

HC rightly upheld

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Anisul Huq yesterday tried to refute the arguments earlier placed by defence counsels claiming that the verdict reviewed the matters of only six convicts out of a total of 15 in the case.

Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim in his verdict as the third judge of the High Court had upheld the convictions and death sentences of 12 on April 30, 2001.

Before him two other judges of a High Court bench on April 14, 2000, delivered two verdicts in the same case.

Justice Md Ruhul Amin had upheld the convictions and death sentences of 10 convicts, and Justice ABM Khairul Haque had upheld the convictions and death sentences of all 15 convicts.

Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim and Justice ABM Khairul Haque are now judges of the Appellate Division, and Justice Md Ruhul Amin went into retirement.

Anisul Huq yesterday argued that the decision of the third judge is the final verdict, as he had arrived at the judgment after reviewing and considering all relevant aspects of the case, without any procedural flaw.

Referring to some decisions of the Supreme Court of India, and the High Court of Pakistan between 1910 and 1996, Anisul Huq argued that the third judge at the begin-

ning of his review held hearings on the question of how much of the case he would review.

The third judge had passed an order on February 6, 2001, saying he would hear and review the matters of only six convicts, since the other two judges of the High Court had been in agreement about the other nine convicts, argued the chief prosecutor for the state.

About the jurisdiction of the third judge he said the third judge had unfettered discretion in hearing the case.

Earlier in the day, he told the court that the father of the nation also the erstwhile president of the country, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and seven members of his family including his 10-year old son Sheikh Russel, and three other sons were brutally killed by the convicts and some other army personnel on August 15, 1975.

He said the ramifications of the case transcend the boundaries of individuals, and reaches the interest of the state.

"Not only some people are waiting for redress through this judicial process, but the entire country is waiting for a closure. For this nation, this case is a journey from chaos to order, from its beginning to the end," he added.

The court adjourned the hearing till 9:30am today.

Backers

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senior and backbench lawmakers also criticised Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia for her alleged links with Razakars and collaborators of Pakistan.

AL lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim implicated Ziaur Rahman in the murder of Bangabandhu as he promoted the killers in their services. "Didn't Ziaur Rahman rehabilitate the anti-liberation forces politically?" he said.

He was also very critical of Khaleda's celebrating birthday on August 15.

Another AL lawmaker AKM Awal demanded arrests of Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and his leader Delwar Hossain Saydee. He said facts of the attack on Taposh would reveal if they were arrested.

The prime minister and leader of the House was present in the discussion the whole time and wrapped up the session. Censuring BNP, she said they protect, nourish and award the killers.

"BNP enforced hartal on the day the trial court was scheduled to deliver its verdict on the Bangabandhu murder case," said Hasina.

Without mentioning the name of the opposition leader, the AL chief said even she could not condemn the attack on Taposh. "What restrained her to console Taposh," she said.

The premier said she had ordered the law enforcement agencies to find out the perpetrators by any means. "We will ensure the trial of these perpetrators," she added.

The ruling alliance lawmakers also held beneficiaries of August 15, 1975 bloodshed and August 21 grenade attack responsible for the attack on Taposh, a counsel of Bangabandhu killing case.

The lawmakers said the evil forces have united and engaged in conspiracy to desist from holding the trial of Bangabandhu killing and war crime cases by creating unrest in a planned way.

They said the attack was not meant on Taposh but the parliament.

Placing the proposal under section 147 of the parliament's rules of procedure, AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta started the discussion in which 26 lawmakers participated.

The House holds general discussion on matters of public interests under this section.

"War criminals, killers of Bangabandhu and culprits of August 21 grenade attack have united and are trying to destabilise the country," Suranjit said.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) lawmaker Mayeen Uddin Khan Badal urged the House to take a resolute stance against the evil forces.

"We will see a Pakistan in Bangladesh if our decision is proved wrong and the country will witness more bloodshed. So, we will have to go forward boldly with clear conscience and without hesitation," said Badal.

Without naming Khaleda Zia, he said names of her party leaders are also emerging in the investigation into the August 21 attack.

Jute and Textile Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui urged the prime minister to eliminate her enemy and anti-liberation forces.

AL presidium member Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir urged the home minister to find out the people indirectly involved with the attack.

