

Shazneen case

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against him," Deputy Attorney General (DAG) ABM Waliur Rahman said in his argument before the HC Death Reference Bench.

"Accused Hasan did not have any conflict with his nephew Atiqur Rahman Masum. Masum was surprised at Hasan's activities since the night of Shazneen's murder although he had never suspected his activities earlier," the DAG said.

Yesterday's hearing on the trial court's order at the HC Death Reference Bench comprising Justice Ali Asgar Khan and Justice Emdadul Haque will continue today.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, youngest daughter of leading business man Latifur Rahman and a class IX student of Scholastica, was raped and killed at her Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Latifur Rahman filed a case with the Gulshan Police Station the same night and the police filed another case during investigation under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act.

Scrutinising Masum's statement yesterday, Waliur pointed out that Masum, also an uncle of Shazneen, introduced Syed Sajjad Mainuddin Hasan alias Azad to Shazneen's father Latifur Rahman and got him to repair work at Latifur's house two and a half years before the murder.

When Masum phoned at Hasan's house several times informing about Shazneen's killing, Hasan's wife told him that he was sleeping. Masum wondered how Hasan could sleep even after learning about such an incident at Latifur Rahman's house, pointed out the DAG.

When Masum took Hasan to Latifur Rahman's house on April 30, 1998, on Shazneen's sister Simin Hossain's request, Hasan was asked when he learnt about the murder but he went out without giving any reply, said Waliur.

When Masum later asked Hasan why he did not go to Latifur's house on April 23 night, he told him that his motorbike was out of order.

The prosecution pointed out how the statements of witnesses

Anisuzzaman Khan and Ahmed Shafi Chowdhury made it clear that convicts Minu and Parvin gave contradictory statements. "Minu and Parvin's statements gave rise to the suspicion about their role," Waliur said.

It was learnt from witnesses Akku Chowdhury and Mahabubur Rahman's statement that a chisel was recovered from the roof of accused Humayun's servant quarter.

The prosecution told the court that accused Shahid and Humayun (who was acquitted for his death) gave detailed description during extra-judicial confession about how Shazneen was raped and killed. They also recovered some evidence. They made the confession spontaneously and the confessions need to be taken into consideration while taking decision in the higher courts, said the prosecution.

The DAG said witness of convict Hasan's conspiracy, Sufia who is a domestic help at Shazneen's sister's house, also gave confessional statement spontaneously. Convicts Minu and Parvin told her on April 23 that Hasan had planned to kill Shazneen. Sufia also saw Hasan talking to them. But Hasan and convict Badal threatened her with death if she discloses the plan.

The prosecution also mentioned the statements of Shazneen's domestic help Moslem Hwalader and Metropolitan Magistrate Narayan Chandra Das.

The Second Special Tribunal for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka on September 2, 2003 convicted six accused and ordered to hang them until death.

The convicts are Hasan, domestic help Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, his assistant Badal, carpenter Shamram Mandal and housemaids Estema Khanum Minu and Parvin.

Additional Attorney General Razzak Khan, Assistant Attorney General Zinat Akhtar Nazli Begum, and advocates Mohammad Nazmul Haq and Sahara Parvin moved the case for the prosecution. Advocate Mosharruf Hossain Kajal moved for the convicts.

Demand for EPZ in Sylhet

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expatriates living in the UK, USA and in other foreign countries are from Sylhet and they have been contributing greatly to the country's economy for long. He claimed that at least 50 percent of the nation's remittances from abroad, come from the expatriates with roots in Sylhet.

An EPZ in the Sylhet region would have a huge potential, Prof Kamal said, but no government so far took the initiative although the necessity for such a venture had been felt for long in the context of the region's age old link with the UK and other foreign countries.

Proper investment opportunities are still absent in the country, he said, but despite facing serious obstacles, some private initiatives achieved well in the region during the last decade. He stressed on the need for opening new avenues for productive investments in the country.

MA Razzaque Chowdhury, former president of Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industries (SCCI) also a director of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) said no step has yet been taken to make viable the 30 textile mills set up in the region in the eighties. The mills have become sick due to absence of government assistance, he claimed. Young entrepreneurs of the new age need technical assistance, he said stressing the need for establishing gas and agro-based industries in the region.

SCCI President Farique Ahmed Misbah said, with a better road and rail link with the capital now, Sylhet has better communication with the rest of the country. For enhancing trade facilities with the north-eastern region of India, the government should immediately think about setting up an EPZ in the Sylhet region, he said.

