

**ARMS CASE
Babar denied
extension
of HC bail**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday rejected a petition filed by former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar seeking extension of his bail in an arms case for which the trial court earlier sentenced him to 17 years imprisonment.

The lawyers concerned said following the SC order, Babar will have to surrender before the trial court without making any delay to serve the jail term.

Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim told The Daily Star that the court can consider Babar as a fugitive convict and issue an arrest warrant against him if he (Babar) fails to surrender before the court as he is not on bail.

About surrender to the lower court, he said there is no scope to grant him bail at this stage by the trial court as he was earlier convicted of possessing arms.

Babar's counsel advocate Ahsanul Karim said on behalf of his client that a petition was filed with the HC yesterday seeking extension of his bail in the case as the bail expires today.

If the HC does not grant his prayer, Babar will have to surrender before the lower court in connection with the case, he said.

Ahsanul Karim also said the trial court has no jurisdiction to grant him bail, as his appeal is pending with the HC.

The full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin, passed the order since Babar did not surrender to the trial court as per its earlier order that directed him to surrender within three months in connection with the case.

On October 16 last year, the HC granted Babar bail for six months in the case on health grounds following a pending appeal against the trial court judgment of October 30, 2007.

But the SC on October 23 modified the HC order and granted him bail for three months and directed him to surrender before the trial court within the time.

**Chinese contractor threatens
to shut mining operations
Asks for resumption of coal production
in Barapukuria by tomorrow**

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinaipur

CMC-XMC consortium, the contractor company of Barapukuria Coalmine Company Ltd (BCMCL) for extracting coal, threatened to close its operations if coal production at BCMCL is not resumed by tomorrow.

Coal extraction of the mine halted February 25 in the wake of protest by villagers who fear further land subsidence and demanded damages to existing victims of land subsidence.

The authorities now fear that about 1,500 miners would lose work for three to four months.

BCMCL sources said coal

extraction halted when the authorities were prepared to extract coal from Phase-1114. People of Jhigagari village, which is over Phase-1114, resisted miners from sealing off the boreholes. The boreholes must be sealed off before coal extraction can begin.

Sources said if they are not sealed off within one month then the fate of the Phase-1114 will be uncertain.

Mine sources said a seven-day halt in coal extraction has caused Tk 15 crore loss to the mine.

The mine officials had formed a committee to enquire about the damage done to villages around the

BCMCL due to land subsidence since 2006.

The committee failed to make any headway even after meeting locals on February 27 and 28. They assured villagers of Jhigagari of damages if land subsidence occurred. But the villagers said they would not allow the boreholes to be sealed off unless the existing victims of land subsidence are compensated.

Experts, however, predicted that coal extraction from Phase-1114 will not cause any major land subsidence.

Finding no way out, the CMC-XMC consortium placed the deadline to BCMCL threatening to stop its operations after March 5.

**Cell set up at
army HQ to
help victims'
families**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A coordination cell has been formed at Army Headquarters officers' mess under the supervision of adjutant general's branch of Army Headquarters to help the families of officers killed brutally at Pilkhana during BDR mutiny in the capital.

Bangladesh Army is distributing Tk 5 lakh from its fund to the family of each army officer and soldier to primarily meet their important needs, said an Inter-service Public Relations (ISPR) release.

All concerned are requested to contact the numbers: 01824850549, 8754410 (direct) and 8750011 Ext 8355, the ISPR release added.

**Govt to import 13
lakh MT food grains**

UNB, Sangsad Bhaban

The government has a plan to import 13 lakh tonnes of food grains in the current fiscal year, Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzak informed parliament yesterday.

Responding to a question from BNP lawmaker Jafrul Islam Chowdhury (Chittagong), he said the government has a plan to import eight lakh tonnes of wheat and five lakh tonnes of rice in the fiscal 2008-09.

An agreement has already been signed to import three lakh tonnes of wheat, the minister said.

The government so far imported four lakh tonnes of rice from India under the government-to-government import programme, he added.

Replying to a supplementary question of Jafrul Islam, the food minister said the food grains

storage capacity in the government godowns across the country is 15 lakh tonnes while the current stock in the godowns is 12.67 lakh tonnes.

