

200 to face trial for China riot

AP, Beijing

More than 200 people are expected to go on trial this week for their involvement in sectarian riots last month that killed nearly 200 people in China's eastern region of Xinjiang, a state-run newspaper reported yesterday.

The trials will take place in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang and the site of China's worst ethnic violence in decades, in which another 1,700 people were injured, the China Daily reported. The rioting pitted indigenous Turkic-speaking Muslim Uighurs against members of China's dominant Han ethnic group who have migrated to the region in large numbers over recent decades.

Tensions in the city remain high with security forces keeping a wary eye out for renewed violence.

China Daily said security will be further boosted around the time of the trials to prevent revenge attacks or assaults by Uighur radicals that Beijing blames for carrying out a low-level insurgency against Chinese rule in the region.

Officials have offered little direct information about the investigation into the riots that broke out July 5 after police stopped an initially peaceful protest by Uighur youths. Uighurs then smashed windows, burned cars and attacked Han. Two days later, the Han took to the streets and staged retaliatory attacks.

Details about the resulting crackdown have filtered out mainly through the official media, which has offered fractured and sometimes contradictory information about numbers of arrests and preparations for trials.

An official reached at the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court on Monday confirmed the court would be handling cases related to the riots, but said he had not known when they would go to trial. The official, who works in the court's political section, gave only his surname, Ren, as is common among Chinese officials.

Authorities have repeatedly accused exiled Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer of fomenting the violence, but have offered little proof to back up their claims.

The accusation has been

denied by Kadeer, and in a recent interview with the magazine Foreign Policy, the 62-year-old US-based activist said China was setting her up as a scapegoat. While saying she opposed the violence, Kadeer said the riot was an outgrowth of pent-up anger among Uighurs, many of whom believe Chinese policies are diluting their culture and marginalizing them economically.

"Instead of blaming me for everything, (the Chinese authorities) should just stop suppressing and stop killing people," said Kadeer, a former businesswoman who served six years in a Chinese prison on charges of endangering state security before going into exile in the US in 2005.

China Daily last week reported that more than 3,300 items of physical evidence had been collected in the investigation into last month's violence, including bricks and clubs stained with blood. The evidence also includes 91 video clips and 2,169 photographs, it said.

A total of 197 people were killed in the riot, most of them believed to be Han Chinese.

Most of the arrests of riot suspects were made in Urumqi and Kashgar, a city in southern Xinjiang with a heavy concentration of Uighur people, the newspaper quoted an unidentified Urumqi prosecutor as saying.

The charges range from vandalizing public property to murder, the China Daily said.

Although security in Urumqi is already high, "a drastic increase in security is expected in the whole city," the newspaper said, especially around the Urumqi Intermediate People's Court. Armed police are already conducting around-the-clock patrols in the area.

The newspaper did not give a breakdown on how many Uighurs and how many Han would go on trial, but it said more than 170 Uighur and 20 Han lawyers had been assigned to the suspects.

The China Daily said 718 people had been detained on suspicion of taking part in the rioting. Earlier reports said at least 1,600 were detained. It wasn't clear whether any had been released.

PM asks to stop

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transport authorities are struggling to ease traffic congestion.

Despite their special measures against illegal parking and unfit vehicles, the city traffic continues to be at its worst.

Even the prime minister's motorcade got stuck in tailback on Sunday, causing her to be late for office.

Hasina also directed the government, semi-government and autonomous organisations to use energy-saving lights, set up solar panels and reduce use of air conditioners for electricity consumption.

She urged the businessmen not to compound public sufferings by raising prices of essentials during Ramadan, sources told The Daily Star.

Observing that vehicles must be parked in specified places, Hasina said the government will construct two car parks in the city's commercial district Motijheel.

The prime minister nodded positively to Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan's proposal for constructing multi-storey car parks in the capital.

Ordering relocation of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority headquarters to Narayanganj, she said some more offices and institutions would be moved to nearby districts to reduce stress on Dhaka city, the sources added.

The cabinet approved a proposal on the use of solar power, energy-saving lights and other electricity-saving programmes over the next three years.

Hasina directed the ministers, state ministers and top civil servants to wear half-shirts instead of formal dresses at work from March to November to help reduce the use of ACs.

