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Bill on women's seats returns to House without any changes

By Staff Correspondent

After holding on to the crucial bill on women's reserved seats in parliament for more than five months apparently to get opposition's support, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Law Ministry brought the bill back to the House yesterday.

Apart from a technical correction, the committee did not suggest any change in the original bill introduced in the House on June 17. The bill providing for a 10-year extension of the tenure of 30 existing reserved seats for women was sent to the standing committee the same day. The committee was asked to scrutinise the bill and send it back to the House in a month.

The committee report on the bill welcomed two popular suggestions on the issue of the provision of direct election to the reserved seats and increase in the number of such seats. So long, women from the reserved seats were the choices of the ruling party for the provision of their election by the directly elected MPs.

Mainstream opposition parties, including BNP also supported the proposed arrangements. But the parties neither put up their suggestions to the standing committee nor are they

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Opposition rally at Paltan today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will hold its joint "grand" public rally at Paltan Maidan this afternoon to press for resignation of the government and early national election.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will address the rally as chief guest. She is likely to announce fresh programmes including a countrywide demonstration on December 5 to protest price hike of essentials and deterioration of law and order. City BNP president Sadek Hossain Khoka MP will preside over the meeting.

The alliance has also planned to organise iftar-party in all wards and thanas and continue organisational programmes during the month of Ramadan.

JP Chairman HM Ershad could not address the rally as he is now

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SC order on Ershad's leave petition today

The Supreme Court will pass its order today on admissibility of former president HM Ershad's leave petition to appeal against the High Court verdict confirming his conviction in the Janata Tower corruption case, reports UNB.

Hearing on the leave petition was completed yesterday in the open court presided over by Chief Justice Latifur Rahman.

In case leave is granted, Ershad's counsel will move with his bail petition.

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Built-in Flaws in the System
Cause the Chaos
By AMM Shahabuddin
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 23		5.11 pm
Nov 24	6-19 am	

Prayer Timings

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-18	5-23
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

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Court hears Manab Jamin tape Ershad tried to influence court, HC observes

By Special Correspondent

The High Court yesterday decided to refer, the issue of 'conduct unbecoming' of a judge of the court to the Chief Justice.

A Division Bench of the HC took the decision after hearing the contempt of court proceedings against the daily Manab Jamin for publishing a story on alleged conversation between the judge and former president HM Ershad following his conviction on graft charges.

The Bench comprising Justice Syed Amirul Islam and Justice AKM Shafiuddin heard the taped conversation closed door in their chamber.

The tape was given by the counsel of Manab Jamin.

The Chief Justice is likely to send the matter to the Supreme Judicial Council which is empowered by the Constitution to investigate the capacity or conduct of a judge.

The HC Bench also issued a rule on Ershad for contempt of court, asking him to explain by December 3 why he should not be prosecuted for attempting to influence the course of justice.

It is also going to pass an order on November 27 whether or not to issue a contempt rule on the judge concerned, whose name was not disclosed.

The Bench observed that from the conversation, it appeared that Ershad had tried to influence a judge in connection with the Janata Tower case and tried to influence the course of justice which is a criminal offence, said Barrister Rokanudin Mhamud who appeared for Manab Jamin. He was talking to news-men.

The Bench directed that the rule should be sent to Ershad in jail and also to his residence. It will hear on November 27 whether Manab Jamin should surrender the 'tape' allegedly containing the conversation between a Judge and Ershad.

The HC also considered a contempt rule on Justice Naimuddin Ahmed, member of the Law Commission, but deferred it following a prayer by the daily Ittefaq and the Sangbad authorities to allow a reply to another show cause notice for publishing a report on the remarks of Naimuddin Ahmed on the cassette issue.

The court gave another chance to the daily Janakantha to say what they would like to in respect of a rule to show cause on the same issue by November 27. It took note of the statement by the Janakantha authorities published yesterday.

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The case of IFIC

Big borrowers hold banks hostage

Star Report

IFIC Bank is in a desperate struggle to get rid of a huge load of defaulted loans stuck up with 20 borrowers. The bank management and board are now frustrated, as legal actions against them have proved ineffective.

The situation is now extremely difficult for the bank. It has Tk 392 crore stuck up with these 20 defaulters which constitute 65 per cent of its total classified loans. But on top of it, IFIC has to keep Tk 296 crore as provision for non-performing loans which it is unable to invest.

Today, IFIC is a classic example of how a private bank can become hostage to defaulters. While the big debtors refuse to pay back, the bank does not get any legal remedy because of a slow-moving judiciary.

These 20 defaulters include names perpetually found on the list of top defaulters with any bank. They include Mohammad Ali, the recently elected vice president of FBCCI, Bengal Group of Abul Khair Litu, Solitec, Ranabir Ray Group of Narayanganj,

Karim Group, Dewan Suhel Afzal Group, BD Dredging Group, Impress Leather and Broadway.

