

Trial of 3 JMB patrons may start today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The trial of former BNP lawmakers Aminul Haq, Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu and Nadim Mostafa for aiding and abetting the militants is likely to begin today.

The Third Court of Rajshahi Additional Sessions Judge fixed today for taking depositions of four witnesses. It also asked the police to ensure security for the witnesses.

Trial of the case filed on April 1 by Ayub Ali Pramanik, a victim of brutalities by now banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), was scheduled to begin yesterday. But the judge decided to shift the date following a time petition by the state side.

Public Prosecutor (PP) Ekramul Haque and APP Khorshed Alam reasoned that they need time to prepare the witnesses for giving

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Forest conservator, DFO held in Khulna, Rangamati

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The joint forces yesterday arrested Conservator of Forests in Khulna Sheikh Mizanur Rahman at his official residence in the city's Khalishpur area.

The same day in Rangamati they arrested a divisional forest officer (DFO) at his office on charge of corruption.

During the three-hour raid at Mizanur's house, Tk 2,40,000 in cash, foreign currencies including 400 US dollar, two international passports, and an arms licence were seized. He was shown

arrested under the emergency powers act.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) task force assisted the army-led joint forces in carrying out the operation.

Mizanur Rahman who was promoted to his current post early this year did not submit his wealth statement within June 20 as directed by the anti-graft body.

He has been named by sacked chief conservator of forests, Osman Gani, as one of the accomplices. Gani was arrested in Dhaka last month on corruption charges.

Members of the joint forces and

the ACC task force also raided the DFO office (west wing) in Khulna city, taking with them Mizan who had also served as a divisional forest officer (DFO) in the east wing of the Sundarbans Forest Division.

From there, they went to his village at Chalna under Dakop upazila in Bagerhat. The search at his village home was going on as of filing this report late in the evening.

Forest division sources said the arrest has set alarm bells ringing for the nine other forest officials who too did not turn in their wealth statements within the deadline of June 20.

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5 killed as bus, truck collide head-on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A head-on collision between a bus and a brick-laden truck in Keraniganj yesterday left five dead, including three of a family, and 20 others injured.

The deceased are Nurjahan Begum, 50, her two granddaughters Halima, 18, and Afsana, 9, Ali Hossain, 60, and an unidentified woman aged around 42.

Police said the accident happened around 10:45am at Najirerbagh of Keraniganj on Dhaka-Mawa Highway Link Road when the Mawa-bound bus from Nayabazar, Dhaka collided with the Dhaka-bound truck.

The bus fell into a roadside ditch following the collision.

Locals rushed to the spot and rescued the passengers of the bus, took the injured to Sir Salimullah

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PHOTO: STAR

Wreckage of a bus that collided head-on with a brick-laden truck on Dhaka-Mawa Highway Link Road in Keraniganj yesterday and fell into a roadside ditch. The accident left five people dead on the spot.

Thunderstorms in Karachi kill 228

AFP, AP, Karachi

Torrential rain and thunderstorms have killed 228 people and injured about 200 others in the southern Pakistani city of Karachi, provincial health minister Syed Sardar Ahmed said yesterday.

He said 43 people were killed as rain and high winds lashed the city on Saturday, while "the bodies of 185 more victims were identified today (Sunday)."

The death toll had now risen to 228, he said, adding some 200 other people were injured, mostly in the suburbs of the port city.

The heavy wind and rain late Saturday wreaked havoc in Karachi, which received 17.2 millimetres of rain within one hour.

Karachi residents angry after a

night without electricity to run fans or air conditioners in the sweltering summer heat staged street protests, Karachi Mayor Mustafa Kamal said.

Many people died in roof collapses and electrocutions before much of the city plunged into darkness after its power grid blacked out.

Anwar Kazmi, an official at the Edhi Foundation, which runs the morgue, said many of the victims came from a cluster of villages with mud houses and other flimsy structures on Karachi's eastern outskirts.

The worst hit area was the impoverished Gadap neighbourhood, where roofs of shanty houses collapsed on families, officials said.

