

JS business hit hard

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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

100MW power shortage

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But due to infrastructural weakness, DESA can supply around 500 MW on an average.

The city dwellers suffer much during the summer due to frequent power disruptions and low voltage as DESA's infrastructure cannot cope with the extra demand for power this season.

DESA officials say that installation of '2000 capacitor banks' is needed to overcome the problem of low voltage in the capital and DESA plans to install 1888 by March 15. It has already installed 538 and the work is going on.

A top official of DESA however admitted that they would not be able to fully meet the demand for power in the city this year. "But DESA can assure that this year the city dwellers suffering due to

Notebooks flood market

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notebook printers has managed to leak out contents of different textbooks in connivance with some unscrupulous NCTB employees and printed notebooks ahead of the arrival of textbooks.

The printers have published those notebooks under fake names with no registration and office address. They are distributing these books with the help of some book wholesalers at Banglabazaar.

Despite excessive price -- a notebook costs three times the price of a textbook -- students and parent are found thronging different bookshops in the city for the notebooks.

Meanwhile, Pustaka in a faxed message to its distributors has informed that it would start distributing books on January 21.

"The Pustaka would distribute only 14 books out of 60 at the secondary level," a source said quoting the Pustaka's faxed message.

Talks on joint PSC

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company 47.5 per cent stakeholder of block 9.

But in its January 4 letter, Chevron wrote that Petrobangla should not suggest what Texaco would do with its share in the future. It was Texaco's business and, therefore, should be left alone.

According to sources, Petrobangla has forwarded this letter to the Prime Minister's Office for further directives on block 9 negotiations. However, sources believe that the government itself has lost enthusiasm in resolving the issue, which was even hammered by the US government last year.

"There is hardly any chance of further progress in this regard now," a Petrobangla source said. "It has been decided in November that if Chevron continues to twist the matter further, the government would shelve the matter till the next elections."

Last November, in its bid to resolve the block 9 crisis, the government sent a draft JVA to Chevron for its consideration. Sources said that the draft outlined the proposed equity ratio between Chevron, Texaco, Tullow Oil and BAPEX, the four companies with which the government is interested to sign the PSC.

In late October Chevron told

the queries on behalf of Haji Mohammad Selim, Joynal Abedin Hajari 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

power disruption and low voltage will be within acceptable level," he said

Besides, DESA officials said installation of three 132 KV transmission lines are likely to be completed by mid-March this year, improving the power supply situation.

Initially, the government had planned to complete the project by March last year but due "DESA's sluggishness," it has been delayed, one source pointed out.

The transmission lines -- Siddhirganj-Maniknagar, Ulon-Moghbazar and Tongi-Ulon-Bashundhara -- would make transmission of power from the National Grid much easier for DESA.

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

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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 Lallu 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

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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 elsewhere 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

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pital 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

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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.

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forcible 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

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 Chandranath 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 differ-

Order on Death Reference

Captain (rtd) Majed. He mentioned that the death sentence of Majed was upheld by both the judges but on different counts--murder and conspiracy to murder.

His arguments were countered by Serajul Huq, Special Prosecutor in the case. He said the reference for the five had been sent to the Third Judge under Section 378/429 of the Penal Code.

Justice fazul Karim observed that the matter was yet to be before the court. All the issues would be settled later.

Serajul Huq then sought attention of the court to preparation of the paper book. He said, "We shall try our best to prepare the paper book. It would not take much time. We are concerned and want expeditious hearing."

He was backed by Additional Attorney General Mahbub-e-Alam and Deputy Attorney General Shamsuddin Choudhury Malik.

Khan Saifur Rahman and Abdur Razzak Khan, another defence lawyer, drew the attention of the court that they were yet to get certified copies of the judgement. Saifur said they should get the copies now "so that there could not be any interpolation".

The judge then said he has got copies of the judgement and that there is 'no scope for interpolation'.

Additional Attorney General Mahbub-e-Alam rose to object

Opposition politicising

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Chittagong.

