

Bangabandhu Murder Case Prosecution seeks to uphold death sentences to acquitted convicts

UNB, Dhaka

Refuting a judge's decision acquitting five of the condemned convicts of Bangabandhu murder charges, prosecution yesterday appealed to the single-judge High Court bench to uphold the death sentences.

Prosecution counsel Adv Anisul Huq made the plea making submissions on Maj Ahmed Sharful Hossain and Lt Nazmul Hossain Ansar, two of the convicts acquitted by one of the two judges of an HC bench in a split verdict after appeal

hearings. Refuting Justice Ruhul Amin's decision the lawyer said the statements of witnesses which were rejected by the judge were not insignificant rather were contrary to records.

Earlier, Advocate Anis also appealed to the court on Tuesday and Wednesday for upholding the sentences on Lt Col Mohiuddin and Lt Kismat Hashem, saying Justice Amin has made his judgement questionable by not considering and mentioning some vital pieces of evidence of important witnesses against the convicts.

In pronouncing the acquittal Justice Amin had said that presence of officers in the night parade was not illegal. And the counsel questioned why he had taken this evidence ignoring evidence of other witnesses who said that the accused came out of cantonment with tanks.

"The said officers," Adv Anis said quoting witnesses, "had discussion with Maj Farook and soon afterwards Farook told his troops to get ready for special assignment and load their arms." Adv Anis argued those officers knew it very well that ammunition is forbidden in night parade.

Contradiction of two witnesses over seeking the officer at Bangabandhu's residence or can't ignore evidence of four witnesses that they saw those officers leave the cantonment without the permission of the chief.

Adv Anisul Huq told the court in the review hearings that those officers were aware that they were going with Farook, who planned to kill Bangabandhu, and also going out to do something illegal.

With the evidence of the witnesses, Adv Anis argued, the prosecution could very well prove its case

that they were in the conspiracy to kill Bangabandhu and his family members. "Reviewing the aftermath of the incident conclusion could be drawn that the accused were involved in the killing of Bangabandhu and his family members," he submitted.

The reasons showed by Justice Amin in rejecting statements of some important witnesses were "very insignificant and are contrary to records".

The hearing resumes at 10:30 am Sunday after a two-day weekend.

Manzur

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of the MPs have also supported this. Manzur told The Daily Star that party lawmakers led by Raushan are going to parliament in the name of saving the party's election symbol 'plough'. "This is nothing but a conspiracy of the government. There is no need to join parliament proceedings to save party symbol," he said. He urged his party colleagues to be aware of this 'conspiracy'.

On the other hand, Raushan told this correspondent her party is going to parliament following approval by the JP parliamentary party and the liaison committee of the four-party alliance. "If the Speaker now asks us to join parliament session, we would do so," she said.

Roushan pointed out that she met BNP chief Khaleda Zia to rule out any scope for misunderstanding in the alliance over this issue. "But she (Khaleda) did not try to understand it," she added.

Meanwhile, sources said Manzur had an hour-long telephonic conversation with Khaleda on Wednesday night.

Toxic water

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water and sanitation. Deputy Minister for LGRD Saber Hossain Chowdhury also spoke.

The minister said that integration of societal power and their combined efforts and involvement of NGOs, private sector technical experts and different potential quarters in government decision making process are essential for achieving the goal of ensuring safe water for all.

Deterioration in the quality of water is directly related to density of population and industrial activities largely due to poor management of domestic and industrial waste water, he noted.

Presenting a paper on drinking water contaminants, a researcher said 'lack of treatment' has allowed dangerous level of micro-organisms in water bodies.

He also said about 1000 chemicals contaminate water supply system in America and this has puzzled many water experts.

NGO Forum's Executive Director S M A Rashid stressed more attention to the prevailing crisis in water sector. Gradual decline of ground-water level, increase in salinity and iron in groundwater, Arsenic invasion and pollution of surface water are causes of great concern, he said.

Rashid called for building massive awareness about health hazards from use of polluted water.

Raghib Uddin Ahmed, a researcher of Environmental Geographic Information System (EGIS) Support Project, in his presentation at the seminar at DPHE Bhaban, emphasised production of food without use of chemical pesticides and a return to traditional methods of growing crops.

