

Suu Kyi lawyers challenge witness ban

AFP, Yangon

Lawyers for Myanmar pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi said yesterday they had asked a court to overturn an earlier ban that prevented three defence witnesses from testifying at her trial.

Myanmar's military junta has charged the Nobel laureate with breaching the terms of her house arrest after an American man, John Yettaw, swam uninvited to her lakeside home in May, leaving her facing up to five years in jail.

Judges at the closed court in Yangon's Insein prison last month refused to allow three people including two members of her party to testify at the trial, in which final arguments are due Friday.

"We have filed a revision order to the court today... We want to call the other three witnesses," Kyi Win, her main lawyer, told AFP.

"The prosecution had 14 witnesses and we had only one so far. If you look at the numbers it is one-sided, and that is why we have made this application," he added.

Nyan Win, the spokesman for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy, said after going to court to file the application that it would be heard on Wednesday.

The three barred witnesses

WFP Biscuits

FROM PAGE 16 WFP had withdrawn the biscuits and suspended the project in the district.

The WFP has deployed a team of experts to investigate the unexpected consequence of its school feeding programme. The organisation has already sent samples of the biscuits to Dhaka and Bangkok for lab tests to verify scientifically whether those caused the problem, said a WFP statement.

A preliminary test report of the Institute of Food Science and Technology (IFST) of BCSIR on the biscuits is expected to be available by 4 June, said the statement.

WFP Bangladesh Representative John Aylieff in a statement yesterday said, "Our prime concern is for the affected children and we take any possibility of a food-related illness very seriously. WFP gives highest priority to the quality and safety of the food we distribute."

In the statement John Aylieff said it was the first time that such incident took place since the school-feeding programme had been launched in 2002. The feeding programme covers one million children in 7,000 schools across the country.

The statement also added that WFP uses 13 different private enterprises to produce biscuits for the feeding programme and a single factory produced the biscuits distributed in Khagrachhari. However, there have been no problems reported in other parts of the country, read the statement.

Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) Chairman Rubity Karbary, also the controlling authority of government primary schools in the district, said they had ordered the schools to stop receiving biscuits.

He also mentioned that he had informed government authorities concerned to investigate the matter and take necessary action if there was any shortcoming.

Banks asked

FROM PAGE 1 "complain and loan supervision cell" would regularly monitor the situation.

In a separate circular, the BP said the cyclone also caused massive damage to the shrimp farming in the region and asked the state-owned commercial banks to reschedule the loans of the affected farmers through relaxing the down payment conditions.

It asked the banks to send their senior executives to the affected areas to get a spot account and give fresh loans accordingly.

The central bank also asked the banks to ensure that the farmers would not face any harassment in getting the loans. The banks' own "complaint and loan supervision cell" will regularly monitor the situation, it said.

In another circular, the BB called upon the banks and financial institutions to undertake CSR programmes in the cyclone-hit areas to rehabilitate agriculture, fisheries, livestock and environment.

were Tin Oo, a journalist who was Myanmar's longest serving prisoner until his release in September; Win Tin, the detained deputy chief of her party, and lawyer Khin Moe Moe.

The only person to testify last week for the defence was a legal expert.

"Tin Oo is a very important defence witness because he was a witness to the Depeyin incident," Kyi Win said, referring to a deadly attack on Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade by a pro-junta mob in May 2003.

Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Tin have both been detained ever since the attack.

Her legal team has questioned the basis of the laws under which she was held under house arrest for the past six years -- the detention order was lifted last week -- and argued that the charges against her are invalid.

She remains in prison awaiting the verdict.

Kyi Win added that final arguments in the case could be delayed until after Friday if the court agrees to hear their appeal to admit the extra witnesses.

JS body

FROM PAGE 16 report within the next two months. Another member of the committee is lawmaker Anwar Hossain.

The parliamentary watchdog also asked the probe committee to make recommendations on how to improve the overall performance of BSMMU, the only medical university of the country.

Committee Chief Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim chaired the meeting, which continued for three hours at the parliament building complex.

A BSMMU probe committee led by former head of the Department of Virology Prof Nazrul Islam unearthed the evidence of graft involving over Tk 22 crore in purchase and maintenance.

The probe committee in its report submitted on July 29, 2007 identified a number of incidents of corruption and irregularities at BSMMU.

The probe body found many instances of corruption at BSMMU during the five-year rule of BNP-jamaat-led government under vice-chancellor late MA Hadi, who served from October 2001 to November 2006. Hadi passed away on October 16 last year.

