

Sedition case

FROM PAGE 1

The accused worked against the Liberation War and carried out massacres by forming Al Badr, Al Shams and Razakar forces in 1971. Thus they committed sedition, the case statement said.

Moreover, the accused recently started making fresh derogatory remarks on the Liberation War by terming it a civil war, and denying the existence of anti-liberation forces.

"I have been compelled to take refuge of the law since the state, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, home ministry and freedom fighters' organisations have not taken any legal action against the war criminals," said complainant Fazlur Rahman, a freedom fighter of Sector-2.

The case statement mentioned that the Jamaat secretary general on October 25 denied his party's anti-liberation role, and claimed that anti-liberation forces never existed in the country. On the next day, Hannan, also a former chairman of the National Board Revenue, in a private satellite television talk show termed the Liberation War a 'civil war' and made derogatory remarks on it.

Quader Mollah at a discussion on October 31 said the freedom fighters joined the Liberation War being allured by beautiful Indian women, and for grabbing property of the Hindus in the country. Three criminal cases including one for sedition were filed against Quader with a Madaripur court for his derogative remarks.

By denying the Liberation War, they have committed sedition, the complaint said. "We will have to bear the shame forever if these criminals are not punished for their heinous crimes," argued Fazlur, a resident of south Kamarkanda in Keraniganj.

He filed the case under sections 121-A and 123 - A of Bangladesh Penal Code. The sections deal with the sedition charges and punishment for committing such offences.

Section 121-A says whoever within or without Bangladesh conspires to commit any of the offences to deprive Bangladesh of the sovereignty of her territories or any part thereof, or conspires to overawe by means of criminal force or the show of criminal force, the government, shall be punished with imprisonment for life or any shorter term.

In the case, the complaint made the editor and news editor

Drug market

FROM PAGE 16

entrances to the slum were seen preventing commoners from entering the area.

Mohammadpur police said yesterday evening that 20 riot police have been deployed at the market. They claimed that there has not been any sort of drug trading since Tuesday.

Sources in the Narcotic Control Department said taking the December 3 report of The Daily Star into due cognisance, the authorities concerned instructed the field level officials to stop drug trading at the spot at any cost.

Locals said if the authorities remain strict about the matter, as they are now, drug trading could be completely stopped in the slum, one of the largest heroine markets in the country. They said customers used to throng the spot round the clock.

RU teachers' conviction

FROM PAGE 1

prosecuting university teachers they would not be able to silence the language of protest against injustice.

Advocate Sultana Kamal, former adviser to the caretaker government, said she has been deeply saddened by the news of conviction of the RU teachers. "It seems to me that they have been punished heavily for a lighter crime," she told The Daily Star.

The jurists referred to some incidents of violation of the EPR: thousands of protesters brought out processions on the Dhaka University campus and in different parts of the capital on August 20 and the following days; thousands of Awami League (AL) workers took to the streets and chanted slogans welcoming party chief Sheikh Hasina's return from abroad last May; Progressive Democratic Party President Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi and his men brought out a motorcade procession in Manikganj during distribution of relief to flood victims; and a few people brought out a procession welcoming the arrest of the AL chief last July.

A renowned jurist pointed out that religious outfit Hizbut Tahrir has also frequently brought out processions in the capital since September, denouncing a cartoon published in a national daily.

But none of them has been prosecuted, the jurists alleged.

On Tuesday, a speedy trial court sentenced the four RU teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment for participating in a silent procession on August 21 protesting the previous day's police attack on DU

of the Prothom Alo and editor the Bhorer Kagoj as witnesses.

When contacted last night, Tejgaon police said they are yet to get copy of the sedition case filed with court.

According to newspaper reports, speeches and statements of those accused of war crimes, and findings of different probe bodies including the People's Enquiry Commission, Mojiuheed, who was president of the then East Pakistan Islami Chhatra Sangha and chief of the infamous Al Badr Bahini back in 1971, helped the occupation Pakistan army commit massacre, loot and rape.

Only two days before the Liberation War ended, he led the killings of renowned academics, litterateurs, doctors, engineers, journalists and other eminent personalities to leave the nation intellectually crippled.

Quader Molla was known as a 'butcher' to Bangalees in Mirpur of Dhaka in 1971. Mirpur at the time was mainly populated by non-Bangalee Muslim migrants from India, many of whom actively collaborated with the occupation army.

One of the largest mass graves of people butchered by Pakistani troops and their lackeys was discovered in Shialbari area of Mirpur after the independence. Quader was behind the killing of thousands of Bangalees in Shialbari and Rupnagar areas of Mirpur in 1971. He had started killing people even before the occupation army's mass killing, local people said.

