

War trial

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genocide and crimes against humanity during the Liberation War, not to harass anyone politically.

Asked about a recent comment made by State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam that only identified war criminals will be brought to the book, the law minister said how many criminals will be tried will be determined after the investigation is complete.

"Those found involved in offences during the Liberation War will be brought under trial. The government is working to appoint investigators, prosecutors, form a tribunal and ensure their logistic support for holding the trial," he said.

Shafique Ahmed said the government would do everything related to the holding of the trial after examining and reviewing all legal aspects. The number of prosecutors and investigators will also be determined soon, he added.

Replying to a question on whether there is any foreign pressure on the government regarding appointment of investigators and prosecutors for the trial, he said there is no such pressure.

He said those who have experience, are honest and committed will be appointed as prosecutors.

"There is no reason for hesitation in holding the trial of war criminals. We have been taking all steps cautiously so that there cannot be any loopholes in the process," he said.

The minister also hoped that the trial of the war criminals would be completed before December 16, Victory Day.

Replying to a question on recent development in the BDR headquarters carnage case, the law minister said the government has formed a three-member prosecution team for the case.

The appointment of prosecutors before completing the investigation will not affect the probe or the trial of the case, he said, adding that after completion of the investigation it would be decided under which law the trial would be held.

State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam was present at the briefing.

Cop action called into question

Boy held for double murder, kept with adult prisoners

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Nawabganj police has arrested an indigenous boy for murder and kept him in prison with adult prisoners in Dinajpur jail for the last 11 days, in gross violation of the Children Act 1974.

Shukh Lal Shoren, 14, son of Goshai Shoren of Kachua village under Hakimpur upazila in Dinajpur was arrested for the killing of two villagers on April 18 over a land dispute.

He is a student of class six at the local Kazipara High School, and also a member of the Shreerampura Child Sponsorship Programme.

The clash on April 18 ensued when some villagers attacked a group of indigenous people. Later, the indigenous villagers returned in a group of 50 and attacked the same villagers with bows and arrows.

Two people, Md Azizul Haq, 45, and Emdadul Haque, 25, were killed.

Yakim Ali, father of slain Azizul filed a murder case with Nawabganj police station accusing at least 13 people including nine indigenous people. Police arrested five people including Shukh Lal Shoren 14, Shreemoti Shanti Shoren, 23, Dudu Soren 45, Laxmi Roy, 50, all from the same family.

The Officer-in-charge (OC) of Nawabganj police station Md Golam Mawla told The Daily Star that police arrested Shukh Lal after finding his



Shukh Lal Shoren

involvement in the killings. Mawla said Shukh Lal was in reality 22 years of age.

Police records however state the boy's age as 17 in arrest documents.

Villagers said the clash was a result of old enmity dating back to 1973 when Suruzmoni Muddi, 70, lost her husband Fagu Shoren in a land dispute. Locals have been trying to grab her 33 acres of land since. They have filed four cases against her family.

The last remaining members of her family were arrested in this recent clash. Suruzmoni said her school-going grandson had been nowhere near the spot of trouble on the day.

Md Nazrul Islam of Save the Children UK told The Daily Star that the police has grossly violated The Children Act 1974 by keeping the boy in jail as he is a minor and the act clearly empowers police to grant bail to any child.

Also, before recording any case, police has to confirm the age of the child and inform the local social welfare department if the child is a minor.

Dinajpur Social Welfare Department sources said they were not aware of the arrest.

The Superintendent of Dinajpur police Md Abu Kalam Shiddique said that on hearing complaints about the boy's age, he had ordered Nawabganj police to keep the boy in safe custody and investigate his age.

4 militant outfits regrouping in SW

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

At least four Islamist militant outfits including three banned ones are regrouping their cadres in twelve districts in the southwestern region of the country.

As many as forty top ranking leaders along with their 10,000 cadres are working under the cover of different names.