"We have evidence of high content of toxic chemicals in fish grown near agriculture lands where chemical pesticides were used. These chemicals leach through the ground and contaminate aquatic life nearby," he said.

The speakers demanded that all activities concerning water in all sectors should be brought under strict regulation to avoid catastrophic consequences.

Chairperson of NGO Forum Dr Fazle Hasan Abed, WHO representative in Bangladesh Dr Suniti Acharya and Chief Engineer of DPHE Md Quiruzzaman also spoke at the seminar.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's message on the occasion of World Water Day was read out at the seminar. "Access to safe water is a fundamental human need, and therefore a basic human right," it said

Airbus case

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Rahman and Justice Najmun Ara. The cases were listed following a move by state attorneys trying to get the stay order on the cases lifted. The cases were stayed upon a petition by Khaleda's counsels.

Court sources said that hearings could be held any day. In another division bench comprising Justice Nurul Islam and Justice Iman Ali, two cases against former President and Jatiya Party leader HM Ershad, now in jail, were enlisted for hearing yesterday.

Meanwhile, the full bench of the Appellate Division would hear on March 27 a regular leave petition for appeal against cancellation of Ershad's parliament membership following his conviction in the Janata Tower Case.

The date of hearing was fixed by Justice Mainur Reza Choudhury, chamber judge of the Appellate Division after hearing Ershad's counsel Barrister Rafiqul Huq yesterday.

Ershad's bail

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issue. In the first case, it was alleged that Ershad while in office permitted the Scimitar Company to dig exploration wells at Haripur Oil Field by misusing power.

The case was filed with Tejaono thana on January 16, 1996 against Ershad and Anwar Hossain, the then Minister for Energy and Mineral Resources. Anwar was later granted bail by the High Court in the case.

In the second case, it was alleged that Ershad, by misusing power, directed the authorities concerned to buy 50 per cent of bitumen emulsion for the Roads and Highways Department from M/s Zakir Industries.

1,323 expelled

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Thirty-two were expelled under the Sylhet Education Board. Of them, nine were in Moulavibazar, seven in Sylhet, four in Habiganj, and 12 in Sunamganj.

Some 270 examinees were expelled under the Comilla Education Board. Of the expelled, 156 in Comilla, 25 were in Feni, 25 in Luxmipur, ten in Chandpur, 22 in Brahmanbaria and 45 in Noakhali.

One hundred and two examinees were expelled under the Jessore Education Board. According to the board officials, seven were expelled in Jhenaidah, one in Magura, one in Bagerhat, four in Jessore, six in Khulna, four in Narail, two in Satkhira and 72 in Kushtia.

Policy on India

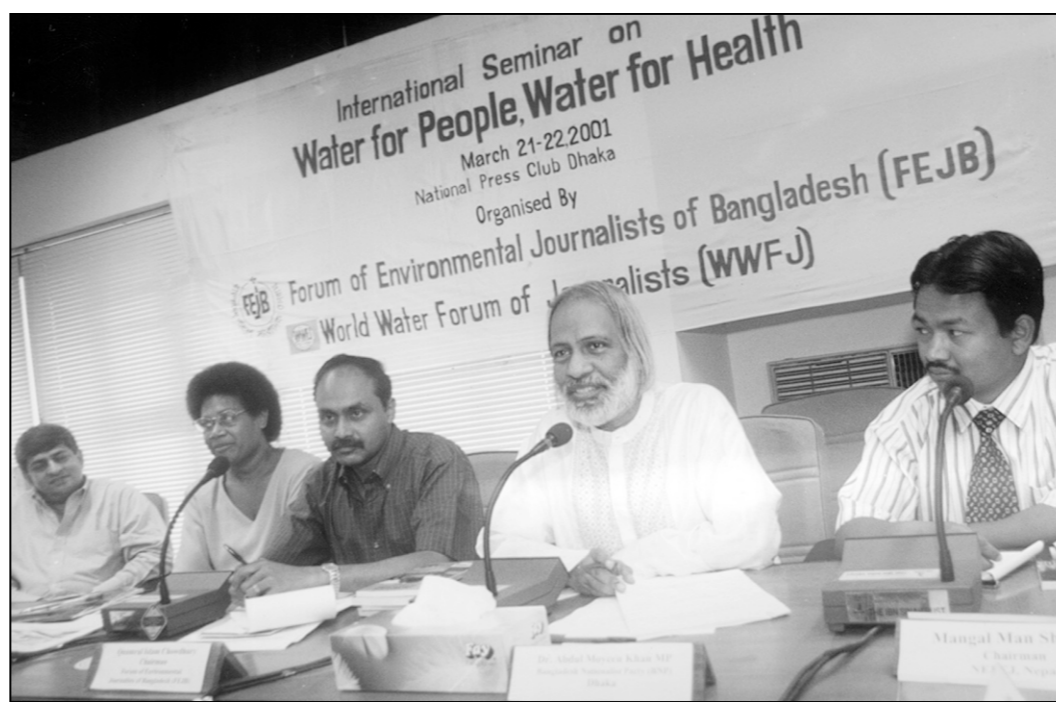
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allowed. He stressed immense prospects of South Asian Growth Quadrangle, BIMSTEC and the Bay of Bengal Triangle.