SCCI has already started preparing a model study and feasibility study on setting up an EPZ or industrial park in Sylhet with assistance from a foreign firm as well as from Shahjalal University of Science & Technology.

"Very soon the studies will be ready and then we will submit those to the government for early implementation," he added. He stressed the need for creating scopes for non-resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) for development of our national economy.

Pension

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welfare ministry to conduct a study to collect data on senior citizens in the city and recommend how to provide the pension to the poor among them.

If the social welfare ministry can correctly identify the poor through the survey, the government can start this scheme within the next two months," the finance minister told the press following the cabinet committee meeting.

"Conducting the survey will be a difficult task as the social welfare ministry has to accurately categorise the floating people scattered all around the urban areas," he noted. In the current budget, the government has allocated more funds for its social safety net scheme for the senior citizens increasing both the number of beneficiaries and the amount of the pension.

With a budget of around Tk 700 crore, the scheme is now benefiting around 30 lakh marginalised people, Saifur pointed out.

About complaints that a part of this sum leaks out to wrong hands, Saifur said, "When the country's rich people have swindled over Tk 30,000 crore from different banks, if some poor people have swindled some money from this scheme - it's not that bad. Even if they have siphoned off Tk 50 crore from this scheme - it's still better, because this has gone to some poor people."

Blasting the country's economists who criticised the small increment of the pension during the current fiscal year, Saifur said, "They have tons of useless brain - but not even an ounce of practical knowledge."

Nicholas Burns

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Burn's meeting with Bangladesh State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar, who is now in the US on an official visit, in Washington on Tuesday.

Termining the US-Bangladesh relation excellent and stressing the need for strengthening it, Babar thanked the US President George W Bush and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for their letter to Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, said the home ministry release.

The Bangladesh minister thanked Burns for US cooperation for Bangladesh law enforcers' capacity building while Burns thanked him for taking adequate security measures for the US Embassy in Dhaka and other US establishments.

Babar also attended a luncheon meeting in the Capitol building where Chief Deputy Whip and the Co-chair of Bangladesh caucus Joseph Crowley (D-NY), and former Congressman Benjamin Gilman attended. Crowley lauded Bangladesh's role as an ally of US in the fight against terrorism.

Babar also had a meeting with Coordinator for Counter Terrorism in the State Department Ambassador Henry Crumpton where they discussed how to increase US cooperation for ensuring Bangladesh internal security and improvement of law and order situation.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the USA Shamsheer M Chowdhury, Home Ministry Joint Secretary Akhtar Ahmed and other senior officers accompanied Babar in the meeting and luncheon.

omy. The chamber leader also urged the government to prepare a legal framework to allow gas based power plants in the private sector.

Vice-chairman of Chittagong Stock Exchange Fokhor Uddin Ali Ahmed suggested that the government should take immediate and effective legal steps to stop indiscriminate cutting of hills and extraction of stones in the Sylhet region. He also suggested that the government should lease out the management of Sylhet Osmani International Airport to the private sector as soon as possible. The airport should be made an international one in real sense, he said.

Executive Officer of Overseas Centre Shamsul Alam stressed the need for immediate inclusion of NRBs on the voter list. Chairman of Zakaria City Holiday Resort Dr Zakaria Hossain said adequate security should be provided to genuine investors for the sake of the national economy. He also said infrastructural facilities should be provided by the government to ensure proper investment friendly atmosphere.

SCCI Director Md Layes Uddin identified corruption by government officials and political unrest as obstacles to industrialisation in the region. Engineer Mohiuddin said, corruption by the officials should be brought under control immediately for attracting our expatriates to invest in the country.

Director of British-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries Hijlal Gulzar said road communication between Sylhet and Chittagong should be improved immediately for ensuring easy transportation of exportable goods from Sylhet.

Sylhet Press Club President Muktabis Un Noor said, "We will lose our next generation of NRBs if we fail to get them involved now. They are fast getting detached from their parental homeland."

Former upazila chairman of Companiganj, Taiyabur Rahman said corruption at all levels of bureaucracy is the main obstacle to development activities. He also blamed elected representatives and the local administration for fast destruction of hills and forests through indiscriminate felling of

Khoka, BNP leader

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Judge (In-Charge) Mohammad Monzurul Bachhid of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court granted the bail to Khoka and Mainuddin alias Mainu and granted the petition for withdrawal of the case when they appeared for bail.