She also asked people to keep their ACs switched-off for at least an hour every day and not to take those below 24 degree Celsius. She also urged everyone to use maximum daylight at workplaces to save power.

The prime minister said the government will incorporate in the building code a provision for solar panels. It will also help manufacturers to produce low-cost Compact Fluorescent

Light (CFL).

The cabinet decided to sell houses to wounded freedom fighters and the families of their martyred fellows at the price fixed by the government in 1972, prime minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad told reporters.

He said 154 abandoned houses have already been allocated.

The meeting also decided to permit privately-owned duty-free shops at airports, seaports and land ports.

Besides, the cabinet approved a climate change trustee fund policy and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (Amendment) Bill 2009.

Rowdy protest

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"We had no other way but to delay the flight as the Airbus became grounded due to technical reasons," Abdul Mamud Khan, general manager, Flight Operations (Central Control) of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Limited, said.

Earlier on Sunday, the national flag carrier also cancelled two flights bound for Rome and Hong Kong due to the same reason.

"I came at the airport early in the morning and was waiting for the flight. We were waiting several hours but there was no sign of flying. Even no Biman officials came to inform us about the flight," a passenger of the flight said.

"At one stage some Biman officials told us that the plane will leave at 10:00pm and took us to the hotels," said a passenger.

A Biman official admitted that migrant workers seemed much worried due to flight delay as they feared to lose their jobs for failing to reach Abu Dhabi in time.

"We sympathise with the passengers for their suffering," said Mamud adding, "The department concerned of Biman has already taken measures to reduce sufferings of passengers."

Out of five Biman aircraft used on international routes, only three were in operation while the rest grounded due to technical glitches, Biman sources said.

Food tender

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place at the end of dropping the tender schedules and it was out of the office building.

Sources said the last date of dropping tenders for repairing of food godowns under Dhaka Division was yesterday. The work was worth Tk 2.70 crore.

But the cadres hired by some contractors, who belong to Jubo League and Chhatra League, took position in the office area since yesterday morning so that others could not submit the schedules.

Witnesses said when the contractors who do not belong to their group went to drop the schedules, the cadres swooped on them around 12:30pm and snatched their schedules by beating them.

At one stage, the contractors left the area failing to drop their schedules.

Talking to The Daily Star, Pius Costa, director general of Food, admitted that a scuffle took place between two groups.

"They locked in the scuffle on Abdul Gani Road, which is out of the building premises", the DG said adding, "One of the contractors informed me over phone that his tender schedules were snatched and torn up. But no one lodged any written complaint."

Asked, the DG said a huge number of schedules were dropped and the box would be opened today.

Andaman

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Tareque said that after having permission from Indian government, they were brought to Kolkata from Port Blair, the capital of Andaman Islands, last Thursday. They reached Kolkata on Sunday.

First Secretary of Bangladesh mission at Kolkata, Md Abul Hasan Mridha accompanied them.

They had an arrangement for primary check up and treatment by the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society and International Committee of the Red Cross at Benapole check post.

They were sent to Cox's Bazar via Dhaka under special arrangements.

The victim Kabir Uddin, of Teknaf, said they were around 500 people and 305 of them starved to death.

"We survived on little food that Thai navy left us with," he added.

Returnees Hashem, Amin and Malek said some local manpower brokers took Tk 13,000 to Tk 60,000 promising them jobs in Malaysia and have them boarded on trawlers from Teknaf in Cox's Bazar for Malaysia.

Ctg port

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Chittagong Press Club yesterday afternoon said they would file the case by next week, if it is not possible within this week.

Salim, also a joint secretary general of liberal democratic party, said Everest Enterprise became the lowest bidder in the tender floated for container handling operation of Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) last year.

But, instead of providing work order to Everest Enterprise, the last caretaker government cancelled the tender at the last moment, he said.

Salim blamed the then shipping adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin for cancellation of the tender that deprived his firm.

Everest Enterprise became the lowest bidder among the eleven private berth operators that participated in the tender floated on April 26 last year, he said.

Khaleda bail

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case against Khaleda Zia and some others on September 2, 2007 on charges of graft by awarding Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co. Ltd a contract for container management at Dhaka and Chittagong inland depots.

The HC granted an interim bail for three months to Khaleda on September 9 last year, when she was in jail in connection with this case.

