

Hasina charges

FROM PAGE 1
The trial court decided to continue the hearing as the prosecution did not produce some evidence and documents substantiating the charges brought against the accused.

The defence is scheduled to come up with their submission for further hearing after seeing the evidence. Though the prosecution completed their submission yesterday with the prayer to frame charge against the accused the court decided to continue the hearing.

Detained Hasina and another accused former health minister Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim were present during the court proceedings. Sheikh Rehana, the third accused whom the prosecution showed as "fugitive," is in London.

However, Barrister Azmalul Hossain had earlier appealed to the court to let him stand on Rehana's defence.

The court had rejected the prayer but decided yesterday to write down the decision following the lawyer's appeal for a certified copy of the decision so that he could go to the High Court (HC).

Azmalul also sought adjournment of the hearing until January 2 so that he might have time to settle the matter in the HC before hearing on charge framing against Rehana.

The court of Judge Mohammad Azzul Haque sat at 9:40am just five minutes after elegantly dressed Hasina came on the dock along with her cousin Selim.

Half an hour earlier, both the defence and the prosecution including AL acting president Zillur Rahman, a number of pro-AL lawyers, and Selim's family members entered the courtroom after phases of checking at several points.

As Zillur appeared, waiting defence lawyers brought a gown and helped him put it on as the 80-year-old veteran politician prepared to sit among Hasina's counsels.

When charges were being read out by Chief Public Prosecutor ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul, Hasina in her mixed-colour handloom saree made scoffing comments finding those "baseless".

Wrapped in a coffee-coloured shawl, the former prime minister looked lively during the over two-hour-long hearing.

Although the court permitted both the accused to sit following a prayer from the defence, Hasina and Selim chose to stand during the hearing.

At times, the AL chief rested her head on her hands tinted with red henna and put on the wooden dock.

As Mukul was reading out the charge sheet Hasina and Selim were seen listening to it attentively, talking to each other, and sometimes consulting their lawyers and family members in a low voice.

"I don't know how to do business," was one of Hasina's remarks made several times in response to the charge that Selim had given her Tk 1 crore of the extorted money saying that "if the work is done, it would be a good business for us".

As Mukul mentioned the amount, Hasina in a satirical tone commented "only" with an insinuating smile flashing upon her face.

"The calculation does not even match the main figure," is another sharp comment by her when Mukul detailed how the amount was shared.

Mukul also read out excerpts from the judicial statement regarding realisation of the extortion money and its shares that Selim retracted in a petition before the same court on December 3.

Mukul also read out from the judicial statement given by Hafizuddin Khoka who had encashed and carried the extorted money on behalf of Selim.

The statement was enclosed in the supplementary charge sheet submitted just before the day the trial began.

The public prosecutor said according to the judicial statements of Selim and Khoka they deposited eight cheques of Tk 299,65,500 in bank accounts with the Standard Chartered Bank and the Southeast Bank.

It was found that Selim then opened an account with the Dutch Bangla Bank Ltd depositing Tk 15 lakh. The money was then withdrawn from the banks and deposited to the DBBL account, he added.

Mukul went on to say that Tk 1 crore of the money was given to Hasina, while Tk 50 lakh was kept in a fix deposit account in the name of Banglar Bani, a Bangla daily.

Selim opened another fix deposit account with Tk 15 lakh in his wife's name, he noted.

Mentioning the 24 pieces of evidence seized, the prosecutor pleaded the court to frame charges under sections 384, 385 and 34 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

The charges the prosecution proposed are extorting money, intimidating an individual, threatening to injure an individual putting them in fear of something and conducting the crime in connivance with another through financial transaction.

After the prosecution completed their submission, the court asked the defence to proceed with their submission. But they declined to proceed saying they are yet to see some evidence of the case.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed said: "There's a provision to show seized items to the defence as well as to the

court." The court also wanted to see those but the prosecution failed to deliver. The court then fixed the next hearing date after the defence and the prosecution reached an agreement.

The pieces of evidence the public prosecutor failed to produce include secretarial files that allegedly created obstacles to the power plant work and caused delays, which according to the public prosecutor forced the complainant to pay the money.

Earlier, the defence petitioned to the court for adjournment of the hearing on different grounds. The court rejected the motion and urged the prosecution lawyers to proceed.

The judge said: "Since there is an order from the apex court vacating the High Court stay order, there is no scope for me to adjourn the hearing. None will come forward to save me and I will not take the risk. It would be an attempt of court."

