

Ex-NSI chiefs

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said CID Chittagong divisional Special Superintendent of Police Mohammad Muslim.

The former NSI chiefs were produced before the court around 2:55pm.

Defence lawyers prayed to the court for meeting the two accused at the dock for some time and the court permitted them, which also gave journalists scopes to talk to the two former intelligence bosses.

"Sahab Uddin (former NSI director of security) has made the confessional statement implicating me in the case to save himself," claimed Abdur Rahim, replying to a query.

"If he has any proof or evidence that I gave him instructions regarding transportation of the seized consignment, then let him show it," he said.

Asked about his involvement in the case, Rezaul Haider said he did not even know Sahab Uddin who was an officer of a different intelligence agency.

Rezaul was director (counter intelligence bureau) of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence when the 10 truckloads of firearms and ammunition were hauled at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Company Ltd in the early hours of April 02, 2004.

Additional Public Prosecutor (APP) advocate Ashoke Das moved the remand prayer on behalf of investigation officer of the case CID Senior ASP Muniruzzaman Chowdhury.

In the prayer, the APP mentioned that it is evident to the investigators that the former

NSI chiefs misused their office and state machinery to help transportation of the huge cache of firearms and ammunition through Bangladesh's sovereign land.

It is needed to take them on fresh remand for further interrogation at TFI cell to reveal the mystery and find out the culprits involved in the greater interest of the country, he added.

Opposing the prayer, defence lawyers argued that Sahab Uddin made an "imaginary" confessional statement to save himself implicating their clients.

Rahim's lawyer advocate Khorsheed Alam Chowdhury said the injury Rahim received on his right eye on the last day of the three-day remand is "mark of torture". He also mentioned that his client was suffering from different diseases.

He said if the remand at TFI cell is meant for only questioning, not torture, then it could be conducted at the jail gate.

The defence lawyers prayed for cancellation of the remand and bail for their clients.

After hearing both the sides the court rejected the bail petitions and granted six days' remand for each accused. The court also ordered investigators to maintain great care while interrogating the detainees, particularly Rahim, considering their health conditions.

During the hearing the prosecution and defence lawyers engaged in a heated exchange, which continued for some 10 minutes before the court stopped them.

Swine flu

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on its soil -- in an Australian doctor who arrived by plane from Hong Kong earlier in the week.

Australia itself reported four new cases, including three young brothers, raising the overall number of confirmed infections to five.

Victoria state health authorities quarantined the family, along with some of the boys' classmates.

The mounting crisis has overshadowed proceedings at the WHO's ongoing annual assembly where UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged people to remain vigilant as previous pandemics had shown flu outbreaks could start mild and worsen.

The WHO has already raised its alert level to five out of a sliding scale of six, indicating that a full-fledged pandemic is imminent.

The top level would indicate sustained community transmission in a second region outside the Americas and the escalating number of cases in Asia has increased the prospects of the red alert being sounded.

Governments in Asia, where memories of the bird flu crisis remain raw, have been swift to quarantine both locals and foreigners in a bid to stop swine flu in its tracks.

But a group of some 20 foreign tourists held in Tibet over fears an Italian woman with them had swine flu were released Wednesday after tests showed she was suffering from common influenza, Chinese officials said.

Meanwhile Egyptian Health Minister Hatem al-Gabali warned of the dangers posed by swine flu to millions of Muslim pilgrims travelling to Saudi Arabia.

Gabali told the independent daily Al-Masri Al-Yom that "there is a large possibility" the A(H1N1) virus may reach Egypt with returning pilgrims.

While he could not bar Egypt's estimated 600,000 pilgrims from travelling as such a decision was up to clerics, Gabali said he could "open quarantines and say: no one will return from Saudi Arabia to his home."

The senior Muslim cleric in the Gulf emirate of Dubai has already published a fatwa, or religious decree, calling on the faithful to delay any pilgrimages to Mecca for the time being.

Sri Lanka

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military had no information about the leader's wife, Madiwadani, or their other two children.

"The process of identifying the other Tiger dead bodies is now going on and we want to see if any other close relatives or associates of Prabhakaran are among the dead," a military official said.

The defence ministry said seven more dead Tiger leaders had been identified yesterday afternoon.

Sri Lankan television repeatedly broadcast images of what it said was the body of Prabhakaran, showing the upper section of a corpse which was dressed in camouflage fatigues.

