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CJ apprises President of problems in dist courts

Chief Justice Latifur Rahman yesterday called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban and apprised him of various problems facing the district level courts, reports UNB.

The Chief Justice also discussed the working of the different courts including the subordinate judiciary.

He told the President that he visited a number of district courts recently and saw some of the problems faced in those courts.

Main problem is shortage of courtrooms, commonly known as 'Elash' due to which judges are sharing the courtrooms, that is, one judge is sharing in the early part of the day and another judge working for the rest of the day in the same Elash, he said.

"Even the district Judges are sharing their courtrooms with different tribunals judges, such as, tribunal under the Public Safety Act," he told the President.

"This is happening because the government appointed judges for different tribunals without making any provision for their courtrooms for judicial works," he said.

In the case of Magistracy, he said, the problem is shortage of magistrates, which is one of the reasons for accumulation of cases, Justice Latifur Rahman said.

President Shahabuddin heard the Chief Justice with interest and assured him that he would instruct the authorities concerned to solve the problems, said a Bangabhaban press release.

Rab murder Petition accusing KCCI chief, 10 others

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Sept 11: Rab's elder son Arifur Rahman Mithu filed a petition at noon today with the CMM's court accusing 11 people of the murder of his father.

The accused are Khulna chamber president Sheikh Nazrul Islam and his younger brothers Moinul Islam Moina and Tariqul Islam. Rangul, James, Motaleb, Azim, Javed, Chhoton, Golam Mowla Shannu and Shaheen.

Of the accused, Rangu, James, Motaleb, Chhoton and Javed are in Police custody, while others are absconding.

In the FIR lodged with the Sonadanga thana on the night of August 11, Arifur Rahman Mithu did not name any one as accused.

Persons arrested so far in this connection were treated as suspects who later confessed their involvement in the murder.

The CMM has, however, sent today's petition of the complainant to the authority of KMP requesting to consider it as supplementary FIR.

Opposition members of JS committee allege Propaganda on gas reserve on to justify export

Opposition members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy Ministry yesterday said propaganda was being orchestrated to justify gas export, reports UNB.

"Imaginary, baseless and exaggerated propaganda about our gas reserve is on only to create the ground for exporting the natural resource to a foreign country," BNP lawmaker Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain told a press conference.

The former energy minister said the recently published World Energy Report 2000 based on a US geological survey, which revealed some 33.5 trillion cft gas reserves, was not made on credible basis.

According to the report of 1986, unexplored gas reserves in Bangladesh were 18.9 TCF, 27.83 TCF in India and 34.37

TCF in Pakistan while in this year's report it was 33.5 TCF in Bangladesh, 22.2 TCF in India and 28.04 TCF in Pakistan.

Pointing out the figure on gas deposits the opposition lawmakers said the quantities in India and Pakistan decreased from 1986 to 2000 but it doubled only in Bangladesh.

"How it is possible?" questioned Dr Mosharraf at the conference held against the backdrop of foreign oil companies' pressure for allowing pipeline export of gas to neighboring India.

Terming the US Geological survey report a blueprint to make a plea for exporting Bangladesh's gas, they said any scientific study is yet to be conducted to know the actual quantity of gas reserve in our country.

Criticising the government,

they said that it had already leased some 8 gas blocks to foreign companies but copies of the agreements were not shown to the parliamentary standing committee of the concerned ministry.

"It is kept secret," said Salauddin Quader Chowdhury MP, another member of the committee.

The lawmakers said they are against any move to export gas anywhere. "At first we'll have to be assured about the actual quantity of our gas reserves and meet our demand."

They apprehend if all the blocks are given lease simultaneously to the foreign companies, the country would lose its control over the natural resources that will be suicidal and against national interest.

PM returns home

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina returned home in the early hours of yesterday ending her six-day visit to New York where she attended the UN Millennium Summit, reports UNB.

Senior ministers, diplomats, high civil and military officials were present at the airport to receive the Prime Minister.

Sheikh Hasina addressed the millennium summit of the United Nations attended by over 150 heads of state or government.

Rangpur AL vows to resist Ershad politically

From Our Correspondent

RANGPUR, Sept 11: Effigy of Jatiya Party Chairman and former President H.M. Ershad was burnt today and he was again declared "persona non grata" from a huge rally of Awami League in Rangpur.

A procession carrying the effigy of Ershad paraded the town area chanting anti-Ershad slogans. The demonstrators led by AL district President and former MP Shah Abdur Rezaque, district Secretary advocate Elias Ahmed and other activists of the party and its front organisation, held a largely attended way-side meeting at local Kachery Bazar, where effigy of Ershad was burnt before hundreds of people.

Speakers at the meeting vowed to resist H.M. Ershad politically and accused him of corruption and autocratic rule.

The former president today started a six-day tour in the district. On the first day today Ershad held way-side meeting

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Seema murder Court orders judicial probe

From Our Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Sept 11: The CMM's court, Chittagong, today ordered a judicial probe into the sensational Seema Murder Case and appointed a magistrate for the purpose.