Just after the court began its proceedings, the defence sought directions from the court regarding security of the court. They said they, AL leaders, and family members of the accused face extensive checking while trying to enter the courtroom.

They termed the trial "a camera trial" and mentioned the inadequate sitting arrangements for people and the extensive security measures that did not even allow AL leader Motia Chowdhury to enter the court.

They criticised "unnecessary" deployment of police around the dock and demanded their withdrawal.

The defence said the law enforcers were treating them and the prosecution differently.

Ordering withdrawal of law enforcers from around the dock, the judge said they should reach an "amicable settlement".

Mentioning bomb blast incidents in courts and parliaments in different countries, the judge said: "I cannot give any order regarding security. I cannot ensure security. It is a matter of the government."

The court however pledged to ensure equal treatment of all lawyers and better sitting arrangements in the courtroom.

Quoting Hasina, Zillur said the case was going on to undermine the survivors of the August 15, 1975 attack on the Bangabandhu family.

He said the former premier has expressed her worries about a fair trial saying she thought the case was politically motivated.

Meanwhile, a large number of security personnel from different law enforcement agencies including police and Rapid Action Battalion were deployed on the roads adjacent to the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, with vehicles for quashing riots on hand.

A considerable number of AL supporters thronged the area as well. THE CASE

Azam J Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case against Hasina and Selim with Gulshan Police Station on June 13 this year, accusing them of extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him.

The investigation officer (IO) later included Sheikh Rehana's name in the charge sheet submitted on July 24.

A court accepted the charge sheet, issued a warrant of arrest against Rehana and ordered confiscation of her property.

Law enforcement agencies arrested Hasina on July 16 and produced her before a magistrate's court, which sent her to the sub-jail.

The supplementary charge sheet was submitted on December 2.

IGP talks

FROM PAGE 16
Noor Mohammad was addressing an opinion exchange and discussion with the civil society in Tangail jointly organised by Tangail Municipality, District Traders Association and Community Police at Shaheed Smriti Poura Udyan.

Emphasising formation of community policing, he said it is not possible to maintain law and order by only 136,000 strong police personnel as there is only one police official for 1,400 people.

He also warned members of the law enforcement agency saying everyone from the IGP to constable would have to face punishment if found guilty of neglecting duty.

He urged police personnel to establish faith and confidence among the general people and prove themselves as their friends.

In his speech, DG of Rab Hassan Mahmood Khandkar said the elite force has recently declared war against terrorism, including trades and use of any illegal drugs.

"Our fight against terrorism, illegal drugs and drug traders will continue until the country is entirely free of these," he added.

DIG of Dhaka Range Mohammad Amir Uddin, Tangail Deputy Commissioner Akhter Ali Sarkar, and Tangail Superintendent of Police Abdul Mannan, among others, addressed the meet.

Members of business associations and 800 units of community police in the district were also present.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1
next? Everything has a limit," she was quoted by her counsel as saying.

About the extortion case she is facing, Hasina told her lawyers: "I know the result of this case is decided. It will be of no use making arguments and counter arguments in this case."

She said that cases are being filed for debaring her from contesting the election and eliminating her from politics.

Hasina also alleged that conspiracy has been on for long to belittle the survivors of the August 15 (1975) massacre.

"The scheme is designed in such a way if I myself is debarred from politics, no member of the Sheikh Mujib family could join active politics," she said, referring to making her younger sister Sheikh Rehana an accused in the extortion case.

The ex-PM apprehended that if such cases continue foreign investors would not come to this country for investment.

She said if foreign investors come to Bangladesh, this government would "either brand them thieves or put them to torture in police custody to drive away the investors."

The AL president was also critical of the government for not fulfilling its commitment to free the detained teachers of Dhaka University, who were arrested in connection with the August 20-22 student unrest case.

Hasina asked her counsel to find out detailed information about those under whose behest Azam J Chowdhury and Tajul Islam filed the extortion cases against her.

Meanwhile, Awami League acting president Zillur Rahman, emerging from the court, told the media men that Hasina's movement inside the sub-jail has been restricted without assigning any reason. As a result, she is virtually in solitary confinement now, he alleged.

Saudi prince

FROM PAGE 1
According to two bids, the government's 93.26 percent shares in the bank were to be sold for over \$458 million while the rest were to remain as public issues.

The government decided to privatise Rupali Bank as part of its programme of financial reforms and banking sector modernisation.

Bids from seven organisations from home and abroad stood up to scrutiny of the Privatisation Commission.

