

Move to resume Estrada's impeachment trial

MANILA, Jan 22: Senate President Aquilino Pimentel today urged resumption of former President Joseph Estrada's impeachment trial and the opening of disputed bank records that prosecutors say would prove he stashed away millions of dollars in bribes and kickbacks, reports AP.

"It's not good to keep things hanging," Pimentel said, adding he wants to "wind up the proceedings."

The trial was indefinitely suspended last week after the entire prosecution team resigned to protest an 11-10 vote by senators, sitting as judges, to bar access to the records.

Meanwhile, prosecutors today launched an investigation of former President Joseph Estrada for allegedly plundering millions of dollars in office.

Estrada, who left the presidential palace under the pressure of mass demonstrations Saturday, has 10 days to file an affidavit in response.

While the top charge technically carries the possible death penalty, it was considered extremely unlikely that the former action film actor could face execution by lethal

injection. Government ombudsman Aniano Desierto told a news conference that the preliminary investigation would take 60 days and involve six charges: plunder, malversation (misuse of funds), violations of the anti-graft law, perjury, bribery and possession of unexplained wealth.

Economic plunder is defined as stealing from the state. There are different categories, with different

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sets of penalties, depending on the amounts of money involved. The most serious is a capital offense.

"There can be a lesser penalty if there are mitigating circumstances," Desierto said.

At the time of his departure, Estrada was facing an impeachment trial on corruption charges. It had been suspended last Wednesday after the entire prosecution team walked out to protest a vote by senators, acting as judges, to bar access to bank documents contained in a sealed envelope.

The prosecutors claimed the documents would have proven

Estrada enriched himself by millions of dollars during his term that began in 1998 and that the tribunal's decision proved they would not be able to get a fair verdict.

Desierto said investigators would use evidence presented in all of the 24 days of proceedings at the Philippines' first-ever impeachment trial and would request access to the envelope in question.

"The assistant ombudsman is moving right now to get all the documents we need," Desierto said. "If the evidence warrants filing of criminal charges, that will be done."

The Senate decision sparked immediate nonstop protests that swelled daily. Estrada reportedly tried to negotiate concessions before leaving the palace under pressure, with tens of thousands of demonstrators gathered outside after he failed to meet a deadline set by the opposition for him to go.

4 killed in clash over control of fish depot in Luxmipur

LUXMIPUR, Jan 22: At least four persons were killed and 32 injured in a fierce clash for domination over north Char Ramonimohan Machghat (fish depot) in Sadar upazila today, reports UNB.

Witnesses said rival groups, one led by Mamunur Rashid and the other by Rustam Sayal, used lethal weapons in the clash that left four dead on the spot.

Those killed are Mamunur Rashid, Rustam Sayal, Mahmud Sayal and Ibrahim Rari. The bodies were kept in hospital for autopsy.

Of the injured, Amir Hossain, Haris Sayal, Delwar Hossain, Firoz Sayal, Abu Sayal, Abdul Khaleq and Kazi Razzak were admitted to sadar hospital with grave wounds.

Shakhar UP chairman ABM Mahbubur Rahman told UNB that quarrel between the rival groups

over occupation of the fish depot had been going on for the last ¼ days that culminated into the deadly clash at 8 am today.

Assistant police super visited the fish depot for spot investigation. He did not return till the evening.

Another clash over land dispute in village Charchamita of Hajirpara union left 10 people injured. The clash occurred between Shah Alam and Tariqullah groups.

Of the injured, Ashura Begum, Safia Khatun, Aminullah, Kazi Mominullah and Abdur Rahman were admitted to sadar hospital.

None was arrested in this connection till this evening.

Khaleda thanks people for observing hartal

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has congratulated the people for observing the dawn-to-dusk hartal yesterday 'spontaneously' despite the government's 'repression and oppression' on them.

In a statement, she said this has once again proved that the people no longer want to see the 'subservient, fascist, incompetent and unsuccessful' Awami League government cling to power.

The Leader of the Opposition in Parliament said the countdown for ouster of this government has already started and its fall is immi-

nent. No government in the past survived after hatching conspiracy and betraying the heroic people of Bangladesh and the present one will also not be able to protect itself from people's wrath.

In a statement, Islami Oikya Jote Chairman Azizul Haq also congratulated the people for observing the hartal 'peacefully'. He urged the government to repeal the Public Safety Act immediately and step down as it has 'no moral right' to stay in power in any more.