Ali alone has Tk 32.44 crore in defaulted loans with the bank. Other than money suits, the bank also filed a criminal case against the FBCCI vice president for issuing a check for Tk 2.28 crore in 1997 which bounced because of insufficient fund in his account.

Bengal Group of Abul Khair Litu owes IFIC Tk 20.86 crore in defaulted loans. Solitec owes Tk 77 crore.

The situation has reached such a pass that even legal steps against the defaulters prove ineffective.

Documents show that till December 31, 1999, IFIC had 447 cases, which involved Tk 365 crore in defaulted loans. Of these, 144 cases had been pending with various courts for between five and ten years.

As unrealised loans piled up, the bank found that the wait for judgement was heavily taxing. The total

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Mayor's commercial flair... the park on the eastern side of the Karwan Bazar kitchen market counts its days as makeshift shops are being erected. Dhaka Mayor Mohammad Hanif has allocated parts of the park and a main road, and a walkway under a single scheme for construction of 51 shops.

--Star photo

Hanif violates PM's order

150 shops allocated in public park at Karwan Bazar

By Staff Correspondent

Violating a directive by the prime minister, Mayor Mohammad Hanif has allocated parts of a public park and a main road and walkway under a single scheme to build 51 shops behind the kitchen market at Karwan Bazar.

The Daily Star carried out a report on the gobbling up of this public park on Tuesday. Chief Estate officer (CEO) of DCC Fazle Elahi told Star yesterday their inquiry following the report found that the park had already been allocated to 51 individuals for a monthly rent of Tk 600 each.

In a directive to all relevant agencies and organisations, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has forbidden building any structure or conducting land filling on public parks, open spaces or low-lying areas in the city.

Fazle Elahi said the whole process of allocating the park was done before he took charge of the Estate Department recently. He said it was the former Chief Estate Officer, Ehsanul Fattah who might have processed the file.

But Ehsanul Fattah, who is now Deputy Secretary at the LGRD Ministry, said he knew nothing of the allocation and it was 'probably' done during the interim period after he left the DCC.

During the interim period, Kamal Talukdar was in charge of the Estate Department, but he could not be reached for comments. When contacted last night, Mayor Mohammad Hanif said that parks were not supposed to be allocated for shops.

When this correspondent said that the official document for allocation bore his signature, Mayor Hanif replied, "In that case, I cannot

pass any comment right now, I have to go through office files but I will definitely look into the matter."

Officials at DCC's Zonal Office-6 at Karwan Bazar said yesterday they had alerted the Estate Department at the Nagar Bhaban about the illegal occupation of the public park. They also said they had planted scores of trees inside to protect the public park.

Fazle Elahi yesterday claimed that in the documents the area of the Kitchen Market Park is shown as car parking space. The DCC's Zonal Office-6 is located hardly 100 yards away from the park.

According to local people and traders, some influential business leaders of Karwan Bazar in connivance with some top DCC men have grabbed the park and portion of the narrow road along northern and eastern ends of the park.

The business leaders are behind a move to build shops on the park and the shops reportedly belong to different front organisations of the Awami League.

Earlier, Bangladesh Hawkers League (BHL), Karwan Bazar unit, in a press release alleged that a number of influential local traders claiming themselves to be relatives of the mayor is building shops on the park.

The so-called relatives of the mayor are likely to rent or sell possessions of the shops for Tk 50,000 to 1 lakh each, it added. On the other hand, as per the DCC records, DCC will get only Tk 600 per month for each of the shops.

Earlier, the encroachers started installing pillars with tube-well pipes along the northern and eastern end of the park and the roads

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Anne calls on Shahabuddin, Hasina

Princess Anne yesterday called on President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, reports UNB.

Welcoming the Princess at Bangabhaban, Shahabuddin recalled the historical and traditional relations between Bangladesh and UK.

The President appreciated her outstanding contributions to the Save the Children Fund and deep commitment to primary healthcare and other development projects for children worldwide.

The President mentioned a number of organisations working in Bangladesh to which Princess Anne is patronising.

The Princess thanked President Shahabuddin for receiving her and mentioned the traditional ties that exist between the two countries. "The relations will further be deepened and diversified in the years ahead," she said.

She also thanked the President and the government for extending full cooperation in smooth functioning of the Bangladesh Awami League in a rejoinder on a news headlined "20th BCS examination: PSC influenced by ruling party?" which was published in The Daily Star on Monday categorically denied involvement of any of the Awami League members in influencing the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

The rejoinder issued by AL Secretary-General Zillur Rahman said, "None of the Awami League Central Working Committee (ALCWC) members or any of their wives belong to the 11-member PSC (Board)."

It further stated that no AL member of any level were represented in the PSC Board and no AL member tried to influence the PSC.

Keep economic issues above partisan politics : Saifur

By Staff Correspondent

Former finance Minister M Saifur Rahman has called for keeping economic issues above politics.

"We should not go for party politics on economic issues. Politics should aim at interest of the nation and not of BNP or Awami League," the BNP stalwart said.