The court also issued a rule upon the ACC and government to explain why Khaleda Zia should not be granted regular bail in this case.

Barrister Khokon yesterday told The Daily Star that the HC earlier extended for six months the order of bail to Khaleda Zia in this case.

He said Khaleda Zia is now on bail in all the four cases filed against her.

Bureaucrats set

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secretary, but no move was taken initially to promote any person to the level of deputy secretary. Many senior assistant secretaries already expressed their grievances to the establishment secretary for being 'deprived of promotions for years'.

About 20 senior assistant secretaries, mostly of the 9th batch of BCS (administration), gathered at the Cabinet Division on July 16 to push for their demand for promotions when the SSB was holding a meeting.

An establishment ministry official said although the government reshuffled the administration several times in the last seven months, which according to some observers were rather indis-

criminate, this time the promotions will be given based on the officers' past records.

He said if any official had been deprived of a promotion in the past, the SSB looked into the grounds for which he or she had been denied the promotion. Officials facing specific allegations were not considered for the promotions, he added.

Other sources in the ministry said 200 senior assistant secretaries are set to be promoted to the rank of deputy secretary, some 150 deputy secretaries are set to become joint secretaries, about 40 joint secretaries are to be promoted to the post of additional secretary, while four to five additional secretaries are to be made secretaries.

Unfit vehicles

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Shafique Alam Mehdi Sunday told The Daily Star, "We have visited several city streets and found a huge number of old and model out vehicles and many others with no valid papers."

"We made the visit to make an observation over the existing situation and found a huge number of drivers and owners were running their vehicles with fake papers and licences," the additional secretary said, adding, "We already asked the authorities concerned to investigate the matter."

The government is going to set up 16 mobile courts with 20 magistrates in eight zones of the city. Shafique said the courts would also take actions against vehicles that cause traffic jams and obstruct vehicular movement.

The two mobile courts run by BRTA since August 4, however, failed to seize a single vehicle so far.

The BRTA director said, "The mobile courts filed 16 cases and collected Tk 20,000 in fines but did not seize any model out vehicles."

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner AKM Shahidul Hoque told The Daily Star, "Since they launched the special drives on August 9, they seized 1,804 motor vehicles and around

BDR camp

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When contacted, Matiranga Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman said civil administration including police is always ready to check any law and order situation after the withdrawal of the camp.

Till date, a total of 10 camps out of 12 were withdrawn in Khagrachhari. The government on July 29 announced it would dismantle 35 temporary security camps in the hill districts by September.

Smuggling surges

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Ulabonia, Keruntoli, Naitongpara, Kaukhalpara, Jalia Para, Nazir Para, Sabrang, Naya Para, Mizir Para under Teknaf upazila and Palong Khali, Amtoli, Rahmater Beel, Balu Khali, Anjumanpara, Ghumdhum under Ukhia upazila.

The smuggled items include mostly edible palm oil, soybean oil, onion, garlic and rice while 'current' nets, Yaba tablets, pistachios, beer, wine bottles, dried fish, rifles, clothes, lungis, tea leaves, powder milk, sugar and polythene bags and some other items are smuggled in from Myanmar.

Sources said the BDR jawans of Teknaf 42 Rifle Battalion have seized goods worth about Tk 3 crore during this month till August 22. Five smugglers were arrested and 13 boats were seized during the period.

The seized smuggled goods include 31 maunds of onion, 1,013 litres of soybean and palm oil, five maunds of garlic, three maunds of rice, three maunds of potato, 1,467 kg 'current' nets, 327 bottles of wine, 319 litres of country made liquor, 358 pieces of lungi and thami, five maunds of pistachio nut, 1,138 packets of polythene and 11 sacks of urea fertilizer.

During the last June and July, the BDR men seized goods including onion, edible oil, garlic and rice worth about Tk 5 crore while being smuggled.

Deputy Commander of Teknaf 42 Rifles Battalion Major Shahinur Rahman confirmed it and said the jawans have been kept on alert so that edible oil, garlic, rice, fertilizer and other essential

1,500 illegal rickshaws."

"Normally 20 to 25 percent buses are model out vehicles but now we do not see them on the streets anymore," the DMP commissioner said, adding, "Currently, we are not releasing any of the seized vehicles. At the end of our drives we would release them against the signing of bonds with the owners that they would not run them in the capital."