After December 26, Bandar Bin Mohammed will be liable to a forfeiture of \$100,000 that has been deposited with the Commission as security money, said sources involved in the bidding process.

NRB talents

FROM PAGE 1
ceremony of the extravaganza with the army chief, the advisers to the caretaker government, senior state officials and civil society members.

The key objective of the conference organised by scholarsbangladesh.com is to create a bridge between the scholars and investors living in the country and thousands of such individuals working in top posts in reputed and world level organisations abroad.

Scholars Bangladesh has been doing research for the past 10 years and has successfully created and maintained a database of 21,000 NRB scholars and professionals to help form a common platform for the NRBs.

The Daily Star, the Prothom Alo and television channels ATN Bangla and Channel I are the media partners of the event.

In the conference, eight Bangladeshis, including expatriates, will be awarded for their contribution to arts, science and technology, health and medicine, and education and research.

There will be two awards in the four categories, one each for local and non-resident Bangladeshis.

The residents are: in Arts and Culture, NRB artist Monirul Islam and singer Kalim Shafai, in Science, Technology and Innovation, Grameenphone co-founder Iqbal Z Qadir and local rice researcher and farmer Haripada Kapali, in Health and Medicine, Europe-based cancer specialist ABM Fazlul Karim and MR Khan and in Education and Research, NRB economist Fazle Hussain and Chittagong University economist Jamal Nazrul Islam.

Over a thousand expatriate Bangladeshi scholars and professionals are taking part in some 20 seminars in the conference.

Different national and international issues including economics, development, information technology, agriculture, human resources and overseas employment, disaster management and medical science, environment, energy, security, textile and garments industry will be discussed in the seminars.

In addition, a career fair (jobs for NRBs offered by local institutions) and exhibition (for NRBs customers only) will also be held during the conference.

War criminals

from page 1
voted to power, in case the caretaker government does not do so.

If everything goes according to the plan, the demand for putting war criminals on trial is likely to gain momentum early next year, said the trial seekers.

If the state of emergency is relaxed or lifted ahead of the next parliamentary polls, demonstrations like rallies and marches agitating for the demand will be arranged, said organisers and supporters of the movement.

"We want to see by March 26 a beginning of the process of putting the war criminals on trial. We will extend all out cooperation to the movement to realise the demand," Acting General Secretary of Awami League (AL) Syed Ashrafur Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the next meeting of AL central working committee will discuss the logistics of intensifying the ongoing movement across the country. Senior leaders of the party held discussions with the sector commanders regarding shifting the agitation into a higher gear, he said.

In a bid to make the movement stronger, the sector commanders' forum will sit on December 29 with a number of organisations of freedom fighters to discuss the logistics of launching a countrywide campaign for putting the war criminals on trial.

The forum already initiated measures to establish its network at district and upazila levels to heighten the intensity of the movement, since the caretaker government still remains rigid on its stance of not initiating any process of putting the war criminals on trial.

Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-ar-Rashid, coordinator of the sector commanders' forum, said their organisation will also sit with leaders of supportive political parties to chalk out a strategy for intensifying the movement and to press them to include the issue of putting war criminals on trial in their election manifestos.

"We are also planning to hold a grand rally of freedom fighters by March 26," Harun told The Daily Star.

Leaders of all pro-liberation war forces will gather at the grand rally which will pronounce directives for continuing the movement until the demand is met, sources said.

Almost all the pro-liberation forces already announced that they will not only continue supporting the movement, but also actively participate in it.

"War criminals exist in the country and the matter should be resolved by putting them on trial," Anisul Islam Mahmud, acting chief of Jatiya Party said adding, "Jatiya Party's election manifesto will include the issue of trying war criminals."

Echoing him, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said his party will actively participate in the movement.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, however is hopeful that the present government will meet the growing public demand for trying the war criminals. "We will continue the movement if the government does not take any initiative to try the war criminals," Selim said.

Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Mohammad Ibrahim, chief of newly formed Bangladesh Welfare Party, said the government should begin the process of putting the war criminals on trial immediately.

Political observers believe the movement is set to gain momentum once again, which had originally started in 1992 responding to the clarion call of late Jahanara Imam, mother of martyred freedom fighter Shafi Imam Rumi.

Back then, the erstwhile BNP government did not respond favourably to the demand for trying the war criminals, instead in its zealous opposition to the demand it went as far as filing sedition charges against the organisers of the peoples tribunal that had been set up by the movement to try the war criminals.