The standing committee also asked the officials of Essential Drugs, a government owned pharmaceutical company, to do away with its irregularities and corruption and to turn the company into a profitable venture.

The standing committee also asked the officials concerned to ensure health facilities at grassroots level through community clinics.

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque, committee members Mohammad Amanullah, Dr MA Mannan, Murad Hossain and ZIM Mostafa Ali, lone opposition lawmaker in the committee, among others were present in the meeting.

Hilsa

FROM PAGE 16 made Tk 5.6 lakh by selling the fish at Tk 7,000 for every 100 pieces. On Monday Amin sold Hilsa worth Tk 3.50 lakh.

At St Martin's ghāt, Hilsa -- each weighing 600 to 800 grams -- is selling at Tk 8,000 to 9,000 for 100 pieces, at around Tk 80 to 90 per piece.

The fishermen in the area have been fighting the inclement weather over the last two days as the southern regions faced the impacts of the depression in the area. Around 7,000 fishing trawlers had to take shelter at different ports in the district at different times as the cautionary signal in the seas was put at no 3.

The channel, off three to four kilometres from St Martin's Island, where most of the Hilsa was netted was relatively calm during the period. Most of the fishermen said that this week's catch in the area is the highest in the last 30 years.

Sources said, seven traders supplied 180 metric tons of Hilsa to Dhaka in 15 trucks on Monday. They supplied 100 to 120 tons of Hilsa in 10 trucks yesterday.

One trader however pointed out that a large catch presents a huge problem for them, as there are no proper arrangements to preserve such huge quantities of fish in St Martin's.

Pintu caught

FROM PAGE 1 anything about the charges against Pintu.

Pintu was taken to the Minto Road office of the Detective Branch (DB) around 8:20pm and later to the headquarters of Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is investigating the BDR carnage case.

Walid Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of DB, told The Daily Star that Pintu was handed over to the CID officials around 10:30pm.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain in a statement demanded immediate unconditional release of Pintu and Apu. Their arrest is nothing but part of a repressive policy of the present government, he said.

Monirul Islam, deputy commissioner of DB (south), told The Daily Star that they arrested Pintu following a requisition from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is investigating the BDR carnage.

Earlier, Pintu came under the spotlight on several occasions for his alleged involvement in criminal activities, violence, tender snatching and corruption.

Although he was arrested and sent to jail on criminal charges, as many as 76 cases against him were withdrawn during the rule of the 2001-2006 BNP-led government. Pintu also faces several cases as a former leader of BNP's student wing Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal.

He was arrested during the rule of the last caretaker government and during his confinement in jail he again came under spotlight for assaulting a deputy jailer.

The summary of the national committee's probe report, which was revealed on May 27, briefly mentioned Pintu's name as having link with the mutiny at the BDR headquarters.

Under the sub-head "Fleeing of the rebels and their accomplices" the report said, "Some civilians aided BDR men to flee by supplying them with clothes, food and water. They were led by former BNP ward commissioner Suraiya Begum, her two sons, local criminals Masud and Leather Lion. Many mutineers used the Keraniganj ferry ghat for fleeing. Former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu helped them flee by arranging engine-run boats to cross the river. Rab arrested 76 rebels while they were fleeing."

Meanwhile, the HC bench Pintu appeared before yesterday declined to pass any order on a writ petition filed by Pintu's lawyer seeking a direction to the government not to harass or arrest Pintu without any specific case against him.

After hearing the petition, the HC bench comprised of Justice Tariq-ul Hakim and Justice M Azizul Haque told Pintu's lawyer that the bench was reluctant to pass any order on the petition and asked him to move it to another bench.

During the hearing of the petition, Pintu's counsel Khandaker Mahbub Hossain told the court that the law enforcers are raiding Pintu's residence and looking for him. He also alleged that plainclothes law enforcers have halted his private car at the main gate of the Supreme Court around 4:30pm yesterday and looked for Pintu.

Khaleda warns

FROM PAGE 1 to speak in the House "This government is dreaming of establishing one-party rule by scrapping the fifth amendment to the constitution," she said.

Strongly denouncing India's Tipaimukh Dam project, the former prime minister said a large part of Bangladesh will turn into desert if the project is implemented. She mentioned that India implemented its Farakka project when Awami League was in power.

"Awami League also wanted to give India transit facility but BNP along with the people foiled that conspiracy. Now, they are hatching the same conspiracy in the name of Asian Highway," Khaleda said.

She criticised the government move to change the name, uniform and logo of the BDR, and said army was in a helpless situation during the BDR mutiny due to wrong decision of the government.