Shahidul also said a major improvement of the city traffic situation was observed. Witnesses said traffic was less hectic yesterday than that of previous days.

Leaders of the transport owners' association claimed the government move would cause sufferings to city dwellers.

Osman Ali, executive president of Mohakhali Bus Terminal Sramik Union, said, "In the name of drive against old and model out vehicles, the mobile courts and police are harassing drivers and vehicle owners."

SC hearing

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19 appointed 10 senior lawyers as amicus curiae (friend of court) for hearing their expert opinions on the reference.

Additional Attorney General AKM Zahirul Hoque yesterday told The Daily Star that Attorney General Mahbubey Alam will first make submission on behalf of the state before the apex court and then the amici curiae will place expert opinions.

The amici curiae are Dr Kamal Hossain, advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, barrister Rafique-Ul-Huq, advocate TH Khan, barrister M Amir-Ul-Islam, advocate Mahmudul Islam, barrister Rokun Uddin Mahmud, advocate AF Hassan Ariff, barrister Ajmalul Hossain and advocate AFM Mesbahuddin.

2 criminals killed in 'shootouts'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two criminals were killed in "crossfire" and two police constables sustained injuries in separate incidents of gunfight with law enforcers in the capital and Pabna early yesterday.

The deceased were Mohammad Masud Hasan, 26, of Louhajang upazila under Munshiganj and Atiqul Islam, 35, of Badalgram village of Faridpur upazila in Pabna district.

Sources in Rab-10 said on information that a gang of criminals was preparing for committing a crime, they conducted a drive at Jurin Graveyard around 3:45am. Sensing trouble, the gang opened fire and hurled bombs on the elite force forcing them to retaliate.

Masud died on the spot while rest of the gang members escaped, said the sources, adding that the Rab team recovered a one-shooter gun and 13 bullets from the scene.

According to Rab and Shyampur police, Masud was a listed criminal and accused in five cases, including murder, extortion and arms dealing.

Meanwhile, Atiqul Islam, a leader of an outlawed organisation Bahini, was killed and two police constables were injured in a gunfight at Badalgram in Pabna district.

Police said a joint team of police and Rab raided Badalgram around 2:00am on information of a secret meeting of the outfit. As soon as the team reached the spot, the members of the group sprayed bullets on the law enforcers triggering a gun battle.

Atiq was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot, said police, adding that they recovered a gun and two bullets from the scene.

Police said Atiq was a convicted fugitive in four murder cases and wanted for several other offences.

Ramadan

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cooking items. I waited for resumption of gas supply, cut off at 5:00pm, for over two hours in vain," said Khadiza Islam, a resident of Madrasa Road at Mohammadpur.

Gas supply in the area usually remains suspended for an hour or two from 12:00noon every day but it remained cut off from 5:00pm to 7:30pm on Sunday, she said.

Khalid Hasan, director (operation) of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Ltd, said the demand for gas shoots up to 770 million cubic feet (mcf) a day from 740 mcf from the first day of Ramadan, resulting in shortage of gas in many areas.

A problem in supply network at Mirpur section-12 makes the residents there suffer the most from gas crisis, he said.

Usually city residents cook foods around 12:00noon but during Ramadan they do it a time in the evening contributing to the ongoing gas crisis, he said.

"We shall try our best to solve the problem as soon as possible," Khalid said.

He said the country faces a gas shortage of 200 mcf a day during the peak season.

The company director said the demand for gas in the capital has gone up to over 200 mcf a day while the production stands at around 170 mcf.

Aug 21 attack

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August 21, 2004 that left 23 people including AL leader Ivy Rahman dead and 300 others injured.

The next day, two cases were filed-one for murder and the other for blasting grenades on the rally.

Earlier on August 12 judge Masdar Hossain of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 granted bail to them on grounds that they didn't have direct involvement.

Moving the petition filed on Sunday, Chief Prosecution Counsel advocate Syed Rezaur Rahman told the court yesterday that the members were directly involved and they had confessed to magistrates.

The judge fixed August 30 for next hearing.

During the hearing on the petition the accused were present in the court with their lawyers.

Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Fozila Begum had fixed the same date for hearing on the petitions for cancellation of the bails in the case under the Explosive Substances Act.

