

Clinton, US journos home safe from NKorea

AFP, California

Bill Clinton and two freed US journalists arrived back safely from North Korea on Wednesday after the former president secured their release on a historic trip to the reclusive state.

Clinton's chartered plane touched down at Burbank, California shortly before 6:00 am local time (1300 GMT), bringing to an end the four-month prison ordeal of TV reporters Laura Ling and Euna Lee.

A mobile stairway carried a "Welcome Home" banner greeting 32-year-old Ling and 36-year-old Lee as hundreds of journalists gathered in a cavernous private hangar at Burbank's Bob Hope Airport.

Ling and Lee, who faced 12 years' hard labor before they were pardoned by North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il, were headed for a reunion with overjoyed family members following Clinton's surprise mission — the highest-level American trip to North Korea in almost a decade.

A senior US official said the journalists were in "very good health" after 140 days in detention.

"We are counting the seconds to hold Laura and Euna in our arms," relatives said in a statement thanking Clinton and the current administration.

"This is one of the happiest days of my life," Laura Ling's father Doug told CNN.

Despite months of high tensions sparked by the North's nuclear and missile tests and United Nations sanctions, Clinton received a warm and well-publicized welcome in Pyongyang Tuesday.

"Leading papers today carry a photo-accompanied report that leader Kim Jong-Il met with

former US President Bill Clinton on a visit to the DPRK (North Korea)," the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

The press also publicized a dinner in Clinton's honor, which according to KCNA "proceeded in a cordial atmosphere."

Striking a markedly positive tone, the agency said Clinton's meetings "reached a consensus of views on seeking a negotiated settlement" of issues dividing the two countries.

TV journalists Ling and Lee were arrested while reporting near North Korea's border with China. They were sentenced in June to 12 years of hard labor for illegal entry and "hostile acts."

Kim agreed to pardon them after Clinton "expressed words of sincere apology" for their "hostile acts," KCNA reported late Tuesday.

After Kim granted his special pardon, Clinton "courteously conveyed a verbal message of US President Barack Obama expressing profound thanks for this and reflecting views on ways of improving the relations between the two countries," the agency said.

Abducted

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from Bandarban Press Club premises to Deputy Commissioner's office building demanding security of all inhabitants living in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Under the banner of 'Sacheton Nagorik Samaj' participants protested the incident of abduction.

They demanded that the government should take immediate measures against armed miscreants involved in anti-state activities.

Land survey in CHT begins next month

Says commission chief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Land Commission has decided to launch a land survey next month, paving the way for resolving land disputes between the local indigenous people and Bangalee settlers in the three hill districts.

Commission Chairman Khademul Islam Chowdhury said this yesterday while addressing the third meeting of the reconstituted CHT Land Commission held at Bandarban Circuit House yesterday.

Earlier on Tuesday, two other meetings of the CHT Land Commission were held in a row in Khagrachari and Rangamati which were the first since Awami League-led coalition came to power.

Completion of the overdue land survey and resolving the land disputes were the two main features of the CHT Peace Accord signed between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) back in 1997.

After a three-day visit to hill districts, the CHT Land Commission chief noted that the overall land management system in CHT is very poor and the total area under government khas lands is yet to be demarcated.

He said government is committed to solve various problems in the hill districts and will soon provide necessary manpower to the Land Commission.

Additional Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong, Nurul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Bandarban, Mizanur Rahman, and representatives of Bomang circle chief and Bandarban Hill District Council were also present in the meeting.

JMB network

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headquarters. Law enforcers detained some foreign criminals and militants recently and are trying to nab the rest, said Tuku adding honest officials can keep law and order stable even with limited logistics support.

He also emphasised that criminals and militants would not dare establish their dominance in areas if law enforcers are trained properly.

Mentioning the incident of shooting a senior lawyer by some unidentified criminals in broad daylight in old Dhaka on Monday, he said the police should never let such things recur.

If police lose their trustworthiness, social peace and harmony will be disturbed, so officials need to carry out their duties in a manner that they can earn people's confidence, he added.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad also addressed the meeting saying police personnel deployed in DMP have to pay more attention to their duties as crimes committed in the metropolis are focused frequently in the print and electronic media that create a sense of insecurity among people as well as tarnish the image of the department.

