

Grenade attack

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over the bail orders. The prosecution will file appeals within a short time with the higher court against the bail orders.

Advocate Syed Rezaur Rahman, chief state counsel, told The Daily Star that every court has a discretionary jurisdiction to grant bail to any accused. But the August 21 grenade attack cases are very sensational ones. Earlier, the same court recorded statements of 61 prosecution witnesses. Moreover, these two accused gave confessional statements admitting their involvement with the incidents. So, the court should not grant bails to the accused at this stage.

"I shall go to the higher court against the orders after getting certified copies of the orders," he said.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor advocate Mohammad Abdullah Abu also told The Daily Star that the trial court should not grant bail to the accused considering the depth of the offences brought against them.

Advocate Masud Ahmed Talukder said the cases are very much sensational and the court should not grant bails to the accused at this stage of trial even though the court has discretionary jurisdiction to grant bail to any accused.

On condition of anonymity, a litigant said no accused should be detained in jail custody if the accused in the grenade attack cases get out on bail.

During the hearing on the bail petitions, Sumon's lawyer advocate Aminul Goni Titu argued that his client's name was not in the first information report (FIR) and that he did not implicate himself even though he had given confessional statement.

Mohibullah's lawyer told the court that his client, whose name was also not in the FIR, was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy.

The prosecution opposed the bail petitions, saying the two along with six others, including Huji chief Mufti Hannan, had confessed to their involvement with the grenade attack.

After the hearing, the

judge granted bails to Mohibullah and Sumon and rejected the bail petitions of detained former deputy minister and BNP leader Abdus Salam Pintu and four others.

Details of the court orders could not be known immediately.

The same court on August 3 ordered further investigation into the cases after the prosecution submitted petitions on June 25 this year.

BACKGROUND

Even though the then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina escaped injuries, the attack left 24 Awami League leaders, including President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, dead and 300 others injured.

A day after the grenade attack, police filed two case-one for murder and another under the Explosive Substances Act--with Motijheel Police Station.

Before submission of the charge sheets, the nation witnessed drama during the rule of the BNP-Jamaat government centring investigation into the grisly attack.

Three former CID investigation officers are now facing charges for misdirecting the investigations.

The charge sheet, accusing 22, was submitted before the court last year but the investigators could not find out the sources of the grenades used in the attack.

CONFESSION

In his confessional statement, Sumon said he attended the meeting arranged in Kajol's house at Merul Badda on August 20, 2004 to plan the attack.

He said he heard every detail of the attack preparations.

After Fazr prayer on August 21, Sumon left for the rally on Bangabandhu Avenue with two grenades, he said in his statement.

CID investigation officer ASP Fazlul Kabir in the charge sheet quoted the confessional statement of Suman.

"Mohibullah in his confessional statement said he was present when the plan to carry out the grenade attack was made on August 20. He said Mufti Abdul Hannan, Maulana Abu Sayeed, Maulana Abu Jandal, Jahangir Alam, Masud, Iqbal, Babu and Bulbul also attended the meeting.

Water supply

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setting up of Gazi tanks at bustling points for a free drinking water supply, said Shahjahan Ali.

Besides, tanker lorries would be pressed into service to supply water to areas of the city according to the demand, he added.

Nurul Haque, chief executive officer of Dhaka City Corporation, who chaired the meeting, said the DCC will provide WASA with every possible help necessary for water supply.

DCC's own tanker lorries would also be ready for supplying water whenever necessary, he said.

WASA, Khulna WASA, Rajshahi City Corporation, Sylhet City Corporation and Barisal City Corporation high-ups claimed to have their preparations complete for uninterrupted supply of water during Ramadan.

Sources said, Dhaka WASA can supply 190 to 197 crore litre water against the city's demand of 210 crore litre.

Khaleda, Tarique

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appear before the court. The lawyers replied their clients were earlier granted bails from the HC for the next six months.

But the accused must appear before it on the scheduled date, even though they were on bail from the higher courts, the judges said.

