

Reforms to help overcome KAFCO crisis, hope shareholders

KAFCO shareholders yesterday expressed their optimism that the latest reform initiatives would help the industry overcome its crisis and become viable, reports UNB.

Fresh discussions among stakeholders would pave way for long-term financial assistance required for rejuvenating the fertiliser factory, the board of directors of Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company felt in a meeting here.

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed, while addressing the representatives of partners of the multinational fertiliser company, said Bangladesh government gives priority to making KAFCO a profitable concern since it is a landmark in the foreign investment here.

Besides, the success of KAFCO, that involves financial assistance of JBIC, would expedite implementation of other Japanese-aided fertiliser projects here, the minister hoped.

Despite being the single-largest shareholder representing 43 per cent shares, Bangladesh government did not earn a single farthing from this giant plant that went into commercial operation

in 1995. Uneven terms and conditions set by previous two governments have compelled Bangladesh to supply gas to KAFCO at 0.75 dollar per unit until 2005 whereas Bangladesh buys gas from foreign oil companies at 2.70 dollar per unit.

Tofail, the key person behind bringing foreign shareholders to the fresh negotiation table, thanked the shareholders for safeguarding Bangladesh's interest as well as working out a bail-out plan for the troubled venture.

The minister said the government was now working on a "white paper" to make public the previous deals where country's interests were largely overlooked.

KAFCO Chairman and Industries Secretary Al Amin Chowdhury, representatives for Japan, European Consortium, Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) and Denmark, KAFCO managing director and director were present in the meeting at Industries Ministry.

HC vacation bench formed

Chief Justice Latifur Rahman yesterday formed a Vacation Bench in the High Court Division of the Supreme Court during vacation from December 17 to January 4 to accept the emergency matters, an official hand-out said, reports BSS.

The bench, which will be conducted by Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim, will sit on December 17, 18, 20, 21, 26 and 31 and January 2 from 11am to 1.30pm at room number 12 of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court.

AL demonstration

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Victims of the killers with death sentences, which fulfilled the expectation of the nation, the meeting observed.

The other judge fulfilled the expectation of the nation by maintaining death sentences against ten out of 15, but acquittal of remaining five surprised and shocked the nation.

The AL resolution further said: "It is the aspiration of the entire nation that the death sentences given against all self-confessed killers of Bangladesh should be executed immediately."

BSS adds: Senior Awami League leaders and ministers of the government have demanded capital punishment of all who were involved in the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members on the night of August 15, 1975.

Speaking at an impromptu public meeting at Paltan Maidan yesterday, Awami League General Secretary and Local Government Minister Zillur Rahman demanded capital punishment of all the indicted persons in the case and said the legal fight by Bangladesh Awami League would continue till the final end of the case.

Awami League Organising Secretary and Home, Post and Telecommunications Minister Mohammad Nasim while addressing a students' rally at Dhaka University yesterday said the hopes and aspirations of the nation have not properly reflected in the verdict. He said that the legal process for amendment to the verdict would continue. Nasim also asked all to remain calm and keep faith in court.

Shahabuddin

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The President expressed the hope that the partnership between the two countries would flourish in the coming days under your leadership.

The President also wished health, happiness and success of his US counterpart.

In a similar message, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina extended her heartfelt congratulations to George W. Bush.

"Your victory is indeed a tribute to your impeccable credentials, dynamism and drive and a clear manifestation of the trust and confidence that the American people have reposed in your leadership," she said in her message of felicitation.

"I look forward to working in close cooperation with you in the coming days. I sincerely hope that the relationship between our two countries which has undergone a qualitative change in recent years, would continue to flourish under your administration," Hasina added.

The horrific night

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Seeing Bangabandhu's blood-stained body on the staircase, a weeping Begum Mujib refused to go downstairs.

Then Pasha took her and other family members except Russel and Sheikh Naser back to the bedroom, took a stenogram from a havidar and shot dead Begum Mujib, her two daughters-in-law and Jamal.

Meanwhile, Russel was brought downstairs where he stood along with the staff and disarmed police guards in front of the house in a row.

He got frightened and asked plaintiff Mohitul, also standing in the row, "brother (bhaiya), won't

Opposition plans

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holding of upazila polls and appointment of Zila Parishad chairmen, and isolating the government from people through sustained campaign.

Another leader said the opposition would have succeeded much earlier had the movement strategies been perfect in the past. Imprudent and unrealistic programmes announced in the past at the influence of the hard-liners and low-ranking leaders of the liaison committee caused serious damage to the parties, especially the BNP, instead of expediting the anti-government movement.

