

Early hearing on split verdict sought

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Attorney General (AG) Mahmudul Islam and two prosecutors in the Bangabandhu Murder Case yesterday met Chief Justice (CJ) Latifur Rahman seeking an early date of hearing of the case in the third judge's court in the High Court.

Earlier the prosecutors had submitted two petitions to the CJ's office on Tuesday, requesting for advancing the date of hearing, scheduled for February 14. The petitions followed completion of formalities like preparation of paper book on the case and distribution of it among all concerned including the defendants, AG's office sources said.

The CJ told the AG that he would refer the matter to Justice Fazlul Karim.

Justice Karim was earlier designated as the third court to hear the

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SAPTA talks now on Feb 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fourth round of negotiation under the South Asia Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA), cancelled several times earlier, is likely to resume in Kathmandu on February 20.

Sources in commerce ministry said timing for the two-day talks has been fixed as Pakistan agreed to participate in it because it will be followed by an Expert Committee meeting on February 22-23 to finalise a draft for turning the SAPTA into SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area).

The draft has been prepared by the SAARC Secretariat.

At the fourth round, Bangladesh will hand over separate lists of commodities to six other member states, seeking duty-free access for those. It will also get lists for allowing duty-free access of goods from those.

The lists Bangladesh placed at the second and third round of negotiations contained 316 items.

More items have been included in the lists.

The source observed that the main thrust at the negotiation should be on increasing the volume of trade, rather than on increasing the number of items.

It is useless if an item is allowed duty-free access but not imported in large scale.

So, separate list for every country has been prepared.

A common list will not be applicable for every country.

"We have to see which country imports what item in large scale. If that item gets duty-free access or concession, then the country will be benefited," he said.

"Suppose Bangladesh exports jute to India, not to Sri Lanka or Maldives. So, what benefit it will get if Sri Lanka allows duty-free access of jute from Bangladesh?"

Under the three rounds of negotiation, Bangladesh so far received concessionary treatment on 1180 items from India and allowed concessions for 313 items.

The third round was held in 1998. The fourth round was scheduled for July 1999 but was suspended due to uncertainty over holding of SAARC summit. It was rescheduled for January 29 this year, but was cancelled as Pakistan expressed inability to send its delegation at that time.

The SAPTA was established as per a decision of the Sixth SAARC Summit in Colombo in 1991 for trade liberalisation among the member states. SAPTA was conceived as a first step towards economic integration in the SAARC region.

But trade liberalization towards "a total economic integration" did not progress as the SAARC itself became virtually non-functional. The SAARC summit is not being held for last couple of years.

Injured newsman's appeal to PM

UNB, Dhaka

Refuting Joyal Hazari's statement, injured UNB journalist Tipu Sultan made an appeal to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for freeing 12 lakh people of Feni from the stranglehold of terrorists.

"Like me sons of many mothers in Feni are rendered crippled. Many fled homes. Feni is now a den of terrorists. The air of Feni thickened with mute agonies of the repressed people," he said in a statement.

Tipu, whose both the hands need to be amputated, as apprehended by the doctors, in a statement refuted MP Hazari's claim that he and his men were not involved in the heinous attack. "Hazari is unleashing falsehood to hide his sin."

As Hazari at a press conference on Tuesday said that Tipu was injured following conflict with his maternal uncles over land, the young journalist said he and his

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Another Palestinian shot dead

Explosion of violence feared if Sharon wins Israeli polls

AFP, Gaza City

Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian travelling in a car near the Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, a Palestinian security source said.

Ismail Ahmed Atlibani, 50, died on the spot, the source added.

The exact circumstances of the shooting incident were not immediately clear.

His death brought to 389 the number of people killed since the Palestinian uprising broke out in late September, including 326 Palestinians, 13 Israeli Arabs, 49 other Israelis including Jewish settlers and soldiers, and one German.

Israelis and Palestinians warned Tuesday of a possible explosion of violence after next week's crucial Israeli election for prime minister which hardliner Ariel Sharon is

widely tipped to win.

A series of bomb attacks in the Gaza Strip and increasingly vitriolic anti-Sharon rhetoric from Palestinian officials have raised fears that "Mr. Security," as the right-wing Likud leader now dubs himself, could usher in a period of increased bloodshed.

For the Palestinians, Sharon is seen as hostile, out of control and obsessed with conflict in the Middle East.

"It has already happened in Gaza, and the escalation in the strip will spread to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank)," Israeli army chief of staff Shaul Mofaz was quoted as saying in the Haaretz newspaper.

Bomb attacks in the Gaza Strip continued Wednesday with an explosion directed at an army patrol claimed by a previously unknown group calling itself the Brigades of Palestinian National Resistance.

