

War crime trial

FROM PAGE 1 The war crime charges that the party now stares at, Jamaat insiders said.

Jamaat leaders say they would accept the verdict of any trial conducted and supervised by the United Nations and would eliminate those who would be found guilty in the trial.

Party high-ups admitted they are in a grave crisis at present and also fearing severe troubles in the coming days centring the issue of trial of Jamaat leaders who were involved in war crimes in 1971.

"We will eliminate the leaders from the party if they are found guilty of committing crimes in the trial," a senior Jamaat leader told The Daily Star.

The issue of the trial of war criminals has surfaced and gained mass support after the landslide victory of the Awami League-led grand alliance in the December 29 parliamentary elections.

Jamaat-e-Islami directly opposed Bangladesh's War of Independence and many of its leaders were allegedly involved in committing war crimes.

Anticipating sure defeat, the Pakistani occupation forces and their collaborators-Razakars and members of Al-Badr and Al-Shams who were mostly leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student front Islami Chhatra Shangha-picked up leading Bangalee intellectuals and professionals on December 14 and killed them en masse with a view to crippling the nation intellectually.

War records show Jamaat formed the Razakars and Al-Badr forces to counter the freedom fighters. The then secretary general of Jamaat Moulana Abul Kalam Mohammad Yusuf established the Razakars and Al-Badr with Islami Chhatra Shangha members.

Thousands of people still bear the brunt of the war crimes committed by Jamaat and its student front now known as Islami Chhatra Shibir, and a few other groups such as Muslim League and Nizam-e-Islami.

"A severe crisis is waiting

for us in the coming days centring the issue of trying the war criminals," Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Muhammad Kamaruzzaman told The Daily Star on Wednesday. "We are discussing how to tackle the situation and a panel of our lawyers is already working on it."

Party insiders said discussion is going on within the party to eliminate a few party high-ups who are widely criticised for their role during the Liberation War. "We are thinking of seeking formal public apology for the actions of many of our leaders during 1971," said a Jamaat leader.

He, however, did not make clear if Jamaat will seek apology for committing those war crimes or for its political decision to oppose the Liberation War.

Jamaat has never since the birth of Bangladesh sought an apology for its anti-Liberation War role and Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid recently claimed that there are no war criminals within his party.

On November 5 last year, the Sector Commanders Forum made public its preliminary list of 50 war criminals including Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami and Secretary General Mujahid.

Earlier on April 3, research organisation War Crimes Facts Finding Committee unveiled a list of 1,597 war criminals responsible for mass killings, rapes and other atrocities during the Liberation War.

Nizam, Mujahid and Kamaruzzaman are among the top Jamaat leaders on that list. The Awami League government has already started working on the issue of trying war criminals and sought international assistance. When UNDP Resident Representative and UN Coordinator in Bangladesh Renata Lok Dessallien called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office on Tuesday the PM sought the United Nations' help in holding trial of the war criminals, saying prosecuting them has become a national demand.

Akbar

FROM PAGE 1 Khan, also chairman of the Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRC), said this at a press briefing after holding the 11th commission meeting of the RCC at its office in Dhaka.

The RCC made four recommendations to the government yesterday. There is still a chance to resolve the issue of appointing the deputy speaker from the opposition by using different mechanisms, Khan said.

He said the government can appoint a second deputy speaker from the opposition with the same power and rank of the current deputy speaker or it can remove the present deputy speaker to appoint a new one.

"If two deputy speakers are appointed in parliament, one can work one month and the other can continue from the next month... in turns," Khan said.

"The government and opposition party should continue dialogue, which is very important for making the parliament really effective... behind the scene, not in public. If such decisions are made public before implementation, the initiatives do not work," he said.

"I hope the incumbent government will continue its generosity, which they have already shown, for the greater interest of the nation," he said. Replying to a query from a newsman, Khan said, "The government and the opposition parties have already reached consensus about one issue-bringing an impeachment bill against the president for his speech in parliament."

He said it is too early to comment on the effectiveness of the parliament. "Please do not see everything from a negative point of view," Khan said.

Jamaat leaders

FROM PAGE 1 with new strategies and decisions to tackle the present crisis, said party sources.