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque and senior officials, among others, attended the meeting.

6 Bangladeshis

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among the people killed in the accident. The newspaper termed the incident the worst in recent years.

Workers said the fire started around 8:30am in one of the sections of the camp. According to them, nearly 400 workers were in the camp at the time.

The Arab News reported that the fire started due to leakage of a gas cylinder in the kitchen of that part of the camp.

"Most of the deceased were asleep after night-shift duty when the fire engulfed the porta-cabins. The men at worksite found their belongings ruined when they came back during lunch break," said a supervisor of Consolidated Contractors International Company that was tasked to construct a massive gas processing plant in Dhahran for Saudi Aramco.

He said, "Workers at the scene reported that around 15 bodies have been recovered and carried away by ambulances." The workers were shocked by the charred remains of their colleagues as many of those burned beyond recognition, he added.

Civil defence personnel battled the blaze for nearly four hours. The injured were sent to Jubail and Dammam Central Hospitals.

War criminals

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The Canadian lawyer, who dealt cases of Rwanda Genocide and Nazi war criminals, made the remarks during an exclusive interview with The Daily Star on the sidelines while attending the Second International Conference on genocide, truth and justice on July 30-31.

Lauding amendments to the International Crimes Tribunals Act, 1973, David Matas said the principle of the law is very good but the rules of the law must be more specific.

On the act's jurisdiction to try only the perpetrators within the territory of Bangladesh, he said Bangladesh could try the Pakistani perpetrators only if they showed up here.

"But, that is not likely. So, Pakistan should bring the war criminals living in its land to justice. It is Pakistan's responsibility," said David Matas, representative of the International Commission of Jurists.

In the case of Sierra Leone, crimes committed by foreign peacekeepers fall within the primary jurisdiction of the foreign state, he said, adding: "If such a state is unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute the crime against any suspect, the special court may investigate and prosecute the individual provided it has the authority of the Security Council."

The legal expert said as war crimes trial waited too long, memories of many witnesses might have withered away or many accused or witnesses died. But, he said, the women who might have been timid witness as young girls immediately after tortures will be courageous now to witness at their fifties or sixties.

The trial process, however, would be more justice-based than politics-based now because of change in political dimension. But, the trial could create serious public discontent if due process is not maintained, he cautioned.

Interlocutory appeals are a primary cause of delays in international criminal trials, he said, adding: "If each ruling can be appealed and the trial held in abeyance in the meantime, the trial can take forever."

The International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973 provides for right to appeal against conviction and acquittal, but these provisions do not address directly the issue of interlocutory appeals, said the jurist based in Winnipeg, Canada.

The International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia resolved this problem with a rule that interlocutory appeals were impossible with two exceptions — one was motions challenging jurisdiction, while the other was cases where certification has been granted by the trial chamber.

A way to save time could be allowing witnesses to file evidence in court through written statements, rather than requiring witnesses to testify in the open court, David said, suggesting that a robust doctrine of judicial notice to avoid repetition of cases of the same events can also save time.

He said the trial chamber

might decide to take judicial notice of adjudicated facts from other proceedings of the tribunal relating to the matters at issue in the current proceedings. "This is an innovation for international tribunals."

"The prosecution will have to choose strategically. Massive crimes require massive participation. Proceedings all at once with every possible case is likely to be unmanageable," David said, suggesting developing criteria to choose cases.

Besides, the accused directly responsible for grievous actions should be given priority over those who merely aided and abetted, he said.

The legal expert said the International Crimes Tribunal Act 1973 is silent on some issues. For example, he said, cases are being launched in the regular courts about the 1971 genocide, but there is no provision what happens to these cases when the international tribunal gets going. There has to be a decision about it, he noted.

David Matas said though Bangladesh waited for too long for the trial, one of its advantages is that many other international tribunals have already sprung up. "They have accumulated experience from which Bangladesh can learn."

Koko

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petition. But the authorisation letter was authenticated by an unauthorised person in Dhaka, not by any official at the Bangladesh embassy in Thailand, it said.

Lawmaker barrister AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, who attested Koko's signature as his lawyer, has no authority to do so as "Khokon was not present before Koko in the relevant time," reads the application.