Jamaat was constitutionally banned for its anti-liberation activities. But the ban was lifted in 1976.

Donors urged

FROM PAGE 1

disaster preparation and adaptation to climate change.

Tornæs said she hoped the \$2 million would bridge the gap between humanitarian relief and long-term reconstruction.

The reconstruction effort is a 'great' challenge that needs international support, and that is why the GFDRR partners have issued the appeal, she added.

"Climate change and natural disaster risk reduction are linked together and should be addressed in a common context," said Tornæs.

She also said that Denmark, as the host of the next UN conference on climate change, would look to integrate both climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into development assistance through the GFDRR.

Zhu Xian, World Bank's Bangladesh country director, who was also present at the briefing, said "Increasingly the international community is focusing on prevention and long-term risk reduction, not just reconstruction." The GFDRR ensures attention beyond the immediate relief operations - on long-term recovery and preparedness, Xian added.

Asked about Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed's \$1 billion appeal to protect the southern coast from climate change and natural disasters, Xian said it was still a 'concept' and the issue requires national consensus.

The GFDRR has already donated \$300,000 to Bangladesh for disaster preparedness and comprehensive disaster risk management.

students.

"Questions have arisen in the mind of people whether the government is enforcing the emergency power rules selectively," Sultana Kamal, also a human rights activist, said.

Bangladesh Bar Council Vice-Chairman Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, however, said many incidents take place violating the laws but not all the lawbreakers are punished.

"The judgment has sent the message to all that none is above the law. It has also sent a message to all teachers and students for abiding by the law," Mahbub, who was made vice chairman to the bar council by the caretaker government, said.

On the allegation of punishing the teachers on the basis of poor evidence, he said if the convicted teachers think they have been punished in an unjust way, they will of course get justice from the higher court upon appealing against the judgment.

Justice Rabbani said, "I am confident the judgment will not sustain [in higher court if appeal is made against the verdict] but considering the long time taken to dispose of the appeal, I will hope the president will exercise his constitutional prerogative of pardon."

Justice Naimuddin Ahmed said both the government and the president can remit the punishment. "Since the convicted are teachers, I appeal to the president to remit the punishment," Naimuddin said.

Prisons abroad

FROM PAGE 1

by the ministry at a press briefing yesterday in the secretariat.

As of November 30 this year, a total of 7,621 Bangladeshis were reported to be imprisoned in Saudi Arabia, 627 in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), 144 in Bahrain, 53 in Qatar, 107 in Kuwait, 135 in Oman, 104 in Libya, 8 in Hong Kong and 31 in Singapore.

Among the convicted prisoners, 636 were convicted in Saudi Arabia, 574 in the UAE, 90 in Bahrain, 9 in Qatar, 209 in Kuwait, 38 in Oman, 1 in Libya, 26 in Hong Kong, 2 in Macao, 217 in Singapore, 35 in Iran, 1 in Switzerland and 92 were convicted in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.

Abdul Matin Chowdhury, secretary of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, told The Daily Star that generally, illegally overstaying, violating visa conditions and criminal activities are the main reasons for imprisonment of expatriate Bangladeshis in a foreign land, but detailed data on the reasons are not available to the government at the moment.

Wage Earners' Welfare Fund of the government is used to repatriate the imprisoned Bangladeshis who had gone to a country through legitimate channels, said the secretary adding that approval from higher authorities is required to use that fund to repatriate Bangladeshis who went overseas through unrecognised channels or overstayed in a country on visit visas.

A few countries deport the Bangladeshis nationals under arrangement with Bangladesh missions abroad upon their completion of prison terms, he said.

Meanwhile, a handout of Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said the government of Myanmar has agreed on unconditional release of all 49 Bangladeshis nationals who had been serving prison terms in different jails in Myanmar.

The decision of the Myanmar government was conveyed through Bangladesh Embassy in Yangon.

Most of the Bangladeshi citizens detained in Myanmar are fishermen and woodcutters and they are now awaiting repatriation, the handout said.

Expressing his satisfaction over the release, Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said, "I see this as a good and friendly gesture on the part of Myanmar. It shows that patient diplomacy bears fruit."

Govt to import

FROM PAGE 1

Public Purchase yesterday approved a proposal for the import, while it sent back a power-plant venture.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) will import the fertiliser from Qatar's QAFCO and UAE's Fertiliser company under state-to-state arrangement.

