

WAR CRIMES, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

'Hold talks before Mar 25 to set up inquiry commission'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

War Crimes Facts Finding Committee yesterday called on the caretaker government to take initiatives to hold a constructive dialogue before March 25 in order to set up an inquiry commission to investigate the war crimes and the crimes against humanity during the War of Liberation.

The government should immediately hold dialogues with those campaigning for the trial of war criminals, Sectors, Commanders Forum leaders and members of the civil society to make clear the government's commitment to justice,

the committee said in a statement.

It also said that setting up an inquiry commission does not mean that trial of the war criminals would start immediately, but the dialogue on certain issues should start now.

The committee also demanded that the commission be comprised of international jurists.

All, including the government, would have to understand that there is no political motive behind the demand for the trial of war crimes, crimes against humanity and mass killing, said the statement, signed by committee convener Dr MA Hasan.

The government will have to take

initiatives to try the war criminals before the next election so that none could use the issue of war criminals for political gains in the future, it added.

The statement also said the war criminals become active again due to the lack of justice.

It also urged the countrymen to send specific allegations against the war criminals to the committee by March 25.

The committee could send the allegations to the Election Commission and the chief adviser of the caretaker government after the verification of the allegations, it added.

JMB man held while giving bribe to another at court

CU CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday detained an alleged Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) member while he was giving money to an accused JMB man at a Chittagong Court.

The arrestee was identified as Abdur Rahman, 18, son of Rafiqul Islam of Ghuchung Chhara in Rangamati.

Sources said JMB member Mohammad Ruhul Amin Sufi along with four other accused was produced before the Chittagong hill district sessions judge's court at about 12:30pm in connection with a case.

Police held Abdur Rahman when he gave Tk 200 to his uncle and JMB member Ruhul Amin while the latter was coming out of the courtroom.

He was brought to Kotwali Police Station and was being interrogated.

Woman, her daughter stabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman along with her daughter was stabbed by her brother-in-law over a family feud at Soilargati under Tongi police station on Saturday.

The victims were identified as Selina Rahman Leena, wife of Mohammad Khalilur Rahman, and her daughter Jhinuk. They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Khalilur Rahman said his brother Shahid Mridha and Shahid's son Sijan swooped on his wife and daughter over a trifle matter. He filed a case with Tongi police in this connection.

Tongi police said none was arrested as the accused went into hiding.

Late night despatch

FROM PAGE 1

(DIG-prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star last night, "I received two home ministry letters around 9:00pm which say BNP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, and businessman Salman F Rahman have no further detention order against them."

Salahuddin and Salman were arrested in February last year.

The DIG said around 20 days ago he received another letter informing them that BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman's detention had also been extended.

The DIG-prisons said, "So far, there are 70 people in jail with division facilities, many of whom are not detained under Special Powers Act anymore. We have been receiving such letters from the home ministry for quite a while now."

He said, "Several of the detainees are now convicts and some are also under arrest in a number of cases, for which they are not being released."

Meanwhile, sources said former lawmaker Mossaddak Ali Fala's detention was also not extended, but the DIG-prisons claimed that he had not received any letter regarding Fala's detention not being extended.

Many of the high-profile corruption suspects have been detained under Special Powers Act for a long time now and the Advisory Board of the High Court, which decides every three months whether to extend a detention, recently decided not to extend detentions of a number of big-wig graft suspects, the DIG said.

Following the HC advisory board's decision, the home ministry has been sending out letters to prison authorities telling them which detainees' detentions were not extended.

The DIG-prisons said relatives of the detainees have to get permission from the special branch of police to visit them, every 15 days. Relatives of imprisoned graft suspects who are not under detention orders are however allowed to visit their incarcerated families once a week without needing any permission, and the jail authorities facilitate the visit, the DIG-prisons explained.

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Obituary



Farhat Firdousi Venu, daughter of late Badruddin Ahmed of Bogra and wife of Firdousi Moiz, passed away at Square Hospital at 1:25pm on February 22 at the age of 68 after a prolonged illness, says a press release.

She left behind her husband, six children, seven grandchildren and a host of friends, relatives and well-wishers to mourn her death.

Firdousi Venu was a social worker and an active member of Eskaton Ladies Club, Dhaka. Among her children are noted beautician Farzana Shakil and pharmacist Nadim Firdousi.