Party leaders ASM Hannan Shah, MA Manna, Fazlul Haque Milon, among others, spoke at the programme held at Gazipur stadium. District BNP President Hasan Uddin Sarkar was in the chair.

Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday protested the arrest of former lawmaker from the party Nasiruddin Pintu.

He said the government now staged 'Pintu-drama' saying that he had helped BDR mutineers to escape. If it is true, then why it did not take action at that time, he asked.

Delwar was addressing a meeting in front of BNP's Nayapaltan central office demanding lower prices of essentials. It was organised by Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal.

Pakistan rescues

FROM PAGE 16

between North West Frontier Province -- where Pakistan is pressing its anti-Taliban assault -- and the lawless semi-autonomous tribal areas, where militants have carved out strongholds.

Officials near the college, located in the town of Razmak in North Waziristan, said the students were aged 15 to 25 and were not training for the army. No army, civilian or militant casualties were reported in the operation.

The students left their college on Monday after it closed for the summer and were heading in about 30 vehicles to Bannu when armed Taliban ambushed the convoy, Rind said. Many of the buses managed to get away, he added.

But details were hazy and officials gave wildly divergent accounts of how many students had gone missing, with numbers ranging from 20 to 400.

The incident has fuelled fears of revenge attacks for a month-long Pakistan offensive against the Taliban in the northwest.

"Whenever there is an army operation, such types of reactions are normal and we should be prepared for such retaliations in the future," said Ikram Sehgal, a security analyst and newspaper columnist.

French plane

FROM PAGE 16 He added that officials needed "a piece that might have a serial number, some sort of identification" to be sure that it came from the missing airliner.

However the items were found near where the Air France plane sent its final message: an automatic data signal telling of multiple electric and pressurisation failures.

Air France flight AF 447 disappeared mid-Atlantic on Monday, four hours into an 11-hour flight from Rio de Janeiro to Paris.

A Brazilian air force statement said the debris was discovered at 0300 GMT Tuesday by an Embraer R-99 AWAC plane fitted with onboard radar that detected metallic and non-metallic items floating in the ocean.

After homing in the search to that locale, other air force planes at 0949 GMT spotted the patches of floating debris.

All systems failed on an Air

The military campaign, now in its sixth week, was launched when Taliban fighters advanced to within 100 kilometres of Islamabad, flouting a deal to put three million people under Sharia law in exchange for peace.

More than 80 people have been killed in bomb blasts across the country since the operation began on April 26.

Pakistan's military said Tuesday that troops were fighting inside the Taliban stronghold of Chahbagh, 20 kilometres from Swat valley's main town Mingora, which the government said it had won back over the weekend.

"Helicopters shelled eastern parts of Chahbagh while ground forces are busy clearing the outskirts," said a military official, who did not want to be named as he was not authorised to speak to the media.

The United States, which has strongly backed the operation, is sending special envoy Richard Holbrooke to Pakistan on Wednesday to examine the humanitarian crisis and meet some of the up to 2.4 million people displaced.

In Tank district on the fringes of the tribal areas, four paramilitary personnel were wounded when their vehicle was hit by a roadside bomb, local police official Sher Mohammad told AFP.

France jet that went missing with 228 people on board but it is still too soon to say what caused the disaster, French Prime Minister Francois Fillon said Tuesday.

"No hypothesis is being favoured at the moment," he told the National Assembly. "Our only certainty is that there was no distress call sent by the plane, but regular automatic alerts sent over three minutes indicated the failure of all systems," he said.

Air France's chief executive said Monday that the passenger jet, which disappeared Monday while en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, had suffered multiple technical failures before crashing into the Atlantic.

On Tuesday, the Brazilian air force found aircraft debris in the Atlantic Ocean as it hunted for the missing plane but could not confirm it was from the French jet.

Pintu's failed

FROM PAGE 1 escape arrest.

The former MP, arrested in connection with the mutiny at Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters on February 25-26, was taken to the DB office on Minto Road last night. He was handed over to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), which is investigating the BDR carnage case, later in the night.

But his brother-in-law Mainur, who is a Japan expatriate, was kept at Shahbagh Police Station. Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh police, said, "During arrest the former MP was wearing a black gown with helmet."

"DB officials took Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu to their office. His brother-in-law is here for interrogation along with the motorbike," the OCS said.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Monirul Islam of DB told The Daily Star, "We picked up gown-worn Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu during his attempt to avoid arrest."

Asked how he managed the gown, the DC said, "He is still in that gown, but we didn't ask him about it yet."

