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Appointment of six HC judges being considered

By Staff Correspondent

The President is considering appointment of six judges in the High Court, sources concerned said.

The six are Deputy Attorney General M Faruque, Deputy Attorney General Altaf Hossain Khan Arun, Advocate Subrata Choudhury, Advocate Syed Dastagir Hossain, Law Secretary Abdul Hai and Registrar of the Supreme Court Marziul Haq. See page 11 col 3

Inside Today

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Musings or Stray Thoughts?
Column: Between the Lines
By Kuldip Nayar
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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Jan 16		5.33 pm
Jan 17	6-43 am	

Prayer Timings

January 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-10
Zuhr	12-45	1-20
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-35	5-40
Esha	7-00	7-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Protest at Supreme Court

Law minister demands criminal suit against 'identified' lawyers

By Staff Correspondent

Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru told the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday that the protest by some "identified" pro-opposition lawyers against the recent appointment of two judges in the Supreme Court was designed to make Chief Justice Latifur Rahman controversial.

Justice Rahman is supposed to head the next caretaker government.

The law minister also demanded that the Supreme Court draw contempt proceedings against those lawyers who "dishonoured the highest court".

Recalling the contempt motion against the Prime Minister earlier, he asked why such proceedings would not be drawn against a group of people who are "more of politicians than lawyers for their con-

spiracy against the judiciary".

Khasru, supported by three senior members of the Treasury Bench, also suggested filing of a criminal suit against those lawyers who confined judges in the Supreme Court (SC) for more than two hours, kicked the doors of the Chief Justice's chamber, beat employees and forced suspension of the court's functioning on January 11.

Pro-opposition lawyers staged the demonstration against appointment of two judges in the SC, superseding their seniors.

Participating in an unscheduled discussion on the issue in

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Chief Justice appoints Third Judge to hear split verdict

By Special Correspondent

Chief Justice Latifur Rahman yesterday appointed Justice Fazlul Karim as the Third Judge to hear the split verdict which acquitted five of the 15 accused in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

He will take up the case today. The hearing will begin after completion of formalities including preparation of the paper book containing the split verdict.

The Chief Justice formed the Third Court after he received copies of the split verdict earlier yesterday.

The split verdict was given by the Death Reference Bench of the High Court on December 14 last. See page 11 col 5

Senior jurists meet Khasru

By Special Correspondent

Leaders of the five-member team of senior lawyers of the Supreme Court (SC) met Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru at his Sangsad Bhavan chamber yesterday in its bid to resolve the crisis arising out of appointment of two new judges in the SC.

Sources close to the team said that Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed and President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Barrister Mainul Hossain, on behalf of the team, took up the issue and also the compromise formula agreed upon at a meeting of pro-opposition and pro-government lawyers on Saturday.

The formula proposes that the

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PM to head IT task force

By Staff Correspondent

A high-powered Task Force on Information Technology (IT) has been formed with the Prime Minister as its head.

Announcing this, PM's Principal Secretary Dr. S.A. Samad said the government attaches top priority to the IT sector and an IT Act is being prepared to protect rights of investors.

The Science and Technology Ministry will soon place a Bill in this regard before the Cabinet for approval, he told a group of newsmen at his office yesterday.

The country can earn two to three billion US dollars by exporting software within a very short time if necessary steps are taken, he said.

"If this sector earns such a huge amount of foreign exchange, we will not require any foreign aid."

"The government wants to bring about a revolution in the IT sector and the Task Force will give all necessary support to take the technology to the door-

steps of people," he said. Planning Secretary Dr. Toufique-e-Elahi Chowdhury also spoke on the occasion.

The 15-member Task Force includes the Minister for Finance, Minister for Science and Technology, State Minister for Planning, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, secretaries of the ministries of post and telecommunications and commerce and representatives of FBCCI and Bangladesh Computer Samity. Prof. Zamilur Reza Chowdhury of BUET is also its member. The Secretary, Planning Division, will work as the Member Secretary.

Dr. Samad said the Task Force will work to tap the "unlimited potential" of the IT sector in social and economic fields and identify the areas where it can grow.

It will also prepare short-term and mid-term plans for the rapidly changing IT.

Thrust will be given for opti-

mum use of computer technology and time limits will be fixed for achieving targets in different fields.

Training facilities will also be provided for human resource development, Dr. Samad added.

In this regard he mentioned that 12 science and technology universities have been set up in the country, where education on IT is mandatory.

Targets will be fixed for development of e-commerce, e-governance, e-trade, e-medicine and e-education.

If necessary, the Task Force will co-opt any person as its member, he told a questioner. It will hold its first meeting within next week.

Replying to another question, Dr. Samad said it will not do 'micro level work', but give guidance, create opportunities and remove obstacles in the growth of the sector.