Parliament attack

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senior Karachi police official Saud Mirza told AFP, adding that a large quantity of explosives had also been seized in the Sunday raid.

"They were planning to hit some major targets including police establishments and Shia mosques in the city," he added. "The material we have recovered from them was enough to start a small war in a part of the city."

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi is regarded as the fiercest of Pakistan's Sunni Muslim extremist outfits and is known to have mounted numerous attacks on the minority Shia Muslim community and other targets since it was formed in 1996.

Pakistani authorities blame the group for the devastating attack last September on Islamabad's five-star Marriott hotel, which left 60 people dead, and say the group has strong links to the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Malik called media reports regarding the presence of 50 suicide bombers in Islamabad "baseless" and has ordered an inquiry into the matter.

Malik ordered all provincial governments and the Islamabad Capital Territory Police to provide foolproof security to the people.

In a separate interview with

BBC, the interior minister said it could be part of a policy not to confirm 100 percent the death of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistani leader Baitullah Mehsud.

Malik was of the view that candidates for the new Taliban chief were 'petty characters' who were fighting against each other and al-Qaeda was taking decisions in the matter.

The Interior Minister said the government's anti-Taliban operations would continue during Ramadan.

"We are not interested in a ceasefire," Malik said. "They haven't kept their commitment in the past. We will continue targeted actions against the Taliban."

The Taliban had announced that it will stop fighting during Ramadan, which began Saturday and is traditionally considered a time of peace.

Malik said the police have prevented at least three possible attacks on government buildings by militants. The security forces arrested three suicide bombers who planned to attack the parliament and two other buildings, the report cited Malik as saying in a CNN interview.

His remarks came after the Taliban in North Waziristan had announced that they would observe a ceasefire during the month.

One more end up

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they read newspaper. It was the duty of the local administration to make people aware of the drug," said Chairman of the Department of Pediatrics of Dhaka Shishu Hospital Prof Hanif.

"We have failed to withdraw the products from market and to create awareness among people at the same time. It is very unfortunate," said Dr Hanif, adding that the people from the Drug Administration even did not visit the hospital after admission of fresh patients following the government's withdrawal order of the medicine.

While talking to The Daily Star, Director of the Drug Administration Brig Gen Ismail Hossain said that he has no information regarding intake of Rid's paracetamol and fresh cases of renal failure.

Denying his failure to withdraw the drugs from the market even after a month of the government's order, he said that his drug superintendents visited all possible areas and advertised in

newspapers and television to destroy the drugs.

"It is still not possible for me to do duty properly with inadequate manpower," he said, adding that if he had enough manpower to do this enormous task then he could be blamed for it.

"There might be manpower crisis in Drug Administration. But the government does not mean only the drug regulatory authority. What did the local government representatives do in this regard?" questioned president of Health Rights Movement Prof Rashid E. Mahbub.

Even the health and family welfare assistants who visit house to house could play an important role in this regard as it involves lives of children, Prof Rashid said.

Though four cases were filed by the Drug Administration under the Drug Court, and arrest warrant was issued against Rid Pharma Managing Director Mujibur Rahman and four others, police are yet to arrest any of them.

Exploration okayed

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countries for the first time. We have to submit our claims on maritime boundary to the United Nations by July 2011."

She said a cell has been created in the foreign ministry for making necessary preparation in this regard.

"We believe we can resolve the disputes through negotiations with our neighbouring nations," the foreign minister added.

An official at the energy ministry told reporters that Tullow, which has been awarded a shallow water block, would get four years to explore its block and must produce oil or gas within eight years of signing of a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) with Petrobranga.

Conoco, which was awarded deep sea blocks, will get five years for exploration and nine years to produce hydrocarbon.

The approvals stemmed from the offshore oil and gas block bidding in May last year. Seven oil companies submitted proposals for 15 blocks out of 28 during last year's bidding.

Conoco Phillips offered to invest \$442.63 million under four PSCs for eight blocks, while Tullow proposed to invest \$50 million in a single block. Tullow now produces 100 million cubic feet gas a day at Bhanguara gas field.

Although Conoco was responsive in all eight blocks, the government did not award it all the blocks following a policy that discourages awarding more than two blocks to a company.