The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Sonajhara Din', the Bengali version of a novel 'A Golden Age' by Tahmima Anam, was held at the Goethe Institut in the city yesterday. From left are Asaduzzaman Noor, Lisa Gazi, author Tahmima, Shaheen Anam, Selina Hossain and Nasiruddin Yousuff.

Dockyard worker murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A dockyard worker was stabbed to death at South Keraniganj on Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Mizanur Rahman, 32, of Raypara village under Dohar Police Station. He was a worker of Kaliganj Dockyard.

Locals said Mizan was attacked in the Khejurbagh area at about 2:00am while he was returning home from his workplace.

The assailants, numbering four to five, stabbed Mizan indiscriminately, killing him on the spot.

Police recovered the body early Sunday.

Mason shot by extortionists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists shot a mason at Rampura in the city yesterday as the owner of an under-construction building where he works refused to pay extortion to the criminals.

The mason identified as Nazrul Islam, 40, told journalists at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) that a gang of criminals asked him and his three co-workers to stop work at the building and shot in his left leg at around 1:30pm.

Nazrul said he just heard that the extortionists had demanded tolls earlier from the house owner.

Khaliganj police could not arrest anyone in this regard as of 8:30pm.

'A Golden Age' reveals reality of liberation war

Speakers tell publication ceremony of the Bengali version of the book

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Sonajhara Din', the Bengali version of a novel 'A Golden Age' by Tahmima Anam, was held at the Goethe Institut in the city yesterday.

The novel in English, set during the War of Liberation, has revealed the reality of the war to the people across the world, speakers at the ceremony said.

Highly appreciating the book, eminent litterateur Selina Hossain said, "It was my dream that any writers would project the history of the country onto the world stage through his/her works."

Mofidul Haque, publisher of the Bengali edition of the book, said the novel is being translated into 16 languages across the world and some of them have already been published.

The novel has made a deep impression in the minds of readers and it has earned worldwide acclaim, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, author Tahmima said, "I never imagined that the novel, which I wrote three years ago, would reach around the world. I am very glad today."

She also hoped that the book would help the new generation know the history of the War of Liberation and they would build a society being imbued with the spirit of the Liberation War.

Lisa Gazi, who translated the novel into Bengali, said, "The post-1971 situation is very complicated to those who did not see the Liberation War and we have been brought up learning the wrong history."

She also said that the history of the Liberation War has been changed with the change of governments and that is why majority of the young generation do not want to know its history.

The book 'Sonajhara Din' was edited by Mofidul Haque, Shihabur Rahman and Mashiul Alam. Shahitya Prakash published the Bengali edition.

Cultural personalities Nasiruddin Yousuff and Asaduzzaman Noor also spoke. Actress and social activist Sara Zaker, litterateur Syed Shamsul Haq and Tahmima's father Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and mother Shaheen Anam were also present at the ceremony.



Mansur Ahmed Chowdhury speaks at a press conference on the occasion of the 3rd general assembly and conference of Asia Pacific Disability Forum at Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 5)

Death threat to Anu Muhammad condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port yesterday condemned the death threat to its member secretary Prof Anu Muhammad.

In a statement, Committee Convenor Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah said that no threats can deter Prof Anu Muhammad from carrying on the movement to protect the rights of the people.

An unknown caller threatened him on February 21, saying that he would be killed if he does not stop his campaign to protect gas and coal, it added.

The statement also said that the agents of a multinational company are also threatening the people who are involved in the campaign to protect mineral resources.

The committee demanded steps to identify the culprits and bring them to book.

Training on disaster management begins

A seven-day training programme titled 'Regional learning by doing VCA (vulnerable capacity assessment) exercise' started at a city hotel yesterday, says a press release.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society together with International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent organised the training.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society Chairman Prof Dr Mohammed Abdur Rabb inaugurated the training programme.

Through this training we could assist better the most vulnerable people during natural disaster, Abdur Rabb said in his speech.

Members of the sister national societies from Canada, Mexico, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal are attending the training.

Bangladesh Red Crescent Society secretary general and Head of Delegation of the Federation Selvaratnam Sinnadurai were also present in the inaugural ceremony.

Russia slams US 'cynicism' over Kosovo

AFP, Belgrade

Moscow accused Washington of seeking to humiliate Serbia over Kosovo ahead of a visit today to Belgrade by Russian Deputy Prime Minister and presidential hopeful Dmitri Medvedev.

