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Remarks on judges

Police refuse to register FIR against four ministers

By Staff Correspondent

Motijheel police yesterday refused to register an FIR against four ministers for delivering speeches against the judiciary and judges of the High Court.

A group of lawyers led by Golam Kibria, advocate of the Supreme Court, brought charges against the ministers under the recently enacted Public Safety Act.

The lawyers alleged that the ministers held rallies and brought out processions in different areas under the police station on April 13, 17 and 19 and made comments on HC judges which were published in different dailies on April 14 and 20.

When contacted, OC, Motijheel thana said, a group of lawyers came to file a case against some ministers. The complaint has been received and is being investigated, he added.

He said police will decide whether the complaint should be accepted as an FIR or as a general diary after investigation and consultation with higher officials.

The ministers are Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Minister for Forest and Environment, Abdus Samad Azad, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, State Minister for Planning and Mohammad Nasim, Minister for Home Affairs.

The lawyers also accused Mukul Bose, Relief and Social Welfare Secretary of the ruling party.

13th amendment

HC serves notices on AL, BNP secys

By SC Correspondent

The High Court yesterday served notices on Secretary General of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and General Secretary of the ruling Awami League in connection with a writ filed earlier challenging the 13th amendment to the Constitution.

The sixth Jatiya Sangsad brought the 13th amendment to the Constitution providing for a caretaker government for holding parliamentary elections.

M Salimullah, a Supreme Court lawyer, filed the writ on January 25.

Following the writ, the High Court served notices on the secretaries of Law Ministry, Jatiya Sangsad and Election Commission.

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April	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
25	5:30 am	6:15 pm
27	5:27 am	-

Prayer Timings

April 26	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:45	5:15
Zohr	1:00	1:30
Asr	5:00	5:15
Maghrib	6:25	6:30
Esha	8:00	8:30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Death ref 12th, at the bottom of cause list

By Staff Correspondent

The death reference in Bangabandhu murder case was enlisted yesterday for hearing by the newly constituted Criminal Division Bench of High Court comprising Justice Ruhul Amin and Justice ABM Khairul Huq.

Twelve death reference cases were enlisted in the cause list of the Bench yesterday, of which the Bangabandhu murder case is the last item.

The new Bench is supposed to hear criminal reference cases of 1997 from 12/97 to 26/97 and of 1998 from 3/98 to 30/98 as per serial.

By count, the cases before the Bench are 43.

But yesterday's cause list showed seven death reference cases of 1997 and five of 1998, totaling 12. The Bangabandhu murder case is the last item having the number 30/98.

Chief Justice Latifur Rahman constituted the new Division Bench on Monday for hearing the death reference in Bangabandhu murder case after two Benches felt embarrassed earlier.

The new Bench is the third constituted by the CJ since March 30 to hear the death reference.

On April 24, the Bench comprising Justice MM Ruhul Amin and Justice Abdul Matin felt embarrassed to hear the death reference. Prior to this, the Bench comprising Justice Amirul Kabir Chowdhury and Justice Abdul Aziz also felt embarrassment on April 10.



Mob beat suspended policemen Tota Mian at Purana Paltan yesterday. —Star photo

Hasten fall of govt: Khaleda

Joint rally in Dhaka on Apr 30 to announce fresh programmes

From Abdul Wadood

RAJSHAHI, Apr 25: The chiefs of the four opposition parties in the BNP-led alliance urged the countrymen today to join the movement to topple the anti-people and terrorist government immediately.

After politicising and destroying all institutions the ruling party has turned its attention on the higher courts, they said.

There is no alternative to ousting this party from power if there is to be democracy, an independent judiciary, rule of law and development, they said while addressing a huge public meeting at the historic Madrasah Maidan.

Tens of thousands of people and supporters of the four parties gathered for the meeting.

Organised by the All Party Action Committee, Rajshahi See page 11 col 7



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia addressing a public meeting at Madrasah Maidan in Rajshahi city yesterday. —Star photo

2 cops beaten up for alleged extortion

By Staff Correspondent

A sub-inspector of City Special Branch and a suspended policeman were beaten by a mob in the city yesterday after they were caught for allegedly taking away 2400 US dollars from a young man on Thursday, police said.