Later, Khaleda's lawyers submitted another petition seeking adjournment of the hearing. In the petition, they mentioned that their client could not appear before it on security grounds and appealed to the court to ensure her security on her way to the court.

The lawyers also said Tarique had earlier gone abroad for his treatment and he was earlier granted bail in the case.

The court then fixed August 30 for hearing on the petition regarding Khaleda's security. Salimul was also granted bail in the case, but there was no step taken on his behalf.

On August 5, deputy assistant director of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Harunur Rashid, also the investigation officer of the embezzlement case, submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court showing 36 prosecution witnesses.

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 part of the embezzlement scheme.

2 more end

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The paracetamol syrup that was given to Tofayel was manufactured on June, 2009 and batch number-8 was mentioned on the bottle," Prof Hanif told The Daily Star, adding that Sinthia of Monohardi, Narsingdi was also admitted to the hospital Monday with renal failure and she too was given Temset, of batch number-5 manufactured in May, 2009.

Sinthia's grandfather, who is a village doctor, collected the medicine two weeks ago when Sinthia was suffering from fever.

"We did not know anything about the government's order to withdraw all Rid's drugs since we neither have a television set nor subscribe to any newspaper," said Runa Akhter, mother of Sinthia.

"This means drugs of Rid Pharma Ltd are still available in the market, especially in rural areas. If the Drug Administration could follow the tracks of the company and find out where they sold their drugs, it might work," said Prof Hanif.

However, the director of the Drug Administration refuted the claim that Rid's drugs are available in the market.

"It is not true as our district superintendents collected all Rid's products from the market and they are still visiting pharmacies looking for these banned items. The Drug Administration has taken every possible step to stop the sale of this spurious drug," he added.

Last week 10-month-old Rani of Syedpur under Pirgachha of Rangpur died of renal failure after she was given the poisonous drug. Her father bought it from a village market on July 26.

In the last one and a half months 26 children died of renal failure, most of them had taken Rid's paracetamol.

Kibria murder case

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Kibria, his nephew advocate Shah Manzurul Huda, local Awami League (AL) leaders Abdur Rahim, Abul Hossain and Siddique Ali were killed in a grenade attack on a public meeting at Baiderbazar of Habiganj Sadar Upazila on January 27, 2005. Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) of CID Munshi Atique submitted charge sheet in the case on March 20 that year accusing ten persons.

Chief of Vice President of Habiganj district BNP Abdul Quaiyum was made the principal accused in the case while Zainal Abedin, Jamir Ali, Momin Ali, Tajul Islam, Shahed Ali, Chhondur Miah, Selim Ahmed, Enayet Ali and Muhibur Rahman were also accused. Among them eight including Quaiyum were released on bail after more than 3 years in jail.

On getting bail Quaiyum and other accused at a press conference in the capital demanded fresh investigation and claimed they had been implicated by some very

influential quarters. The CID official had done so just to save the powerful masterminds, they alleged.

But Kibria's wife Asma Kibria and his son Dr Reza Kibria rejected the charge sheet filed in the case. They also demanded fresh investigation. Asma Kibria on January 19, 2007 through a petition to the then Chief Adviser of the caretaker government demanded proper investigation and trial in the case.

Mentionable, the latest Investigation Officer of the case ASP Md Rafiqul Islam of CID, after the retirement of senior ASP Munshi Atique Rahman, took five Harkatul Jihad (Huji) men to remand in December last year. He said Huji chief Mufti Abdul Hannan, his brother Mofizur Rahman alias Ovi, Sharif Shahedul Alam Bipul, Delwar Hossain Ripon, Badrul Alam Mizan, Hafez Nayeem and others would be made accused in the supplementary charge sheet. But it remained hanging.

Fair election

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"Polls under an elected government can also be peaceful if it wants, but elections under political governments, especially before that of 1991, were not very peaceful," he said at the inaugural session of a workshop on 'Ninth parliamentary election—a critical appraisal' at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The Election Commission (EC) in coordination with UNDP organised the workshop. Stating that the EC held free, fair and peaceful elections in 2008, the CEC said, "Still, we are not satisfied. There is no alternative to improving performance to make polls fair and peaceful."