Study on gas resources

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maintains that the official gas reserve is no more than 10 tcf now, asked the two to provide data to substantiate their claims. None of them initially came forward. Both the companies are also putting pressure on Bangladesh to export gas to India through pipeline.

At a later stage, Unocal wanted to sell Petrobangla its exclusive gas study on Bangladesh. It was conducted using a technology called G-Tech developed by Leeds University. Satellite images were used for the study. Petrobangla, however, did not purchase the report.

A source, who partially studied the confidential report, told The Daily Star that Block 11 had gas reserve potentials of 6-10 tcf and Block 8 as much as 6 tcf.

Another study conducted by a foreign oil company, the name of which the source did not want to disclose, made similar observations. This study was undertaken in the

1980s for Petrobangla and many of its assessments were later proved true, as different gas operators started searching for oil and gas in different blocks.

This study says that block 8 has a potential for total gas reserves ranging between 5 tcf to 10 tcf. Block 11 might have similar potential. In addition, two other 'uninteresting' blocks -- 3 and 4 -- also had potential gas reserves of 2 tcf each.

Petrobangla initially did not want to supply USGS with all its data. However, when USGS refused to take 'censored' data, Petrobangla supplied whatever was required.

Seven Bangladeshi experts in Bangladesh participated in a training programme organised by the USGS. Following the visit, USGS experts came to Bangladesh and stayed here for months for the study.

Ctg Computer Fair deferred

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Jan 22: Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) has deferred its proposed 'Chittagong Computer Fair 2001' for an indefinite period.

The five-day fair, organised in cooperation with Chittagong Info Data Ltd and Blue Chip Computer and Technology, was earlier scheduled to begin tomorrow (Tuesday).

CCI sources said the fair has been deferred due to "unsatisfactory response" from participants because of political unrest and hartals.

Japanese national on one day police remand

By Court Correspondent

One Toshifumi Yamada, a citizen of Japan, arrested in connection with smuggling, was placed on a one day fresh remand yesterday for interrogation.

Gulshan police produced him before the CMM's Court, Dhaka yesterday with a prayer for five days' remand after completion of one day remand.

After hearing, the CMM's Court granted him one day.

Toshifumi Yamada, a black listed person by the Ministry of Home in Bangladesh was arrested on January 20, on suspicion of being a member of the gang of international smugglers, police sources said.

He came to Bangladesh earlier for two times by changing his passport.

Information derived from Toshifumi during the remand period were verified, police added.

JP divided

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There are several issues in the cassette case that might favour the deposed president in the review of the Janata Tower case, he added.

The other group led by Ershad's relatives, however, wants him out of jail as soon as possible on payment of the fine specified.

The amount of fine should be half by now since the convict has served almost three months of the jail-term, they believe.

"The verdict of the cassette scam case is still uncertain and it would not be wise to wait for an indefinite period," said one of Ershad's relatives.

Golam Mohammad Qader, a JP lawmaker and younger brother of Ershad, told The Daily Star that they plan to have Ershad released by mid-February.

Meanwhile, the party has chalked out a series of programmes demanding Ershad's release. Senior JP leaders have designated February 15 for a grand rally at the Paltan Maidan. They will hold four such gatherings at four points in the city at the end of the month.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placing a wreath at the Independence Monument in Phnom Penh in Cambodia yesterday. -AFP photo

AAPP Chairmanship

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She told the function that since peace is the right of the people, it can thrive only in conditions where democracy and democratic value thrive. "Unfortunately there have been occurrences in the recent past where the practice of democracy was hampered."

Mentioning her success in ending the bloody ethnic conflict in the insurgency-torn Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1997, the Prime Minister said it was possible for her firm belief in peace and firm determination. "If we all truly wish to end violence and conflict, violence and conflict will end."

Hasina paid tributes to the peoples of Cambodia, Bangladesh and other countries in Asia for their sacrifice, sufferings and commitment for the quest of peace. "But we must leave behind those dark days," she said, "that is why we are united in the AAPP" which she said is to create a bridge among the member-states and establish a

greater link among the peoples.

Hasina said democracy is the prerequisite for development and restoration of peace is not possible without economic emancipation.

The Prime Minister said: "It is our duty to make this millennium different from the one we have left behind, marked as it was by untold miseries for millions all over the world."

"A new beginning must be made. Let us make it right here, right now, in this dear continent of ours," Hasina made the appeal at the conference of Asian lawmakers who are trying to frame guidelines for their collective action for peace and development.