Hearing on PSA validity Jan 30

Police ordered not to harass Murshed Khan, his son till then

By Special Correspondent

The High Court yesterday ordered police not to arrest or disturb BNP law maker M Murshed Khan and his son till the hearing of its rule on the government concerning the Public Safety Act (PSA) on January 30.

The government immediately filed a leave petition for appeal to the Supreme Court.

Additional Attorney General (AAG) Mahub-e-Alam filed the leave petition with Chamber of Judge of the SC Justice Mainur Reza Choudhury.

Hearing on the petition will take place today, court sources said.

The HC yesterday passed the order on a petition by counsels of the lawmaker and his son, seeking stay of the proceedings of a case under PSA filed against them in Chittagong recently.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Abu Saeed Ahmed and Justice Khademul Huq Choudhury gave the order.

Earlier on Thursday, the Bench issued a rule on the government asking it to show cause

why the PSA will not be declared ultra vires the Constitution. The rule followed two days of hearing on the first legal challenge against validity of the PSA, enacted on February 14 last year.

Another Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice Nurul Islam and Justice Montazuddin, on a petition by Khan and his son seeking interim bail, also directed police yesterday not to arrest or disturb them till January 30.

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Khaleda sets Jan 18 deadline for repeal of PSA

COMILLA, Jan 15: BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia has said BNP, if voted to power, will resolve the social and economic problems created during the Awami League regime, reports UNB.

Addressing a huge public meeting at the Town Hall Maidan this afternoon, Khaleda warned the government of tougher programmes including hartal, barricade if the Public Safety Act is not repealed by January 18, the day set for countrywide mass procession by the 4-party alliance.

Khaleda who is spearheading an anti-government movement told the audience amidst cheers that the alliance will form the next government.

The BNP chief assured the gathering that the alliance will build an economically sound nation and establish the country as a dignified nation in the world.

JP senior presidium member Raushan Ershad, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Matiur Rahman

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48 Bangladeshis abandoned on Philippine island

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Jan 15: Some 48 Bangladeshis were abandoned on a remote southern Philippine island after being promised jobs in Japan, police said Monday, reports AFP.

The job-seekers sought the help of local villagers at the end of circuitous two-month journey from their native land that took them to Manila, the southern island of Mindanao, then to Basilan island and later to Tukbabas, a tiny outcrop off the remote island of Jolo.

Police said the group was apparently duped by a Filipino labour recruiter who promised

them employment in Japan.

Immigration officials said the group will be deported back to Bangladesh after questioning.

The strife-torn southern islands of Basilan and Jolo are home to the notorious Muslim extremist group Abu Sayyaf, which kidnapped a group of mostly foreign hostages last year whom they later ransomed off for millions of dollars.

The rebels still hold an American and a Filipino from the kidnapping spree but last week also abducted a local trader.

Free distribution of textbooks uncertain

Needy students to suffer most

By Mustak Hossain

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) would not be able to distribute books free of cost among distressed students as three concerns of Beximco group are not depositing the required number of books for this purpose in violation of tender rules, sources said.

The Beximco trio which were awarded the job of printing more than eight crore textbooks have to deposit with the NCTB one per cent of the books for free distribution among poor students and financially weak institutions. But they are not doing this, an official of the NCTB told this correspondent.

The three concerns--Pustaka, Shuktara and Free Press--had won the bid for printing around 5.5 crore textbooks for secondary level and 2.50 crore for pri-

mary level.

The companies were supposed to print and distribute the books for the current academic year by November 30 but failed to do so.

But the NCTB instead of taking proper action for this extended the time limit twice.

Now Pustaka, one printer of the Beximco has advertising to attract distributors for money.

The Pustaka in its advertisement informed that it would be able to distribute books by January 21, about 50 days behind the schedule.

The Beximco concerns have allegedly sold out the allotment letters to some notebook printers at Banglabazar in the city and a publisher in Sylhet.

These printers, without printing the textbooks, have printed

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Meghnaghat-2 power plant

PDB, Marubeni start vital negotiations

By Staff Correspondent

The Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday began a vital negotiation with Japanese company Marubeni over the 450 MW Meghnaghat phase-2 power plant, sources said.

The meeting discussed a latest Marubeni proposal which is alternative to a past understanding under which the Japanese company would provide the PDB with free electricity worth at least US 35 million dollars during the initial operation period of the Meghnaghat Power Plant.

Marubeni's alternative proposal however sidetracks this option. Instead, Marubeni is offering a package of benefit, which it claims to be worth 39 million dollars. This benefit would be given to PDB in different phases during the 22-year-operation of the Meghnaghat plant.

Marubeni had originally agreed to set up and operate the

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