The two -- SI MA Fattah of City SB and Tota Mian, a suspended Naik -- were rescued by Motijheel police. A revolver and hand cuff were also recovered from their possession. They allegedly took away 2400 dollars from Tobarak Hossain Khasru.

Fattah and Tota came to the foreign exchange branch of Janata Bank at Purana Paltan yesterday and asked some brokers if they could convert

10,000 dollars into Taka.

The brokers became suspicious, and after settling the price, asked them to hand over the dollars near the Danik Bangla Crossing. One of the brokers called Khasru on mobile phone.

Khasru came and identified that the two policemen took away 2400 dollars from him on Thursday. People nearby gathered there, beat and dragged the law enforcers to a nearby shop. Police came and rescued them.

Khasru claimed that on Thursday, the two policemen in a motorcycle challenged him near the petrol pump at Danik Bangla crossing for carrying 2400 dollars. The policemen



Police arrested M A Fattah, a sub-inspector of Special Branch, yesterday for taking away US\$2,400 from a young man. —Star photo

Spl court likely for speedy trial of Jail Killing Case

By Mizan Ali

A special court may be set up for speedy trial of the Jail Killing Case, official sources said yesterday.

Special courts may also be set up for trial of other heinous crimes like those committed by Ershad Shikdar, the sources said.

A government directive was sent to the Law Ministry on Monday to study the pros and cons as regards setting up of such special courts, they said.

The ministry, under the guidance of Law Secretary NK Chakrabarty, is examining whether the special courts can be set up under the existing laws or a special law should be enacted for this purpose, the sources said.

Four national leaders -- Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, AHM Quamaruzzaman and Mansur Ali were killed inside the Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975.

The then DIG Prisons Abdul Awal filed the Jail Killing Case on November 4, 1975, under Section 302/34 of the Penal Code. The CID took up the case on September 10, 1996 and after two years' investigation, submitted a charge sheet accusing 23 people.

The case is pending with the Metropolitan Court of Sessions, Dhaka as charges are yet to be framed.

Seven of the accused, now in Dhaka Central Jail, were produced before the court yesterday. The next date for hearing was fixed on May 3.

The CID submitted a charge sheet in the case accusing 23 people. Among them, 19 were also charged in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

Of those charge-sheeted in the Jail Killing Case, seven are in Dhaka Central Jail, two are dead and the rest 14 -- all former military personnel -- are absconding.

The two dead are former president Khauddaker Mubtahaque Ahmed and former secretary of the session.

150 students begin 'fast-unto-death' at Rajshahi College

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 25: About 150 students began a fast-unto-death this morning seeking admission to first year Honours class in Rajshahi Government College.

About 900 seats are lying vacant in 19 departments of the college for this session, college sources said.

The admission process was postponed halfway when some student organisations demanded at least 10 per cent quota for them.

The date for admission expired on February 27. A total of

BIRDEM cardiac centre: Tender irregularities detected

By Naimul Haq

The parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Social Welfare has detected irregularities in tender for a cardiac centre at the BIRDEM hospital.

The prime minister allocated Tk 25 crore for a cardiac centre at BIRDEM Hospital. The executive committee for the National Economic Council approved the money for the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, the co-executing authority of the project for the centre.

The association formed a technical evaluation committee to assess the tender offers to set up the cardiac centre.

Sources said seven offers were received. The evaluation committee recommended at a meeting on March 16, 1999 that Siemens, a German medical

equipment manufacturer, should be awarded the contract, since they submitted the lowest bid.

However, on April 24, 1999 the association's national committee decided to cancel the tender and re-tender because they were short of funds.

Siemens lodged a complaint with the Ministry of Social Welfare. The ministry formed a committee to investigate but its findings were never revealed due to "pressure from higher authorities."

"The ministry suspended its query half way as the parliamentary standing committee on ministry of social welfare also initiated investigation," said Mainul Hassan, the private secretary to the state minister for social welfare. "The parliamentary standing committee

had nothing to do with a non-government body like BIRDEM. "So, naturally the ministry did not implement what parliamentary standing committee had recommended."

