

EC verdict on JS seat of Maj Akhter today

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission will give its verdict today whether the parliamentary seat of expelled BNP leader Maj (Retd) Akhteruzzaman would be vacant or not.

The Commission had earlier fixed the date for its decision on the issue after a three-hour hearing on December 11 last year.

Akhteruzzaman, who was elected from Kishoreganj-2 constituency on BNP ticket in the 1996 general elections, had joined the 19th session of Jatiya Sangsad defying party decision of boycotting JS sessions. He was expelled from BNP in September last year.

Soon after the expulsion, Opposition Chief Whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain in a letter to the Speaker asked for declaring Akhter's parliamentary seat vacant. Delwar showed a number of reasons for this including violation of Section 70 of the Constitution.

The Speaker referred the issue to the Election Commission for disposal.

Akhteruzzaman in his explanation to the Speaker and arguments before the Commission claimed that there was no controversy regarding his seat. So his seat cannot not fall vacant for "joining parliament sessions".

CPA sees no reason for imposing CFTC surcharge

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 9: Chittagong Feeder Trade Committee (CFTC), a Singapore-based organisation of feeder vessel operators, has threatened to impose congestion surcharge on the vessels bound for Chittagong Port against the backdrop of recent congestion in the port.

This was disclosed by the Chairman of Chittagong port commodore Golam Rabbani at a press conference held at port rest house yesterday afternoon.

The chairman said that CFTC had faxed a letter to him in this regard.

He said the port authority will send a reply to the letter immediately clarifying the improvement of congestion situation at Chittagong port.

The chairman claimed that congestion of container vessels was noticed at the port from second week of December, 2000.

He attributed the reason behind congestion to nine-day government holiday and fall in productivity in the month of Ramadan.

"We faced problem with container ships during the period," the chairman said, adding that

5 shot as gunmen attack arbitration meeting in Pabna

PABNA, Jan 9: Gunmen attacked an arbitration meeting at a primary school near Goashpur bazar in Sadar upazila today, leaving five people injured by bullets, reports UNB.

The meeting was convened by UP Chairman Shahidul Islam to end rivalry between two groups that clashed in the bazar over payment of a toy on Monday.

The bullet-hit people are Alauddin, 26, Azmat, 20, Abdur Rahman, 40, Fazar Ali, 35 and Abdul Majid, 26. They were admitted to Pabna hospital.

Alauddin was later shifted to Dhaka as his condition deteriorated.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurates the annex building of the Bangladesh Supreme Court yesterday. -- Star photo

PM opens Supreme Court annexe 'Govt wants to hold trial for all political killings'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said her government wants to hold trial for all political killings to ensure justice, reports UNB.

"The path of establishing rule of law has been created through holding of trial and pronouncement of verdict in Bangabandhu murder case after repeal of the infamous Indemnity Ordinance," she said while inaugurating the annex building of the Supreme Court yesterday afternoon.

The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the court's verdict sentencing the killers to death would be executed soon.

Apart from the assassination of Bangabandhu, the country witnessed brutal killing of four national leaders in Dhaka Central Jail on November 3, 1975 and the killing of President Ziaur Rahman in Chittagong in 1981.

The Prime Minister also announced that the Ombudsman would be appointed before the next general elections.

"We are working with a commitment to establish democratic values, human rights and justice by establishing an independent judicial system acceptable to the

people," she told the function.

Hasina said her government is working sincerely to ensure quick disposal of cases in the interest of the commonman.

About relations among the three organs of the State executive, legislative and judiciary she said the government and the people expected the three organs would be complementary to each other for people's welfare.

Describing the court as one's last resort for justice, the Prime Minister said it is the fundamental right of the people to seek justice and get it.

Chief Justice Latifur Rahman and law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Matin Khasru also addressed the function.

The annex building of the Supreme Court has been constructed at a cost of Tk 38.73 crore on 10.50 bighas of land. The four-storey building, designed similar to the main building, will accommodate 34 courtrooms.

A total of 44 judges will be able to run court at the same time in the new building, which will help quick disposal of pending cases, Supreme Court sources said.

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SAARC summit Bastola for move to convince India, Pakistan

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Visiting Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola said yesterday efforts should be made to convince India about the necessity of holding the next SAARC summit.