Replying to a question, Islam said, "We made the

arrest on recommendation of the investigation officer of the BDR mutiny case."

Walid Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of DB, told The Daily Star that Pintu was handed over to the CID around 10:30pm.

It could not be known from the detectives how Pintu entered the High Court premises where he was picked up.

Contacted, Pintu's lawyer Khandaker Mahbub Hossain said, "Pintu was not arrested; he was rather hijacked from the court premises along with another one."

Witnesses say Pintu entered the HC around 2:00pm. He hurriedly left the Annex Building through the gateway after sensing the presence of detectives. The motorcycle was waiting for him in front of the Supreme Court Bar office at around 5:00pm, they add.

"Soon after he crossed the HC shrine, some 20-25 members of intelligence agencies barred him and picked up him," comments a witness.

2 criminals

FROM PAGE 16 police recovered a pistol, a revolver and seven bullets from the scene.

The sources said the shoot-out began as a patrol team of DB police led by Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mashiur Rahman reached Argaoon BCC Bhaban around 1:15am. Sensing presence of the law enforcers Mahbub and his four accomplices opened fire at the team compelling them to shoot back, sources added.

ASP Rahman told The Daily Star that with their leg-injuries Mahbub and Sabuj are receiving treatment under police custody.

The team also arrested Samad, 25, a member of the gang, while two others managed to escape, he added.

He said in preliminary interrogation, Samad informed that they collect toll from Mirpur area in the name of top listed criminal Shahadat who went underground in a neighbouring country a few years back.

Quoting the criminals he added that they had planned to extort money from Texmart Textile near Mirpur-2 Stadium in the morning.

Govt critical

FROM PAGE 1

The report signed by Cabinet Secretary M Abdul Aziz came following the parliamentary body's query as to on what authority the ACC provided its lawyers with remunerations and salaries, higher than those of the chief justice.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the report that incorporated explanation of ACC on the payment of its lawyers with higher rate.

The ACC spent Tk 7.74 crore for hiring lawyers in corruption cases in last two years.

In 2007-08 fiscal year, the ACC spent Tk 5.11 crore for hiring 51 lawyers on regular payroll. The lawyers include four senior prosecutors, 10 advisory counsels, 22 public prosecutors (PP), one assistant PP and seven lawyers for dealing with writ petitions.

In the first month of this year, the ACC reduced the number of lawyers on regular payroll to eight keeping open the option for appointing lawyers for a particular case if necessary.

According to the parliamentary body's claim, the anti-graft body gave Tk 2 lakh to each of its lawyers every month and it also spent Tk 13 crore as source money.

The committee on April 12 meeting asked the office of Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to examine on what authority the ACC spent the money although the ACC laws do not have any provision for source money.

The office of the CAG yesterday placed a report before the parliamentary body, but the committee did not accept it.

"The report was partial and we asked the office of Comptroller and Auditor General to come up with full report on the expenditure," Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, chief of the parliamentary body, said at a news briefing after the meeting.

On the expenditure of lawyers' payment, the ACC said a high level meeting on April 18 in 2007 decided to hire expert lawyers by giving higher rate and the cabinet division was informed about the decision of the meeting at that time.

The cabinet division in the report however said the ACC Act, 2004 has provision for appointing lawyers temporarily until a permanent prosecution unit is formed and rules are made to specify the terms and reference of their job. But the rules and the ACC's own prosecution unit are yet to be formed.

The report also explained the previous actions on freezing bank accounts of politicians and businessmen.

Madrasa

FROM PAGE 1 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in their offices.

It also recommended for madrasas to ensure that the national anthem is sung on the campuses everyday.

"We have asked the madrasa authorities to observe different national days including Independence Day and Victory Day at all madrasas with due respect," Menon said.

Different quarters allege that Moududi misinterpreted Islam in his books and spread Islamist radicalism in the sub-continent.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat claim that Moududi first launched the anti-Ahmadiyya campaign in 1934. After the partition of the erstwhile undivided India, he settled in Pakistan and started spreading religious hatred with rejuvenated zeal.

Bangladesh Parliament on June 28, 2004 witnessed a 15-minute debate over Syed Abul Ala Moududi when the erstwhile main opposition Awami League (AL) threatened to walk out of a session.

Jamaat Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami sparked the debate raising the issue during his budget speech.

Nizami, also the then industries minister, lambasted AL for accusing Moududi of igniting violence in 1953 in the erstwhile united Pakistan, and defended the ideology of Moududi, who founded Jamaat in 1942.