The EC wants more institutional reforms to make the election process foolproof to ensure security to voters and institutionalise democratic practices.

Addressing the inaugural session he said the 2008 parliamentary elections were not only free and fair but also drew the highest turnout of voters including the marginalised, the disabled and women and witnessed no post-polls violence.

The EC is independent in discharging its duty as it was during the caretaker govern-

ment, Shamsul Huda said adding that it has taken initiative to amend the Representation of People Order (RPO) and would hold dialogues with the political parties.

It would set up 502 upazila server stations to link with district, divisional and central servers so that voters get their national ID card conveniently, he noted.

"We want to provide more service to people through our database. For instance, sharing information with the passport department or other agencies for VGF or elderly allowances," said the CEC.

Terming the 2008 polls historic, UN Resident Representative Renata Dessallens said it was peaceful, free and fair with high turnout because of people's confidence in it.

"The EC is now going through a new phase," Renata said, adding that organising the workshop on review of the reforms reflects the EC's sincerity.

EC Additional Secretary Rafiqul Islam, Election Commissioners Brig Gen (retd) Sakhawat Hossain and Sohul Hossain were present at the workshop chaired by Secretary Humayun Kabir.

Unusual BDR death

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might not be able to deal with such a sensitive matter while being headed by a deputy secretary.

The government formed the committee on May 14 for an executive inquiry into the rising number of BDR jawans' deaths in custody, following growing concerns and criticisms from human rights organisations at home and abroad.

The committee was asked to identify the reasons behind the custodial deaths and to recommend steps for preventing it. It was also asked to complete the investigation and submit a report in 15 days.

Deputy Home Secretary Zakir Hossain was made the chief of the committee, which also included a representative from the police and another from BDR. A doctor was later added to the committee after Zakir had told the ministry that he would not be able to carry out the inquiry without a medical expert.

After the committee had missed the first deadline of June 4, the ministry allowed it 15 more days to complete the inquiry, but it missed the second deadline too and was given a month's extension.

But then it missed the third deadline of July 26 as well, prompting the home ministry on July 29 to allow one more month for completing the inquiry and submitting the report.

"It's a very weak committee, too weak to initiate any inquiry into the unnatural deaths," a senior home ministry official told The Daily Star.

Saidee

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Manik Poshari in the case said Saidee and four other accused along with Pakistani army men stormed into their house at about 3:00pm on May 8, 1971 and the accused persons not finding them looted their house and set it on fire. They also handed over their caretaker Ibrahim to the Pakistani army to kill him.

Later the Pakistani army personnel led by Jamaat leader Saidee shot Ibrahim dead at Parerhat Bandar.

Janmastami

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Krishna in the prison of Raja Kangsa on the eighth day of "Shukla Pakka" (bright fortnight) in the month of Bhadra in Dwapara Yug in order to protect "Dharma" from the clutches of devils.

As part of the central programme, Mahanagar Sarbojanin Puja Committee has taken up a two-day programme. On the first day of the programme 'Geeta Yagya' will be held at Dhakeswari Mandir at 9:00am today.

Shankar Math of Sitakunda, Chittagong, will conduct the Geeta Yagya. Special prayer will also be offered seeking welfare, peace and progress of the country.

The traditional and colourful Janmastami procession will be brought out from Dhakaswari National Temple at 4:00pm. Mayor of Dhaka Sadek Hossain Khoka will inaugurate the procession while sector commander Major General CR Dutta (retd) Bir Uttam will be the chief guest. Local MP Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin will attend as special guest.

On the second day, a discussion will be held at 6:00pm to be attended by Law Minister Shafique Ahmed as the chief guest while State Minister for Religious Affairs Shajahan Mia, State Minister for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Advocate Quamrul Islam and State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promote Mankin as special guests.

President Zillur Rahman will host a reception for distinguished members of the Hindu community marking the day.

The government has declared the day as a public holiday on the occasion of Janmastami. National dailies will publish special stories on works and ideals of Lord Krishna while Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will put up special programmes highlighting significance of the day.