However, clause 248 of the Rules of Procedure of the Bangladesh Parliament states that the standing committee has every right to investigate into ministry affairs.

When the government did not respond, Siemens sent a letter to the prime minister explaining the "unfair decisions."

The petition cell of the Prime Minister's Office sent a directive to the Social Welfare Ministry to investigate. Allegedly the ministry never responded.

Meanwhile, the parliamentary standing committee's own investigation

One of 132 students file writ with HC

Marufa Akhter, one of 132 students of Motijheel Model School and College, yesterday filed a writ petition before the High Court challenging action of the government debarbing them from appearing at the HSC examinations beginning tomorrow, reports UNB.

Chairmen of Dhaka Board and Text Book Board, Secretary of Education Ministry and Principal of the college were made respondents. The division bench comprising Justice Mainur Reza Chowdhury and Justice Mohammad Mozammel Hossain heard the petition.

Appearing for the petitioner Advocate Khandokar Mahabuddin submitted that the students were in no way at fault. It is a question of fate and career of the young girl students. Debarbing them from appearing at the examination may jeopardize their life, contended the

JRC survey along Sylhet border Talks to resume today after long 7 months

From Iqbal Siddiquee

SYLHET, Apr 25: Work on the Indo-Bangla Joint River Commission Survey along the Sylhet border has been suspended for seven months due to a shortage of money.

However, a meeting of the Sylhet-Assam regional chapter of the commission will be held tomorrow at the Jakiganj border post, said an official. It will be the sixth meeting in a year.

An 11-member team headed by the chief engineer Abu Taher Chowdhury of the WDB will take part.

The additional chief engineer, Cachhar and Hill Flood Control Department, Silchar, Assam, DR Talukder will lead the Indian delegation. The objective of the meeting is to finalise the work plan for the

joint survey and dredging of the Barak river in Assam and the Surnia and Kushiyara rivers in Sylhet.

Water Board officials said the paper work for the reclamation of the Surnia river and effective measures to protect the Barak Valley across the Indian border from floods was completed about seven months ago. However, no significant development have been made due to a shortage of money.

Water Development Board asked for Tk 60 lakh for the project, but got only Tk 1 lakh which was spent on the paper work. The commission's regional officials haven't done any paper work since August 1999, said the source.

"BPDB, being a government body, cannot afford unlimited delays in the implementation of a project as a consequence of your misdeamour. You are arbitrarily imposing strain upon BPDB, which is detrimental and prejudicial to our national interest," stated the letter.

Two DU students expelled for possessing illegal arms

By DU Correspondent

Dhaka University authorities yesterday temporarily expelled two students from the university for possessing illegal firearms, said a DU press release.

The expelled students are Mohammad Monjurul Ahmed, a first year student of Public Administration Department and Mohammad Mujibullah Farhad, a first year student of the Department of Arabic. Both were residing at the Zahurul Huj Hall.

The authorities also declared them *personam non-grata* on the campus until disposal of an arms case filed against them, the press release added.

Police arrested the two with firearms from near Plessey-Nikkhet link road while they were allegedly trying to snatch a rickshaw passenger on Sunday night. Police filed an arms

SUST students to begin 'fast unto death' in city today

By DU Correspondent

Students of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) will begin fast-unto-death at the Central Shaheed Minar today to press home their demand including immediate reopening of the university.

The students under the banner of 'General Students of SUST' staged a sit-in at the Shaheed Minar from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm yesterday in support of their demands.

The other demands are security of the students, teachers and officials of SUST and immediate solution to the problems raised over naming of residential halls and buildings of the university.

The students submitted a memorandum to the Chancellor of the University President Shahabuddin Ahmed recently to press home their demands.

In the memorandum they threatened to go for fast-unto-death from April 26 if the demands were not met by April 25.

Shahjalal Varsity Peace procession at Sylhet Apr 29

By Staff Correspondent

Sylhet Bibhagh Unnayan Parishad (SBUP) will bring out a peace procession in Sylhet town on April 29 demanding reopening of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) and overall development of the division.

Leaders of SBUP, council for the development of Sylhet Division, announced the programme yesterday at a press conference in Dhaka.