Seema, a teenage garments factory worker was gang raped in police custody inside Raouzan thana on October 9, 1996. She died inside Chittagong Jail on February 7, 1997.

Seema's brother Sajal Kanti Chowdhury filed a case with the court on September 3 against 15 people including the then district SI, jailor, jail super, some physicians and police personnel in connection with his sister's death.

The court ordered the Kotwali thana OC on September 3 to report within seven days if any other case was filed elsewhere in this connection. As the OC failed to submit any report, the court today ordered a judicial probe into the case.

Dacoity at Dhanmondi

By Staff Correspondent

Robbers took away cash and valuables worth about Tk 7.11 lakh from a residence at Mirpur Road at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

A gang of robbers cut the grills and entered the house of AKM Wahid Shahjahan at about 3 am yesterday. They confined the residents and took away over 85 kilos of gold ornaments and Tk 64,000 cash from the almirah, sources said.

Police, however, said that it was a case of burglary and there was none in the room from where the valuables were stolen, police said.

A case was filed with Dhanmondi police in this regard.

By Staff Correspondent



Waiting for a new lease of life: Amit at the hospital yesterday.

— Star photo

Doctors sit Sunday to decide on breathing device for Amit

A medical board is scheduled to approve on Sunday the purchase of breathing pacemaker — a costly device that may give Shaikat Rahman Amit a new lease of life.

The board would also complete the formalities for a surgery on Amit and for sending the money to Dobelle Institute in New York, USA. Bangladesh Bank requires a certificate issued by medical board to allow sending money abroad.

Nearly Tk 48 lakh has so far been donated for Amit, a 12-year old school student who needs implantation of the breathing aid.

We had set out to raise Tk 43 lakh (equivalent to US\$ 76,000), but we have got more than that," said Amit's father.

More than 50 organisations including schools, NGOs, private and public bodies apart from doctors, teachers, students, bank employees and members of the public responded to Amit's plea for helping him to buy the rare life-breathing aid.

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Bus service suspended

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Sept 11: Direct bus service between Rajshahi and other districts was suspended for an indefinite period from this afternoon at the call of Rajshahi District Motor Bus Samikha Union (RDMBSU).

RDMBSU took the decision after arrest of a bus worker this noon. Police arrested Nurul Islam, supervisor of a Rajshahi-Dhaka coach service for his alleged involvement in a bus dacoity about one and a half months ago.

Pabna gunfight: Police SI, outlaw killed, 15 shot

From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 11: A sub-inspector of police and an outlaw were killed on the spot and 15 others shot during a gunfight between police and outlaws at Dalar Char under Bera thana of Pabna district this afternoon.

The dead were identified as Hedayetul Islam, 40, sub-inspector of Bera thana and Ratan, 30, an outlaw.

Of the injured, 10 including three outlawed party members were rushed to Pabna Hospital and private clinics.

The gunfight began when police raided Dalar Char village

45 km off Pabna district headquarters at about 5 pm today.

UNB adds: The officer-in-charge of Bera police, Nurul Alam was also injured during the gunfight.

Ratan died on the spot, said an unconfirmed source, adding the death toll could rise as police assumed few more gunmen might have died in the clash that continued into the evening.

Three injured outlaws — Ratan, Shaheen and Jahangir — were arrested along with three rifles, the sources said. Later Ratan died.

Sensing police presence, the outlaws fled on them leaving the police officers and personnel wounded.

SI Hedayetul hailed from Gai-bandha district. "Dalar Char is a safe haven for outlaws, terrorists, toll collectors and snatchers ganging up from Kushtia, Jhenidah and Pabna districts," one police officer said.

BB Governor

From page 1

Farashuddin said Bangladesh Bank has conducted an investigation and found some flaws in the operation of the Saudi-Bangladesh joint venture investment company. The Bank will take action according to the nature of irregularities, he said.

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"Dalar Char is a safe haven for outlaws, terrorists, toll collectors and snatchers ganging up from Kushtia, Jhenidah and Pabna districts," one police officer said.

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Agitated workers put up barricade on the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway yesterday, the first day of SKOP programme.

— Star photo

JS condemns bomb planting at Kotalipara Sedition cases will be filed against 26: Home Minister

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday adopted a resolution condemning the recent planting of a powerful bomb at Kotalipara and demanding immediate action against the persons responsible for it.

The 76-kg bomb was recovered from the venue of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's public meeting a day before the programme.

Abdul Latif Mirza of Awami League moved the resolution after two and a half hours' discussion on the issue.

Rounding up the discussion, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim assured the House that all those involved in the heinous act would be brought to book soon.

Sedition cases will be filed against all the 26 persons arrested so far in connection with the incident, he said.

Six others from the Treasury Bench and another member

from the pro-government faction of Jatiya Party (M-M), Fazle Rabbi, also took part in the general discussion.