The face was intact, with the eyes wide open, and bore a clear resemblance to the stocky rebel leader.

While Sri Lanka marked the end of decades of war with a national holiday, the United Nations has said victory came at the cost of many innocents lives.

The UN and human rights groups have blamed indiscriminate shelling by the military for causing many civilian casualties, while accusing the rebels of using tens of thousands of people as a "human shield."

Relief agencies have complained that access to overcrowded government-run camps housing tens of thousands of displaced Tamil civilians in the northeast has been further restricted in recent days.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is to visit Sri Lanka on Friday and Saturday to push for reconciliation on the mainly Sinhalese island.

He told reporters in Geneva on Tuesday he was concerned about the welfare and safety of civilians, and said that any serious allegations of war crimes "should be properly investigated."

Under international pressure to reach out to the Tamil minority, President Mahinda Rajapakse vowed on Tuesday that a political solution to the island's deep-rooted ethnic divisions would be found.

"All should live with equal rights. They should live without any fear or doubt," he told parliament. "Let us all be united."

Neighbouring India was sending national security adviser M. K. Narayanan and foreign secretary Shivshankar Menon for talks with Rajapakse, officials said.

Major decisions

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coal production. Towfiq said the work order for these pumps would be issued this month.

Identifying coal as one of the vital natural resources that needs to be developed for future energy security of the country, Towfiq said in the past the government had undertaken mining project without informing the people its consequences on the environment and agricultural land. The government had not even kept any allocation to address the environmental issues.

"But in future all such projects should be done in a transparent manner by informing and involving the people," he said.

The draft coal policy that the government did not approve in the last four years will soon see the light of day. "We are working on it. We hope to approve it within a few months. The main focus would be to ensure the best usage of coal," Towfiq said.

He noted the future of power would be dependent on coal as well as nuclear technology. "Seventy-five percent of power in France comes from nuclear power stations and one third of power in the USA also comes from nuclear power stations," he quipped.

Meanwhile, the eight-member committee headed by a joint secretary of the energy ministry recommended that a mining city be developed as per the Resettlement Action Plan. This city would provide amenities, shelter and livelihood as an alternative to the affected people.

As part of this action plan, the government should appoint a third party organisation--possibly a non-government organisation--to conduct a baseline survey in the affected area to assess the size of the population, their assets, cropland and livestock, schools and other educational institu-

tions etc. If there is a slum in the area, it should also be assessed.

Till the plan is implemented, the villagers living in vulnerable structures should be relocated to the East Camp of the Barapukuria mine. The East Camp is a structure built during the project construction period, said the committee that was formed in January to look into the land subsidence of Barapukuria.

All future mine projects should be implemented after conducting a feasibility study, undertaking a resettlement plan and by acquiring the land necessary for the projects, it said.

The committee pointed out that land outside the mine area, which has subsided and will subside in future, should be acquired by paying premium to the owners. The baseline survey should identify the lands that could be acquired by paying the premium.

It recommended jobs for the locals as per their merit in the Barapukuria coalmine. A social awareness committee should be formed with these people to disseminate information about the long-term impact of the mine.

The 2,500-acre underground mine area includes 650 acres of agricultural land on the surface. The mine is directly affecting the lives of about 2,500 people in seven to eight villages. "Rehabilitation of these people should not be very costly for the government," said Asource.

Other members of the committee include director general of the Hydrocarbon Cell of the ministry, Dhaka University geology department Professor Badrul Imam, chiefs of the Bureau of Mineral Development, Barapukuria Coal Mine Company, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company and Geological Survey of Bangladesh.

Saarc summit

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"It will greatly enhance Bhutan's international image as a sovereign, independent, responsible and equal member country," said the Prime Minister of Bhutan Lyonchhoen Jigmi Y Thinley, according to a report of Bhutan's national newspaper Kuensel.

"We are now prepared in terms of the administration, infrastructure and the foreign ministry being ready to host the summit," said Lyonchhoen.

"It is also like a coming of age for Bhutan," said the prime minister adding that the leaders would be visiting a country that had successfully and peacefully made a transition to democracy inspired by His Majesty, the King.

Bangladesh has welcomed Bhutan's decision to host the summit for the first time since the birth of Saarc mooted in Dhaka in 1985.