He said side by side the militant movement after the Ramadan, the alliance was also planning to submit en masse resignation from parliament to further expedite the programmes. Although no decision regarding the resignation from parliament was made, the resignation could be tendered at one stage of the post-Eid movement.

A policy maker of BNP recently told The Daily Star that Khaleda Zia had instructed secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan to think about future programmes and sit with other party leaders to finalise a strategy to be launched after the Eid.



Military personnel have been deployed at different street corners to control the excessive traffic jams that is typical in the last few days leading to the Eid. -- Star photo

10 death sentences upheld

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awarded by District and Sessions Judge of Dhaka Kazi Golam Rasul on November 8, 1998.

Justice Khairul Huq upheld the trial court's death sentence to all the 15 accused, completing the order at 11am.

Justice Ruhul Amin in his order dismissed the appeals against the trial court verdict preferred by Faruq, Shariar and Huda and granted Lt Col (rtd) Mohiuddin's appeal. He upheld the lower court death sentence of nine on two counts-- for murder and for conspiracy to murder-- and revised that of another, Capt (rtd) Abdul Majed, upholding the death sentence on one count only, conspiracy to murder.

Majed was "a party to the criminal conspiracy and thereby abetted the incident in the early hours of 15th August, 1975 in the house of the then President Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," he said.

Both the judges said the death sentences should be carried out in the existing mode of execution. They made no mention of Kazi Golam Rasul's order that the verdict be carried out by firing squad or by hanging.

Lawyers from both the state and the defence sides, relatives of the accused, scores of other lawyers and journalists were present when the orders were made.

After the orders were dictated, there was a heavy rush for obtaining the copies, which were given at 2pm.

Earlier, since the morning, tight security was maintained in and around the court.

Uniformed and plain clothes police kept vigil and none was allowed to enter the court without pass. Hundreds of people were waiting outside.

Special Prosecutor Serajul Huq, Attorney General Mahmudul Islam, his assistants Shauddin Ahmed Manik, Bazlur Rahman Chheda and others were present from the prosecution side.

Among the defence lawyers, Khan Saifur Rahman, Abdur Razzak and Mahbubur Rahman were present.

The much awaited judgement came after 63 days of hearing that ended on November 27.

The process of trial of the case was initiated 21 years after the carnage. On August 12, 1996, Faruq, Shariar and another person were arrested under the Special Powers Act. An FIR was filed with Dhanmondi thana on October 2, 1996. The Indemnity Act that barred trial of the accused was repealed by the Parliament on November 12, 1996.

The charge sheet was submitted on January 15, 1997 accusing 27 people including six civilians. The names of five of them including Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed, who headed the post-coup government, and Mahbubul Alam Chashi were dropped from the charge sheet as they were dead.

Zobaida Rashid, wife of col (rtd) Rashid, was cleared of the

charges by the High Court. Three others--Naik Yunus, captain (rtd) Nurul Huda and Abu Musa Majumder, a civilian, were dropped from the charge sheet.

The arrested accused were produced before the court on January 20, 1997, gazette notification on the absconding accused were published on February 3 and trial started on March 1 that year at a building adjacent to Dhaka Central Jail. The verdict was given on November 8, 1998 and the death reference was sent to the High Court on November 11. It was enlisted for hearing on March 30, 2000. On April 10, Justice Amirul Kabir felt embarrassed to hear the reference. A stick procession led by some ministers was brought out on April 18 demanding expeditious trial of the case.

Another HC Bench comprising Justice Ruhul Amin and Justice Abdul Matin felt embarrassed. The hearing by the death reference bench finally began on June 28.

Bangabandhu's family members killed on the night of August 15, 1975 included his wife Fazilatunnessa, sons Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal and Sheikh Russel, nephew Sheikh Fazlul Huq Moni and his wife, brother-in-law Abdul Rob Serniabat and members of his family. Only two daughters of Bangabandhu survived as they were abroad. Sheikh Hasina, now Prime Minister, was in Germany and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana was in London.

Tribute to martyred

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Sheikh Hasina, also President of Bangladesh Awami League, then placed another wreath on behalf of the party. Colleagues in the cabinet and senior partymen were present by her side. Later on, she visited the mass graveyard at the memorial premises and offered feteah.

The prime minister then went to the Rayerbazar Mass Graveyard and placed wreaths at the memorial built there two years ago in remembrance of intellectuals who were gunned down at the marshy periphery of Dhaka in 1971. She also placed wreath there on behalf of the party.

Main Opposition BNP observed the Intellectuals Day paying glowing tributes to and making a fresh vow to realise the dreams of the illustrious sons of the soil.