In response to a question of M Abdul Latif, he said the government has decided to procure 15 lakh tonnes of rice from internal sources. The target of foodgrain production in the current fiscal year has been fixed at 343.32 lakh tonnes, the minister said in reply to a question from Sheikh Afil Uddin.

Of the total production target, 23.12 lakh tonnes of aus, 130.09 lakh tonnes Aman, 180.11 lakh tonnes boro and 10 lakh tonnes wheat, he said.

Replying to BNP lawmaker Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anny (Laxmipur), the food minister said the government has enough stock of food grains to face any calamity in the country.

**Govt sees no
stopping in
trial of war
criminals**

UNB, Dhaka

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan said the barbaric incidents in the BDR headquarters could not divert government's attention from trying the war criminals or executing other agenda.

"No conspiracy can cause the government deviate from its desired goals, including the trial of war criminals," he told reporters after a meeting with the leaders of Bangladesh Bread, Biscuit and Confectionery Manufacturers Association and Bangladesh Auto-biscuit and Bread Manufacturers Association at his office yesterday.

He said the mutiny that claimed lives of brilliant army officials and civilians was not an ordinary incident, rather an evil force was behind the brutality.

"The conspiracy is still on to weaken the government... We all should be united in this critical situation," said the former military officer.

Commenting on the reconstitution of BDR mutiny probe body, he said the government excluded two members, including Home Minister Sahara Khatun, to ensure fair investigation.

"Findings of the probe body and its relevant facts will timely be revealed for the countrymen to ensure transparency" he added.

Denouncing the allegations raised by the opposition, Faruk Khan said: "The extent of loss of life might have been doubled if we had directed the army to carry out attacks."

"Many civilians might also face tragic end of their life," he said to the reporters.



The five BDR men arrested in a case filed in connection with the BDR mutiny in Pilkhana. From left...Sepoy Zakir, Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) Rahim, DAD Towhid, Havilder Azad and Nayek Firoz.

**China, Russia cautious
over North Korea
sanctions**

AFP, Seoul

China and Russia have called for caution in seeking sanctions against North Korea if it goes ahead with a planned rocket launch, a report said yesterday.

The North is preparing to fire a rocket for what it calls a satellite launch, although Seoul and Washington say the real purpose is to test a missile, which could theoretically reach Alaska.

South Korea, Japan and the United States say a launch for any purpose would violate a UN resolution passed after the last missile tests in 2006, and Seoul and Tokyo have warned it would likely lead to further sanctions.

The three countries are members of a forum negotiating nuclear disarmament with North Korea, along with China

and Russia.

But Beijing and Moscow have conveyed their position to South Korea through diplomatic channels, calling for caution in pushing for any new sanctions, Yonhap news agency said.

"We believe it will be difficult for six-party members to reach a consensus if North Korea goes ahead with a missile launch," a Seoul diplomatic source was quoted as saying.

The foreign ministry declined to confirm the report.

The new US envoy on North Korea, Stephen Bosworth, is touring China, Japan and South Korea this week. He will discuss ways to dissuade the North from a launch and try to persuade it to resume the stalled nuclear disarmament talks.

**Five Shias
killed in Pak
sectarian
attack**

AFP, Quetta

At least five Shia Muslims were shot dead yesterday in an apparent sectarian attack near Pakistan's southwestern city of Quetta, police said.

Two gunmen riding on a motorbike opened fire at the victims, who were travelling in a private car on the eastern bypass outside Quetta, capital of oil- and gas-rich Baluchistan province which borders Iran and Afghanistan.

"All the five men, who were members of the Shia Muslim community, died on the spot," local police official Abdul Khalid told AFP.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the killings.

The attack came a week after four Shia Muslims were killed while getting into a car in Quetta, which has a history of sectarian attacks involving Sunni and Shia Muslim extremists.

**Karadzic refuses to plead to
genocide charges**

AFP, The Hague

Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic refused to plead to genocide charges yesterday, rejecting the authority of a UN court and prompting an automatic not guilty plea on his behalf.

"I am not going to enter a plea at all," Karadzic told presiding judge Iain Bonomy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), based in The Hague. "This tribunal does not have the right to try me."

