

JS business hit hard

From Page 1
10:20 am for the quorum.

All the three MPs, whose star-marked questions were selected for the day, were not there in the House. Two of the three ministers who were supposed to answer them were also absent. As a result, the absentees were substituted by their colleagues.

Industries Minister Tofail Ahmed replied to the questions for Civil Aviation and Public Works Minister Mosharraf Hossain while lawmakers Atiur Rahman, Jalaluddin Talukdar and Abdul Latif Siddiqi raised

the queries on behalf of Haji Mohammad Selim, Joynal Abedin Haji and Mostafizur Rahman Fizu respectively.

The Chair postponed all the three urgent notices on issues of public importance following requests from three ministers concerned, with two of them being absent. Two out of the three MPs who submitted the notices also did not turn up.

In an apparent bid to make up the mandatory one-hour question-answer time, the Chair in a rare practice allowed 35 lawmakers to make supplementary

queries on three basic questions.

As soon as the question hour was over, the half-empty (due to boycott of the opposition parties) House started witnessing gradual departure of the lawmakers belonging to ruling Awami League and the pro-government Jatiya Party.

The House lacked quorum at about 11:20 am and the dearth continued until it was adjourned at 1:10 pm, with the members quitting gradually. At the time of adjournment, there were only 39 members including two ministers, a state minister and 16 MPs from the women's quota.

JCD body

From Page 12
JCD leader of DU yesterday.

"We will no longer oppose the new leadership when we see ourselves represented in the central body," said another rebel leader.

When contacted, Shahabuddin Lalit said last night that the full-fledged central committee would be announced before Tuesday's discussion meeting marking the founding anniversary of JCD.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is expected to be the chief guest at the meeting scheduled to be held at the Engineering Institute.

Census

From Page 1
Sources concerned said the BBS has failed to create adequate awareness among the masses.

The Taka 50 crore census project might not yield desired results due to inadequate public awareness about it," one source noted.

The BBS gets at least 10 years to take preparations for a population census but started sticking of posters in the capital and only two days ago, the source said. "It has printed six lakh posters, two lakh brochures and prepared four thousand banners, which are not enough for use in the 64 districts of the country."

When contacted, a top official of the BBS however said they would be able to create adequate public awareness about the census before it begins. BBS has already arranged Radio and TV spots and advertisements in national dailies.

The objectives of 4th census are to create local and national level benchmark database in a computerised system to help formulate macro and micro plans and prepare development programmes," he said.

About three lakh people would be engaged in conducting the census. There would be 2,50,000 enumerators, 45,000 supervisors, 2,017 zonal officers, 460 upazila/ thana census coordinators, 113 district census coordinators, 35 regional census coordinators, eight divisional census coordinators and a census commissioner, said another official.

The questionnaire of the census focuses on "housing and household characteristics and individual characteristics." There are 28 questions.

A post-enumeration check will be conducted two weeks after the census.

The first population census was held in 1974, the second in 1981 and the third in 1991.

Chakoria

From Page 1
Capital and Chakoria Upazila Health Complex.

No case was filed in this connection till writing of this report at 8:00 pm.

A tense situation was prevailing at Rajapalong area.

PDB accepts

From Page 1
has a longevity of 35 years. However, it noted that the plant would need an overhaul on the 26th year and that would cost around 25 million dollars. But the value of the plant would be 31.4 million dollars even after undertaking the overhauling.

AES had signed a contract with the government to provide electricity for a levelised 2.79 cents for the next 22 years.

Political intimidation in legal garb

From Page 1
forceful confinement of the Chief Justice and all his colleagues in their lounge for more than an hour. They chanted slogans, used extremely uncharitable language and lay themselves down on the ground (with a view to preventing the judges from walking away) in a trade union like manner, which shocked the whole nation. The condemnation was instant and widespread which created a natural sympathy for the ruling party and the government, that the opposition lawyers were using the sacred premises of the Supreme Court for partisan politics. But even before the public could recover from that shock, they have been dealt a bigger shock by the government in the form of so-called legal action against the lawyers.