"We have discussed several issues including the present political situation," a Jamaat central leader said. He, however, denied giving any details.

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer and former minister Matiuur Rahman Nizami at the inaugural session of the meeting said a 'deep conspiracy' is being hatched to give transit to India, which would pose a serious threat to national security.

He also criticised the new government's plan to form South Asian Taskforce for combating militancy in the country.

"Neither the transit facilities to India nor the formation of South Asian Taskforce is acceptable to us as both will pose threats to national security," said the Jamaat chief.

He also said the formation of South Asian Taskforce will allow other countries to interfere in the country's internal issues.

About 250 members of majlish-e-sura were present.

One-third posts

FROM PAGE 16 session began at around 5:00pm with Deputy Speaker Shawkat Ali in the chair.

"We will make extensive field-level visits to ensure presence of physicians at working places and bring transparency and accountability in health sector," the health minister said replying to a query from Jatiya Party lawmaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmed.

The health minister said the government would take initiatives to appoint doctors, nurses and health workers as per requirement to ensure health service to people.

He said as recruitment of government doctors through the BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) examinations is time-consuming they are planning to recruit doctors through special BCS examinations.

As a number of legislators highlighted the acute crisis of ambulances at the upazila health complexes of their areas, the health minister said he would make sure the availability of ambulances from those hospitals once fund is available.

Ruhul Haque also told the House, the government is pledge-bound to establish one community clinic for every 6,000 people and it requires 13,500 community clinics across the country.

The Awami League (AL) government during its 1996 to 2001 tenure constructed 10,723 community clinics. However, operation of those community clinics came to a halt as soon as the new government took over in 2001.

"We will also take all necessary measures to run those clinics that the BNP-led alliance government abandoned," he said in reply to a question of AL lawmaker Shab Uddin from Moulvibazar.

The health minister said the government would reform population policy, formulate a time-befitting drug policy and bring self-sufficiency in drug products.

Jalil tells of torture

FROM PAGE 1 subjected to their "torture" anymore.

Visibly seething with anger, the AL leader made the remarks during discussions on thanksgiving motion on the president's address.

He also said the government should have the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) chairman dismissed immediately for being 'partial' in the drive against graft.

"He (ACC boss) asked for my wealth accounts, but did not bother for those of Syed Iskander (Khaleda Zia's brother), a plunderer of public money," he added.

Referring to the DGFI personnel, Jalil said they "humiliate politicians just for kicks".

He said he would soon write to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, seeking an end to the "DGFI cruelties".

Describing what followed his arrest on May 28, 2007, the former commerce minister said, "After picking me from my office, the DGFI men blindfolded me and drove me to an unspecified place. There, they tortured me gruesomely for five days at a stretch--all in the name of questioning."

"During interrogations, they made a CD exploiting camera tricks. They released the CD to ruin my reputation

at home and abroad and to cause misunderstandings between me and Sheikh Hasina whom I see as a sister and respect."

Challenging the intelligence outfit to prove any allegation against him, he said, "They did not show me the respect I deserve as a citizen, a former lawmaker and a minister, and above all, as a freedom fighter."

Besides Jalil, ruling party lawmakers Joyal Abedin, Nazrul Islam, Shafiqur Rahman and Abdul Mannan took part in the second day's discussions on the thanksgiving note.

Govt body

FROM PAGE 16 Former Secretary M Azizur Rahman, and representatives of the finance division, home ministry and establishment ministry have been made members of the six-member body.

The committee has been asked to submit its report with specific recommendations within 30 working days.

"It is deemed by the government that those repressive measures were taken with mean political motives," a government announcement said, indicating the steps of the past BNP-led coalition government.

Mumbai terror attack planned outside Pak territory

Says Islamabad

CNN-IBN, Islamabad/new Delhi

After weeks of dithering, Islamabad has now rejected the 26/11 evidence dossier provided by India.

Reports indicate that Pakistan's internal probe has concluded that the Mumbai terror attack was planned outside its territory.

The report that was to be submitted to India by Wednesday is now likely to be communicated to India by the end of this month.

Pakistan appears all set to declare that no group or organisation in the country carried out the Mumbai attacks.