He however added, "We need to impress Pakistan as well."

The summit was due to be held in Kathmandu in November 1999 but has since been postponed due to the developments involving relations between India and Pakistan.

India reportedly is against sitting on the same table following the takeover of state power in that country with Pakistan by the military.

Bastola responded briefly to reporters' questions after the official talks between him and Bangladesh Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad.

Azad ruled out the possibility of holding a mini-summit without India and Pakistan and said that SAARC is for all the seven member states.

The Nepalese foreign minister, when asked whether Nepal would take steps to remove the complexities regarding the 32-kilometre

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Hasina invited to visit Nepal

Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra Prasad Bastola yesterday called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and handed her a letter from his premier Girija Prasad Koirala, reports UNB.

In the letter, Prime Minister Koirala invited Hasina to visit Kathmandu at an early date. He also conveyed her warm greetings of the Nepalese King.

Sheikh Hasina accepted the invitation and also invited to Koirala to visit Bangladesh.

The Nepalese Foreign Minister briefed her on the official talks he held with his Bangladesh counterpart Abdus Samad Azad here in the afternoon, focusing on ways of bolstering bilateral trade and business.

Dissident JCD leaders yield to Khaleda's wishes

By Staff Correspondent

Caving in under "severe pressure" from BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, dissident leaders of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) have called off agitation against the new executive committee, headed by Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Shahabuddin Laltu.

At a meeting Sunday night at her Minto Road official residence, Khaleda compelled rebel leaders into recognising of JCD's new central body with a warning that she would no more tolerate agitation against the Pintu-Laltu committee.

Involve China in developing water resources, Khaleda tells Nepalese FM

Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia called for involving China along with Bangladesh, Nepal and India for development and proper utilisation of water resources in this region, reports UNB.

If and when it is done millions of people of the region will be benefited in various ways adequate and timely availability of water for hydro-electricity, irrigation and navigation, Khaleda told the visiting Nepalese Foreign Minister Chakra, Proshad Bastola.

Bastola, now in Dhaka, called on the opposition leader and expressed his country's desire to develop water resources in this region through tripartite accord by Nepal, Bangladesh and India for the benefit of all countries in the region.

But Khaleda suggested that China should be included for harnessing water resources of the region for the greater interest of the maximum number of people.

Bastola who met with Khaleda at her official residence in the

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they had full confidence in her leadership and would always abide by her directives.

BNP Secretary-General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khondakar Mosharraf Hossain, BNP's Student Affairs Secretary Amanullah Aman and Nazimuddin Alam also attended the meeting.

ABM Mosharraf Hossain, DU unit President Manir Hossain, city south unit President Sagir Ahmed, city north unit President Manun Hasan and President of Jagannath University College Rawnakul Islam represented the dissident faction in the meeting.

Violence protest was staged in the city soon after Khaleda had announced a five-member central body of JCD on December 23 with Pintu and Laltu as its president and general secretary respectively.

Majority of the JCD leaders and activists and other front organisations of BNP termed Pintu and Laltu "non-students and terrorists" and began to demonstrate demanding cancellation of the new committee.

The rebel leaders reiterated that

Road digging back again



Excavation continues in full swing at the Biswa Road in the city's Maniknagar area, spelling woes to the city-dwellers. -- Star photo

By Raziur Rahman

Road digging in a large area of the city by DCC and other agencies concerned is once again afflicting the city dwellers. The ordeal that started a few months ago doesn't show any sign of letting up.

Sources said lack of coordination between DCC and agencies like Dhaka WASA, DESA and BTTB that have been digging different city roads for 'different purposes' throughout the year, frequently delay project implementation.

The already poor condition of city roads worsened recently when WASA started installing new pipelines for Syedabad Water Treatment Plant under the Fourth Dhaka Water Supply Project from September last year.

Since then, WASA has excavated portions of the roads from Nilkhet crossing to Bangla Motor link road, from Bangla Motor towards Moghbazar and from Shahjahanpur towards Khilgaon rail crossing. The damaged portions of the roads that were filled up with earth after installation of the pipelines are yet to be repaired.

At present, WASA is digging up roads at Bashabo, Maniknagar, Jatrabari and Jurain areas for installing pipelines while DESA is digging up the Mirpur Road from Sobhanbagh area towards the Russell Square.