The committee in a meeting with its chairman Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam in the chair gave the nod to the Industries Ministry's proposal, considering the demand for fertiliser.

The purchase committee also approved two other proposals given by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) for appointing two consulting firms for two rural infrastructure projects. The projects are Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project (RIIP-II) and Primary Healthcare Management & Training.

The committee, however, sent back two other proposals, one from power ministry and another from the industries ministry, for further scrutiny.

Earlier, the Cabinet Economic Affairs Committee, a similar panel, endorsed a proposal exempting compliance with the existing rule for tender invitation in such state procurement.

"Since this is a state-to-state-level procurement without involving any private company, we endorsed the proposal for import without tender," Mirza Aziz said.

The purchase committee also approved two other proposals given by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) for appointing two consulting firms for two rural infrastructure projects. The projects are Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project (RIIP-II) and Primary Healthcare Management & Training.

The committee, however, sent back two other proposals, one from power ministry and another from the industries ministry, for further scrutiny.

DGFI car

FROM PAGE 1

accused RU teachers Dr Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan Sajal and Dr Sabbir Sattar Tapu of Geology and Mining Department, Sadekul Islam, RU deputy chief information officer and Ataur Rahman, driver of former RU vice-chancellor Faisal Islam Faruki.

The other accused are on the run. They are Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) RU unit Secretary Ayeuddin, Dipayan Sarkar, Mizanur Rahman Mithu, Sardar Ayaz, SM Fakrul Islam Raihan, Abu Sayem, Shamim Ahmed, Kazi A. Latif, Shakawat Hossain, and Aziz Bin Kamal.

Shawkat Ali, assistant director of Rajshahi DGFI, filed the case on August 23 against two teachers and four students.

Later, Sub-inspector Mukhtar Hossain included the names of eight others in the charge sheet submitted on September 1.

The plaintiff alleged that he was assaulted and the DGFI vehicle was torched during RU campus violence on August 22.

He also alleged that the two teachers encouraged the unruly students to set the vehicle on fire giving them instructions over mobile phone.

37 Pak judges

FROM PAGE 16

house arrest in their residences, where they have been kept under heavy police guard since the state of emergency began.

Only four of the Supreme Court's former total of 17 judges agreed to be sworn in under emergency legislation brought in by Musharraf.

Musharraf has been at loggerheads with the judiciary since he tried to sack former chief justice Chaudhry in March, a move that led to massive street protests and sent his popularity plummeting.

Chaudhry was finally dispatched when he refused to take the oath.

Critics say Musharraf's main motivation for imposing the emergency was to purge the Supreme Court of hostile judges amid fears that they would overturn his victory in an October 6 presidential election.

The new-look court rubberstamped his election win last month and Musharraf was subsequently sworn in for a second term as president, albeit this time as a civilian after quitting his dual role as army chief.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's election commission yesterday rejected allegations from leading opposition parties that January polls will be struck by vote rigging, insisting that the vote will be free and fair.

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto has said that her party is contesting the January 8 polls "under protest" despite fears that they will be massively rigged by the government.

She has objected about the setting up of 'ghost' or improvised polling stations, bulk transfers of officials and a plan to steal thousands of ballot papers ahead of the election for the pro-government candidates.

Another former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who returned from exile from Saudi Arabia on November 25, has been demanding other opposition groups boycott the elections arguing that the vote will not be fair and transparent.

Both leaders met in Islamabad on Monday and have tasked their parties to compile a list of demands the government must meet to stop them boycotting the poll.

But voting watchdogs insisted that the opposition's fears are unfounded.

"The Election Commission is a constitutional body and it is fully independent to hold free, fair and transparent polls," the commission's secretary Kanwar Dilshad told AFP.

"The entire election exercise is absolutely free, fair and transparent," he said.

"More than 95 per cent of polling stations will be in schools or government buildings, but in some areas where there is no proper building, polling stations are established in tents or some other premises," Dilshad said.

He said such a move was not new and that improvised polling stations would be set up in consultation with the contesting candidates.

Addressing allegations that thousands of ballot papers would be stolen, Dilshad said they would be

handed over to officials by January 5 and "there is no question of somebody getting hold of them."

President Pervez Musharraf last week pledged to lift a month-old state of emergency by December 16, ahead of the January 8 vote.

A committee set up by the parties of the two ex-premiers to draft the "charter of demands" began its maiden session on Tuesday and was to meet again on Wednesday afternoon.

"Yesterday we had a preliminary round in which we agreed that the entire electoral process was based on rigging and fraud," Sharif's spokesman Ahsan Iqbal told AFP.