Sources said the law enforce-

agencies confirmed the attempt of regrouping based on information gleaned from 31 arrested militants of Hizb-ut-Towhid in Kushtia last week.

A total of 10 out of 31 arrested Hizb-ut-Towhid men are now being interrogated by Kushtia police after Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court placed them on a four-day remand.

The Superintendant of Dinajpur police Md Abu Kalam Shiddique said that on hearing complaints about the boy's age, he had ordered Nawabganj police to keep the boy in safe custody and investigate his age.

ers are now trying to hunt down the chiefs of those outfits holed up in different districts.

The outfits operating in the region are Allahr Dal, Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh Jihadi (JMB), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji) and Hizb-ut-Towhid.

The militants are mainly active in ten districts of Khulna division -- Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Magura, and Paridpur and JMB in Satkhira, Narail, Khulna, Jessore and Rajbari.

Allahr Dal and Hizb-ut-Towhid are active in Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, and Chaudanga, Hui in Jhenidah, Magura and Paridpur and JMB in Satkhira, Narail, Khulna, Jessore and Rajbari.

Of the outfits, Hizb-ut-Towhid is more active in several districts of Khulna division with around 1200 trained militants. The outfit has several dens in the division and is recruiting fresh members under supervision of its 10 top ranking leaders.

Police have already extracted names of several leaders of Hizb-ut-Towhid. They are Moulana Mahabbut, in-charge of Kushtia and Chaudanga; Anisur Rahman, in-charge of Meherpur and Jhenidah and Mejbah Uddin, in-charge of Magura, sources said.

Baizezid Khan Panni of Tangail is currently leading Hizb-ut-Towhid and considered as Imam to his followers. Panni has written several books to indoctrinate his followers and he also distributes leaflets to preach his followers.

According to police, during interrogation Hizb-ut-Towhid men told them Baizezid Khan invited them to take preparation for a 'direct combat' against the man-made rules.

Police said a large number of members and leaders of the organisation are well-trained and motivated. In some areas, the outfit is reportedly operating under the cover of Tablig Jamaat.

Those seeking employment in Australia should apply under other appropriate visa types, he continued.

Recognising that many Bangladeshis cannot afford education overseas, he noted, the Australian government last year committed over A\$6.5 million through AusAID to fund scholarships for Bangladeshis to study in Australia.

Though allowed to work in the world's 14th largest economy, Bangladeshi students in Australia, like their peers from other countries, should focus on their education and avoid a situation where dependence on employment will affect their key goal of academic success and skills transfer, the press release said.

Though it permits international students to work part-time (and full-time during holidays), it does not want that work to be a student's primary means of support.

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US declines to confirm arrest of al-Qaeda leader

AFP, Washington

The US Defence Department on Tuesday said it was still not ready to confirm the arrest last week of a top Al-Qaeda leader in Iraq, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, as claimed by the Iraqi government.

"I still can't confirm that report to you," Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman told reporters.

His comments raised doubts about the arrest of a shadowy figure said to be the leader of the local Al-Qaeda umbrella group blamed for a wave of bloodshed, even as Iraq's prime minister hailed his capture.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's office on Tuesday

confirmed the arrest and Iraqi security forces released what they said was the first known picture of Baghdad, showing a middle-aged man with dark skin and a close-cropped beard and mustache wearing a black shirt.

The criminal terrorist Abu Omar al-Baghdadi is in the hands of justice," Maliki's office said in a statement.

The US military has previously raised doubts about

Baghdadi's existence, once describing him as a fictional character.

People asked

FROM PAGE 16

Precautionary measures, including screening of passengers, will subsequently be expanded to Sylhet and Chittagong airports and the land ports, the minister said at the Zia International Airport lounge yesterday evening.

From tomorrow, incoming passengers suffering from fever, cough, running nose and respiratory problems will have to report to a health desk where doctors will examine them.

