

Legal experts

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at a discussion on "Liberation War of Bangladesh, India and Joint Force" held at Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs auditorium in the capital.

They said the seditious case has been filed with a regular court only to foil the demand of the people, especially of the Sector Commanders Forum, to arrest and try the war criminals.

On Wednesday, an individual named Mohammad Fazlur Rahman filed the case with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka against Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahed, Assistant Secretary General Abdul Quader Mollah and ex-chairman of Islami Bank Shah Md Abdul Hannan accusing them of working against the Liberation War and carrying out massacres by forming Al Badr, Al Shams and Razakar forces in 1971.

"There is conspiracy behind filing of this case by an individual. Those who do not want that the war criminals tried have filed the petition," said Professor Kabir Chowdhury, the chair of the discussion.

It occurs that a few of the advisers in the caretaker government are against the trial of war criminals, Prof Chowdhury added saying, "I would like to say this clearly to the caretaker government -- sit together and take the decision on the basis of majority and start the process of trying the war criminals."

Prof Chowdhury also said the war criminals are known to all and they should be arrested before the trial. One of the advisers of the caretaker government seems to be speaking for the Jamaat-e-Islami, he alleged.

Justice KM Sobhan, presidium member of South Asian Conference Against Fundamentalism and Communism, said it is not possible to try the war criminals in a regular court since war crimes are not considered crimes under the Bangladesh Penal Code.

"We have to understand that there might be a different intention if someone files a case against them [war criminals] with a regular court," he said, urging all to be alert about such ill-intended moves.

Rebutting the claims made by a few of the caretaker government advisers who said that there was no attempt to try the war criminals in the last 36 years, Justice Sobhan said following the independence of the country, around 37,000 criminals were arrested and around 3,000 of them were convicted of war crimes, but the process of the trial was stopped after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Awami League Presidium Member Abdur Razzak said the Jamaat leaders do not recognise the Liberation War as they had claimed that the war was a mere civil. Moreover, they want the country to turn into Pakistan, he added.

Filing a seditious case by an individual against them is not right. Instead, the state should file a case against them, Razzak demanded.

Shamoli Nasreen Chowdhury, wife of a martyr, said the seditious case is a conspiracy to prove the war criminals innocent.

Meanwhile, speakers at a discussion said if an individual files a case against the war criminals it would hamper the entire initiative to try them.

Rice import

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no difference between Saturday's estimate and the new one if import of wheat is considered.

But on Saturday, the agriculture ministry did not say anything on wheat import.

In their latest estimate, the food and agriculture ministries said the domestic demand for rice this fiscal year is 285.20 lakh tonnes while net production in the country will be 271 lakh tonnes. "Thus, we will have a deficit of 14.20 lakh tonnes," Golam Kibria, senior information officer of the food ministry, told reporters citing official data.

In Saturday's report, the agriculture ministry put the demand for rice this fiscal year at 302 lakh tonnes, and net production at 271 lakh tonnes, the same as yesterday.

Yesterday's report on food status in the country and import requirements figures raised questions about government data.

On Saturday, the agriculture ministry said 12 lakh tonnes of rice have been imported in the current fiscal year, and import of another 19 lakh tonnes is needed.

"To meet the deficit, seven lakh tonnes of rice have already been imported this fiscal year, and import of 7.20 lakh tonnes more is needed."

On wheat, he said the domestic demand stands at 24 lakh tonnes while its production is estimated to be 8.90 lakh tonnes, leaving a deficit of 15.10 lakh tonnes. "The deficit will be met through import."

He went on, "In the current fiscal year, 9.20 lakh tonnes of wheat have already been imported, and we need to import another 6.40 lakh tonnes."

India has recently agreed to lift the ban on export of five lakh tonnes of rice only to Bangladesh considering the crop damage in cyclone.

Referring to the Indian offer, Tapan Chowdhury told the press briefing yesterday that the Indian side has asked for import of rice through government bodies. "We want our private traders, certified by the food directorate, to import the rice," he said.

The foreign adviser, now in Delhi on a visit, will raise the issue with its Indian counterpart, Tapan mentioned.

Bangladesh sought food aid of five lakh tonnes from the donors. The food secretary told newsmen that Saudi Arabia, India and Pakistan have so far agreed to provide two lakh tonnes.

Hamidur

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embraced martyrdom during a fighting against the Pakistani occupation forces in a frontier area of Sylhet on October 28, 1971.

They said some conspirators influenced the person to file the seditious case.

The discussants demanded trial of war criminals under the International Crime (tribunals) Act, 1973 and formation of a commission to collect evidence of war crimes.

Maj Gen (retd) KM Shaiful said it might be part of a conspiracy to divert their movement to wrong direction.

"It would be very hard for an individual to prove crimes like rape, killing and arson committed by the war criminals," the former army chief said.

"The existing law is not enough to try the war criminals as it would be tough to prove their (war criminals) misdeeds after 36 years of the Liberation War," said Maj Gen (retd) KM Shaiful.

"It is the present government that has to take initiatives to try the war criminals," said Mahfuz Khanom.

Ahad Chowdhury, Ferdousi Priyabhashini, Shaheed Jaya Salma Hagi, Dr Dipu Moni, Afroz Haq Rina, and Meher Afroz Chunni, among others, spoke.

Speakers at another discussion at BILIA expressed gratitude to India for extending its full cooperation to Bangladeshi people during the Liberation War and recognising Bangladesh on December 6 in 1971.

Former secretary HT Imam and Bangladesh University Teachers Association General Secretary Prof Ajay Roy also spoke.

Meantime, discussants at a roundtable urged the government to form a special tribunal to bring the war criminals to book, reports BSS.

The roundtable, organised by Anura Muktioddhar Santan, was addressed, among others, by journalist ABM Musa and Bangladesh Muktioddha Sangsads Central Command Council Chairman Prof Abdur Ahad Chowdhury.

Humayun Kabir, president of the organisation, chaired the roundtable.

Magistrate feels

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politan magistrate (CMM) for taking next steps.

In his order, Sultan mentioned that a DU teacher inquired him about the proceedings of the case. But it was impossible for him to inform the teacher about it. So, he transferred the case to the chief metropolitan magistrate's court.

After receiving the case, CMM AKM Enamul Haque transferred it to the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani.

The next hearing of the case will be held on December 12. Police pressed charges against Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) President Prof Sadru Amin, General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain, Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-or-Rashid and Applied Physics Department Chairman Prof Neem Chandra Bhownik on September 9 for instigating violence on the university campus and at Shahbagh in the capital on August 22 and 23.

Among the other accused DU student Moniruzzaman is now in jail custody while other students are on the run.

They are DU unit Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Hasan Mamun and its General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz, JCD leader Kamru Hasan Kochi, acting JCD President of Shamsunnahar Hall unit Tanjeen Chowdhury Lili, JCD President of Rokeya Hall unit Shahnoor Nargis, central Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Vice President Aparna Rani Pal, Rifat Hossain Jiku, Nazrul Islam Russell, Shamsul Kabir Rahat, Mitul Aziz Hasan, Rokonuzzaman and Anwar Hossain.

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Awami League Presidium Member Abdur Razzak said the Jamaat leaders do not recognise the Liberation War as they had claimed that the war was a mere civil. Moreover, they want the country to turn into Pakistan, he added.

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