Russia, which has been Belgrade's staunchest ally in opposing Kosovo's declaration of independence a week ago, said Sunday that US backing for the breakaway region was an act of "flagrant cynicism".

Visit to Japan will expand ties: Iftekhar

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury left for Tokyo yesterday morning on an invitation of Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura.

"This visit to Japan would expand bilateral cooperations," he said this prior to his departure at Zia International Airport.

"Japan will play a significant role as the host of G-8 Summit in global economy this year. She is a major actor in the international stage."

Bangladesh is a 'Thought-leader' in development and a potentially important player in global economy. There is much we can do working together, Iftekhar said.

During his four-day visit Iftekhar is scheduled to hold formal bilateral talks with his Japanese counterpart Masahiko Koumura.

The Japanese foreign minister will host a dinner in honour of the foreign adviser following the talks today.

The foreign adviser will sign an 'exchange of notes' for a Japanese loan of US\$ 60 million for 'Emergency disaster damage rehabilitation project' in Bangladesh.

He will also meet with the President of Japan International Training Cooperation (JITCO) Tashio Takano and with the Senior Vice President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Kenzo Oshima.

The adviser will deliver a speech on 'Doha and G-8: Putting development back into Doha Round of trade talks' at the United Nations

University in Tokyo.

He will speak on 'Bangladesh foreign policy and climate change' at the Japan National Press Club.

The adviser will also hold a meeting with the president of Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary League and former foreign minister Taro Aso.

He will pay a courtesy call on the Speaker of the Japanese Diet (Parliament) Yohei Kono on the same day.

Iftekhar will place a wreath at the 'Shaheed Minar' at Toshima City, Tokyo, along with officials of the city corporation.

"Good relations and close cooperation with Japan are an extremely key elements in our foreign policy," he further observed.

Death of workers in S Arabia condoled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of four Bangladesh workers in Saudi Arabia, said an official handout.

The four workers - Saiful Islam, Md Siddiqueur Rahman, Md Enran and Tofazzel Hossein - died in road accident on February 22.

In a condolence message, the foreign adviser conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family and prayed for salvation of the departed souls.



Light rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at one or two places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and the regions of Jessore and Kushtia in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country.

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said predicting nearly unchanged night temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 31.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 12.0 degrees Celsius at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:59pm today and rises at 6:24am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	29.8	16.3	60	50
Chittagong	28.6	16.2	60	81
Rajshahi	30.4	16.0	85	51
Khulna	30.0	17.4	94	62
Barisal	30.0	13.5	81	64
Sylhet	28.7	15.4	56	53
Cox's Bazar	29.5	16.0	54	77

India to host next military exercise with China

AFP, New Delhi

India will host the second joint military exercises with China, as the neighbours continue to mend ties after a brief but bitter border war in 1962, a report said yesterday.

The first-ever military manoeuvres between the world's most populous nations were held in China in December, when about 200 Indian and Chinese troops jointly "took out" a group of supposed terrorists along their border.

"The next joint exercise will be held in India this year," Defence Minister A.K. Anthony was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency.

Anthony did not provide further details on the drill.

The countries fought a brief war more than four decades ago over

rival claims to Himalayan territory in a dispute that still has not been resolved.

India says China occupies 38,000 square kilometres (14,670

square miles) of its territory, while Beijing claims the whole of the northeastern Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which is 90,000 square kilometres.



Nirjato Protirodh Chhatra Andolon stages a demonstration in front of the Aparajeyo Bangla on the Dhaka University campus yesterday urging the government to recognise Kosovo's independence.



Seminar

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) organises a seminar on 'Investment opportunities in Bangladesh'. Venue: FBCCI conference room. Time: 11:30am.

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of the book 'REMOLO: a child of idealism, the account of a small NGO in Bangladesh' by Tanja Rordam Nielsen of Denmark will be held. Venue: Dhaka Reporters' Unity. Time: 3:00pm.

ADD seminar

Action on Disability and Development (ADD) organises a seminar on 'Towards a new disability law in the light of UN convention on the rights of persons with disability'. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 9:30am.

Roundtable

SHEBA Bangladesh Foundation organises a roundtable on human rights and safe life in the perspective of road

accident. Venue: Press Institute of Bangladesh. Time: 4:00pm.