President of the National Assembly of Cambodia Norodom Ranariddh and secretary general of AAPP Kazi Monjur-e-Mowla also addressed the inaugural function. Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen and President of the International Parliamentary Union Nazma Heptullah were

present on the decorated dais.

The main theme of the 5-day conference of AAPP is "Building of Sustainable Peace and Democracy for the New Millennium: A Challenge for the Parliamentarians."

Delegates from a total of 25 Asian countries are attending the conference to work out plans for sustainable peace and democracy for economic progress of the region.

Queen of Cambodia Norodom Monioath Sihanouk was also present on the state.

The meet was heralded with national anthem of Cambodia and girls presenting a traditional Cambodian dance to welcome the Queen and the members of parliamentary delegations from different Asian countries.

7 victims of bomb blast

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drugs for the injured from drug stores nearby.

An attendant of Shaktipada Ray, one of the bomb victims now in emergency ward 32, said he had to

buy diclonafec and ranitidine tablets because the hospital could not provide those.

Another victim, Moshir Rahman who lost both his eyes, was lying almost unconscious. His

attendant also made similar complaints of non-availability of required drugs.

In the same ward, Mizanur Rahman who also is a victim, said he had to buy ciprofloxacin IV and neotac injections. "The hospital has no supply of these drugs. They have not given any drug for me. I am only getting service mainly from junior doctors." He is from Jessore.

CPB leaders said they were purchasing drugs like penicillin, ranisol, ceptron, tramol and matrod for treatment of the two at post-operative ward.

At ICU, Lakkhan Mondal's wife Arati Mondal said CPB members bought drugs worth Tk 1300 yesterday for treatment of her husband and most of those were life-saving ones.

The hospital store has only a limited number of life saving drugs, one source said.

"Despite all this, the authorities are yet to ensure adequate supply of such drugs," said a senior doctor.

Lalon's shrine

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and people from all walks of life have expressed solidarity with the CPLS.

Meanwhile, the authorities in Kushthia are yet to respond to pleas from people not to go on with the Tk 3.64 crore project which envisages construction of a 500-seat auditorium, a guesthouse and other structures in the shrine area.

Hundreds of CPLS members have urged the government, specially the Ministry for Youth, Sports and Cultural Affairs, to shift the project elsewhere and leave the shrine area as it is.

The CPLS will stage a token hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city on January 27 from 11:00 am to 2:00 pm to press home its demand.

Link between blasts

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the bag to the Bangabandhu Avenue. The bag, as it later turned out, contained the bomb that caused the second explosion there.

However, ASP Abdur Khar Akand of CID, the investigation officer in the case, told a few journalists at the DMCH later that as per his information the bag was handed over to Mashui by his friend Miraz and not a stranger.

From Mashui's statement it seems that the man, who had handed over the bag to him, might have also passed over the bomb that went off at the Paltan Maidan. Police said once the supplier was traced, it would give them insight into the whole incident.

According to Mashui, at the rally, he sat by a young man who was reading a newspaper while the speeches were on. The young man also had a bag and a guidebook with him.

When Mashui asked for the newspaper, the stranger gave him the newspaper and told him to keep the bag and the guidebook for a while. He told Mashui that he came from Kaptan Bazar in the city and left. The young man never came back.

Meanwhile, after the Paltan Maidan explosion, Mashui left the venue and walked towards the Baitul Mokarram mosque. On the way he met Mazid, an acquaintance, and talked about the bag. The two then decided that they would share whatever valuables were there in the bag.

With that intention they came to the narrow lane at the Bangabandhu Avenue behind Awami League office. They handed over the bag to a third person who was known to Mazid. As soon as he opened the bag the bomb went off, killing Mazid and Sabur on the spot. Mashui was unconscious within minutes.

Mashui said that he works for a garment factory named Silva at Ibrahimpur in the city.

He shared a bachelor's quarter at Ibrahimpur with his four friends, Tushar, Riaz, Miraz and Biplob, who also work at the same factory. However, the police later told The Daily Star that they had raided the quarter yesterday but found nobody there.

Mashui came to the rally at the request of Miraz who had told him that there would be a declaration at the CPB rally in favour of the garment workers. Mashui hails from a village under Kawmia thana in Rangpur district.

Mashui claimed that he never told the police that Miraz had handed over the said bag to him. "Miraz did not give me the bag, he would be available at the Silva garments," he said.