Khokon obtained the signature of the assistant secretary (consular) at the foreign affairs ministry in Dhaka on the letter, putting "undue pressure" on the official, it said.

"The government prayed to the HC for conducting an inquiry into the matter and directing the authorities concerned to file a complaint against the persons responsible."

During the hearing of the application, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told the court that Khokon went to Bangkok to meet his client Koko in January this year, but he signed the authorisation letter on August 2.

He said Khokon forced the official in Dhaka to put signature on the letter using his influence as a lawmaker.

Koko's counsel advocate TH Khan told the court that the writ petition was filed on behalf of his client with the court's permission and the court can issue a rule asking the state why the case proceedings should not be quashed.

The HC bench of justices Syed Rezaat Ahmed and Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury fixed Monday for delivering orders on the application and the writ petition.

Local technology

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Hundreds of private volgates however now lift billions of cubic metres of sand every year from the riverbeds of Meghna, Dhaleshwari and Buriganga rivers. The large amount of sand extracted there feed the thriving construction sector as well as projects surrounding the metropolis.

Professor Khabirul Haque Chowdhury, head of planning, Department of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering of BUET, said that the government should immediately involve the country's dockyards, and institutions such as BUET, to develop local technology for river dredging.

"With our experts it will not be difficult to convert existing volgates into dredgers and thus save a huge amount of money," said Chowdhury. According to an official source, in August 2008 BIWTA formed a four-member committee to explore possibilities of dredging the rivers by private entrepreneurs. The committee, comprised of experts from the BIWTA and Water Development Board revealed that dredging of all rivers and canals could be completed almost free of cost under some strict guidelines.

The committee formulated a set of policy guidelines for the dredging operations and

sent it to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) for further evaluations. IUCN is yet to offer its opinion on the subject.

Meanwhile, the government recently unveiled plans to import 17 dredgers to dredge the country's major rivers and canals and protect those. In another move, BIWTA has floated an international tender to procure three 'top-of-the-shelf' dredgers and other equipment at a cost of around Tk 200 crore.

Moreover, BIWTA is also seeking a fund of about Tk 1,000 crore for a mega-project to keep the country's river system flowing.

Abdul Amin Howlader, owner of Hasan Volgate and Dredging, who has been running sand lifting business for ten years, said with minor modifications his volgates could dredge any river or canal scientifically.

"We are keeping many of the country's rivers flowing by extracting sand from them," he said adding that the government could earn crores of taka by selling sand from the riverbeds.

"We just need to slightly modify our technology and listen to experts in order to complete the job as efficiently as a conventional dredger," Howlader said.

UN to contact Musharraf in Benazir murder probe

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan said Wednesday that the UN commission probing the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto intended to contact ex-president Pervez Musharraf.

The commission, which began its first working visit to Islamabad in July, is headed by Chilean ambassador to the United Nations Heraldo Munoz and includes an Indonesian ex-attorney general and an Irish former police official.

"We have got signals that the commission intends to contact General Musharraf directly," foreign ministry spokesman Abdul Basit told reporters in the port city of Karachi.

Bhutto, the first woman to become prime minister of a Muslim country, was killed in late December 2007 in a gun and suicide attack after addressing an election rally in Rawalpindi, a garrison city near the capital Islamabad.

Rid's fatal syrup

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directive, Rid's syrup is still available and Rani's case is just a tragic manifestation of this fact.

Rani's parents said they bought it on July 26 as per the prescription of village doctor Syedur Rahman and that Rani stopped urinating and defecating after receiving three doses of the syrup.

Prior to admitting Rani to RMCH, her parents took her to Islami Community Hospital in Rangpur. Dr Sadequul Islam of the hospital told The Daily Star, "Her parents brought the syrup along with them when they met me at my Sayedpur chamber. I saw that it was manufactured by Rid Pharma."

Head of the child ward of RMCH Prof Nurul Absar said Rani needed dialysis, a service not available in RMCH and she needs to be transferred to BSMMU.

Following the deaths of 25 children in quick succession — all due to renal failures — the government on July 21 formed a seven-member probe committee, which found poisonous substances in the syrup.

Diethylene glycol, a compound used in battery and tanneries, was used in the syrup instead of Propylene Glycol.