Leaders and workers of BNP wearing black badges started assembling in front of Mirpur Shah Al Mazar Gate from 8.30 am before going to the Mirpur Intellectuals Memorial at 9 am in a mourning rally led by party chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Khaleda along with her party colleagues placed wreaths at the memorial and showed respect to the martyred intellectuals.

National and party flags were hoisted half-mast while black flag was flown at the BNP central office at dawn.

BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, opposition chief whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Dr RA Gani and Dr Khondker Mosharraf Hossain were among those who paid hom-

age to the martyrs at the memorial.

Later, the party held a discussion on the Martyred Intellectuals Day at the City BNP office at Naya Paltan.

Presided over by BNP Vice Chairman Major (rtd) Hafizuddin Ahmed Bir Bikram MP, it was addressed by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan MP, Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain MP, Dr Khondker Mosharraf Hossain MP, Abdullah Al Noman, and Mirza Abbas.

At Rayerbazar Mass Grave-

Indian govt

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issues out, "Vajpayee said, "The NDA is united and is standing as one."

Vajpayee, speaking amid constant interruptions in a tense atmosphere, stuck to his state-ment that the drive to build a temple at Ayodhya reflected national aspirations, and said there was nothing wrong with that assertion.

But he said that there were only two ways of resolving the wrangle over the mosque: Either there will be a court verdict allowing the construction of a temple or Hindus and Muslims will agree to build a place of worship each in the holy town.

Early today, the upper house was adjourned after uproar by opposition deputies demanding a vote in a parallel debate on the same issue. The government does not have a majority in the upper house and would probably lose a vote on the issue there.

yard, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) organized a photography show depicting historic events of 1971 and displaying quotations of martyred intellectuals. It drew a huge crowd, including school-goers for whom it was a rare opportunity to know the history better.

One photograph captured the moment when Golam Azam was having a chat with Pakistani General Tikka Khan while in another Moulana Mannan was seen talking with chief of the occupation army General Nazim in 1971.

BSD also distributed leaflets among mourners revealing once again the well-known fact that how deceitfully the two main political parties of the country joined hands with Razakars time to time just for political mileage.

Visitors told The Daily Star separately that the collaborators of 1971 should be tried without any further delay.

Organisations that placed wreaths there include Awami League, Projonmo '71, Uddieth, BSD, Bangladesh Mahila Awami League, Dhaka City Corporation and Awami Garib League. Different other professional, political and social organisations also placed wreaths.

National dailies brought out special supplements on the lives and sacrifices of the martyred intellectuals. Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private TV channels also carried special programmes marking the day.

Bangla Academy held a seminar on the occasion.

Govt tells FEJB to resume its activities under SEMP

The government yesterday asked the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) to resume its activities under UNDP-funded Sustainable Environment Management Programme (SEMP), reports BSS.

Dr Mizan R Khan, Policy Specialist of SEMP of the Ministry of Environment and Forest in an official letter to FEJB chairman Gaurul Islam Chowdhury yesterday conveyed it as per the direction of the National Programme Director (NPD) and requested him to submit an updated Programme Implementation Plan by January 15, 2001.

In similar but separate letters, the programme activities of ADAB, IUCN, CAMPE, Unnayan Samannya, Gono Chetona, Prism, Caritas and others have also been resumed.

Earlier, the NPD unilaterally suspended all activities under SEMP three months back raising strong protest from the civil society bodies and UNDP.

Polymer notes

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as a section of the angry crowd damaged window panes of the BB building. Many got hurt during the incident. None was however arrested.

People held central bank authorities responsible for the incident, blaming their mismanagement for causing the situation.

BB officials however said they never anticipated that such a large number of people would turn up to collect the new polymer notes. They also said that it was difficult for them to enter the office in the morning as large number of people thronged the bank premises from early in the morning.

The central bank for the first time launched polymer notes in the country on an experimental basis.

What's next?

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the trial court and in the High Court said the judgement reflected justice.

"We have to accept the verdict. Justice has been done and it shows there is justice in this country", the veteran lawyer told newsmen at his chamber after the verdict was pronounced.

Giving his reaction after the split judgement, Serajul Huq said that the third court would hear the acquittal of five by one judge.

But he opined that the appeal process would have to wait till the third court's verdict regarding the acquittal of the five.

Defence attorney Khan Saifur Rahman also said that there would be a status quo in the proceedings since the matter would be referred to a third court.

Abdur Razzak, another defence counsel, said they would appeal against the death sentences of the ten after hearing in the third court is completed.

Other lawyers preferring anonymity said the matter would be cleared when the Chief Justice would send it to the third court. But it would obviously take some time for completion of the hearing and the appeal process, they added.