Discussion

Coalition of Local NGOs, Bangladesh organises a discussion on the role of Bangladesh in peace missions. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.

Seminar

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and International Labour Organization (ILO) will jointly organise a seminar on 'Promoting employment-intensive growth in Bangladesh: Policy analysis of the manufacturing and service sectors'. Venue: Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 10:00am.

Sculpture exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of the first solo sculpture and drawing exhibition titled 'Rejuvenation of womanhood' of Habiba Akther Papia will be held. The exhibition will remain open till March 2 from 12:00am to 7:00pm everyday. Venue: Zainul Gallery, Institute of Fine Arts. Time: 5:00pm.

HC issues show cause notice to ACC on Ilyas wealth report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A High Court bench yesterday issued a show-cause notice to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) chairman, ACC secretary, the deputy director of the commission's Sylhet office and the law secretary as to why the issuance of an ACC notice asking for the wealth statement of M Ilyas Ali should not be declared illegal.

The court ordered the respondents to reply within six weeks after former lawmaker and Sylhet district BNP convener M Ilyas Ali filed a writ with the bench comprising Justice Abu Nayeem Muminur Rahman and Justice Shahidul Islam.

ACC Sylhet Deputy Director Nasir Uddin issued the notice on Ilyas on January 28 asking for his wealth statement. Ilyas through his lawyer submitted the statement on February 14 showing his total wealth worth Tk 4 crore.

Other respondents of the show-cause notice are ACC Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashud Chowdhury and secretaries of the ACC and the law ministry.

LIST OF TOP CRIMINALS HC issues rule on govt

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A High Court (HC) Division yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain why the order to include Moshir Rahman Kochi in the list of top criminals instead of Omar Faruque Kochi, an accused in 100 criminal cases, should not be declared illegal.

The division bench of Justice Shah Abu Nayeem Mominur Rahman and Justice Shahidul Islam passed the order following a writ petition submitted by Moshir Rahman Kochi challenging the legality of inclusion on his name in the list of top criminals.

In the writ petition, it was mentioned that Moshir Rahman Kochi was arrested from Comilla under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) on June 11, 2003, although there was no case against him. Later, he was shown arrested in nine criminal cases, but the police submitted final report (FRT) on Kochi, as there was no evidence.

Earlier, the HC had granted bail to Kochi in another case, as there was no specific allegation against him. He was rearrested under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) on October 29 last year in front of the jail gate after he was released on bail.

He was also granted bail by the HC in the case filed under the EPR. Later, he was also given detention order under the Special Powers Act 1974.

Kochi could not be released from the jail because of the detention order.

On the other hand, Omar Faruque Kochi of IG gate, an accused in more than 100 criminal cases and an accomplice of top listed criminal 'Kala' Jahangir, was on the list of criminals. But the home ministry on December 27, 2001 in a gazette notification published a list of 23 top criminals showing Md Moshir Rahman Kochi as one of the criminals instead of Md Omar Faruque Kochi.

Advocates Abdul Baset Majumder, Mantazuddin Ahmed and Mosfaur Rahman Sobu moved the writ petition.

BAHODDERHAT MURDERS Deposition of witnesses ends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Deposition of the witnesses in the sensational Bahodderhat murder case ended yesterday.

The armed cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir fired indiscriminately on a microbus, leaving eight people, including six leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), dead on the spot at Bahodderhat on July 12 in 2000.

The court of 2nd Additional Metropolitan Session Judge Ekramul Haq concluded the hearing and fixed March 3 for examining the accused.

Deposition of the then Metropolitan Magistrate ANM Shahidul Islam, now an official of ministry for energy, and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Inspector Shafiqul Alam, also investigating officer (IO) of the case, were recorded on the last day. With this deposition of 42 witnesses, out of 63, were recorded in the case.

The Shibir cadres waylaid and attacked the microbus carrying the BCL men near Bahodderhat Bari in a move to establish supremacy on the new campus of Technical Training Centre at Kalamia Bazar.

Charges were pressed against 22 Shibir men in the case.

Of the accused, 10 were arrested while 12 others are still absconding. Of the arrestees, seven went absconding after obtaining bail while two of them - Gitta Nasir and Azrail Delwar, were killed in "cross fire".

Of the 42 witnesses, 11 were declared "hostiles" for making inconsistent statements, sources said.