The home minister said the attack was well planned and it was a conspiracy of the grenade attack masterminds. "The anti-liberation forces, Mustaq-Zia nexus, are always conspiring," she added.

Muggers loot

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muggers snatching a bag with Tk 30 lakh in it, the muggers fired several shots that caused minor injuries to Lito's right hand.

Nasir and Lito drew the money from HSBC, Dhanmondi branch, around 11:30am. Officer-in-Charge of Dhanmondi Police Station Mohammad Shah Alam said.

Quoting them, the OC said they drew the money to pay salaries to the employees of the company and to meet other expenses.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-2) personnel picked Elias, driver of the private car, for interrogation, he added.

Nasir filed a case with the police station accusing the unidentified muggers.

Meanwhile, an ex-police constable was caught red handed while fleeing with Tk 12.5 lakh from a cloth trader in the city's Kamalapur area last evening.

Officer-in-Charge of Sabujbagh Police Station Asaduzzaman told The Daily Star that detained Mohammad Shahin, 32, was dismissed from the police department four years ago for his misdeeds.

Sources said the criminals tried to snatch the money from Al Amin in front of the international container depot.

The locals caught Shahin and gave him a good beating when Shahin and some of his associates tried to flee with the amount at around 7:00pm, the OC said.

Besides, the locals of Mughda in the capital handed a fake inspector of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) over to police when he demanded Tk 40,000 from a house owner last evening.

OC Asaduzzaman of Sabujbagh Police Station said they arrested Zahurul Islam who introduced himself as a building inspector of the Rajuk.

Jamaat slates

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The party leaders raised questions about the policy formulation committee and its members, saying the committee did not consult with any representative organisation.

Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Assistant Secretary General Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and other central leaders were present.

In a written statement, Nizami said a small number of people are aware of the policy as a short time was given to give opinions on it.

"Adequate time was not given for this and no measure was taken to publicise the matter through the media," he said.

Asked whether the party gave its opinion on the policy at the website, Nizami said they did not post any opinion on the website directly.

"Different organisations gave their views and we are informing [the matter] through you [media]... who will give the guarantee that our views will be published through the website," he said.

Taking the floor, Mojaheed said thousands of people gave their opinions and they will give it if the government wants.

Both the leaders, however, remained silent when asked why they did not give any opinion when the government wanted it through the website.

Nizami said a proposal was included in the policy to destroy madrasa education because of the anti-Islamic mentality of the committee members.

He labelled committee chairman Kabir Chowdhury as a cultural activist saying, "Is he [Kabir Chowdhury] an educationist? We used to know him as a cultural activist."

When he was told that Kabir Chowdhury is a national professor and was a university teacher, he said no body could be an educationist by teaching only.

Asked whether Jamaat is going to give a definition for an educationist, both the leaders could not give proper answer.

Asked why they did not discuss with the committee,

Nizami said the committee did not invite them while Mojaheed alleged that the government is doing everything secretly.

Replying to another question whether Jamaat had sought time to discuss with the committee to share their views as around 56 organisations did so, they said they were not aware of it.

When the newsmen asked whether the party was doing politics on the policy, he said: "Where do you [journalists] get politics here? We are just giving our opinion and we will respond if they call us."

The Jamaat chief said the policy says that the education system would be secular and pro-people which is contradictory.

"The meaning of pro-people education in Bangladesh is an education based on Islamic principles and the meaning of secular education is irreligious and anti-people education," he said, adding that the committee does not have the authority to force irreligious education on the people.

As the reporters asked why had the party not demanded for introducing an education policy based on Iman (faith) and Aqidah (Islamic creed) during their regime as the key ally of the government, Mojaheed said it is a wrong information as no report was published during the then four-party regime.

When informed about the report prepared by the Moniruzzaman Mia Commission, Nizami said a report was prepared but that did not go to the cabinet.

Asked whether they had demanded for an education system based on religion during their regime, he said, "We did not have time."

The Jamaat chief said it is the duty of the people to resist if an irreligious education system is forced on the people unilaterally.

Asked whether the party would announce any programme, he said, "Time will say."

Nizami alleged that religious and moral education have been removed from class I and II to teach anti-religious education.