Dhaka, Delhi

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and Dhaka and restoration of Petrapole-Benapole rail link.

The two sides, he said, reviewed ways and means for consolidating bilateral trade. Liberalisation of visa regime was also discussed.

He said the two sides agreed to convene as early as possible the next meeting of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC).

The next meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) will be held in Dhaka in 2001, he added.

The spokesman said the two sides laid emphasis on enhancement of cooperation in strengthening early flood warning system. The two sides appreciated cooperation between the peoples of Bangladesh and India during the recent floods in the border areas.

Meanwhile, the spokesman said, Bangladesh Foreign Secretary C M Shafi Sami called on External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and Minister of State of the same Ministry Ajit Kumar Panja separately today. Both the ministers reiterated their commitment to enhance cooperation with Bangladesh.

Bush begins

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"He spoke for all of us last night, he did it eloquently and well and president-elect Bush responded with generosity in kind," Clinton said.

The president, who formally leaves power when his successor is inaugurated on January 20, is on the last leg Thursday of a three-day visit to Britain and Ireland.

Blair spoke by telephone with Bush. Offering his "warmest congratulations," the British prime minister said: "I'm glad it is finally settled. I know that together we will strengthen still further the special friendship between Britain and the United States."

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent his message of congratulations from Havana, where he was visiting Cuban President Fidel Castro.

Among the first world leaders to congratulate Bush on winning the White House were Chinese President Jiang Zemin, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Philippine President Joseph Estrada.

Bush will take Florida's vital 25 electoral votes and will have a total of 271 electoral votes country-wide -- one more than the total needed to win the presidency.

Gore will end up with 267 votes. That is the narrowest Electoral College victory since the one-vote win by Republican Rutherford Hayes over Democrat Samuel Tilden in 1876. The Electoral College meets on Monday to vote for a president.

Bush had a scant 537-vote edge out of more than six million ballots cast in the presidential contest in Florida. Gore insists that hand recounts would show he won the southeastern state.

The vice president won the popular vote nationwide by more than 300,000 votes, making Bush the fourth man in US history to win the White House while losing that count.

Bush is the second son of a president to be elected to the White House. The first father-and-son presidential team were John Adams

and his son John Quincy Adams, who both served in the 19th century.

Speculations, rumours

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Bangabandhu Murder Case that began four years and three months ago.

Riot police and plainclothes guarded the court building and adjacent areas, and restricted entrance to the courtroom where the Death Reference Bench sat on the day after hearing the case for 63 days.

Many others, mostly pro-government activists, were also on the wait at different places, especially the Dhaka University campus, the ruling party offices and the Paltan Maidan.

Anxiety hung heavy in the air, with people seeking information and exchanging views on the court proceedings.

There were rumours that thousands of people have come from outside Dhaka on some 100 buses to join protest and that army has been deployed at the High Court premises.

People at different places were seen skimming through special publications and watching special TV bulletins.

Hours leading to the pronouncement of the verdict were also marked by fear of violent flare-ups at some trouble-prone areas. Traffic congestion turned worse.

Intense speculations also gripped places outside the capital where there were also reports of violent protests.

As the much-awaited verdict came out split, frustration and anger gripped the waiting crowd at the court premises where some women activists of ruling Awami League brought out an instant procession. Many were heard asking about the next course of the historic case, which was sent to the Chief Justice who may form

another bench to hear it.

The AL activists also held similar protests at the Paltan Maidan, the Dhaka University campus and other places in the city demanding that all the killers are hanged.

Addressing an angry gathering at Paltan Maidan, senior AL leaders including three ministers asked the party workers to show restraint and have confidence in the judiciary. They, however, said the verdict did not reflect people's will and rather they are frustrated. The speakers include AL General Secretary and Local Government Minister Zillur Rahman, Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak, State Minister for Shipping Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Mohammad Hanif.

As the AL-backed student activists turned violent in protesting the split verdict, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim rushed to the DU campus. The minister forced a militant student group back to the campus and advised them not to take law in their own hands.

Expressing solidarity to the students' demand for hanging of all the killers of Bangabandhu, Nasim warned a gathering in front of the Arts Faculty Building that the conspirators would take advantage of any unpleasant situation they may trigger out of frustration. Besides, he noted, the government will have to bear the consequences of any such situation.

Angered by the police assault, some student activists interrupted the home minister by raising slogans. The minister assured them of action had there been any excess by the police.

Post-verdict violence

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around Dhaka University and the High Court turned into trouble points where agitated people, of them leaders and activists the DU unit of BCL, took to streets and damaged many motor vehicles and rickshaws.