The former foreign secretary, who played a key role in setting up the BISS, called for strengthening its research capability so that it can act as a 'crucial link, a bridge and a sounding board' for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Prof Shahiduzzaman underscored creation of a new demographic order. Migration of people should be treated as a central issue by developed countries and it should figure in the agenda of the United Nations.

Director General of BISS Maj Gen Jamil D Ahsan presided over the seminar and thanked the keynote speakers and participants.



Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan MP addressing the closing session of the two-day international seminar titled 'Water for People, Water for Health' organised by the Forum of Environmental Journalists (FEJB) in Bangladesh and World Water Forum of Journalists (WWFJ) at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. Picture also shows (L to R) Fahim Munaim, WWFJ member and Managing Editor of The Daily Star, Nina Ratulele, Secretary general of CEJA, FEJB Chairman and WWFJ Secretary General Quamrul Islam Chowdhury and AFEJ Regional Director Mangal Man Shakya..

Inside the hostage drama

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thorough knowledge of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and guerrilla warfare.

During their captivity, the hostages were made to walk at nights through deep forest and hills to new hideouts of the group and sometimes they could even see the light at hilltop army positions 'not very far away'.

The new captors were much more disciplined and they changed guards at regular intervals. The 'Captain' spoke good English and told the hostages on several occasions that during all his days in the hills and in the guerilla war, he had never killed any one and 'he hoped' that he would never have to kill.

Although at the beginning, some of the captors claimed themselves to be members of the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), later they told the hostages they did not have any political demand but wanted money for the "welfare of Chakma people".

Tim Selby, who talked to this correspondent exclusively prior to his departure from Dhaka on March 19, said although they were in absolute terror and felt helpless

during the whole period, the captors treated them with respect and dignity. The captors alerted the three foreign engineers in the evening of March 16 about their imminent release. Sources said the group gathered around the hostages and presented them home woven Chakma robes and bags for their wives and family members. Then they apologised to the three foreigners for 'all the inconveniences caused to their families during these days' and bade them farewell.

At around 8 that night, the hostages, led by the 'Captain', had to walk for about six hours before reaching a place where three 'ordinary looking' men in white shirt were waiting. The three men introduced themselves as members of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. Then the 'Captain' shook hands with the hostages and disappeared into the thick forest. At around 5 next morning, the three foreigners saw a man crossing a paddy field with a torch in his hand.

As soon as that man came near the Red Crescent men, the foreigners were led into a 'cabin' and asked to wait. After closing the door of the

'cabin' from outside, the four men disappeared. Half an hour later, at about 6 am, Army troops entered the cabin with bags of orange, grapes and cans of coke and announced, "You have been rescued by the Army".

Sources said the troops then came out of the cabin and fired 60 to 100 shots in the air. Then they led the three men towards the army camp. On their way to the camp 'lots of photos' were taken amid villagers who had curiously gathered there. The hostages said they had never heard of any ransom being paid to the abductors.

The three Europeans, after a three-day medical check-up at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka, flew to their respective countries on 19 March. Although the government has said amnesty had been granted to the hostage takers, some sources concerned pointed out that they were yet to be officially relieved of the charges. The matter is now pending with the Home Ministry while a combined operation of the police and the army is underway in the hills of Rangamati to rid the area of 'criminals'.