The most astounding thing about the government's move is that some of its leaders actually thought that by making a totally unknown lawyer, junior of a junior lawyer in the Supreme Court, act as the complainant it will be saved from being held responsible for this action. The logic put forward to the high chair by some over-enthusiastic

News

PM opens eco-park at Sitakunda

CHITTAGONG, Jan 17: Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated a botanical garden and eco-park at Sitakunda here with the aim to preserve gene pool of plants and maintain ecological balance, reports UNB.

The botanical garden and eco-park, first of its kind in the country, has been set up on 1,996 acres of land with a panoramic view on the foot of Chandrananda Hills, 35-km off the port city.

The first phase of the project cost Tk 3.57 crore while the revised project cost has been fixed at Tk 9.98 crore. The five-year project is expected to be completed by fiscal 2003-2004.

Main objective of the project is development and preservation of genetic pool of different varieties of plants, gardening and management of different varieties of bamboo, cane and herbal plants and collection and preservation of valuable plants and bio-diversity.

The project will also create scope for eco-tourism, provide physical infrastructure for tourists and opportunity for education and research by students and researchers.

"This eco-park will not only preserve biodiversity and different species of wildlife, but also make arrangements for eco-friendly tourism," the Prime Minister said.

She urged the scientists to work for preserving and nurturing the wildlife in the hills of Chittagong by creating a gene pool.

She said the government has been implementing massive programmes for the development of environment and preservation of forest resources in the country and for facilitating researches in this field.

"We are also encouraging tree plantation and afforestation," she said adding the government has taken a 20-year action plan for afforestation.

The Prime Minister planted saplings of Palash and Neem tree in the eco-park.

Chaired by Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, the function was also addressed by Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan, Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, CHT Affairs Minister Kalpa Ranjan Chakma and Chittagong City Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

The injured were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In another incident, six dacoits entered the residence of businessman Mobaraj Hossain at Lake Circus Road in Kalabagan area. The dacoits entered the house by cutting the grill at about 3 am yesterday.

The gang looted Tk 1.20 lakh

in cash and more than 20 tolas of gold ornaments worth about Tk 2.70 lakh.

The court then asked Barrister Ishtiaque Ahmed to clarify if there is any precedence of such a case.

Ishtiaque Ahmed said that on the day of occurrence, Morshed Khan came to the court with him

Nikunja murder

From Page 12
Kahar said he recovered an old knife used to kill the victim and visited the place of occurrence.

He further told the court that he recorded statements of 28 witnesses and submitted the chargesheet to the CMM's Court Dhaka on February 22, last year.

Nikunja Bibari Debnath, 55, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, was stabbed to death by a gang of muggers near Swadhinata Sangram sculpture on the Dhaka University campus on January 11 last year.

The first dacoit

immediately announced the presence of dacoits over microphone.

In the meantime, the dacoits left the spot with six tolas of gold ornaments in presence of a patrol police team, local people alleged.

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PSA case stayed

From Page 1
judges violating seniority.

The lawyers include BNP MP Barrister Nazmul Huda, Convenor of Sanmitto Aijnibi Parishad.

Barrister Maudud Ahmed

appeared for the lawyers and Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed

appeared for Morshed Khan.

Assistant Attorney General Subroto Neogi represented the

SC lawyers. We have no

prejudice against the judge who are distinguished judges of this court. The two judges who were

superceded in the process are also distinguished judges of this court.

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common view that the case has tarnished the government's image. A law officer of the government also shared the same view.

Neither the law minister nor the office of the Attorney General, the chief law officer of the government, was consulted before initiating a fresh case against some senior lawyers under the PSA at a time when the controversial law is being challenged before the High Court, it was reliably learnt.

Since the case against the Supreme Court lawyers was lodged by a pro-ruling party lawyer, the government cannot avoid shouldering its responsibility, the aggrieved AL leaders maintained.

Talking to The Daily Star, an influential minister wondered why he did not come to know anything about such a sensational case prior to its filing.

Case against lawyers

From Page 12
the case," Law Minister Abdul Matin Khasru told The Daily Star while asked about it last night.

Competent sources in the ruling party said that at least two influential ministers were consulted by a small group of pro-AL lawyers of the Supreme Court before filing the case.

Unwilling to be named, the angry ruling party leaders viewed that the rowdy protest by the pro-opposition lawyers at the Supreme Court exposed their design to make the Chief Justice controversial, who is due to head the next caretaker government.