The case was filed with Ramna Police Station against Khoka and five others on November 5, 1997 on charges of blasting bombs towards the on-duty policemen and common people near BNP office at Purana Paltan that left three cops and a pedestrian seriously injured.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Khoka and Mainu while relieving four others from charges on November 16, 2001. The court then issued arrest warrant against them but they did not appear before the court for 26 consecutive dates.

The home ministry in a letter on March 7 this year informed the district magistrate of Dhaka that it had decided to withdraw charges against Khoka and Mainu as the charges were "politically motivated".

The ministry asked the district magistrate to hand over the matter to the district public prosecutor (PP), who will arrange withdrawal of the case with permission of an appropriate court.

PP Abdullah Mahmud Hassan submitted a petition on May 17 to the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka along with a photocopy of the home ministry's letter for revoking the case.

Following the petition, the prosecution and the defence made

CEC rigid

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experts, the ruling BNP Secretary General and also the LGRD Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the voter list should be prepared through door-to-door visits.

"The voter list should be prepared by visiting from door to door by as many died and many have shifted their addresses in the past years. It will not be possible for many to come to the election offices to get enlisted," Bhuiyan told reporters yesterday.

He said the BNP will request the EC to prepare the voter list by visiting from door to door. But the CEC argued: "There is no necessity for visiting from door to door for the task." He claimed that the latest Supreme Court verdict also did not leave any scope for such activities.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed on Tuesday also expressed his doubt over the success of the EC in preparing the voter list and suggested door-to-door visits for the task. There is no legal bar to such actions of the EC, he said.

Outlaws kill

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Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga. Police said that the dead were involved with the ML faction of the PBC.

Quoting the victims' family members, police said that the cadres of Communist War went to the house of Abul at Kasthad village around 1:00am and took him hostage at gunpoint when he came out hearing their call.

The gang then went to adjacent Duku's house and also held him captive. Earlier the outlaws picked up Raju from his house at Uzirpur of adjacent Alamdanga upazila.

The gang then took all three to Padma beel (a water body) and slaughtered them. Locals found the bodies and informed police yesterday morning.

Police recovered and sent the bodies to Meherpur General Hospital for autopsy. Later, a person identifying himself as Raj and a leader of Communist War, called the local journalists and claimed the responsibility for the incident.

On June 15-16, the outlawed cadres killed three people in Chuadanga and Kushtia including two farmers and a rival cadre.

Ahmadiyyas

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Such a declaration of terrorism and their activities in the name of Islam are enough to ban the organisations. It is also tarnishing the image of the country in the abroad," the letters read.

Zealots conducted hate campaign yesterday from two trucks in front of the Ashkona Ahmadiyya Jame Mosque, vowing to oust Ahmadiyyas form the area after capturing their mosque. The zealots took shelter at the Northpara Babus Salon Kowmi Madrasa, Dakkhinkhan Bazaar Al Arabi Kowmi Madrasa, Falan Kowmi Madrasa, Moktarbari Kowmi Madrasa and Askona Bazar Boro Mosque Kowmi Madrasa.

"Encouraged apparently by the government's policy, the fundamentalists dared to attack our men and capture our mosques across the country again and again," Central Ahmadiyya Missionary Abdul Awal Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Rights organisations -- the Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Bangladesh Coalition for Child Rights, Bangladesh Development Partnership, Nari O Manobadhikar Foundation, Nari Pokkho and Durbar Network - yesterday announced at a press conference that they would go to Ashkona to resist the fanatics.

RJ ready

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will end up like the controversial appointments of 546 employees in 2004. This illegal recruitment may also create unrest on the campus, they added.

Meanwhile, Zahurul Haque, a joint convener of '546 employee association' told the newsmen that the university authorities assured them of legalising their jobs and shift them to the newly vacant posts. Otherwise, they threatened to go for agitation.

Prof Abdus Sobhan, a syndicate committee member of the university, told the reporters that RU management cannot ignore the local political pressure in the new recruitment scheme.

When asked over the 'recruitment business' and illegal dealings, the RU Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain said that he has heard the allegations. "We will strictly resist any element trying to create unrest in the campus over recruitment like previous years," the VC said.

Rajuk

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The Rajuk officials said the structures were illegal while the locals claimed that those were on private land.

"We are to remove the illegal structures as per direction of our higher authorities," said Shamsur Rahman, who introduced himself as the authorised officer of the Rajuk.