50 Russian diplomats

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ously scheduled news conference with visiting Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.

In Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin's top foreign policy advisor in the Kremlin deplored the expulsion reports as "spy mania" reminiscent of the Cold War. "Any spy mania campaigns, or the search for an enemy is a sorry remnant of the Cold War," Interfax new agency quoted Sergei Prikhodko as saying.

Relations between the two countries have become increasingly strained in past weeks, most recently after Russia announced its intention to boost military co-operation with Iran, and after US officials said a meeting was planned with a leader of the separatist Chechen rebels.

CBS television, which first reported the expulsions, said most of the six Russians accused of working with Hanssen had already left the country, but that the case had given Washington a reason to reduce Moscow's diplomatic staff here.

Last week, the Washington Post quoted FBI officials as saying that Vladimir Frolov, a press attaché for the Russian Embassy who abruptly returned home after Hanssen's arrest, may have been a spy connected with the case.

US officials declined to name any of the Russians implicated. Hanssen, a counter-intelligence officer with 27 years of FBI service, had nearly unlimited access to state secrets and is accused of having seriously compromised US national security for more than 15 years.

The 56-year-old Hanssen, arrested last month after allegedly leaving classified information in a Virginia park for his Russian handlers, began to pass highly sensitive information to Moscow in 1985 until after the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, according to prose-

Arms snatched

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Gafor and Sathkira SP Aminul Islam along with other high police officials visited the spot. Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna adds: Armed cadres of Purbo Banglar Communist Party looted the firearms.

The PBCP outlaws fired at the policemen before looting the firearms and ammunition. Legs, hands and backbones of all the policemen were fractured in the attack, said S. I. Ataur Rahman of Sadar thana.

Driver of the van carrying the policemen escaped when outlaws started firing. He is yet to be traced out. The van driver may also be an outlaw, Sathkira Sadar ASP said yesterday afternoon.

O. C. Kader Baig of Sadar thana rushed to the spot with forces half-an-hour after the attack. He found the injured policemen lying on the ground, two kilometres from Brahmbazar police outpost.

Police, quoting some villagers, said, the miscreants raised slogans in the name of PBCP when they were leaving the spot. Police have launched a combing operation with the help of additional reinforcements sent from Khulna, Tala and Paikgacha.

All the police stations in Khulna, Sathkira and Bagerhat districts have been put on high alert and OCs have been asked to crackdown on suspected hideouts of outlawed organisations to recover the looted arms and ammunition.

Textbook crisis

FROM PAGE 12

problems for the scarcity of new books, while only six per cent came up with a different view. The survey revealed that only one per cent of the students was able to buy all sets of new books.

About errors in the new books, 36 per cent teachers said the new ones are full of informational and spelling mistakes while only two per cent did not find such mistakes. Sixty-eight per cent teachers said examinations of secondary level would not be held in time while 26 per cent teachers argued against this opinion. They observed that the crisis could be resolved by taking additional classes on holidays.

Wesfarmers plans

FROM PAGE 1

imported cylinders, he said. Wesfarmers joint venture in Bangladesh would kick-start marketing "Kleenheat Gas" in the local market within two months, he said.

Price of the LPG cylinder would be competitive and the gas would be of international standard. "We will also offer package programme so that subscribers could get a certain price rate for a tenure and internationally standard gas accessories including burner," he said.

He praised the role of the government officials and co-operation his company received during implementation of the LPG plant. However, he said, "It takes a long time to get a result."

The supply of natural gas through pipelines is a costly process, so the government should go for an easier and cost-effective means as Bangladesh lacks infrastructure, he said.

Use of LPG/LNG would minimise pressure on wood and help improve the air quality of big cities mostly polluted by emissions of motor vehicles running on petroleum. LPG demand in Bangladesh is estimated at 280,000 tonnes per year, and it is mainly used in the country as a domestic cooking fuel, in industry and in powering some vehicles.

Wesfarmers is listed with the Australian Stock Exchange. It had an annual turnover of over US\$3.5 billion dollars last year.

Jamaat: EC

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election. The party placed a 23-point demand when a four-member delegation led by Mawlana Abdus Sobhan met to Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed at his office yesterday. The demands include a code of conduct for political parties.