Mashui, however, appeared inconsistent with his statements.

Sunil Mondol, another bomb victim and a friend of Himangshu who was killed in the first explosion at the CPB rally, told The Daily Star he had come to Dhaka with

Himangshu. They had come from Batiaghata in Khulna. The 56-year-old said that the explosion has partially impaired his hearing.

Sunil is staying at Razarbagh police hospital under custody. A fisherman by profession, he has been working for the CPB for last 28 years. Sunil further claimed that Himangshu was not involved with the bomb explosion.

Sunil said the bag which was shown to him by the police belong to Himangshu. But the bag initially contained a bed sheet, some cloths and some green bananas. He was supposed to carry the bananas for his brother in Mymensingh. He could not go to Mymensingh due to lack of money.

Later the bananas were given to a street beggar.

As Sunil was talking to The Daily Star, CID inspector Uttam was recording his statement. When asked why he was shifted to the police hospital from the DMCH, the police officer said the DMCH had released him. "We are recording his statement as a witness of the incident," he said.

"It would be difficult to find him once he leaves Dhaka. The local MP and political leaders have also tried to take him away from here but we told them that he would go some days later," the officer said.

While Sunil claims Himangshu was clean, the Special Branch (SB) believes that the bag contained the bomb and the incident might be a result of intra-party feud in CPB.

However, at the same time, the SB officials told The Daily Star the incident might have been triggered by a feud between CPB President Monzurul Ahsan Khan and Awami League MP and a transport sector leader Shahjahan Khan over the hold of Saidabad Bus Terminal. When contacted, Shahjahan Khan denied any such connection.

Garment owners

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square feet per worker, the meeting was told.

Shahjahan Khan MP, Daliluddin Mandal, Joint Secretary of Labour and Employment Ministry, Dr Ruhul Kuddus, Director of Labour, Salamattullah, Chief Inspector of Factories, BGMEA representatives Giasuddin Khan, Sazzad Hossain and Nurul Islam and workers' representatives Abul Bashar, Delwar Hossain Khan, AZM Qamrul Anam, Badruddoza Nizam and Mamunur Rashid attended the meeting.

The meeting also resolved that a "full report" will be submitted to the Parliamentary Standing Committee soon for passage of a bill in parliament for framing laws on the basis of the agreed points.

EU Needs Assessment Mission

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considered a typical remote election area fraught with risks.

On the basis of the pathfinders' report, the EU will send election observers, as Ketelson said EU is highly interested in a fair and democratic election in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Germany expressed its desire to provide material assistance to the Election Commission if sought for the next elections.

German Ambassador Uwe Schramm said the support could be in the form of any materials like ballot boxes, ballot papers, ink or whatever is required for the balloting.

CPB urges parties

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the killings," the CPB president observed. "It seemed that they were ready to issue statements blaming their opponents."

Even the home minister and the police commissioner blamed Jamaat-e-Islami and other opposition parties for the blast, quoting preliminary investigation reports, he said.

"If the home minister is so sure about the identity of the real culprits, why doesn't he arrest them?" questioned Khan.

"Such comment is apparently aimed to divert public attention," he added.

"Whoever they may be, the killers are enemies of the country and humanity. They must be brought to book as they are trying to destroy the democratic system by unleashing

such violence in the election year."

Police had been deployed at the western corner of the meeting venue, where the bomb went off, he said, adding that they left the place and took position behind the podium three minutes before the explosion.

After the explosion, "we tried to draw the attention of police for help but the security personnel resorted to baton charge on CPB activists and lobbed teargas cells to disperse them instead," Khan said.

CPB leaders Jaid Al Malum, Ashraf Hossain, Abdul Halim and Rohin Hossain Prince also attended the press conference where demand for compensation and proper medical treatment for the explosion victims was also raised.

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Replying to a question from Begum Shaheen Monwara Huq (AL), Selim said the Prime Minister promised to upgrade the existing 500-bed Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) to 1,000-bed. But it will be difficult to manage a 1,000-bed hospital. So the government has decided to construct a new 500-bed hospital, he said.

Replying to a supplementary, the Health Minister said a national nutrition project costing Tk 640 crore has been undertaken.

Replying to Mustafizur Rahman (Fiz), Selim told the House that the government received financial assistance of about Tk 1079.58 crore from foreign countries and international organisations for the health and family planning sector in the current fiscal year (2000-2001).