The occupiers of the land, on the other hand, claimed that there was a court injunction upon the land and the Rajuk authorities conducted the eviction drive in violation of the court order.

"Even our lawyers came and showed them the court order but they did not listen," said Naminuddin alias Bhasani who claimed to inherit the land from his father.

The agitated occupiers of the land also alleged that the Rajuk authorities did not serve any notice to them for removing their stuff from there.

"They just came and started knocking down the things. Even they did not give us any chance to remove our belongings from there," a Lal Sabuz staff said, adding, "They even took off the sign-board of the newspaper."

However, people who claimed ownership of the land admitted that there was dispute regarding the land with the Rajuk authorities. "My father owned the land that the Rajuk authorities acquired in 1958 but they did not do anything with it. So I filed a case in 1987 to get back the land and the case is going on in the High Court," said Naminuddin who claimed the quantity of land would not be less than five acres.

Other sources said Naminuddin and his brothers sold out the disputed land to different people including some real estate housing companies though the legal battle is going on in the court regarding the land.

Oriental Bank

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Ordinance, 1969. Although the shares of Oriental Bank are not enlisted with the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE), the SEC informed CSE about its decision.

Sources said, the suspicious rise in the share price of Oriental Bank also prompted Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman to call up the BB governor and the SEC chairman and to instruct them about particular measures to be taken.

"We have already started a special investigation into the Oriental Bank issue," Saifur told the media at the Secretariat yesterday adding, "after I woke up in the morning, I talked to the finance secretary, governor of BB, and the people of stock exchange and told them what we should do about it."

The central bank in its letter to the SEC said it is necessary to stop transfer of Oriental Bank's ownership for properly determining the asset-liabilities of the financial institution. The letter also said the Bangladesh Bank believes that all transfers and transactions of the shares of Oriental Bank should be suspended.

The letter added that the problem bank is suffering from a massive shortfall of capital and provision. It is deeply troubled by a huge accumulation of classified loans, income shortage, ineffective management, severe liquidity crisis and above all, a financial crisis. In this situation, to protect the interest of the depositors and to maintain public confidence on the banking system, the Bangladesh Bank dissolved the board of directors of Oriental Bank, removed its chief executive, and appointed an administrator, said the letter.

SEC Chairman Faruk Ahmed Siddique told journalist, "We have taken this measure to protect the interest of the general shareholders of Oriental Bank, so that they are not affected by unusual trading."

Upon completion of the ongoing BB investigation and filing of the report on the financial health of Oriental Bank, the SEC in consultation with the central bank will take

Hasina

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hours behind schedule. Her delayed arrival is understood to have caused the postponement of the meeting with Singh this evening.

Hasina will visit Ajmer and offer prayers at the shrine of Khwaja MoINUDDIN Chisti tomorrow before her return to Delhi for the meeting with the Indian PM.

Hasina is expected to meet Sonia, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Leader of the Opposition LK Advani tomorrow.

She will then fly to Kolkata where she will be given the Mother Teresa Lifetime Achievement Award at a function on June 25, a member of the award committee said.

"Hasina will be given the Mother Teresa Lifetime Achievement Award on June 25. She has confirmed participation at the function," Chairman of the Mother Teresa International and Millennium Award Committee (MTIMAC) Anur Biswas said yesterday.

The Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner's office said Hasina will arrive in Kolkata on June 24. After receiving the award on June 25, she will leave the metropolis on June 26.

Veteran filmstar Dev Anand, also being given the Mother Teresa Lifetime Achievement Award, is likely to attend the function, Biswas said.

Denying reports that the awards will be given away by Sonia Gandhi, he said it would be given either by the Church of North India's Bishop of Kolkata Rev PSP Raju or the Roman Catholic Church's Vice-General of the Kolkata Archdiocese Michael Baaju, both of whom would be present at the function.

Actors Madhavi Chakraborty and Sabitri Chatterjee, singers Arati Mukherjee and Haimanti Shukla, Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University Ashish Banerjee and former Indian cricket team captain Sourav Ganguly will also be given the award.

The MTIMAC is part of the West Bengal Minority and Weaker Sections Council, a secular forum established in 1986 by among others, former West Bengal chief minister Prafulla Chandra Sen and Roman Catholic Bishop Lineus Gomes.

Saddam lawyer killed

FROM PAGE 16
Despite the massive security operation in Baghdad launched on June 21, at least 70 people have been killed in a spate of bombings and attacks including strikes against a mosque and busy clothing markets.