When contacted, Foreign Secretary Towhid Hossain told The Daily Star that Bangladesh would definitely attend the Saarc summit. "All the formalities regarding attending the summit have almost been completed," he said.

The venue for the next year's summit was the Maldives, which has now been shifted to the Himalayan kingdom. Last year the 15th summit was held in Colombo in August 2008.

Bhutan had skipped the opportunity to host the Saarc summit three times on the ground of the country's infra-

structure. The summit will be held in Thimphu on the currently proposed dates April 28-29, 2010.

The summit is also important for Bhutan since it is actually obligatory for each member state to host the summit. It was actually Maldives' turn to host the 2010 summit.

The summit would also allow bilateral meetings at the sidelines between the leaders of member countries. They will discuss all matters of mutual interest and appraise each other of global and regional issues, officials said.

They said the summit would promote good neighbourly relations among Saarc countries, as different countries could meet and discuss.

The Saarc secretariat in Kathmandu has already begun consultations with other member states, including the newly inducted Afghanistan, to finalise the dates proposed by the Bhutan government.

Bhutanese Prime Minister Thinley has proposed April 28-29, which would have to be confirmed by India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Afghanistan and Nepal.

Though initially it was the Maldives' turn to host the 16th summit, the SAARC Council of Foreign Ministers who met in Colombo in February agreed with Bhutan's request as the Maldives expressed inability to host the summit due to financial recession.

Paltan killing case

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28, 2006 was based on a false and imaginary incident, a source said quoting from the MPP's opinion.

"The persons who were made accused in the case had no reason to go to the place of occurrence that day. The case was filed at a time when the people of the country were demonstrating against the misuse and corruption of BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government," the MPP said in his opinion.

He sent the opinion to the Dhaka district magistrate, who will forward it to the home ministry for taking necessary steps.

Just before the immediate past four-party alliance government handed over power to the successive caretaker government, seven people were killed in a fierce clash between activists of AL-led 14 party coalition and Jamaat-e-Islami.

On October 28, 2006, Jamaat and Workers Party filed two separate cases with Paltan police station in connection with killings of their activists. Workers Party in its case

accused Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General Ali Hossan Mohammad Mojahid, Assistant Secretary General Muhammad Kamaruzzaman, and seven others.

The case against AL-led alliance leaders is now under further investigation while the case against Jamaat is on trial.

The Jamaat leaders also filed petitions with the Dhaka district magistrate for scrapping of the case against them. On receiving the petition from the district magistrate, the MPP will scrutinise it to give his opinion.

The MPP earlier recommended scrapping of 11 other cases against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On receiving the recommendations from the MPP, the district magistrate will forward those to the home ministry, and the ministry will submit those to a high-powered committee led by the law minister for review.

After the review, the MPP will file petitions with the courts concerned seeking permission to throw away the cases.

CHT accord

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institution in CHT aspect," he said.

The state minister said it is very difficult for an old person to maintain the huge responsibility as land commission chairman. A justice retires from service at the age of over 67 years and the land commission will perform better if its chairman has been appointed from other services, he added.

"In the mean time we talked to two persons for the post of chairman of the commission and they agreed to join," Dipankar said.

A proposal has been submitted by the state minister for CHT affairs before the standing committee meeting to take decision to appoint any retired government official from any other service as the chairman of land commission.

ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury MP, Jyotindra Lal Tripathy MP, Abdur Rahman Bodi MP and secretary and officials of the ministry concerned and other departments attended the meeting presided over by Promod Mankin MP, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on CHT Affairs Ministry.

Prof Thanjama Lusai, chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council, was present at the meeting as a guest.

BNP reforms

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Asked whether intra-party conflicts might escalate after announcement of new committees, Mosharraf said, "It's not unusual that some leaders might be aggrieved since BNP is a big political party. But we shall request all to work together in the greater interest of the party."

The party would nominate a convener and a few joint conveners for a 51-member district committee. The rest of the members will be co-opted into it later, said party leaders.

A senior BNP leader said the process of reorganising the party was delayed because of lobbying by some top-level leaders for including their followers in the new committees.

Earlier, a four-member high-powered committee led by party Chairperson Khaleda Zia reviewed the reports of grassroots-level leaders for about two months to constitute the district and city convening committees as part of the move to reorganise the party.

Haji Selim

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Judge Sirajul Islam of the Special Judge's Court-7 passed the order rejecting Selim's bail petition after he appeared before it and sought bail in the case. The court also directed the jail authorities to provide him with first class division in jail.