Although AL had extended its wholehearted support for the movement at the time, soon after coming

Ministries busy

FROM PAGE 1
after completion of a year in office of a political government, we thought we may receive similar instructions from the present caretaker government," a PID official told The Daily Star yesterday wishing not to be named.

He said they asked the ministries to give them information about their activities so that they can publish a special supplement if the government asks them to do so.

Sources said the supplement would highlight the success in curbing corruption, implementing projects and economic development.

"For example, while writing about the law ministry we can mention the separation of judiciary and the new ordinances promulgated during the period," said the PID official.

The information officers asked different wings of the respective ministries to provide them with necessary information.

Home Secretary Abdul Karim yesterday held a meeting with the ministry officials to discuss the matter.

to power following its victory in the 1996 parliamentary polls, it however seemed to suffer from a strange amnesia regarding the matter.

This time around, the sector commanders want public assurances from the political parties that they will try the war criminals, if voted to power, the sources added.

According to BNP insiders, their party is currently not opposing the demand openly, and leaders of the party have also been demanding trials of the war criminals seemingly in an effort to keep up with the popular sentiment. But the party is still in a dilemma regarding whether to break up its tie with Jamaat-e-Islami, the most prominent anti-liberation organisation, which is also the most important partner of BNP in four-party alliance that was the last ruling alliance in the country. But if it continues to keep supporting the movement for trials of war criminals, the question of severing its ties with Jamaat is bound to come to the forefront sometime or the other.

Asked about the party's position on trying the war criminals, BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star that there is no way to stand against the demand, which will obviously gain momentum in the coming days.

"We also want trials of war criminals. It will be good if the present government can start the process," Mahbub said.

Asked whether his party, if voted to power, will try the war criminals, Mahbub said hopes and aspirations of the people are for trying the war criminals. "We will of course meet the people's hopes and aspirations, if we are voted to power," he asserted.

Almost all of the political parties, who participated in the electoral reform talks with the EC between September and early December this year, strongly demanded that the EC should not allow anti-liberation forces including Jamaat-e-Islami to get registered as political parties with the commission, and it should bar war criminals from contesting elections.

The political parties also refused to sit with Jamaat in a common meeting with the EC, terming Jamaat as an anti-liberation force which had worked against the birth of Bangladesh.

The EC held electoral reform talks with 15 political parties that meet the commission proposed criteria for being eligible to be registered with it as political parties. Jamaat was among the 15.

Most of the pro-liberation forces have started boycotting state events where war criminals including Jamaat and its leaders are invited, regardless of the occasions, in an effort to socially isolate the war criminals.

They already boycotted presidential receptions at Bangabhaban on Victory Day and on Eid-ul-Azha protesting President Iajuddin Ahmed's invitation to known war criminals.

40 Tigers killed

FROM PAGE 16
President Mahinda Rajapakse, addressing a public rally in this southern heartland of the majority Sinhalese, said the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) may not resume peace talks without first being militarily defeated.

"We are for a political settlement. But there is no point in talking about a political settlement without first defeating terrorism," the president said during a ceremony marking the third anniversary of the Asian tsunami.

The tsunami claimed an estimated 31,000 lives in Sri Lanka, where over 60,000 people have been killed in the LTTE's demand for a separate state for minority Tamils since 1972.

"The LTTE is not interested in negotiations. They must be made to realise that problems cannot be solved through the barrel of a gun," he said, adding that the Tigers must be forced to lay down arms.

He said security forces had already scored major victories against the guerrillas in the past year and hoped to build on them.

"Like we overcame the tsunami tragedy, we will face the threat of terrorism and overcome it soon," he said at the tightly guarded Sanath Jayasuriya grounds in this coastal town, 160 kilometres (100 miles) south of Colombo.

The president, who is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, said the military wrested control over the eastern province from the Tigers in July after heavy fighting and there would be no let up in the military drive.

Rajapakse's brother Gotabhaya, who is the country's defence secretary, had earlier announced that security forces will move to dismantle the mini state of the Tigers in the north of the island.

Heavy fighting in the north of the island has claimed a high death toll among combatants since a Norwegian-arranged truce began to unravel since December 2005, according to both sides.

"We have recorded unprecedented military gains and they, no doubt, will pave the way for a political solution," Rajapakse said.

"There is no point in talking about a political solution without militarily crushing terrorism,"

100 feared dead

FROM PAGE 16
predicted that the recovery of bodies would take at least two or three days.

"The conditions here are very bad and steep, so that we cannot use heavy machinery," Pratomato said.

TV footage showed flood evacuees clutching their belongings above their heads as they sloshed through muddy brown water reaching chest height.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono relayed his sympathies to the families of the deceased.