Residents of the Central Road area complained that a recently rehabilitated lane connecting Central Road and Bhuter Gali was dug up for installing cable only a few weeks ago.

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Murder of Dumuria Jubo League leader Hunt on for woman mastermind

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Jan 9: Police hunt for the killers of Kabirul Islam continued for the fourth-day today.

Kabirul Islam, president of Jubo League Dumuria Upazila Unit and Chairman of Dumuria Union Parishad, was gunned down by unidentified assailants near AL office at Dumuria bazar on Friday night.

Police raided all residential halls of Daulatpur govt BL College at midnight last night to nab the killers.

Police are also looking for a woman leader of BCU who allegedly was one of the masterminds of the killing.

The young women has been absconding since the murder, said OC Zakir Hossain of Dumuria thana.

Police are desperately looking for the hired killers of Biplobi Communist Party to find out the motive behind the killing, said OC who expressed his reluctance to comment on the involvement of some BNP and JP activists named in the FIR.

Dumuria thana BNP president Molla Abul Kashem, Secretary of thana unit of Jubo Dal Molla Sirajul Islam, president of thana and unit of Chhatra Dal Mofizul Islam, HMA Rof of thana unit of Jatiya Party, former president of district unit of BCU Shamim Akhter, secretary of thana unit of BCU Moimul Islam,

secretary of thana unit of CPB Kazi Abdullah, JP activists Shahinur Sarder and Yahia Sardar are among the 20 persons named in the FIR.

Farrukh Ahmed, Police Super of DSB, Dhaka arrived in Khulna on Monday night to supervise the murder case, said Khulna Police Super. Farrukh Ahmed visited the place of occurrence today and talked to IO of the case to take stock of the real situation which led to the murder of Kabirul Islam.

A half-day hartal was observed at Dumuria today protesting the murder. The hartal paralysed normal life there disrupting transport services on Khulna-Satkhira highway.

Meanwhile, leaders of BNP, CPB and JP have strongly protested police action against their those of these three parties who have been implicated in the murder case.

None of these three political parties is at all involved in the murder, said leaders of the district units of the three parties.

The main mastermind behind the murder is Alamgir Kabir Alam, General Secretary of Dumuria thana unit of Jubo League, said some district and thana level leaders of BNP and JP.

The complainant of the murder case was forced to omit name of Alamgir from the FIR, said BNP leaders.

Mysterious boxes 6 crew brought to Dhaka for interrogation

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 9: The six crew including a Pakistani national were sent to Dhaka this morning by road for further interrogation by the joint interrogation cell (JIC) in connection with the mysterious boxes dropped in the Bay of Bengal on December 17, police said.

They were sent to Dhaka following an order from higher authorities, police said.

The crew were taken on a seven-day remand granted by the court here yesterday.

The mysterious boxes were dropped in the Bay of Bengal from two mechanised boats by 28 crew including a Pakistani national on December 17 when navy patrol ship challenged them.

BIWTA employees protest privatisation move

By Staff Correspondent

Several hundred members of the employees' union of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) yesterday held a rally at the Sadarghat launch terminal protesting the government's move to privatise it, the largest inland passenger river port in Asia.

It is nothing but a bid to help some people earn money, the union leaders said and vowed to resist the move.

They said BIWTA has the "technical ability" to renovate and modernise the terminal. There is no need to privatise the terminal, which has been managed by government agencies since 1958.

According to the union leaders, the government is soon floating a tender to hand over the terminal to a private company for 15 years. The company will modernise it in two years at a cost of about Tk 60 crore.

There are 56 ferry ghats, launch ghats, labour handling and toll points including Sadarghat launch

terminal under the Dhaka River Port of BIWTA. With an annual income of Tk 12 crore, Dhaka River Port is currently the most economically viable establishment of the BIWTA, they said.

The leaders said, in addition to maintaining the terminal, BIWTA is responsible for various other technical jobs.

The moment the terminal is privatised, entry fee, taxes and other charges will be raised and its users who are mostly peasants and people of low income group would suffer.

Mohammad Tofazzel Hossain, secretary of the employees' union's Barisal unit, Al Haj Mohammad Abdur Razzak, Secretary and Nurul Islam, General Secretary of its central council and Golam Mostafa, secretary of BIWTA Floating Workers Union addressed the rally.

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