He told Husna Ara Wahid that 22 hospitals were upgraded to 100-bed hospitals from 50 beds since 1996.

Pharmaceutical co

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from various sources contaminate the environment, agencies dealing with municipal administration, health and environmental protection, cannot evade their responsibilities to ensure proper treatment of wastes."

According to doctors, excessive chemical emissions into the environment can cause acidosis, loss of tissue proteins, anaemia, blindness, depletion in urine output, blurred vision, bronchial spasms, bronchitis, cardiac impairment, palpitations, and arrhythmia, disorder of central nervous system.

The chemicals can also cause changes in higher cognitive functions, cardiovascular pains and tightness, chronic vaginitis, DNA damage, drowsiness, eczema, emotional disorders, ethmoid polyps, frequent urination with pain, gastrointestinal inflammation, headaches, haemolytic anaemia, inflammatory diseases of the reproductive organs, intestinal pain, joint pain, aches and swelling, kidney ailment, crusting and mucous inflammation.

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Stock Exchanges was not on due to the hartal. Attendance in the secretariat was lower than usual.

Witnesses said two processions of the opposition BNP and the ruling Awami League confronted at Shyampur at about 10:30am. Several rounds of gunshots were heard during the incident, but no injury was reported.

BNP activists alleged that AL men, aided by police, swooped on its procession and fired several rounds that left eight wounded. Besides, some cocktails were exploded at Shaheed Faruque Sarak of Jatrabari during hartal hours.

Presence of opposition activists on the city streets was much higher yesterday than previous hartals. Police obstructed opposition activists by putting barbed-wire barricades near Kasturi restaurant at Purana Paltan and did not allow

them to proceed towards the Paltan crossing and Press Club areas.

BNP and its different front organisations brought out a series of processions at different parts of the city, including Mouchak, Naya-paltan, Dhanmondi and Sutrapur areas.

BNP leaders Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Khondaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Abdullah Al Noman, Ashraf Hossain, Sadek Hossain Khoka, Major Gen. (Retd) ZA Khan, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Major Gen. (Retd) Anwarul Kabir Talukder, Amanullah Aman, and Abdus Salam led those processions all day long.

Jamaat and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir brought out processions in Paltan, Bijoyagar and Nayapaltan areas. Jamaat leaders Ali Ahsan Mujahid and ATM Azharul Islam led the processions.

Kazi Firoz Rashid, Shaha

Mohammad Abu Zafar, Ruhul Amin Hawlader and Saifur Rahman led the JP processions while ARM Abdul Matin and Abdur Rab Yusuf led the IOJ demonstrations.

In the afternoon, BNP, JP, Jamaat, IOJ and Jagpa brought out a joint procession, led by BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, from Nayapaltan and paraded the Kakrail and Bijoyagar areas. Later, they held a rally in front of the BNP central office with city BNP President Sadek Hossain Khoka MP in the chair.

Addressing a huge gathering, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan blamed the ruling AL for the bomb explosions at CPB grand rally on Saturday.

Bhuiyan said the government after the explosion at Udichi framed false case against BNP leader Tariqul Islam to protect the real criminals. As a result, the terrorist

gang has continued such unholy activities in the country, he added.

BNP Standing Committee Member Abdul Matin Chowdhury in his speech called upon the armed forces to move away from the Sheikh Hasina government as people and all political parties have united against the AL regime.

Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna reports that hartal was observed in full in the city and no untoward incident was reported from anywhere. Hartal affected normal work at Mongla port and all modes of vehicles remained off the road.

BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and their front organisations brought out separate processions and held rallies in the city. Ruling Awami League and its front organisations also brought out anti-hartal processions.

Star correspondent from

Rajshahi said the daylong hartal passed off peacefully in the divisional headquarters. Except a few rickshaws, all kinds of vehicles were off the road and shops, markets and commercial establishments remained closed.

Our Jhenidah correspondent reports that the daylong hartal was observed peacefully in the district today while Saikupa upazila was free from hartal. All business establishments in the district headquarters remained shut, but auto-tempoed the Saikupa-Jhenidah route as usual. A group of pro-hartal activists damaged a tempo at Jhenidah town at noon.

Report from Brahmanbaria correspondent says the hartal passed off peacefully and all modes of vehicles were off the road. Pro-hartal activists brought out a huge procession in the town during the shutdown.

Peaceful hartal paralyses normal life