Encroachment

FROM PAGE 16 Encroachers have grabbed rivers Turag, Buriganga and Balu by earth-filling and erecting illegal structures.

Following the ongoing campaign by The Daily Star, a high official of BIWTA visited Amin Bazar, Gabtoli, Ashulia and Tongi last week to see the appalling condition of the rivers.

Waiting for the water

FROM PAGE 16

"As soon as navigation will become impossible in these waterways, we either have to give up our profession or make a 100-kilometre detour to reach Dhaka through Taltala canal in Munshiganj," Abdul Ganil pointed out.

If any of these rivers or canals is opened up for navigation round the year, hundreds of traders from the northern districts destined for Dhaka, will use this route for easier and cheaper transportation," Madhu Mandal added.

The boatmen said every year as soon as navigability is restored in the canal, hundreds of boats laden with different merchandise from Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sirajganj, Gaibandha, and other places rush there. Carrying merchandise through these waterways is much cheaper and easier, as the boats can be directly anchored at the business hub in the capital's Sadarghat area.

The entire stretch of Ghor canal, which winds its way through the rivers Kaliganga, Bangsi, and Dhaleshwari into the river Buriganga, remains dry for up to eight months a year. Along its way, a handful number of lucky villages are blessed with some water pockets, where the villagers wash and bathe.

Ambia Begum of Sometpur village explained how she has to walk more than a kilometre everyday for her daily washing. A mother of three children, Ambia said when Ghor canal dries up for over seven months a year, village women face their toughest days.

"I have to carry a pitcher in one hand, my clothes in the other and walk to the trapped water of Ghor canal more

Tax holiday

FROM PAGE 16 parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry opposed it. They said if tax holiday is discontinued, it would hamper industrialisation of the country.

Officials of the finance ministry said the facility is being greatly misused, and that is why they want to withdraw it.

As long as the industries enjoy tax holiday, they make profit every year, and when the facility discontinues, they show that they suffer losses, the officials noted.

The government, used to get most of its revenue from the import sector but now earning from this sector is falling. So, it is trying to increase revenue earning from other sectors.

Sources mentioned that in the next FY, revenue earning target of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) is going to be fixed at Tk 61,000 crore. In the current FY, the target is Tk 54,500 crore but it is going to be slashed to Tk 53,000 crore.

Pak court frees

FROM PAGE 16 They also indicated that the high court verdict could be appealed in the Supreme Court.

A full bench of the Lahore High Court that heard a habeas corpus petition against the detention of Saeed also ordered the release of his associate, Col. (ret'd) Nazir Ahmad, Geo TV reported.

The bench, comprising judges Ijaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Hasnat Ahmad Khan and Zubdatul Hussain, passed the order after hearing arguments of the petitioners' counsel after those of Attorney General Latif Khosa.

Speaking to reporters in Islamabad, Saeed's son Hafiz Talha appealed to Jud workers to stay calm and focus on the relief and rehabilitation of the civilians who had fled the military's anti-Taliban operations in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

On May 30, the Pakistani government had presented evidence to the Lahore High Court linking the Jud to al-Qaeda.

Khosa told the court during an in-camera hearing "that Jud is linked to al-Qaeda, adding one culprit involved in Mumbai attacks is said to have links with Jud," Geo TV said.

Saeed is the founder of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror group that India blames for the Nov 26-29, 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai. The LeT had morphed into the Jud after the Pakistani government banned it under international pressure in the wake of the Dec 13, 2001 attack on the Indian parliament that New Delhi blamed on the terror group.

Ajmal Amir Kasab, the lone gunman captured alive during the Mumbai mayhem, has admitted to being a Pakistani national and to being trained by the LeT for the Mumbai attacks.

Saeed was detained last December after the United Nations declared the Jud as a terrorist group.

He was originally detained for one month and this had been successively extended. On May 5, his detention was extended by 60 days.

After the UN action, the authorities arrested some 40

than a kilometre away for washing and bathing every day," she said. The flood season brings some relief, but severe flooding often brings misery too, she added.

Ambia's father-in-law, Habibur Rahman, 70, who has always been a farmer, said years ago they used to use Ghor canal for transporting their produce to other places including Dhaka, and its water for irrigation.

"Now with the canal dried in most part of the year, we are faced with a severe transport problem, and are also unable to produce winter vegetables," Rahman added.

At Amtoli Bazar, Wahid Ali, 96, of Uttar Amtali said years ago, just after the country's independence, villagers had manually dredged Ghor canal