He was speaking as chief guest at a Round Table Discussion on 'Banking and Insurance Sector Reform: Key for boosting investment and economic development' yesterday, organised by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI).

Criticising the government policy regarding banking and insurance sectors, the former finance minister said the Banking Act should be amended and there should be a 'regulatory framework' for insurance companies.

The discussants included former deputy prime minister Jamal Uddin Ahmed, DCCI President Aftab ul Islam, its former president M A Yunus, Secretary General of Bangladesh Insurance Association Mollah SM Nurul Islam and managing director of Pragati Insurance Ltd A K M Rafiqul Islam. M A Baqui Khalily, Chairman of Banking and Finance department at Dhaka university, presented a paper on banking.

Saifur Rahman was critical of the government for allowing a number of private banks and insurance

companies in the country. "New banks mean more defaulted loans and more problems," and the government is already facing problems with the banking sector, he said.

Criticising the role of CBAs in banking sector, the former finance minister pointed out that the BNP government had taken some stringent measures to check their unhealthy activities.

But the present government allowed those again, he alleged.

In this regard, he mentioned that as many as 30 insurance companies were given licence after the BNP left power. This was done without conducting any survey on the requirement, he said.

Saifur did not subscribe to the view that banking and insurance were the key to boosting investment and said 'an investment friendly environment is the key'.

Good governance, improved law and order and proper infrastructure are necessary for creating such an atmosphere but these are yet to be ensured, he said.

About the Board of Investment, Saifur said, "Instead of promoting investment, BOI is preventing it."

Jamal Uddin Ahmed said the 'default culture' in

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WB threatens to roll back funds for WASA project

By Staff Correspondent

The World Bank will stop financing the fourth Dhaka Water Supply Project, if some of its conditions are not fulfilled within the next three months.

The Bank has sent a letter to the Local Government Division, informing the government of its decision. It will, however, continue payment for the next two months, WASA sources said.

Earlier, on a visit to Bangladesh in August this year, a WB team complained that WASA was yet to fulfil some of the major preconditions such as realisation of arrears from the government and private organisations, and administrative reforms within its ranks.

Its express dissatisfaction raised fears among officials of the WASA as well as the Local Government Division that WB might discontinue its financial involvement in the project.

The water treatment plant at Sayedabad is the major component of the project. Nearly 50 per cent

of the Tk 750 crore plant has been completed so far. Although the plant is scheduled to be complete by July next year, it might drag on till December.

Once complete, WASA's water supply capability would reach 22.5 crore litres a day. At present WASA supplies 120 crore litre per day against a demand of 145 crore.

The World Bank and the governments of France, Japan and Bangladesh are jointly financing the plant. As per agreement, WB will provide Tk 336.45 crore and the governments of France and Japan Tk 137.83 crore and Tk 5.45 crore respectively. The government of Bangladesh will bear the rest. WB has already sanctioned more than half of its promised amount.

Realisation of pending bills with the public and private organisations and administrative reforms were two major preconditions the WB attached while

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AL rejoinder on 20th BCS exam

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Awami League in a rejoinder on a news headlined "20th BCS examination: PSC influenced by ruling party?" which was published in The Daily Star on Monday categorically denied involvement of any of the Awami League members in influencing the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPSC).

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It further stated that no AL member of any level were represented in the PSC Board and no AL member tried to influence the PSC.

Brokers lure patients to put chambers of CMCH docs

From Nurul Alam

CHITTAGONG, Nov 22: Over 100 'brokers' are active in Chittagong Medical College Hospital, luring patients to private chambers of a section of CMCH doctors or to clinics with which they are 'linked', sources concerned said.

The brokers are paid for this. They operate in connivance with the doctors concerned and many of the hospital staff -- nurses, ward boys, ayas and others.

This evil practice continues unabated in the second biggest hospital in the country, the sources pointed out.

Several thousand patients turn up at the outdoor section of CMCH every day and about 1500 usually remain admitted.

When contacted, Director of CMCH Brig Zillur Rahman said, "We are maintaining vigilance to check such a practice by brokers and doctors."

He went on, "We have already issued show cause notices to some doctors for negligence of duty during office hours."

"Besides, an investigation is on against a doctor at the Skin and VD department in this hospital following a complaint from a patient. Punitive action would be taken against him if he is at fault as per probe report".

An application submitted by the doctor concerned to get posted as a resident physician in this hospital has also been held up for this, he mentioned.

The director further said that proper action would be taken if any doctor was found a late comer or engaged in any private clinic during hospital duty hours from 8 am to 2:30 pm.

Some sources alleged that brokers take additional money to provide tickets to patients queuing at the outdoor wing of CMCH. They collect tickets in collusion with some staff at the ticket counter and give those to patients.

On the other hand, a section of doctors give visiting cards to many patients, advising them to come to their (doctors) private chambers or clinics for better treatment, the sources added.