Relatives have identified and claimed all 228 bodies, said Anwar Kazmi, a senior Edhi Foundation

official. Among the 185 dead were eight children and 15 women while the rest were men, he said.

A spokesman for the Edhi Trust, which runs welfare homes and a massive network of ambulances, also put the toll at more than 200.

A 22-year-old woman, her son, 2, and daughter, 3, were among the dead in Gadab Town, Karachi Mayor Mustafa Kamal said earlier.

Some 200 people were injured in the storm, he said.

Ahmed said an emergency had been declared at all government hospitals and doctors and paramedical staff had any leave cancelled.

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PHOTO: STAR

Ismat Ara regains consciousness in a Dhaka Medical College Hospital bed after she was drugged and robbed of everything on her arrival to the capital from Dubai on Friday.

Dubai dreams turn into nightmare

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Luck failed to favour her either in Bangladesh or abroad, filling her life with tales of misery.

While in the country she starved with her seven children, and abroad she was tortured 10 to 12 times a day even over a trifle like delaying in serving a glass of water to her employer or his family members.

Ismat Ara left home seven months ago chasing a dream of better days and was forced to return home with the dream turned into a nightmare as the tale did not end with her leaving the torturous job. On her return to homeland she was robbed of all her belongings.

Ismat was robbed of Tk 13,000 in cash, a passport and some clothes just after she had arrived in Dhaka on Friday. The robber drugged her into unconsciousness and left her on a road in the capital. She was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where she regained her consciousness on Saturday night.

Ismat left home for Dubai as her day labourer husband Helal Uddin, who had been remaining sick almost all year round, could not manage to earn enough to meet everyday expenditures. She got married when she was 14 and has been facing hardship since then.

Ismat, who had no money, had to collect Tk 60,000 to finance her trip to Dubai. Some of the money was donated by her neighbours and

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Criminals kill 1, injure another at Adabor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unknown criminals strangled one and critically injured another person at Adabor in the capital yesterday.

The dead is Ainal Huq Mollah, 55, caretaker of a piece of land in Adabor. The injured Mosharrar Hossain, 55, is now receiving treatment at Shaheed Suhrawardi Hospital.

Jalal Miah, brother-in-law of Ainal, told The Daily Star that Ainal received a cellphone call Saturday night and went outside the house with his friend Mosharrar. Both were missing since then.

Yesterday morning, locals found Ainal's body lying on an empty house-plot near the Flood Control Embankment in Mohammadpur. Mosharrar was also found lying unconscious near the wall of a house. Both had marks of beating on their body.

Police, recovering the two, sent Mosharrar to hospital and the body to Dhaka Medical College Morgue for an autopsy.

Morgue sources said there were marks of injury around Ainal's neck which indicate that he was strangled to death. Police also found a rope, which they suspect Ainal was strangled with.

Tarique's in-laws' house searched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces yesterday raided Tarique Rahman's in-laws' house in Dhanmondi and took away documents concerning the property of his wife Zubaida Khan Rahman.

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Iraq's 'Chemical Ali' sentenced to hang

AP, Baghdad

An Iraqi court yesterday sentenced Saddam Hussein's cousin known as "Chemical Ali" and two other former regime officials to death by hanging for their roles in a 1980s scorched-earth campaign that led to the deaths of 180,000 Kurds.

All Hassan al-Majid, Saddam's cousin and the former head of the Baath Party's Northern Bureau Command, trembled and stood silently as the judge read the verdict.

The judge, Mohammed Oreibi al-Khalifa, said al-Majid was convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for ordering army and security services to use chemi-

cal weapons in a large-scale offensive that killed or maimed thousands.

As he was led out of the court, al-Majid said, "Thanks be to God."

The decisions, if upheld on appeal, would bring to a close the second trial against former regime officials since Saddam was ousted in the 2003 US-led invasion. Saddam, who also had been a defendant in the so-called Anfal trial, was hanged Dec. 30 for ordering the killings of more than 140 Shia Muslims from the Iraqi city of Dujiil following a 1982 assassination attempt against him.

Kurds welcomed the trial as their chance to taste vengeance,

although the case did not deal with the most notorious gassing the March 1988 attack on the northern city of Halabja that killed an estimated 5,000 Kurds.