Even though Health Minister Prof AFM Ruhul Haque said legal actions would be taken against the company, the Drug Administration is yet to file any case against Rid Pharma.

Tagore's

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Tagore dominates the Bangla literary scene with copiousness of works: over 10,000 poems, nearly two dozen plays and play-lets, 12 novels, over 100 short stories, more than 6,000 songs and a mass of prose works on literary, social, religious, political, and other topics.

Add to these his English translations, paintings, travels and lecture-tours in Asia, America, and Europe; and his activities as an educationist, as a social and religious reformer, and as a politician.

Different government and non-government cultural organisations have chalked out special programmes to mark the occasion.

After having won world-fame with the mystical-devotional poetry of the Gitanjali, he dug over much along that particular seam — a one-sided impression of his works. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1913.

Born to a wealthy land-owning family of Bengal, Rabindranath was initiated into art fairly late in his life and painted close to 2,500 paintings.

In 1930, through a series of exhibitions in Paris, London, Berlin, Moscow and New York, the world discovered the poet as an important modern painter.

Politically active in India, he was a supporter of Gandhi, but warned of the dangers of nationalism thought.

Unable to gain ideological support to his views, he retired into relative solitude.

Between 1916 and 1934, he travelled widely, attempting to spread the ideal of uniting the East and the West.

Only hours before his death on August 6, 1941 (Srabon 22 in Bangla calendar), the poet dictated his last poem.

Sri Lanka resettles displaced Tamils

AFP, Vavuniya

Sri Lanka yesterday allowed 1,100 people displaced during the recently-ended ethnic conflict with the Tamil Tigers to return home, in the first phase of an ambitious relocation plan.

At a colourful ceremony, senior presidential advisor Basil Rajapakse presented gift packs of food to the group and pledged to resettle more people in the coming weeks.

Men, women and children, clutching their few belongings in canvas bags, boarded buses to return to Jaffna, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Ampara.

They had been housed in state-run camps in the northern district of Vavuniya, 260 kilometres

north of Colombo.

Wednesday's batch of relocations was the first in the government's efforts to resettle by the end of the year at least 80 percent of the 300,000 displaced people.

Tens of thousands of those who fled the war zone are housed in tightly-guarded camps to which international observers and aid agencies have not been given free access.

The United Nations and western governments have urged Sri Lanka to allow people to return to their homes quickly.

The government said it would allow resettlement once minefields were cleared and the refugees had been screened to weed out Tamil Tiger fighters.

JMB planned

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brought in to execute the plan of foiling the ninth national election that was eventually held peacefully on December 29 last year.

The Indians left Bangladesh in the beginning of February as the plan did not work, Mizan claims.

Mizan said they had realised that the polls would be cancelled if they could kill any of the two top national leaders — Sheikh Hasina, now prime minister, or Khaleda Zia, leader of the opposition.

So they had chalked out their plan in accordance with their idea, he said.

They had also planned to kill any of the high-profile candidates of the elections in northern region as part of their master plan, he revealed.

Mizan said they had chosen the North as they believe they have more organisational strength in that region.

But all the killing plans failed as two significant members — Hanif and Russell — were arrested before the elections.

Mizan told the investigators they had also planned to assassinate Hasina in the beginning of the caretaker rule but failed.

He said in another attempt JMB member Sa'ad was assigned to kill Hasina in her grand election rally at Paltan Maidan. Mizan said Sa'ad went to the venue with a grenade but does not know why the latter failed to execute the plan.

Asked how far Mizan's statement is correct, the Rab investigator told The Daily Star, "We had information that Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia might come under attack at their grand election rallies at Paltan. That's why the authorities provided them with bullet-proof lecture stand to ensure their security."

Hasina delivered her speech at the election rally standing inside the bulletproof lecture stand, though Khaleda did not use it for her rally.

Mizan also told the investigators JMB had formed a team led by Shahed to kill Khaleda, but the plan also did not work.

One month before his (Mizan's) arrest Shahed left Bangladesh for Swat in Pakistan to embrace martyrdom through fighting for the militants there, he said.

He further said the arrest of an eh-sar (full-time member) Mohammad Hanif alias Kamal and Zubayer alias Russell before the elections forced them to scrap their plans.