Oesur Rahman Chowdhury, secretary of SBUP, said the crisis at SUST should be resolved immediately for the sake of about 3500 students who have been facing uncertainty for the last six months.

He urged the authorities concerned to ensure security of students, teachers and employees of the university.

Rahman also pointed out a number of demands for the overall development of Sylhet division.

Vice president of SBUP, Nasrin R Karim said they want integrated development of Sylhet division. "Peace is the prime condition for any development. That is why, we urge all quarters, including students, teachers and political leaders to work together for restoring peace," she added.

Lt Col (ret'd) Azizur Rashid See Page 12 Col 8

AES creating a 'smoke screen' to obscure facts: PDB

By Sharier Khan

The chairman of the Power Development Board accused AES yesterday of creating a "smoke screen" on the issue of the Meghnaghat Power Plant site.

Quamrul Islam Siddique said the board plans to seek compensation from the U.S. power company, since it did not take control of the site or begin construction on time. The board is also ready for AES' legal challenges.

"AES has created a smoke screen that is obscuring the site's actual facts and figures," said Siddique. "We are satisfied with the quality of the Chinese developer's work."

The battle between the board and AES took a serious turn early last week after the project's consultant issued a take over certificate to the Chinese developer, and the board issued a final take over notice to AES.

The board said the land lease agreement would be cancelled and AES would have to pay compensation if it did not take over the site by April 24.

AES said the board couldn't cancel the land lease under their agreement. It also demanded compensation from the board for the damage they caused to the project.

"The problem actually lies with AES itself," said Siddique. "It has been unable to arrange financing for the project and is delaying the take over."

"It is also using the delay as a pretext to collect \$30,000 US daily in damages from the board," Siddique said CWHEC, the Chinese developer, would also have to pay for its delays. It has been served with a notice to pay 50 days worth of damages for construction delays.

CWHEC was scheduled to deliver the site last July, but the land wasn't ready until January, a six month delay. CWHEC has issued a counter claim against the board for losses caused by the devaluation of the taka and other reasons.

"CWHEC's claims are invalid," said Siddique. "This project is financed entirely in taka and therefore we shall not pay for any such claims by CWHEC."

Regarding allegations of manipulation by Mott MacDonald, the local agent for CWHEC, and the project's consultant, Siddique said that Syed Abul Hossain of SAHCO was the local agent of CWHEC and that he was "not directly involved" with Mott MacDonald.

"An adviser never works through a local agent," said Siddique. "We believe Mott MacDonald has been playing a fair role as the consultant."

Siddique dismissed allegations that the board was taking the side of CWHEC and McDonald against AES.

AES refused to take over the land because it said the site was so poorly prepared that it might not be stable after construction. It also said the site was not elevated enough and that the installation of heavy machinery would increase the risk of damage during an earthquake.

The board sent another letter to the AES on Sunday that stated "the defects alleged by you are incorrect, imaginary and do not come within the purview of LLA."

"The possession date passed on January 3. Therefore, as per Section 2(a) of Schedule II of the LLA, you are liable to pay Tk 53 million 33,334 for Initial Development Payment within seven days after the possession date."

The letter stated that AES was also liable for Tk 3.5 million in rent and interest for the first part of the site.

"BPDB, being a government body, cannot afford unlimited delays in the implementation of a project as a consequence of your misdeamour. You are arbitrarily imposing strain upon BPDB, which is detrimental and prejudicial to our national interest," stated the letter.

Monilal Tripathi next Indian envoy

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Monilal Tripathi, a career diplomat and Indian envoy to Mauritius will succeed Deb Mukherjee as envoy to Bangladesh shortly. It was confirmed yesterday.

Mukherjee, who served as an envoy here for over four years, will take up his new assignment as his country's envoy to Nepal. A veteran Bangladesh watcher, Deb Mukherjee served as his country's envoy for a long time and was posted here during four Indian administrations, viz Congress, United Front and the BJP twice.

Mukherjee, one of the senior most diplomats of his country, was earlier tipped to be the foreign secretary. But he would now move to the Himalayan Kingdom which, analysts say, is currently occupying a prominent position in Indian foreign policy focus.