If necessary, the doctors will collect samples and send them to the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), which would deliver test results within 24 hours, said director of IEDCR.

A travel advisory will also be provided to those going abroad.

The government is thinking about opening isolation wards at Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH) and National Institute of Diseases of Chest and Hospital (NIDC&H) to contain the spread of the disease if it somehow manages to enter the country.

The government said that messages would be distributed regarding coughing etiquette as the virus spreads mainly through coughs and sneezes.

The Department of Livestock has also been instructed to strengthen surveillance in areas where pig farming is popular or common since pigs act as carriers of the A/H1N1 virus.

Bildt said he had been denied a visa and described the as "exceedingly strange behaviour." He was recalling the top Swedish diplomat to Colombo.

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency, said Sri Lanka's

government had made a "grave

mistake" that will "have repercussions in Europe and will influence the further relations between the Sri Lankan government and the European states."

Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry said Bildt had not made a formal application for a visa and his plan to visit the island had not been discussed when the joint visits of French and British ministers were considered.

"It needs to be understood that in this instance there had been no formal prior consultations with the government of Sri Lanka with regard to the visit of the Swedish Foreign Minister," the foreign ministry statement said.

"The Swedish minister also wanted to jump on that bandwagon and we said no," the official said.

"Some think they can land up at our airport and expect a red carpet treatment. We are not a colony and neither a bankrupt Third World country.

Our main donors are in Asia, not in Europe," the official added.

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NBR moves to locate duty-free vehicles

UNB, Dhaka

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) is preparing a letter for all ministries, embassies, high commissions and donor agencies to know the whereabouts of the duty-free imported vehicles.

Apprehending the duty-free cars being deployed in other duties, the NBR has taken the move to identify the actual position of the luxury cars.

According to the existing law, embassies, high commissions and donor agencies and projects taken under these institutions, enjoy the privilege of duty-free import of vehicles.

But the vehicles are strictly for the particular job, not for use of any other purpose. This is not the end--the donor-funded projects run under any ministry will not be able to use those vehicles for the ministerial purpose.

"We have strong evidence that the duty-free imported vehicles are being used for other purposes in ministry, embassy, high commission and donor-agency offices," said an NBR official seeking anonymity.

For an example, he said that an embassy last year informed the NBR that they had a car that had to be disposed of.

"But the project where the car was deployed ended in 1997. That means the particular embassy used the car for other purpose for more than one decade," he said.

In this connection, the NBR official said that after the particular job (for what the vehicle was imported) it has to be exported or can be paly on the

local road after giving proper duty and other taxes.

"Even the vehicle will not be included in the vehicle pool of government as the government cannot buy old vehicles," he said.

Relying to a question, he said that although he did not know how much money the NBR lost on this account, but he said that the amount would not be negligible at this moment when the government is in trouble to generate revenues.

The NBR official said that after getting response from the ministries, embassies, high commissions and donor agencies regarding the vehicles the NBR will then examine whether the vehicle is in right position or not.

"After knowing that we will impose duty and taxes on the concerned ministries, embassies, high commissions and donor agencies if they are not using the vehicle in proper way or using the vehicles after completion of the projects," he continued.

The NBR official mentioned that the government allowed the embassies and high commissions to import duty-free vehicles for their offices to show respect towards them complying with the Geneva Convention.

"This does not mean that the duty-free imported vehicles will be used in other purposes," he added.

The file to send letters to the ministries, embassies, high commissions and donor agencies to know the whereabouts of the duty-free imported vehicles now lies on the table of the member (customs) waiting for approval.

Lanka snubs Sweden as tensions over war mount

AFP, Colombo

government had made a "grave mistake" that will "have repercussions in Europe and will influence the further relations between the Sri Lankan government and the European states."

The government maintains that the number of trapped civilians is fewer than 20,000. President Mahinda Rajapakse pledged Monday that air strikes and attacks using heavy-calibre weapons would stop.

But