Like previous years a buzzing Janmastami will be celebrated in port city Chittagong through a four-day programmes. The programmes of the Janmastami Udayan Parishad begins today.

Tremor jolts

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report of damage although panic stricken people came out of their houses as the tremor shook their residences. The tremor hit around 4:43:45am, Mohammad Shah Alam, deputy director of Bangladesh Meteorological Department told The Daily Star.

The epicentre of the tremor was near the Myanmar-India border area, he added.

Our Rajshahi correspondent said many people came out from their residences in fear of further jolts.

People of Nature and different areas in Rajshahi city said their houses were rattled for three or four seconds around 4.45am.

"I was sleeping and woke up feeling a tremor, and went outside with my parents," said Zakirul Islam, a young resident of Mirzapur in the city.

The Met Office on Tuesday withdrew the tsunami alert it had issued in the early hours of the day following an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter scale off the Andaman Islands.

It said Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and the southern region felt the quake at 2:55:42am Bangladesh time for a few seconds. It had its epicentre 980 kilometres south-southeast of the Met Office in Dhaka.

The tsunami alert had been issued around 4:00am, and was withdrawn around 6:40am.

Govt firm

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The prime minister directed the shipping minister to devise ways to modernise all river ports. She also underscored the need for developing the river ports' landing stations and signaling system for safe movement of watercraft, especially at night.

She said her government will build a deep seaport and modernise Chittagong and Mongla seaports.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan chaired the programme while acting secretary of the ministry Mohammad Masud Elahi and BIWTA Chairman M Abdul Mannan Hawlader also spoke.

Earlier, a documentary film on the country's water-transport system was showed. A colourful rally, led by the minister, was brought out from BIWTA's Motijheel head office to the Jatiya Press Club.

Putin promises military backing for Abkhazia

AFP, Sukhumi, Georgia

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin pledged Russia's military backing for Abkhazia in any new conflict with Georgia, as he visited the rebel Georgian region yesterday for the first time since Moscow recognised its independence.

Putin's visit was the latest sign of Russian commitment to the lush mountainous region on the Black Sea coast, whose status remains a major bone of contention between Moscow and the West.

It was his first trip to the region of 250,000 since Russia recognised Abkhazia and fellow breakaway Georgian region of South Ossetia as independent following the five-day war with Georgia which started on August 7 last year.

Georgia, which insists that Abkhazia and another rebel region South Ossetia are an integral part of its territory, angrily denounced the visit as a provocation and accused Moscow of increasing tensions in the Caucasus region.

"Russia is showing and will show economic, political and, if necessary, military support to Abkhazia," Putin said at a news conference after talks with rebel leader Sergei Bagapsh in the rebel capital Sukhumi.

"There will not be a return to the previous situation" of before the 2008 war when Abkhaz independence was not recognised by Russia, he added.

He also urged the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) must recognise Abkhazia's independence if their monitors were to be sent there.

"Abkhazia and Russia do not oppose foreign observers from various organisations, including the UN and the OSCE. But this must be based on reality."

"Corresponding agreements must be made with Abkhazia, having recognized its sovereignty," he said.

UN and OSCE monitors have withdrawn from Georgia's conflict zones after Russia vetoed extending their mandates.

Russia caused an outcry from the West when it recognised pro-Moscow Abkhazia as independent after the August war with Georgia. Only distant Nicaragua has so far followed the Kremlin's move in recognising South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In an interview with Abkhaz media before his visit, Putin announced that Russia was planning a half-billion dollar package to boost its security presence in the region amid continued tensions.

"Russia will deploy forces in Abkhazia. We will build a modern border-guard system... All these measures are additional serious security guarantees for Abkhazia and South Ossetia," Putin said.

"All this will cost about 15-16 billion rubles" (463 million dollars/328 million euros, he added.

Clinic

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demanding Tk 50,000 for the occasion.

However, the local Awami League activists present at the scene told reporters that the aggressors did not belong to the ruling party.

Police said no case was lodged in this connection.

In another incident on Tuesday, local leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League snatched tender schedule from contractors at LGED office in Manikganj.