"Finally, the past hard days are gone. I am ready to start over without this burden on my chest," said LokmanAbdul-Qader, a 40-year-old resident of Halabja who lost six relatives in the chemical attack and says he has suffered from acute asthma attacks since he inhaled the nerve and mustard gas that was used.

Former defence minister Sultan Hashim Ahmad al-Tai also was sent

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RAMNA BLASTS Huji man Wali remanded

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday remanded banned Harkatul Jihad (HuJi) man Waliur Rahman for eight days in the Ramna Batamul carnage case.

Ten people killed and several others were injured on April 14, 2001 when bombs went off at a crowded a Bengali New Year celebration at the Batamul inside the Ramna Park.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) yesterday produced Wali, 35, son of Amin Uddin Mondol of Sharifpur under Jhikargacha in Jessore district, before the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka and appealed for a ten-day remand.

In the forwarding report placed before the court, CID Inspector Abu Hena Mohammad Yusuf, the investigation officer (IO) of the

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BNP reformists meet again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Reformist leaders of BNP yesterday held a meeting among themselves and also met some senior leaders of the party to put the final touches on their party reform proposal which will be made public any time now.

Ashraf Hossain, joint secretary general of the party, along with former lawmaker Nazir Hossain met party standing committee members Saifur Rahman and Khandakar Mahub Uddin Ahmed to inform them about the reform proposal.

The reformists, who believe all active leaders of the party are with them, are also confident that they will be able to reorganise the party retaining only the good people in it if the reform proposal is adopted, which contains a 10-point set of recommendations including a provision that the same person cannot be the chairperson or the secretary general of the party for more than two terms in a row.

Asked whether Khaleda will be eligible to stay in politics after the reforms, Ashraf Hossain, who is also a framer of the reform proposal,

said, "She will be in the party if she changed constitution allows it."

Abdul Alim, another reformist leader, firmly said, "All the active leaders of BNP across the country are with us, not only a few people."

Many BNP leaders including Ashraf Hossain, former minister Maj Gen (ret'd) Mahmudul Hasan, former lawmakers Nazir Hossain and Abdul Hye, Pirojpur district leader Monir Hossain, Patuakhali leader Golam Mostafa, and Kishoreganj leader Gonesh Chandra met BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in his residence in the capital yesterday and discussed the reform proposal.

Later Ashraf Hossain told reporters that they want to make the party democratic and they will make the reform proposal public very soon. "We will present a decent and democratic BNP to the nation," he told the reporters.

Replying to a question he said, "BNP will be reorganised with

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PHOTO: STAR

This lid-less manhole on Green Road in the capital causes frequent accidents and damage to cars, rickshaws and other small vehicles as well as inflicts injuries to people.

Mohiuddin seeks SC approval to move against death sentence

UNB, Dhaka

Condemned prisoner AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed yesterday filed an application with the Supreme Court for approval to move against his death sentence in the Bangabandhu murder case.

"A petition for condoning an inordinate delay in filing the jail appeal has also been enclosed with the application," a Dhaka Central Jail authority source said, without elaborating.

Office of the registrar of the Supreme Court already received the application in the afternoon.

He is one of the 12 former army officers sentenced to death for assassinating Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in a bloody coup on August 15, 1975.

On June 18, after nine years of a fugitive life in the USA, Mohiuddin was brought back home from Los Angeles.

He was deported by the US Homeland Security after a district court in California turned down his appeal.

Mohiuddin, 60, a major at the time of the coup, was tried in absentia and sentenced to death in 1998 along with the rest.

Nepal polls Nov 22

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's eight political parties announced yesterday that November 22 will be the date for the Himalayan nation's first post-war elections originally scheduled for June.

"The cabinet meeting on Sunday decided to hold the constituent assembly elections on November 22," government spokesman Krishna Bahadur Mahara told reporters.

The vote for a body to rewrite Nepal's constitution had been set for June 20, but Nepal's top election official repeatedly said more time was needed to prepare.

The elections will decide the future of Nepal's embattled monarch King Gyanendra, who has been stripped of most of his powers

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