She said after violating rules and unleashing terrorism, they are now calling hartals for protecting the interest of an individual.

The meeting, presided over by Sitakunda Awami League president Abul Kasem Master, was also addressed by Forest and Environment Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Labour and Employment Minister M A Mannan, Housing Minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, CCC Mayor A B M Mohiuddin Chowdhury, AL leaders M A Salam and Rafiqul Anwar MP.

Another report from Banshkhali adds: Hasina said Khaleda Zia was now shedding crocodile tears for the freedom fighters after joining hands with killers, rajakars and autocrats to capture power through illegal means.

The Prime Minister asked Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia if she would give the responsibility of the Ministry for the Freedom Fighters to Matiur Rahman Nizami or Golam Azam of Jamaat.

She said this while addressing another public meeting at Banshkhali Iqbal High School ground in the afternoon.

ministers behind this move was that since it was not the government but a private citizen who lodged the case the public will not associate the government with this act. (We always knew that our leaders take us for fools, but never thought it was to that extent.) The points to note here is that 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 functions as a team. But in our case the most important team players knew nothing of it. In fact most of the cabinet members and almost all of the leading party figures came to know of it with the rest of us mortals.

What mystifies the public even more and indicates the vengeful nature of the move is the involvement of Morshed Khan in the PSA case against the lawyers. We single him out in our discussion not because he is rich and powerful, as the PM never tires of repeating (though being rich and famous should

not disinherit 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 venerated lawyer of the country, Barrister Ishtiaque Ahmed, was representing him in the case in a particular courtroom. How could he be involved in the activities of a section of lawyers, happening some distance away? The only link is that Morshed Khan belongs to the opposition and so do many of the lawyers who were doing the mischief.

This writer had termed the PSA as 'Mini-Martial Law' when it was being passed. We opposed it then and we do so now. In the face of government protest we said that the law was a 'black law' and that 'nothing good would come of it. We predicted that more than using it against the criminals it would be used to harass those who opposed the government. We think we stand amply vindicated. Today there is

Nikunja murder

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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 Bihari 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.

Two dacoities

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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.

The injured were sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

In another incident, six dacoits entered the residence of businessman Mobarak 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.

Hartal likely

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BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia will address the rally as chief guest and lead the procession. She is expected to announce fresh programmes, including a countrywide hartal in the last week of this month.

Sadeque Hossain Khoka, City BNP President and convener of the All-Party Action Council (APAC), will preside over the rally.

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

BNP sources said the opposition is planning to call a countrywide 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.

PSA case stayed

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judges violating seniority.

The lawyers include BNP MP Barrister Nazmul Huda, Convener of Sanmilito Ainjibi Parishad.

Barrister Maudud Ahmed appeared for the lawyers and Barrister Syed Ishtiaque Ahmed appeared for Morshed Khan. Subroto Neogi represented the state.

In his submission at the crowded court room, Maudud Ahmed said the case against the lawyers lacks 'ingredients' of PSA. "The case is totally arbitrary and filed with a mala fide intention. The accused are distinguished lawyers of the Bar. They include the former president and the secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association and officials of its Executive Committee", he added.

There is no guideline in the PSA leading to its arbitrary use, which ultra vires the Constitution, he argued.

At this stage, the court asked AAG Prabir Neogi to put up his arguments.

He said, "Since there is a principle set in the case against Morshed Khan and another in petition No. 76/2001, I have no objection to any order of by the court".

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

Case against lawyers

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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 he 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"

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Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Nazmul Huda MP, Abdur Rab Chowdhury, Zainal Abedin, Mahbubuddin 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 extortion, 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

Jalal's family

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Mohammadpur Thana, said that he did not receive any instruction from the CID till last night.

On January 8, police claimed in the court that leading witnesses in the Jalal murder case, i.e. his family members, could not be traced. But, during an interview with The Daily Star Halima Khatun, wife of Jalal, said that she and her children were told by the Public Prosecutor to 'keep away' until he summoned her.

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 published 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

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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 Tchanlessso, 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."