The lone BNP lawmaker, Major (Retd) Akhtaruzzaman, was also given the floor to discuss the resolution. But he finished his allotted time by debating with the Chair on his plea to propose an amendment to the resolution.

Deputy Speaker Abdul Hamid said there was no scope for the opposition MP to seek any amendment at that stage.

Akhtaruzzaman continued his bid to take part in the discussion when Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury took the Chair. He had another round of debate with the Speaker who also turned down his request as the 'chance was missed'.

The Speaker then rose on his feet and sought opinion of the House, which rejected Ak-

htaruzzaman's plea.

Forest and Environment Minister Sajeda Chowdhury, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, Food Minister Amir Hossain Amu, Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, Agriculture Minister Matiya Chowdhury and the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Suranjit Sengupta also took part in the discussion.

The ruling party lawmakers described the Kotalipara incident as an attempt by 'anti-liberation forces' to overthrow the government of Sheikh Hasina to protect the killers of Bangabandhu. He blamed the BNP-led opposition parties for the 'conspiracy' and alleged that certain alien forces were also involved in it.

They said the opposition has opted for terrorism after they realised that they would never

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Bill in JS to ensure environment friendly urban habitats

By Staff Correspondent

Housing, Public Works, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Mosharraf Hossain yesterday introduced a bill in the Jatiya Sangsad for ensuring environment friendly urban habitats by preserving play grounds, open spaces, parks and natural water reservoirs in all cities, district and divisional headquarters and municipal areas.

The "Bill for preservation of play grounds, open spaces, parks and natural water reservoirs in the cities, district and divisional headquarters and municipal areas, 2000" was then referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Housing and Public Works for scrutiny and return to the House within a month.

The Bill provided that parks or gardens, open spaces, play grounds and natural water reservoirs identified in the master plans and land survey maps of

the cities, district and divisional headquarters and municipal areas cannot be declassified for use for other purposes.

These identified places also cannot be rented or leased out or handed over by any means. Cutting of trees in a park and changing of basic structure of any park will be considered as declassifying it and as punishable offence, the Bill said.

However, the authorities may consider application from any land owner for declassification of land marked as park, open space and play ground, which has to be disposed of within 60 days.

Before considering any application, the authorities have to consider that such declassification would not affect the master plan or would not have any negative impact on environment affecting people living around the place.

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Talks on WDB situation today

By Special Correspondent

A vital meeting of Water Development Board (WDB) officials, union leaders of its employees and representatives from the Ministry of Water Resources and Flood Control is due to be held today in a bid to end bitter relations between the officials and the unions.

WDB sources said that the situation deteriorated due to the CBA agitation for removal of some high officials of the WDB including a director general and transfer of a number of engineers.

Tension mounted at the WDB headquarters at Motijheel yesterday as drivers were barred by some union leaders from driving the vehicles of 11 engineers whom they termed 'anti-independence elements, Rajakars, pro-Jammal' etc.

Even the driver of a private car carrying one of the officials was harassed, the sources said. The Power and Water Engineers Association at a meeting yesterday decided that they would not use their official transports till the authorities take action against the 'trouble makers'.

Cabinet body examining political implication of VPA

By Reaz Ahmad

The first meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Vested Property Act (VPA) yesterday discussed the probable political implications of recovery of vested property.

The meeting discussed that there might be 'political implications' if the government goes for recovering vested property from illegal occupants to return those to their original owners.

The Daily Star reported on Friday that people affiliated with political parties mainly occupied property of minority Hindus, which were listed under VPA (formerly, Enemy Property Act) over the last three decades.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Motin Khasru, who is also Convener of the six-member Cabinet Committee, chaired the

meeting, held at the Secretariat. The meeting that began at 1:30 pm lasted five hours.

In addition to the five other committee members, Attorney General Mahmudul Islam, Member of Law Commission Justice Naimuddin Ahmed, and senior officials of the ministries concerned also attended the meeting.

On September 3, the Cabinet decided in principle to return the vested property to their original owners and formed the Cabinet Committee to formulate a draft law for restoration of ownership of the dispossessed persons.

Coming out of the meeting yesterday, a number of Cabinet Committee told The Daily Star that the government was proceeding with 'utmost caution so that none is affected'.

"We want the whole process to be completed with a 'minimum shake,'" he said requesting

anonymity.

Another member of the Committee said, "It's a very complicated matter. After having discussion for long five hours, we could complete scrutiny of hardly eight of the total 26 sections of the draft law."

An observer, who attended the meeting on invitation of the Cabinet Committee, told the correspondent that there are people who are occupying vested property for decades. "The meeting discussed at length the real implications of recovery of those lands."

None of the participants in yesterday's meeting agreed to speak on record on the plea that the whole issue was still in a formative stage.

They said, the Cabinet Committee on VPA would hold its second meeting at 4 pm on September 19.

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