But implicating BNP MP Morshed Khan, who was at the court on that very day to attend hearing of a writ filed against PSA, had exposed the political motive behind the case, they argued. The leaders also ridiculed the charge against Khan that he acted as a terrorist.

The AL leaders are of the

PSA case "naked tyranny"

From Page 1
Mahabubuddin Ahmed, Nazmul Huda, MP, Abdur Rab Chowdhury, Zainal Abedin, Mahabubuddin Khokon and BNP chief's Advisor M Morshed Khan MP clearly proved that the 'black act' was introduced by the fascist Awami League government solely to suppress and oppress its opponents in a barbaric way," the statement said.

The MPs alleged that the AL government kept the ruling party men involved in terrorism, robbery, toll extortions, forcible occupation of property, tender snatching and killings since the enactment of the black law and is blatantly abusing it against opposition leaders and activists.

They recalled that such 'one-sided application and abuse' of any black law had also taken

place during the AL rule immediately after the independence.

The AL government, sensing its imminent fall, has intensified its repression on the opposition, they said and warned of dreadful consequence if it does not stop this, withdraw the false case and repeal the PSA immediately.

The signatories to the statement include Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury, M Saiful Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khandaier Delwar Hossain, Md. Ahmed, Shaikh Razzak Ali, Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain, Kursheed Jahan Haq, MK Anwar, Major (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, Sadeq Hossain, Khoka, City BNP President and convenor of the All-Party Action Council (APAC), will preside over the rally.

Acting Chairman of JP Roushan Ershad, Jamaat Ameer Matiur Rahman Nizami and Iqbal Chairman Azizul Haq will address the rally as special guests.

BNP sources said the opposition is planning to call a country-wide hartal in the last week of this month demanding repeal of the 'black' Public Safety Act and withdrawal of cases filed under it against their leaders and activists.

Meanwhile, Khaleda Zia yesterday held a meeting with the secretaries general of BNP, JP and Jamaat and representatives of the Central Liaison Committee at her 29 Minto Road official residence.

The meeting discussed filing of a case under PSA against BNP lawmakers Barrister Nazmul Huda, M Morshed Khan and 15 other pro-opposition lawyers.

Following a Tuesday report on

Halima's 'disappearance' in The Daily Star, one of our correspondents met her in just three hours

and learnt that the Public Prosecutor had asked her to keep away from the court.

Meanwhile, the High Court on Sunday issued a suo moto rule on the government to explain why a new Public Prosecutor (PP) would not be appointed in accordance to the informant's choice in the murder case, discharging the present PP Qamrul Islam.

A Division Bench of the court comprising Justice Ali Asgar Khan and Justice SK Sinha issued the rule and directed the investigation officer (IO) of the case to ensure security of the witnesses.

The court issued the rule taking into cognizance a report filed in The Daily Star on January 11.

The Bench also asked the authorities concerned to produce documents of the case before it within 24 hours.

Congo president

From Page 12
was fatally shot by former deputy defence minister Dieudonne Kayembe during a row inside the palace with senior generals over their prosecution of the war against rebels and "foreign invaders".

Later, Minister-Delegate for Defence Godefroid Tcham'lesso, speaking in Tripoli, also said Kabila had been killed and had died two hours later in a Kinshasa hospital.

The Zimbabwean government, Kabila's main military ally in the DRC war, however, indicated that the president had died while being flown to Harare for emergency medical treatment.

"It was a last-minute decision to fly Kabila to Zimbabwe but unfortunately he died on the plane," a Zimbabwean government official told the state-run ZIANA news agency.

Zimbabwe's Defence Minister Moven Mahachi told ZIANA: "President Kabila has died. It was pure assassination."

not disinheriting anyone from the due protection of law but because his example serves to illustrate most dramatically and graphically the partisan use of the law by this government. On the day in question he was present on the premises of the Supreme Court for the hearing of his writ petition against a previous PSA case. The most relevant minister and the most relevant law officer, namely the law minister and the attorney general, were totally bypassed in carrying out this action. The fundamental principle, on which the cabinet form of government is based, as against the presidential form, is that it