Moving the petition, lawyers told the court that their client was earlier sentenced in absentia and later he (Selim) had appeared before the High Court (HC) seeking bail. The HC asked their client to surrender to the trial court. So, their client appeared before it and sought bail.

On April 27 last year, Selim was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth worth Tk 14.65 crore illegally and concealing wealth information of Tk 8.70 crore submitted to the ACC.

Selim was also fined Tk 10 lakh, in default, to suffer one year more in jail. His wife Gulshan Ara Begum was also sentenced to three years' imprisonment for abetting his husband in acquiring illegal wealth.

The judge also ordered confiscation of all his ill-gotten assets worth Tk 27 crore.

ACC Assistant Director Mahabub Alam filed the case with Labagh Police Station against Selim and his wife on September 24, 2007.

Meanwhile, a large number of Selim's supporters gathered and chanted slogans demanding withdrawal of the case filed against Haji Selim.

CASE AGAINST BABU
Judge Jesmin of the Special Judge's Court-4 ordered to send Saifur Rahman's son Babu to jail when he appeared before it and sought bail in the case in which he was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment.

He was convicted for amassing Tk 13.85 crore through illegally and concealing information of wealth worth Tk 1.2 crore to ACC. Babu was also fined Tk 15 lakh, in default, to suffer two and a half years' more in jail. The court also ordered confiscation of all his ill-gotten assets.

ACC Deputy Director Sharmin Ferdousy filed the case against Babu with Ramna Police Station on April 29 last year.

Indonesian military plane crash kills 98

AP, AFP, Magetan

An Indonesian military transport plane carrying soldiers and their families crashed into homes and erupted in flames yesterday, killing at least 98 people, the air force spokesman said.

The burning wreckage of the Hercules was scattered in a rice paddy near Magetan, East Java, about 160 kilometres east of Yogyakarta.

"The death toll has risen to 98 people," air force spokesman Bambang Sulistio told AFP as soldiers and rescue workers continued to search the charred debris for human remains.

The plane was carrying more than 100 passengers and crew including soldiers and their families, among them children, officials said. It was flying from Jakarta to the eastern province of Papua via Magetan.

Sulistio said the dead included 14 children and two residents of Geplak village whose homes were destroyed in the crash. About a dozen people were injured in the crash.

"The evacuation process is still underway and I predict that there are still some bodies trapped inside the wreckage," he said.

Witnesses said the plane smashed into houses before erupting in a ball of flame and rolling into a paddy field.

"The plane hit some houses, bounced, hit the ground and then caught fire," one witness told Metro TV.

Several people said they heard explosions or thunder as the plane plunged toward the ground, and one reportedly said he saw a wing falling off.

"I heard something like thunder, like swirling wind and then suddenly a plane hit the two houses and crashed," a local resident told AFP, adding that the fuselage split apart on impact.

The plane's massive tail section could be seen resting upside down and badly damaged in the green rice field, but the rest of the fuselage had burned down to its metal frame.

Burning debris was scattered over a large area and soldiers were helping pull bodies from the wreckage and the thick mud of the paddy.

The crash occurred at around 6:30 am (2330 GMT Tuesday) as the plane was preparing to land at nearby Iswahyudi military airbase.

Officials said the cause of the accident was not yet

known. "The engines were good, the weather was good. Was it human error? We can't confirm that yet," military spokesman Sagom Tamboen said.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono summoned military chief Djoko Santoso and Defence Minister Juwono Sudarsono to a meeting at the presidential palace in Jakarta to discuss the accident.

Sudarsono complained that the military's budget was insufficient to ensure minimum maintenance of aircraft.

Another child

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the government committee formed by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) under the health ministry said all the children died due to poison and it could happen because of overuse of pesticide and lack of consciousness among users.

The IEDCR's primary investigation found quite a few examples of overuse of pesticides.

Report received from Dhamrai says, Shibli had her breakfast yesterday morning and went out for playing and came back with the sickness. Doctors later announced her dead when she was taken to the upazila health complex.

Upazila health complex sources said like other pesticide victims Shibli also had the same sudden onset of symptoms--reduced consciousness, frothy discharge, respiratory distress, constricted pupils and convulsions.