Failing to drop the tender against resistance from the BCL activists, Dyan Khan, a representative of Air Engineering Service, registered a first information report (FIR) with Manikganj Sadar Police Station.

According to the FIR, Dyan Khan and project manager of their firm Nazrul Islam Khan went to the LGED office in Bewtha around 1:35pm dropping the tender in the tender box there. Anjan and two to three others took them to a room and confined them there. Later they snatched the tender schedule and told them to leave threatening of dire consequences if they dropped the tender and went to the police, said the FIR.

Dyan said they submitted written allegation to the LGED office in this regard.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Azizul Haque of Manikganj Police Station said the LGED office did not inform them about the tender dropping or any problem.

Recently BCL activists abducted and mercilessly beat a contractor from the Manikganj Municipality where he went to drop tender papers.

He later said that Russia would spend 10.9 billion rubles (350 million dollars) in 2010-2011 for the economic development in Abkhazia.

Donning a white coat, Putin was earlier shown round a maternity ward Bagapsh, where two male twins had been born minutes before his arrival.

In honour of Putin and President Dmitry Medvedev, the pair were named Vladimir and Dmitry.

Sukhumi lies just south of the Russian city of Sochi which is to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in a major event for Russia's prestige. Moscow is keen to prove the region's stability to the world ahead of the Games.

The Georgian foreign ministry called the visit "a provocation carried out quite in the tradition of Soviet special services," in apparent reference to Putin's past in the KGB.

The visit is "yet another attempt to destabilise the situation and escalate tension in the Caucasus region," the ministry said in a statement.

Georgian MP Giorgi Kandelaki, deputy chairman of foreign affairs committee, said the visit "represents an illegal crossing of Georgia's borders, which is a crime."

Putin said he could not rule out another conflict in the tense Caucasus region as long as Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, Moscow's arch foe, remained in power.

"Given today's Georgian leadership it is impossible to exclude anything," he told Abkhaz media.

The region was known as a prime holiday destination for Russians and people from other former Soviet republics. But Abkhazia's 1992-1993 battle for independence from Georgia reduced the economy to ruins.

Mumbai

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Kerala on Tuesday becoming the state's first victim.

So far, the flu has claimed one each in Ahmedabad, Vadodra, Thane, Chennai and Thiruvananthapuram, two in Mumbai, and ten in Pune—a total of 17 lives.

With the infection spreading fast, Maharashtra government ordered closure of all schools, colleges and coaching institutes in state's capital Mumbai for a week and theatres and multiplexes for three days from today.

Chief Minister Ashok Chavan told the closure of educational institutions was not aimed to create panic but as a "precautionary measure to check further growth of the disease."

He claimed the situation was "definitely under control."

The Maharashtra government is worried as some popular religious festivals are knocking the door, which naturally marks up large turnout of people on the streets and become vulnerable to air-borne swine flu virus.

Maharashtra's opposition Shiv Sena and ruling Nationalist Congress Party, which shares power with Congress Party, appealed to the people to observe cultural programmes on a low key to check the virus from spreading.

Police fail

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time to determine the age of the victim and gather other evidence of the rape. Rafiqul Alam, Faridpur assistant superintendent of police (circle), visited the Charvadra on Thursday.

Advocate Rakibul Biswas and Zahid Hasan Khokon, the lawyers of the victim, yesterday alleged that an influential group on behalf of the rapists had offered them to settle the issue out of the court but they refused it.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the victim said four young men raped her by turn and captured the scene using cell phone set. She recognised only two of them as Kalam Khan and Tusher Khan.

However, she said she would be able to recognise two others by the face.

The girl, who is now under the protection of police added, after the incident the rapists threatened her of killing her parents if she disclosed the incident to anyone.

The frightened girl did not report the incident to anyone but when someone informed her about the footages, she had to reveal the incident to her parents.

Meanwhile, different social organisations including Bangladesh Mohila Parishad, Bangladesh Legal Aid Services and Trust, Faridpur unit inquired about the incident and demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the culprits.