"The current system was not leading us towards free and transparent elections," he added.

Iqbal warned that if elections became controversial then the "political crisis will be much deeper and create more instability."

He said that it was also agreed that instead of Musharraf "dictating" his terms of elections, political forces should set the rules for the conduct of impartial and fair elections.

Under massive international pressure following his declaration of emergency rule, Musharraf has delivered significant concessions to the opposition in recent weeks.

He quit as army chief last week and was sworn in for a second term as a civilian president, ending eight years of military rule after he seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999.

2 American HR activists arrested in Pakistan

Ap, Lahore

Two US human rights activists were arrested after they had been seeking the release of a prominent Pakistani lawyer, who was detained under the country's state of emergency, officials and a witness said.

Police travelling in two cars picked up Medea Benjamin and Tighe Barry near the Holiday Inn Hotel Tuesday in the eastern city of Lahore, said Amir Sohail, joint secretary of the Punjab Union of Journalists, who was with the two Americans at the time.

Elizabeth Colton, press attaché at the U.S. Embassy in the capital, Islamabad, confirmed the arrests. She said that the two had contacted the US mission in Lahore by phone, and that it was giving consular assistance.

A police official in Lahore, who requested anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to journalists, said the arrest order came from "higher-ups." He said the two US citizens were likely to be deported.

Pakistani newspapers reported during the weekend that the two Americans had been staging a vigil in the city to protest the house arrest of Aitzaz Ahsan, the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association.

Aminul Haque

FROM PAGE 16

high-profile graft suspects including Awami League (AL) presidium member Tofiq Ahmed and former BNP state minister Maj (ret'd) Kamrul Islam yesterday submitted their wealth statements.

Besides, Jatiya Party (JP) Secretary General and former minister, ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader and Abul Hashem Miah, supervisor, New Market post office, submitted Tk 12 crore and Tk 1 crore wealth statement respectively yesterday.

The three other high-profile graft suspects who submitted wealth statements are former communications secretary Rezaul Hayat, building inspector and Rajuk CBA president Amir Khassru, and former AL lawmaker AKM Rahmat Ullah.

CASE AGAINST AMINUL ACC Assistant Director Sayed Ahmed filed the case against Aminul as preliminary investigation found he as well as his wife, son, daughter and family members accumulated property and wealth worth Tk 76.75 lakh, which is disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The case was filed under the sections of 26 (2), 27 (1) of ACC Act and 15 (d) (5) of Emergency Power Rules with Ramna Model Police Station.

In the first information report (FIR) the complainant said Aminul in his wealth statement concealed information, giving false information about his property worth about Tk 76.75 lakh.

Investigators found that the property - a five-storey building in Baridhara and a one-storey building in Rajshahi - he concealed in the wealth statement is disproportionate to his known sources of income, the FIR added.

CASE AGAINST HASHEM ACC Deputy Director Manjur Ahmed filed the case against MA Hashem and his wife Sultana Hashem for "illegally accumulating property worth Tk 19.81 crore."

The case was filed under the sections of 26 (2) and 27 of ACC Act and Emergency Power Rules with Ramna police.

Huda, Sigma

FROM PAGE 16

Ahmed, in a graft case.

Besides, the hearing on a seven-day remand prayer to interrogate detained former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar was not held yesterday, as the jail authorities could not produce him before the court due to his illness.

HUDA-SIGMA CASE Sub-Inspector Amirul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Nazmul Huda and his wife to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court (CMM), showing 23 people as prosecution witnesses.

Businessman GM Siraj, chairman of Sky Park Ltd, filed the case against them with Dhamondhi Police Station on July 27 for extorting the money from him.

HASINA AHMED CASE Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after the investigation officer (IO) prayed for issuance of an arrest warrant against her in a graft case.

On December 2, ACC Assistant Director Mozahar Ali, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Salahuddin Ahmed and his wife Hasina Ahmed to the CMM's Court, showing 24 people as prosecution witnesses.

In the case filed with Gulshan Police Station on June 14, ACC Deputy Director Shafiqul Islam stated that the couple had concealed Tk 3,51,72,782 amassed through illegal means in their wealth statements submitted to the ACC.

BABAR CASE

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani yesterday re-fixed January 6 for next hearing on the remand prayer in connection with a bribery case filed against Babar and five others to save Basundhara Group chairman's son from a murder charge.

Tuku

FROM PAGE 16

case halfway through the trial proceedings, and issued a ruling upon the revenue board to explain why the case 'should not be quashed'.