"This action is a response to the continuing Israeli aggressions against the Palestinian people," it said in a statement.

"The resistance against the occupation forces and the herds of settlers will continue until they leave our land and a Palestinian state is established with Jerusalem as its capital," it added.

While no Israeli soldiers were injured in the blast near the Kissufim crossing between the Gaza Strip and Israel, the Jewish state is concerned it is part of a trend.

The army said Palestinians fired a mortar bomb on the Jewish settlement of Netzarim south of Gaza City on Tuesday, describing it as a "very serious incident" and the first time during the intifada the Palestinians used such a weapon.

Mofaz said violence would also pick up in the West Bank because

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KU students announce fresh agitation programme

DU CORRESPONDENT

Students of the Khulna University yesterday announced fresh agitation programme in support of their four-point demand which includes accommodation as well as security for the students on and outside the campus.

As part of the programme, the students under the banner of "General Students of Khulna University" will submit a memorandum to the Chancellor of the University on February 3. They will also lay a siege to the University Grants Commission (UGC) on February 5, form a human chain in front of the National Press Club on February 7 and stage a token hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Miner on February 9.

Their other demands include immediate reopening of the university, withdrawal of punishment on the 'innocent' students and removal of the treasurer and other official of the university.

The programme was announced at a press conference at the Madhu's canteen on the Dhaka University campus.

Addressing the press conference, the students alleged that the authorities expelled one student from the university, four female

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Pro-opposition lawyers threaten tough action

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The Sarbadaliya Ainjibi Oikya Parishad has warned that it would for a 'tough programme' if the Prime Minister fails to resolve within seven days the issue arising out of appointment of two judges in the Supreme Court (SC).

Parishad leaders gave the deadline while addressing a rally yesterday at the SC Bar Association hall.

They mentioned that five top lawyers of the country were nominated by all the sides concerned including ruling party supporters to help solve the issue. The team of lawyers worked out a compromise

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Cinema-crazed youths go on a rampage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cinema-crazed youths ransacked the Madhumita Cinema Hall yesterday and attacked vehicles nearby, failing to get tickets for the Indian super-hit film 'Kahona Piyaar Hai' that is being screened there as part of the International Film Festival.

Witnesses said several thousand young boys and girls started to throng the cinema hall premises since morning to buy tickets for the romantic movie that was scheduled to begin at 12 noon.

Sources said that after a long wait in queue for tickets, the crowd became angry when they came to know that all the tickets were sold out.

The frustrated youths then raised a hue and cry and threw obscenities at the hall authorities, accusing them of selling the tickets to ticket touts. At one stage, they attacked the ticket counter. They also tore down posters from walls and damaged

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Silently they march, eloquently they protest

Students and teachers of the city's Agrani School and College carry banners and placards to protest the premature death of a teacher in a road mishap.

New Year session of JS prorogued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The New Year session of the Jatiya Sangsad was prorogued yesterday with a fresh call from the Speaker for cooperation from all quarters to make parliamentary democracy in the country more effective.

"With cooperation from all, we will be able to complete more important tasks in future," Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury said before reading out the prorogation order by the President.

At the fag end of yesterday's sitting, the House adopted a thanksgiving motion on the Presidential addresses, delivered at the year-opening sitting on January 1. Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah moved the motion.

A total of 71 members, mostly from the ruling party, took part in discussion on the presidential address.

The 21st session of the Seventh Parliament in its 14 working days transacted some important businesses including passage of six

bills. Some reports of parliamentary standing committees on different bills were also placed.

Opposition BNP and its allies -- Jatiya Party (Ershad) and Jamaat-e-Islami -- are boycotting the proceedings since the 13th session.

However, Moin Khan, a BNP lawmaker, attended a sitting of the 21st session to protect his seat. A lawmaker's seat is vacated automatically if he remains absent for 90 consecutive days.

Members of the other faction of Jatiya Party led by Communications Minister Anwar Hossain Manju took part all the sessions.

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina termed the Manju-led faction of JP as the "main opposition" in the session.

Although the House faced severe quorum crisis throughout the session, most of the ruling party members attended yesterday's sitting.

Suranjit Sengupta, Chairman of

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Tania Rape Case adjourned till Feb 22

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the Tania Rape Case till February 22.

The Judge, Mohammad Shah Alam Miah, adjourned the proceedings as he was busy with some other cases yesterday despite the complainant as well as the fourth prosecution witness in the case was present in the court.

Mohammad Obaidul Haq alias Mara, the lone accused in the case now at the jail custody was produced before the court yesterday.

Tania, an eight years old girl, was raped in the police control room adjacent to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka on March 10 in 1998.