He added, "We will place the demand for reorganisation of the EC after a caretaker government takes over," he added.

The party had earlier opposed appointment of MA Syed as CEC.

Kader Siddique

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Kishoreganj. Sources said BNP has offered Siddique to join the opposition alliance and said it will then consider his request. But Siddique does not want to formally join the 4-party alliance.

Army cordon

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abduction drama on March 17, some army men who fell sick were evacuated. Sources informed that the cordon was lifted as the special search operation ended yesterday. The operation, launched in and around the Kalapahar area after the month-long hostage drama, was aimed to round up the terrorists linked with the abduction of the three Europeans and to flush out other criminals.

Mutilated body

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bodies started off with the sensational double murder at Gandaria last September when the son of a leader of AL's women's front killed two boys and cut their bodies into six pieces each.

Meanwhile, the identity of the man whose body was cut up in 12 pieces and dumped into the manhole inside a North Goran house in the city's Khilgaon area on March 1 could not yet be established.

PM renews offer for polls in June

FROM PAGE 1

economy. "There was no gas or power. Per capita income was 240 dollars at that time, now it has gone up to 450 dollars. Food autarky has been achieved while there was a deficit of 40 million tonnes. Growth curve has risen to 6 per cent from 4 per cent", the premier noted.

She urged all to compare the achievements of the Awami League government with that of the BNP government. "She is playing the broken record of our failure. But records show that we succeeded whereas they failed to run the country. The lives of the middle class and ordinary people have improved. We did not allow prices to rise, keeping it in

check even during the month of Ramzan and post-budgetary period when there had been trends in the past for prices to spiral," Hasina said and added that wages and salaries had also been increased during the reign of Awami League government.

UNB adds: She said her government has taken various steps to lead the country, keeping pace with the rapid advancement of information technology utilising the vast human resources which she said is the most valuable resources for development.

In this regard, she also focussed on the government initiatives to establish high-tech park, IT village and biotechnology institute and launching of country's first communication satellite Bangabandhu-1.

Referring to the theme of the diploma engineers conference Save rivers, Bangladesh will survive Hasina said the government has taken steps to save the rivers from water pollution and increase their navigability. "We have also taken stringent measures to stop illegal occupation of rivers and against dumping of industrial wastes into the rivers."

The Prime Minister pointed out that some parts of the country are facing arsenic problem due to indiscriminate use of groundwater in irrigation. Besides, water logging has become a permanent problem due to loss of navigability in rivers.

Turning to various demands of diploma engineers, the Prime Minister said the government has already directed the education ministry to introduce a 4-year diploma engineering course and it was included in the national education policy.

"Besides, a decision has been taken to bring diploma engineers, like degree engineers, under selection grade to end the long standing discrimination in their salaries."

The conference was also addressed by IDEB President Rafiqul Islam Bhuiyan, General Secretary AKMA Hamid and Joint Secretary M Mozammel Huq.

Earlier, on her arrival, the Prime Minister laid the foundation of a multi-storied IDEB Bhaban on its office premises at Kakrail.

Ensure safe water

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The former state minister for planning called for taking immediate mitigation measures and ensuring the health security of the millions of arsenic victims.

Dr Khan favoured integrated, pragmatic and participatory water management plan and policy for ensuring water for people and water for health. Quamrul Chowdhury said best water practices of the region should be popularised and there has to be a proper balance of regulatory and incentive mechanisms to optimise the use of both the surface and groundwater resources of the country.

He said water quality has to be improved and water resource management should be made efficient and effective by involving all stakeholder groups and related agencies.

Nina Ratulele emphasised the role of the media in changing the water habit of the people to help achieve sustainable development. Fahim Munaim was critical about the national water policy and

said most of the objectives of the policy are yet to be achieved. He said there should be a balance between both micro and macro water management. Mangal Man Shakya described water as one of the major problems which create conflicts in the region and called for regional cooperation among neighbouring countries.

Dr Iftikher Husain underscored the need for regular testing and monitoring of water quality and solutions to the associated health problems. Arifur Rahman said the nation should discard the holiday-mood in water management and go for an integrated day-to-day and long run water management plan.

Over 100 experts, water and environment journalists from home and abroad and representatives from different ministries, agencies and missions took part in the two-day seminar inaugurated yesterday by Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak.

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