A 27-year-old autotempo driver, Liton, was gunned down allegedly by a group of armed BCL activists who also damaged motor vehicles and shops at Nilkhet at around 2.30 pm.

Nearly fifty people, most of them BCL activists, were injured during a clash with police near the Shahbagh crossing at about 12.30 pm. Police and BCL activists exchanged gunshots when police severely beat one BCL activist there.

Vehicles were also damaged on the road in front of Mirpur Bangla College at Mogbagar and Syedabad and in some areas in Old Dhaka.

According to witnesses the incidents started when a large number of BCL activists of its DU unit, led by its general secretary AKM Azim, came on the street after a rally at Paltan Maidan at around 11.45 am.

Equipped with sticks and iron rods, they damaged motor vehicles at the Zero Point, in front of the Jatiya Press Club, at the High Court crossing, Doel Chatter and Shahbagh crossing.

They damaged a staff bus parked near the Atomic Energy Commission and attempted to set it on fire. A car was torched at the Shahbagh crossing. A 'maxi' was set on fire in front of the DU Vice Chancellor's official residence.

Police charged baton at

Shahbagh crossing when the BCL activists damaged many motor vehicles and hurled brick bats at police at around 12.30 pm. There was a chase and counter chase. A large number of BCL leaders and activists, including AKM Azim were severely beaten by police.

BCL activists fired gunshots at police when they lobbed tear gas shells.

The activists dispersed and then regrouped at the Bat Tola in front of Arts Faculty building at DU. Central leaders of BCL joined them and held a rally there.

When a militant procession BCL leaders and activists was going towards the Shahbagh crossing again, Home Minister Mohammad Nasim arrived there and took the activists back to the Bat Tola. Gunshots were fired in front of Zahurul Haq Hall and crackers were blasted at the Mal Chatter when Nasim was addressing the activists at Bat Tola.

Witnesses said that soon after Nasim left the campus, a group of BCL activists went to Nilkhet area and started damaging motor vehicles at around 2 pm. They also tried to set on fire some quilt and bedding shops and beat a number of shopkeepers there.

The shopkeepers in the area, joined by youths from nearby slums, chased the BCL activists. Some of the fleeing activists fired shots, killing Liton on the spot. An unidentified rickshaw-puller was reportedly injured with bullet.

Traffic movement on the Nilkhet road that connects Dhaka University and the New Market area were halted for several hours following the death of Liton.

Our Narayanjan Correspondent reported that agitated people attacked the house of Captain Kismat Hashem in Dawn Chanleer area and set furniture on fire.

People also ransacked the licensed liquor shop of Kismat's brother Ismat at Tanbazar at around 2.45 pm.

Awami League brought out a procession in the town protesting the split verdict.

Our Mymensingh correspondent reported that agitated students, teachers and employees of BAU ransacked the office room and residence of Prof. Monsurul Amin, younger brother of Justice Ruhul Amin, on the campus at around 2.00 pm.

They also declared Prof. Monsurul Amin persona non grata on the campus. They brought out a procession with sticks and held a rally on the campus protesting the verdict.

The ordinance that barred trial of killers for 21 yrs

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passed by any court, tribunal or authority in the exercise or purported exercise of such powers, are hereby ratified and confirmed, and are declared to have been validly made, done or taken and shall not be called in question or before any court, tribunal or authority whatsoever.

The killers of Bangabandhu were given protection through this so-called Indemnity Ordinance. But later, legal experts opined that this black ordinance had no legal basis.

When Awami League returned to power after 21 years, the Jatiya Sangsad repealed the Indemnity Ordinance on November 12, 1996 allowing trial of the killers.

After passage of the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill, Colonel

(dismissed) Syed Faruq Rahman and Colonel (dismissed) Shariar Rashid Khan filed two writ petitions on December 1, 1996, challenging repeal of the ordinance.

After 16 days of hearing, the High Court in a verdict on January 28, 1997 declared that the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill was passed by the parliament through legal procedure.

During hearing of the writ petitions, a Division Bench of the High Court comprising Justice Mozammel Haq and Justice Abdul Matin appointed six amicus curiae. They were Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed, Dr Kamal Hossain, Rafiqul Haq, M Nurullah, Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Amirul Islam.

Except Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, all other

amicus curiae opined that repeal of the Indemnity Ordinance by the parliament was valid.

Attorney General Barister KS Nabi appeared for the state during hearing of the writ petitions. He was assisted by Additional Attorney General Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan and Deputy Attorney General M Faruq.

Barrister Korban Ali appeared for the petitioners.

Finally, Supreme Court's Appellate Division comprising the then Chief Justice ATM Afzal, Justice Mostafa Kamal, Justice Latifur Rahman, Justice Abdur