Abdullah Mahmud Hasan, former General Secretary of Dhaka Bar Association filed a case with Kotwali thana the same day accusing police but the thana authority registered it as a regular case excluding names of the police.

Earlier, three prosecution witnesses were cross-examined. Special PP MA Bari appeared for the state while Advocate MAKamrul Hasan Khan Aslam for the accused.

Student politics at SUST banned for 3 months

UNB, Sylhet

The authorities of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology have imposed a ban on student politics on the campus for three months.

The university syndicate yesterday took the decision at a meeting with Vice Chancellor Professor M Habibur Rahman in the chair.

According to the decision, punitive action will be taken under Varsity Act and existing laws of the country against the students who will stage any type of demonstration on the campus and hinder academic activities through political programmes.

The meeting decided to resume admission process on February 11 and examinations on February 18.

Sharif remanded once again in Sutrapur double murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sharif, arrested in connection with the sensational double murder in Sutrapur, was placed on a one-day fresh remand yesterday.

Detective Branch of police prayed for a three-day remand on Monday, but the Metropolitan Magistrate Sirajul Haider granted one-day.

Sharif is a close associate of Rabeed Hasan Suman, the principal accused in the double murder case. Sharif was placed on fresh remand so that detectives could interrogate him along with Suman.

Son of Nasibun Ahmed, president of Dhaka City Mohila Awami League and a ward commissioner, Suman was arrested from Comilla on Friday night and placed on a five-day remand. During interrogation, Suman denied his involvement in the killing of two teenage boys in Sutrapur on September 15 last year.

Suman's armed gang picked up Saem and Mohsin from their houses at SK Das Lane and took them to a nearby Rifle Club. The gang killed the two, cut the bodies into six pieces each and dumped those in a manhole.

Intra-party conflicts grip Ctg BNP, JCD

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Intra-party rivalry surfaces in Chittagong chapter of BNP and its student wing JCD, due to internal conflicts among the party leaders and supporters, party insiders and other sources said.

BNP high command reportedly called the local leaders to Dhaka in a bid to patch up the internal feud.

Internal rivalry in Chittagong BNP reportedly became acute after former MP Nurul Alam of Rangunia was assaulted allegedly by the supporters of Salauddin Kader Chowdhury, MP, at Chawkbazar area on Monday night.

Alam was assaulted by the activists of Salauddin Kader when he was returning from Rangunia after holding a meeting, insiders said.

Salauddin Kader's Rangunia meeting was reportedly disturbed by the supporters of his rival faction.

Salauddin Kader's supporters attacked Nur Alam for his alleged involvement in the disturbance in that meeting, sources said.

The supporters of Nurul Alam on Tuesday demonstrated at Rangunia protesting attack on him and demanded arrest of Salauddin Kader Chowdhury, party sources said.

JCD president Nasir Uddin Pintu

was assaulted at a rally at Muradpur here on Sunday by a group of agitated activists.

The incident occurred when some activists led by former city JCD general secretary Mohammad Ali demonstrated demanding withdrawal of expulsion on the organising secretary Yasin Chowdhury Liton, party sources said.

The rally was ended amid chase and counter chase between two groups of JCD activists.

Later, Mohammad Ali filed a case with Panchlaish thana under public safety act (PSA) accusing nine JCD activists that triggered a sharp split in JCD here.

However, while talking to this correspondent, Chittagong city BNP president Mir Md Nasiruddin blamed the external elements for creating trouble in Pintu's rally on Sunday.

"We don't have any intra-party rivalry in Chittagong BNP," he said. "Some external elements backed by Awami League are creating trouble in our party activities", Nasiruddin added.

But Awami League denied the charge.

Nasiruddin further said "I wonder how the complainant against whom warrant already issued, went to Panchlaish thana to file a case against JCD activists".

Shikdar, Faruque, Liaqat to die for killing Akimul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Ershad Shikdar, Jamai Faruque and Liaqat Lashkar have been sentenced to death in the Akimul Murder Case.

Accused Idris Jamai and Jainal (absconding) were awarded five years' rigorous imprisonment (RI).

Accused Sultan Mahmud and Khodeja Begum were acquitted as their guilts were not proved beyond doubt.

Accused Noor-e-Alam was acquitted of the charge as he was helping the court to prove this murder case. He is now acting as an approver in favour of the government.

The judgement of this sensational murder case was delivered today by Hasan Imam, Additional District and Sessions Judge of the First Court who is in charge of the Special Court formed to try all criminal cases against Ershad Shikdar and his accomplices.

Akimul, an operator of PABX of Lockpur Fish Processing Company Ltd was chopped to death by Shikder himself at the Skid Ghat at about 9:00 pm on February 25, 1998. His body was dumped into the Bhairab river the same night.

Akimul was killed for having

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