In the latest attack, two people were killed and four wounded in a bombing outside a busy restaurant in Sadr City, according to an interior ministry official.

Another seven people were killed by gunmen in a string of attacks on Tuesday and Wednesday in and around the restive city of Baquba northeast of Baghdad where insurgent attacks have surged in Baquba in the past few months.

In Baghdad, police found the bodies of a man and a woman. Meanwhile, the commander of US forces in Iraq, General George Casey, was scheduled to hold talks with US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Washington expected to review the prospects for a US troop reduction.

The talks come after the bodies of two US soldiers were found south of Baghdad following their abduction by insurgents Friday. A spokesman for US-led forces, Major General William Caldwell, announced that coalition forces had recovered Tuesday "what we believe are the remains of our soldiers, who

its next step regarding share transaction of the troubled bank, he said. The BB meanwhile started a detailed investigation into Oriental Bank's history of activities to find out which persons using their own names or pseudonyms took loans.

Oriental Bank has an accumulated loss of Tk 450 crore. Banking sources said the loss was caused by unscrupulous borrowing by the owners of the bank using false names, which have never been returned. Many of the owners also bought their shares of the bank using fictitious names.

The sources point out that the loans taken by the owners are much bigger than the value of their shares. That is why, they are desperate to sell out their shares in the market and get away, the sources claim. They said a number of 'extremely powerful people' are behind the fictitious names.

While the central bank was in the process of deciding to takeover Oriental Bank, the influential owners of the problem bank were allegedly lobbying the government to delay the takeover by six months so they could evade the scrutiny.

Ivory Coast

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Zigic and Ilich gave Serbia & Montenegro a 2-0 lead inside 20 minutes before Dindane struck twice in either half.

The theoretically meaningless game was played in continual rain, torrential at first, but there was nothing damp about the action on the pitch which was an exciting spectacle.

The crunching tackles and repeated yellow cards, seven in the first half alone, showed neither side wanted to end fourth in a group generally regarded as the toughest at this World Cup.

The result left Serbia & Montenegro, playing in their last match as one team after Montenegro's vote for independence, without a point. Both sides had already lost to Argentina and Netherlands and had no chance to qualify for the last 16.

The West Africans followed their now familiar pattern of letting in two early goals, before halving the advantage -- they lost 2-1 to Argentina and Netherlands -- showing they continue to suffer defensive lapses despite their efforts to solve them.

The Serbs, seeking self-respect after a 6-0 drubbing by Argentina in their last game, again had a man sent off as substitute stand-in left back Albert Nadj was shown a second yellow just before the break.

Iajuddin

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Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka under the supervision of a medical board, the president will be discharged from the hospital on June 24 if "everything goes smooth" and will go to his Bangabhaban residence.

When Iajuddin will resume his office totally depends on the decision of the medical board that is examining him, sources said.

"A seven-member medical board headed by National Professor Brigadier General (Rtd) MA Malik has examined his health condition at the CMH today and said the president will return to his official residence on June 24 for rest and further treatment," said M Mukhlisur Rahman Chowdhury, press secretary to the president.

The medical board will review his health condition in one or two weeks, he said.

"The president will be able to take the charge when the board says he is fit for it," said the source, adding that till then Speaker Jamuriddin Sirur will continue as acting president.

The 75-year-old president was flown to Singapore on May 24 for treatment of his cardiac complications a day after he was admitted to Dhaka CMH following his chest pain.

He came back to the country on Tuesday after having bypass surgery at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore and was admitted to Dhaka CMH again.

disappeared in the vicinity of Yusfiyah.

He said the bodies of Kristian Menchaca, 23, and Thomas Tucker, 25, were being flown home for an autopsy and formal identification.

Caldwell refused to confirm that they had been brutally tortured and "viciously killed" as indicated by an Iraqi army general.

An Al-Qaeda in Iraq-led coalition claimed responsibility for the soldiers' killing in an Internet statement following several warnings by the group to avenge the death of its former leader Jordanian-born Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in a US air strike on June 7.

A US soldier was killed when his comrades were abducted and another died in the 8,000-strong hunt for the missing soldiers, the military said.

"It is a reminder that this is a brutal enemy that does not follow any of the rules," White House national security adviser Stephen Hadleysaid.

The mounting US casualties, which have surpassed 2,500 since the US-led invasion in 2003, come amid a heated debate between President George W. Bush's Republican party and Democrats in Congress, who have demanded a timetable for a drawdown of the some 130,000 US troops in the country.