Sources in Islamabad have told Dawn TV the Mumbai attack was planned from somewhere outside Pakistan and there are apparently no references to the Lashkar-e-Toiba.

Dawn News correspondent Mateen Haider said, "Certain information that was provided by India and that links Mumbai attacks with Pakistan."

"The initial report says that there were no such things, no leads found in Pakistan. The attack was planned outside Pakistan."

This is a response just as many had expected it to be, coming typically from Pakistan in reply to the Indian dossier handed over earlier this month.

The formal response from Islamabad will come probably later this week or early next.

Manna's death

FROM PAGE 16 surrendered before the HC bench and jointly filed a petition praying for bail.

The HC bench of Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah and Delwar Hossain asked the law enforcers not to harass or arrest any of the accused during this period and also said the trial court should consider their bail prayer.

During the hearing of the bail petition, the court told the doctors that they were not devoted to their service as expected. It is also observed that a horrible situation prevails in the health sector in the country.

Metropolitan Magistrate of Dhaka Abdul Majid on Wednesday issued arrest warrants against the physicians in the case filed with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on September 17 last year by Reza Kader, Manna's brother-in-law.

Advocate Khandker Mahbub Hossain appeared for the petitioners.

200m workers

FROM PAGE 16 more decisive and coordinated international action is needed to avert a global social recession. Progress in poverty reduction is unravelling and middle classes worldwide are weakening. The political and security implications are daunting," said ILO Director General Juan Somavia.

"The crisis is underscoring the relevance of the ILO Decent Work Agenda. We find many elements of this Agenda in current measures to promote job creation, deepening and expanding social protection and more use of social dialogue," he said.

ILO called upon the upcoming meeting of the G-20 on April 2 in London, alongside financial issues, to urgently agree on priority measures to promote productive investments, decent work and social protection objectives, and policy coordination.

3 cops closed

FROM PAGE 16 city's Khaza Road in the early hours of Wednesday.

Habib was produced before the court in the morning but the court police refused to take him in, as he was too sick.

He was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where the on duty doctors declared him dead.

Family sources said that Habib died from torture while in police custody.

Habib was the son of Abdul Hai from Lalmoan thana under Bhola. He came to the port city in search of a livelihood.

Assistant Commissioner (AC) (Panchlajha zone) Syed Mejbah Uddin was asked to investigate the matter and he submitted his report yesterday.

In the primary investigation, the AC found negligence in duty and non-professionalism of the part of the three policemen.

Hamas signals

FROM PAGE 16 the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that the money would be used to provide food, shelter, healthcare and other assistance.

An assessment is being made on long-term needs, including reconstruction of damaged homes, said OCHA.

Hamas is trying hard to flex its muscles in the aftermath of Israel's punishing onslaught in the Gaza Strip, doling out cash, vowing revenge and declaring victory over Zionist aggression.

But AP interviews with Hamad and two other Hamas leaders in the war-ravaged territory they rule suggest some of that might be more bluster than reality and the group may be ready for some serious deal making.

That raises the question of whether Hamas, which receives much of its funding and weapons from Tehran, can be coaxed out of Iran's orbit. That question looks less preposterous than it did before President Barack Obama began extending olive branches to the Muslim world and Israel's Gaza offensive reshuffled Mideast politics.

The militants appear to be in the throes of an internal power struggle between hard-liners and pragmatists. Which group comes out on top will likely depend on who is able to garner the most benefits in postwar Gaza.

With hawks urging more violence, the window of opportunity to boost the voices of relative moderation is likely to be short.

"We won this war," said Hamas politician Mushir Al-Masri. "Why should we give in to pressure from anyone?"

Al-Masri spoke to the AP while standing next to a chair that used to serve as his seat in the Palestinian parliament, now reduced to rubble by Israeli bombing. Surrounding him were cracked cement, broken bricks, shattered glass and microphones covered in ash.

Yet even Al-Masri, a staunch hard-liner, sounded a conciliatory note.

"We have our hands open to any country... to open a dialogue without conditions," he said clarifying that does not include Israel.

Hamas' pragmatists may have emerged from Israel's offensive slightly stronger, perhaps because of a perception among some Gazans that the organisation's hawks overplayed their hand by provoking the wrath of Israel.

