km south of Bangkok, when the accident happened.

Two others were saved.

Witnesses told police that as the girls walked into the water, a game organised by the teachers, they began to panic.

The victims apparently struggled while getting deeper into the pond and instead of returning to land they lost their sense of direction, an officer said.

Police are investigating.

### Call to increase reserved seats for women in JS

By Staff Correspondent

Some women's rights activists in a letter yesterday urged the government and the Opposition to increase to 64 the number of seats reserved for women in the Jatiya Sangsad.

The activists who include intellectuals and teachers also urged the prime minister and the Opposition leaders to open the seats to direct elections rather than the nomination system.

They said the government was distancing itself from the 1997 National Women Policy.

However, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told the nation Friday night that the government could not amend the Constitution to increase the number of reserved seats for women while the Opposition abstained from attending the parliament session.

The activists said the government's inaction was a clear violation of the constitution.

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