Earlier, two other children died at Naogakait village and another in Malancha village in Dhamrai. It has been seen that the children were affected in the morning.

Earlier the Local Agricultural, when the Daily Star correspondent visited Dhamrai said the farmers in Malancha and Naogakait spray pesticides in amounts way more than what is safe.

Before expiry, the dogs and calves were bellowing, jerking heads and off feeding, the IEDCR report reads.

The IEDCR has launched an awareness campaign against pesticides in those two villages.

It cautioned the villagers against letting their children go to the crop fields and using clay to make toys or ovens.

The IEDCR team has collected many biological and environmental samples including those of blood, urine, stool, cough and breast milk from villagers.

The samples have been sent abroad for further tests but the final result is yet to be received.

Congress

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274 members and has the support of Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Bahujan Samaj Party which add up to 28.

The president said she invited Manmohan to form government as Congress was the single largest party and also headed the single largest pre-poll alliance.

Asked whether Congress' allies will be included in the government, Manmohan said, "You will come to know in due course".

Addressing the media separately, senior Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee said his party and its pre-poll allies discussed mechanism for forming the government today and further talks would be held later.

Earlier in the morning, Congress and its allies held talks over ministerial berths with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who is in a position to dictate terms after his party's facile electoral triumph.

Leaders of UPA's constituents were believed to have pitched for cabinet berths at a meeting at the residence of Congress President Sonia Gandhi who was re-elected the head of the alliance.

Congress, which won 206 of the 543 elected seats in parliament, is expected to retain the key portfolios for finance, defence, foreign affairs and home.

The Congress-led alliance bagged a total of 262 seats in India's month-long general elections that left it just 10 seats short of a working majority in parliament.

Congress General Secretary Janardhan Dwivedi said Manmohan had stressed that providing a strong and stable government was his first priority while pushing forward pro-poor schemes launched in his previous tenure.

Odd BDR deaths

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The BDR headquarters is likely to submit its report to the government today.

Although the report was completed several days back, the committee took a few more days to submit it as some works including binding copies of the report were not finished.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday placed 67 suspected BDR rebels on remand for five days each for interrogation in the Pikhana mutiny case.

Five other suspected mutineers made statements to magistrates in Dhaka courts confessing to their involvement in the massacre during February 25-26.

Meantime, a joint team of police and Rab arrested 140 BDR jawans from different battalions in Sylhet in connection with three sedition cases filed by police for staging mutiny on February 26.

Public Prosecutor Misbah Uddin Siraj told The Daily Star that the trial of the cases would begin on May 26 at the Sylhet District and Sessions Judge's Court.

Sources said the chairman of the 11-member probe committee would submit the report to the home minister. The last one-month deadline for submitting the report expired on May 11. Earlier, the deadline had been extended several times.

The committee headed by former bureaucrat Anisuzzaman Khan is comprised of serving bureaucrats and high-ranking officers from the army, navy and air force.

Our court correspondent reports: The Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court granted five days' remand for each of the 67 BDR

jawans after the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police prayed for seven days' remand for each.

A total of 660 people have been interrogated so far on remand in connection with the incident while 95 people have made confessional statements under section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Our staff correspondent in Sylhet adds: The Sylhet Chief Judicial Magistrate, sent the arrested 140 BDR jawans to prison after they were produced before it yesterday.

The arrests were made after a Sylhet court issued warrant against 142 BDR jawans following filing of three sedition cases against them.

A total of 1,721 BDR jawans have been arrested so far in 29 districts outside Dhaka.

JS body

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2,000 in tax a year if he is properly motivated," he said in reply to a question.

The committee asked the finance ministry to take measures to implement its suggestions, Mostafa Kamal said.

Earlier on May 15, the finance minister the government was planning to cancel tax holiday scheme in the next fiscal year.

Kabirul held

FROM PAGE 16
the day he locked into a quarrel with his brother Khairul who was managing director of New Age Tobacco as he (Khairul) refused to pay him Tk 75 lakh for a cold storage of Rangpur.

Kabirul said during the quarrel, he was addicted and shot three shots at Khairul that left him dead.

Police said he went into hiding after the killing and later got admitted to the centre identifying himself as Helal.

Dhaka metro

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The committee members also suggested splitting Dhaka City Corporation into two separate entities having two mayors," Rahmat Ali said.

"As the chairman of the committee I did not make any recommendation over their opinion as I need to talk more on that," he said.