"The president sends his deepest condolences and has ordered the home affairs minister to coordinate with local officials and monitor the emergency response," his spokesman, Andi Mallarangeng, told Metro TV.

Meanwhile in East Java, where heavy rains have also been falling, at least 10 people were killed when a bridge was swept away by swelling flood waters, Andi Hartoyo, chief of police at Madiun district, told ElShinta radio.

"Based on several witnesses, at least 10 people were swept away by strong currents as they were standing on the bridge when it collapsed," he said.

"Local officials have been working on collecting data about missing people. We cannot start the search (for bodies or survivors) as the current is very strong now," Hartoyo added.

The Sinar Harapan afternoon newspaper reported that a family of four had also died in a separate landslide in East Java's Ngawi district, citing a local policeman.

And on the tourist haven of Bali, two Indonesians were killed when a small landslide, also triggered by heavy rains, hit their house in a village in Gianyar district, local policeman Sumantoro told AFP.

"The victims were asleep when a hill collapsed and engulfed their house," he said, adding that no one else was missing.

Indonesia has been repeatedly afflicted by deadly floods and landslides in recent years, with activists warning that logging and a failure to reforest denuded land in the world's fourth most populous country are often to blame.

Jalil, family

FROM PAGE 1
term deposits, loan accounts, foreign currency accounts, credit card, vault and transaction records of the AL leader and his family members

Jalil, who had been arrested on May 28 this year, was sued by the Anti-Corruption Commission on December 18 for concealing information in his wealth statement and amassing assets beyond known income sources.

Bangladesh crash

FROM PAGE 16
With Bangladesh racing along at five an over, Ashrafur belted the Oram delivery straight to Peter Fulton at deep mid-wicket, triggering a sensational collapse.

Bangladesh were then 150 for four after 29 overs, and in the space of the next 20 more balls they added just four more runs and lost three wickets to be 154 for seven.

Mashrafe Bin Mortaza (17) and Abdur Razzaq (not out 22) added some life to the tail before the Bangladesh innings ended at 201 in the 43rd over.

Despite New Zealand's batting shortfalls in recent months they were never in trouble on the ideal batting wicket.

How and Brendon McCullum started with a 90-run opening partnership before a lack of concentration by McCullum (40) saw him lob a full toss straight back to Farhad Reza.

The second game in the series will be played in Napier on Friday with the third and final ODI in Queenstown on New Year's Eve ahead of two Test matches.

MK Alamgir

FROM PAGE 16
Tk 22.51 lakh and acquiring property worth over Tk 1.35 crore illegally.

The case has been filed under sections 26(2) and 27(1) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 and section 15(D)(5) of the Emergency Power Rules, 2007.

In the FIR (first information report), the complainant mentioned that during the inquiry into the corruption allegations against her husband Mohiuddin, the inquiry officer came to know that Sitara possesses huge assets earned illegally.

Based on this information, the ACC served notice on her on June 27, 2007 directing to submit her wealth statement. Accordingly, Sitara submitted the wealth report to the ACC secretary on July 16 through her representative stating that she has moveable and immovable property worth about Tk 2.37 crore.

Meanwhile, according to ACC sources, the commission yesterday approved the filing of graft cases against former BNP state minister from Gazipur Prof MA Mannan and Munshiganj Awami League President Mohiuddin.

The cases will be filed soon, the sources said.

Musharraf, Karzai pledge to fight terror

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Afghan leader Hamid Karzai yesterday pledged better cooperation in fighting terrorism, which Musharraf said was "destroying both our countries."

In a brief news conference after their first meeting in four months, they said their talks had been helpful in finding ways to rein in the al-Qaeda and Taliban militants who have flourished along their mutual border.

Both men have accused each other in the past of not doing enough to stop Islamic militants, particularly in the rugged tribal border region that has been in the international spotlight since the September 11 attacks on the US.

But in an apparently warm atmosphere before Musharraf was to host a state dinner for Karzai, he underlined the need for intelligence cooperation with Afghanistan to fight the militant threat.

He said the neighbours had to stop "this menace of extremism and terrorism which is destroying both our countries" and called on their respective intelligence agencies to work hand-in-hand.

"We have developed a strong understanding of each other's problems," Musharraf said. "The key to enhancing our capability against terrorists and extremists is intelligence cooperation."

Both nations are pivotal allies in the US-led "war on terror" and get substantial US aid aimed at fighting militants -- but both have also seen a sharp increase in violence this year.

This