Bonony replied: "I shall enter pleas of not guilty on your behalf" to each of the 11 counts.

Judges last week approved the prosecution's third, amended indictment against Karadzic, which lists two genocide charges and nine of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to his role in Bosnia's 1992-1995 war.

Dubbed the "Butcher of Bosnia," Karadzic was arrested on a Belgrade bus posing as a doctor of alternative medicine called Dragan Dabic in July 2008, 13 years after he was first indicted by the ICTY.

The main allegations against the 63-year-old relate to the 44-month siege of Sarajevo that left 10,000 people dead, and the July 1995 massacre of around 8,000 Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica.

Among other things, the prosecution has

charged Karadzic with having sought to "permanently remove" Bosnian Muslims and Croats from Serb-claimed territory, and to "eliminate" Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica.

He also stands accused of spreading terror among the civilian population of Sarajevo through a sniping and shelling campaign from April 1992 to November 1995, and of taking hostage UN personnel to prevent air strikes against Bosnian Serb military targets. But Karadzic repeated his claim Tuesday that an agreement with top US diplomat Richard Holbrooke, currently US envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, had given him immunity from prosecution.

"I am challenging the jurisdiction of this tribunal... on the basis of my agreement with the international community whose representative at that point in time was Mr Richard Holbrooke," Karadzic said.

Karadzic maintains that Holbrooke, the US peace negotiator in Bosnia and architect of the Dayton peace agreement that ended the Bosnian conflict, had promised on behalf of the UN to shield Karadzic from the tribunal in return for disappearing from the public eye.

Holbrooke has insisted that no such deal existed.

A defiant Karadzic declined to have the charges read, saying: "I do not wish to have anyone else read the indictment for me."

BTCL MD Alim finally made OSD

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appointed Khabiruzzaman as BTCL MD."

Sources said the government sent a letter to Ashraf Alim informing him about his new position. The letter dated February 28.

Employees of BTCL heavily criticised the telecom ministry move.

The BTCL officials apprehend the traditional politics is set to return to the newly formed BTCL through the appointment bypassing due process.

The officials say they are not against the government decision but are shocked to see Khabiruzzaman sitting on the MD's chair before his appointment is approved by the board.

As per the Memorandum of Association of BTCL, appointment of the MD would be ratified by board of the company. Interestingly, till Thursday there was no agreement signed between

the new MD and BTCL.

The BTCL board even did not receive any official order from the government to ratify the new MD's appointment.

Alim went on leave recently with permission of the board. Meantime, the government appointed the new MD without issuing any notice to Alim whether he replaces any other position.

According to the clause 37, 52 and 149 of Memorandum of Association of BTCL, any appointment of the company would go through the company's board. The board has the exclusive right to appoint new MD of the company.

But Khabiruzzaman's appointment bypassed all of these processes.

Sources say the government appointed Khabiruzzaman considering

his political backing rather than his expertise.

"The appointment process of the new MD is nothing but a showdown of political interference," says a member of the board asking not to be identified.

The member adds such kinds of attitude may encourage politically biased employees to engage in corruption, which was significantly reduced during the last caretaker government rule.

The member terms the appointment what the BNP-led four-party alliance government did through Hawa Bhaban.

The board members are also worried about how they would ratify the last few days' work by Khabiruzzaman.

Sources in the telecoms ministry say the appointment was made at a time when the secretary to the

ministry was also on leave.

Shah Mohammad Ali, joint secretary of the ministry, who was in charge, said the establish ministry appointed Khabiruzzaman. "We just forwarded the letter."

He claims the whole procedure is "transparent".

The state-run BTTB was made BTCL in July 2008 with the aim to run the company under private management gradually. Talking to The Daily Star, Khabiruzzaman said the board is bound to ratify his appointment as it is fully government-owned company. "When it becomes fully private ltd company by 2010, the board will have liberty to exercise its power," he said.

"But before that the board will have to ratify decisions the telecoms ministry wants."

Some deaths can never be borne
Some mourning never ends
Some lights never dim out...
You will always remain in our hearts

SINGER
AT HOME WORLDWIDE