Obama has repeatedly reached out to Muslims since becoming president. He assured hard-liners in his inaugural address that "we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist" He dispatched special envoy George J. Mitchell to the Middle East on a "listening tour." And on Tuesday he chose the Arab satellite network Al-Arabiya for his first televised interview, declaring "Americans are not your enemy."

It's unlikely Obama would talk directly to Hamas, which the US lists as a terrorist organisation. However, if reconciliation talks between Hamas and its pro-Western Fatah rivals in Egypt bear fruit, Obama, unlike his predecessor, may accept a Palestinian unity government that includes the militants.

It's true Hamas has yet to renounce violence and Israel's assault has hardened many hearts in Gaza. But with the territory in desperate need of recovery, the group is promising not to interfere with aid efforts and appears keen to reconcile with Fatah.

No one expects the international community to drop all of its reservations about Hamas, an organisation that made its name by strapping explosives onto young people and sending

them to blow themselves up in crowded Israeli markets and buses.

But rebuilding Gaza after Israel's onslaught is going to require open borders and a large inflow of money and material things that Iran, whose aid to Hamas is strictly surreptitious because of Israeli restrictions, cannot provide.

Hamas says it wants international recognition as much as an end to the blockade of Gaza but it won't get either for free. For Hamas, the price may include allowing Fatah back into Gaza 20 months after it violently ousted them, along with halting its rocket fire and weapons smuggling.

The notion of engaging Hamas is anathema to Israel. "A dialogue with Hamas as a terror organisation would be a strategic mistake, because Israel advocates dialogue with the moderates and displaying toughness against the extremists," Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni told the Maariv daily this week.

Israel's position is based on the fact that Hamas refuses to recognise its right to exist. However, the three Hamas leaders interviewed said they would accept statehood in just the West Bank and Gaza and would give up their "resistance" against Israel if that were achieved.

BNP skips

FROM PAGE 1 a meeting at the conference room of the opposition leader.

The Speaker yesterday evening informed Chief Whip Abdu Shahid about the opposition's demand and asked him to give feedback in consultation with leader of the House Sheikh Hasina.

Talking to reporters, Shahid said he will inform the Speaker after discussing the matter with Hasina.

The opposition lawmakers walked out of parliament prior to resumption of the House proceeding on Wednesday protesting against the new seating arrangement by Speaker Hamid. The new layout gives the main opposition BNP just four seats in the front row instead of nine allocated by the immediate past speaker Jamiruddin Sircar.

The ruling Awami League opposes Sircar's arrangement saying it was disproportionate to the number of seats won by the opposition.

Following the new seating arrangement, the BNP-led opposition in fact continued their first walkout staged on Sunday from the inaugural session, boycotting the presidential address.

On Wednesday, they just entered the House but did not take part in the proceedings and left it protesting against the new seating arrangement.

Speaker Hamid yesterday blamed Sircar for the ongoing crisis. He urged the opposition lawmakers to return to parliament and not to make it an issue to boycott the House.

"Seating arrangement does not have any significance to make the House effective. If a cordial atmosphere is created among the treasury and the opposition benches, the seating problem will automatically disappear," he observed.

Thailand

FROM PAGE 16 "It is a population that lives under very difficult circumstances... it is a population which I would say are stateless," Hall told reporters.

A Myanmar government official on Thursday denied that there were any Rohingya in Myanmar, despite reports that up to 700,000 of the minority live in its western regions near the border with Bangladesh.

"These so-called Rohingya are Bangladeshis who left their state for a better life, trying to get sympathy from Western countries by claiming to be Rohingya from Myanmar," the official who asked not to be named told AFP.

Human rights watchdogs have said the group is largely shunned in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, with the military junta long denying them citizenship and committing religious persecution against them.

Kasit told reporters Thailand plans to bring up the Rohingya issue at a summit here late next month of regional grouping the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), of which Myanmar is also a member.

"All levels will discuss how to solve this, as there is a human trafficking group sending Rohingya to work in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand," he said.

Accusations of mistreatment surfaced earlier this month after nearly 650 Rohingya were rescued off India and Indonesia, some claiming to have been beaten by Thai soldiers before being set adrift on the high seas to die.