According to the case statement, Tuku repeatedly submitted "false" information to the income tax department about his income and expenditure. He also "used his ministerial position to conceal information on his real income."

Besides, Tuku allegedly did not submit statements about his non-agricultural property, motor vehicles, bank statements, credit cards, and savings investments, fixed deposits and interest deposits.

The former state minister, who was arrested in February, is now serving a nine-year sentence in a corruption case following a fast-track court convicted him November 15.

The court, trying high-profile corruption suspects, also ordered confiscation of his property worth about Tk 3 crore. The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the graft case against him.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, assisted by Barrister Ajmalul Hossain, QC, appeared for the defendant.

2 former premiers

FROM PAGE 1

judiciary is open. No one is above the law and everyone will get due process of law," the chief adviser said as Ullah Tornaes, the Danish minister, enquired about the trial of Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

Tornaes made a courtesy call on the chief adviser at his office, and discussed relief and rehabilitation work, election, political reforms and prices of essentials.

Fakhrudin said the present government is committed to holding a free, fair and acceptable election by December 2008 which will be free from the influence of 'money, muscle and misuse' of authority.

"The Election Commission is working to that end following its announced roadmap and the government would provide all-out cooperation," he told Tornaes.

On the Election Commission's dialogue with political parties, the chief adviser said the commission is an independent entity and they would prepare a set of guidelines after the discussion.

Responding to a question, Fakhrudin said political parties also want their own reform, adding that registration of political parties is the demand of the people and the political parties as well.

Citing various institutional reforms, he said reformed political parties and revamped institutions would further strengthen democracy in Bangladesh.

The Danish minister highly appreciated the government's relief operations in the cyclone-affected areas as she visited some Sidr-hit places. It impressed her that the government evacuated thousands of people in a short time.

Tornaes told the chief adviser that Denmark's donation of another US\$ 2 million for midterm rehabilitation will be channelled through the World Bank.

She said Denmark will donate one million dollars for long-term rehabilitation, in response to the chief adviser's call for international cooperation in raising a one-billion-dollar fund.

Fakhrudin thanked the Danish minister for immediate response to his call for cooperation.

Climate change and its negative impact on Bangladesh also came up at the meeting. The Danish minister said a conference on climate change would be held in Denmark in 2009.

Sharp reaction

FROM PAGE 1

the release of four of their colleagues as they were arrested on same charges.

"Freedom of speech is a constitutionally recognised basic right and punishing any individual for giving opinion at a critical moment of the country is unexpected," acting President of the Awami League Zillur Rahman and his acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam said in a joint statement.

Prof Tazmeri SA Islam, acting president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), said sentencing the four academics frustrated all the teachers and they are now worried about the fate of the detained DU teachers.

She said teachers are surprised that university faculty members were given rigorous imprisonment even though they only took part in a silent procession.

Describing the incident as unwanted, Prof Tazmeri said, "We are fully respectful of the law, but the example might have negative impact on congenial academic atmosphere across the country."

Former Duta president Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said the jail terms have been a body blow to the hopes of Dhaka University teachers who were optimistic, following assurances by the government and the university administration, that their detained colleagues would be released soon.

"The detained teachers of Rajshahi University and Dhaka University only expressed their opinion by taking part in a silent procession for which they have been given rigorous imprisonment," he said.

"Such an example would discourage the teachers to be vocal in times of need in the future."

Dhaka University Vice chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, however, sounded hopeful about the release of his four teachers and said the university authorities are continuing their effort to get them freed and that the government assured them to that end.

Some family members of the detained DU teachers also expressed their frustration and helplessness.

A Rajshahi speedy trial court on Tuesday sentenced the four RU teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment for violating the emergency power rules by bringing out a silent procession on the campus on August 21.

The procession came amid countryside violence which began when army personnel, camped at Dhaka University at the time, beat up three DU students during an August 20 football match at the university gymnasium.

Law enforcement agencies later picked up four Dhaka University teachers - Prof Sadrul Amin, president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association, its General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain, Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-or-Rashid and Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik, chairman at applied physics department.

Nine students were also arrested in this connection.

Duta in a statement Tuesday night urged the government to take initiative to free the detained DU teachers and imprisoned RU teachers soon, saying their release is the demand of all teachers and students.

DU teachers will stage a silent protest in front of the Arts Faculty building on the campus at 11:30am today demanding release of the detained teachers and students of the two universities, said DU teacher Prof MM Akash.

REACTIONS Terming the verdict unfortunate, many political, professional, socio-cultural