Rab arrested Hanif in mid-November in Mirpur and seized 70kg explosives following his confession soon after the arrest. Russell, JMB's Majlish-e-Sura member, was arrested in Chapainawabganj.

Despite the change of plan, JMB tried to attack Khaleda in Chandina in Comilla on December 23, just five days before the polls. Mizan said this plan failed due to some technical mistakes.

Rab sources say they foiled the plan to attack Khaleda in Chandina as they arrested a few JMB men and recovered grenades from that area at the night of December 23.

Mizan said they had manufactured the improvised grenades to attack top leaders in their election rallies.

He said he fled to India after the crackdown on JMB following the countryside simultaneous blasts on August 17, 2005 and was called back to manufacture explosives and train up some members.

Mizan also said during his stay in India he used to live in a village in Karimpur in Nadia district. There was a group of 20-25 Indians who were members of JMB. But later all of them left the outfit and joined Indian National League (INL), a Muslim-based political party.

He said in the Vidhan Sabha

(Legislative Assembly) election in 2008 JMB leaders forbade their Indian members to cast their votes, but they denied the directive and defected to avoid the risks of involvement with an underground outfit.

Eight to 10 more Indian JMB members also joined INL in Lalgola in Murshidabad, according to Mizan's statement to the investigators. He also disclosed that now there are around a dozen members active in India.

He said JMB members in India used to hold weekly and monthly meetings to prepare themselves, as soldiers of the outfit and come to Bangladesh to discharge their duties.

Mizan claims there was no involvement of any Indian JMB members in any terror attacks launched by the outfit in Bangladesh.

He said only one Indian named Al Amin presently stays in Dhaka along with local JMB member Zahid, who manufactures improvised grenades in Dholakhal.

Al Amin married a Bangladeshi woman, he said.

Khaleda, son

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The other charge sheeted accused are former BNP lawmaker Kazi Salimul Haque, Khaleda's nephew Mominur Rahman, Sharfuddin Ahmed, and former principal secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui.

Deputy Assistant Director of ACC Harunur Rashid, also the investigation officer (IO) of the embezzlement case submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court yesterday afternoon showing 36 prosecution witnesses.

The IO included Kamal Siddiqui's name in the charge sheet as evidence of his involvement was found while names of Syed Ahmed alias Sayeed Ahmed and Gias Uddin Ahmed were dropped as they were in London at that time.

He appealed to the court for issuance of arrest warrants against Kamal Siddiqui and Mominur and an order to attach their properties as they have been absconding.

On July 3 last year, the ACC filed the case with Ramna Police Station accusing Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman and five others.

Khaleda is also accused in Gatco, Niko and Barapukuria graft cases while Tarique in 15 other cases.

Of the accused, Khaleda, Tarique, Salimul and Sharfuddin were earlier granted bails from the High Court on different dates.

The higher courts had stayed the proceedings of all the three cases against Khaleda and Tarique following writ petitions.

Sources said the anti-corruption drive ceased last year for ensuring participation of all parties in December 29 general elections. A huge number of corruption cases piled up in the High Court due to stay over proceedings of the cases.

CASE STATEMENTS According to the case statement, then prime minister Khaleda Zia and the other accused embezzled over Tk 2.10 crore by establishing Zia Orphanage Trust that exists only on paper.

The complainant alleged that on June 9, 1991, a grant of \$1,255,000, equivalent to about Tk 4.45 crore at the time, was transferred from United Saudi Commercial Bank to Prime Minister's Orphanage Fund — a fund that was created by the then premier shortly before the transfer — as a part of the embezzlement scheme. Only Khaleda could administer the fund.

Thailand, Cambodia resume talks

AFP, Bangkok

Government ministers from Cambodia and Thailand resumed official talks for the first time in three years yesterday after months of fractious relations over a border territory dispute.

Cambodian foreign minister Hor Namhong and his Thai counterpart Kasit Piromya met at a Bangkok hotel to discuss the spat and deeper economic ties.

Violent clashes near the ancient 11th century Preah Vihear have left seven soldiers dead since July 2008 when the temple was granted UN World Heritage status.

Cambodia and Thailand have been at loggerheads over the Khmer ruins for decades. Although the World Court ruled in 1962 that the temple belonged to Cambodia, its most accessible entrance is in northeastern Thailand.