Hundreds of the boat people are still believed to be missing at sea.

Gruesome murder

FROM PAGE 1 Meanwhile, locals including Asgar's relatives laid siege to the Lalbagh Police Station in the evening for about an hour demanding arrest and punishment of Asgar's killers. Police later dispersed the agitating crowd on assurance that police was taking proper action on the matter.

Detective Police picked up two people, Zahurul Islam Zahir and Saiful, for questioning in this connection.

Police said they recovered three pieces of the body from two places in Azampur Colony around 10:00am, three pieces from Shahidnagar around 2:30pm and eight pieces from Swarighat around 4:30pm.

Officer-in-Charge of Lalbagh Police Station Naboyoti Khisha said residents of Azampur Colony called in the police after they found three pieces of a human body wrapped in polythene sheets in a narrow lane between two buildings at the colony.

Another three pieces of the body were recovered from Shahidnagar and six other pieces from Swarighat area. All pieces, recovered from waste dumps, were found wrapped in polythene.

Asgar's elder brother Najimuddin Badsha told reporters that Zahir called Asgar out of his shop on Wednesday around 9:00pm. He did not return after that and has been missing since.

Badsha said Asgar had a quarrel with Zahir Wednesday morning. Zahir had asked Asgar to join him in a business involving cable television. The quarrel ensued when Asgar declined to join in this venture. Badsha said.

Badsha yesterday afternoon went to the police station to file a general diary in connection with his missing brother. Hearing about the recovery of a few pieces of a body he had a look at the pieces and identified

CHT accord

FROM PAGE 16 Tindigenous people at the CHT development board as per the accord.

He also demands banning United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), another regional political platform in the region, terming it an outfit against the sentiment of the indigenous people.

Jyotirindra Lal Tripura, lawmaker from Khagrachhari, Bangamati Zilla Parishad Chairman Jagad Jyoti Chakma, Khagrachhari Zilla Parishad acting chairman Ruthi Karbari, Bandarban Zilla Parishad Chairman Thajama Lusal, new King of Bomang circle Saching Pru Chowdhury and three Bangla-speaking representatives from CHT also attended the meeting.

them to be his brother's. He later went to Sir Salimullah Medical College Morgue to see the other pieces and be sure that his brother was dead.

Police recorded a murder case early today as they were sceptical about the identity of the victim since no clothing, the head or other identifiable belongings were found.

Asgar's another brother Ali Akbar had filed the case accusing four people and eight to nine unknown people.

Asgar's wife Eva, who is pregnant, fell sick on hearing the news of her husband's murder and was admitted to a local clinic. Asgar and Eva have a five-year-old boy.

Five years ago, businessman Shamsul Haque and his son Russel's body were found dismembered in a similar way. Allegedly, a local BNP leader and criminal Kajor of Patuati in Old Dhaka murdered them.

At the time, 250 pieces of the victims' bodies were recovered from different places in Dhaka and Gazipur.

Padma Bridge

FROM PAGE 16 The bridge could also be used as part of the trans-Asian route, he said, adding, "The bridge will help gear up industrialisation in the region too."

It will also contribute hugely to the functioning of the Mongla Port, the lone seaport in the southern region that fails to attract cargo shipment because of poor communications.

Earlier on January 13, Maunsell AECOM was selected for designing the bridge as it scored the highest in the government's evaluation.

People of Gopalganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Narail, Jessore and Khulna have long demanded a bridge over the Padma and a decision to construct a bridge was taken back in 2001. However, time passed in selecting the construction sites.

Ministry sources said the process for land acquisition for the bridge's construction sites has started in Munshiganj, Madaripur and Shariatpur. "Initially, 755 hectares of land will be acquired," said engineer Qazi Md Ferdous, executive engineer of the Bridge Division.

A total 12.6km approach road on Mawa side and 11.95km road on Janjira side will be constructed for the bridge while river training work will be done on 16.5km stretches of the rivers banks-6km on one side and 10.5km on another.

Communications ministry officials said the government is negotiating with donors like the World Bank, ADB and Japan Bank for International Cooperation for financial assistance for constructing the bridge