Fertiliser boost

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cost of winter crops, especially for potatoes and boro rice, while increasing yield.

"There is a tendency among farmers to use urea which is cheaper. The reduction in the prices of non-urea fertilisers will bring a balance in use of fertilisers," he told The Daily Star.

This is a second price cut of non-urea fertilisers within 11 months under the present government's high priority attention to the agricultural sector.

The present government in its first cabinet on January 14 had slashed the prices of the three non-urea fertilisers by a half.

Matia believes production of boro rice will be enhanced due to the price cut, which will ultimately reduce the price of the rice next year. "It will also be a boost for production of winter vegetables," she added.

The new prices go into effect today.

"Our government is farmer friendly... we've decided to slash down the prices for the interest of farmers," Matia told reporters, adding that the government will have to spend Tk 500 crore in subsidies due the price cut.

The government had earlier earmarked an allocation of Tk 2,500 crore for subsidies in the agriculture sector. After the price cut of non-urea fertilisers, the total subsidy will now stand at Tk 3,000 crore.

Before announcing the price cuts, Matia held a meeting with Industries Minister Dilip Barua in her ministry.

The agriculture minister said the immediate past interim government purchased a large amount of fertilisers hoping it would be sold, but that did not happen.

About smuggling of fertilisers to neighbouring countries, she said the home ministry is giving necessary instructions to the border force regarding the matter.

Presently, 1,73,310 tons of TSP, 49,454 tons of MOP, and 29,943 tons of DAP imported last year are remaining in warehouses.

Attackers

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murder case, came under bomb attack on October 21 that left 13 people injured. He was unhurt.

So far DB arrested six people in this connection. Four of them are from the families of Bangabandhu murder convicts.

The four arrestees include Kamrul Haque Swapan, younger brother of Maj (ret'd) Dalim, Mehaz Rashid Khandaker, daughter of Lt Col (ret'd) Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Nazmul Hasan Sohel and Mahbubul Hasan Emran, sons of Lt Col (ret'd) Mohiuddin Ahmed-- three convicts in the August 15 killing case.

The other two arrestees are Freedom Party leaders.

Pay wages

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industrially crowded area, will be linked with the proposed elevated expressway from airport so that the international buyers can easily go there and its adjacent areas for business, she said.

"Please don't worry or make us worried. Try to take advantages of the global recession," the PM said.

She also advised the owners to install solar power plants. The government will soon solve the problem of gas supply, she said, adding that the government has a plan to produce 4,110 megawatt more electricity within 2013 to meet the country's growing power demand.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith as the special guest said the apparel sector might be having difficulties in power supply, bank interest rate and maintaining law and order.

"Despite all those difficulties the sector is doing good by employing 3.5 million workers. Hence, the government is ready to support the sector," said Muhith.

Fazlul Hoque, president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BKMEA) and the organiser of the exhibition, said this year a record 153 registered buyers from different countries participated in the three-day fair.

"A special aspect of the exhibition is that 52 buyers and investors from Japan has attended the exhibition," he said.

He said the apparel sector needs financial support from the government while the owners are trying hard to cope up with the global economic meltdown.

"We need adequate supply of gas and power. We also need to recover the lost market and find out new export destinations," Hoque said.

Commerce Minister Faruk Khan and Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, among others, spoke at the inaugural session of the exhibition.

Karzai declared

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Ban met both Karzai and Abdullah as well as his staff in a show of solidarity for those working in Afghanistan following a deadly Taliban suicide attack on a guesthouse for UN staff.

In a press conference, Ban did not say whether he wanted to see the election scrapped but said the United Nations would respect and support the decision of the Independent Elections Commission, the organisers of the ballot.

"The United Nations and the international community will stand together and walk together with the next government and the people of Afghanistan."

While Ban refused to be drawn on whether he believed the run-off should be staged, a UN spokesman said it was "difficult to see" how Afghanistan could hold an election in just five days' time with only one candidate.

A senior European diplomat said there was great unease about staging such a contest at a time when a Taliban insurgency is gathering pace.

"Clearly we know that practically, going to the vote means a big expense and the possibility of a loss of life both of international and Afghan security forces," he told AFP on condition of anonymity.

After Karzai snubbed a series of demands promoted by his rival as a chance to avoid a repeat of massive first-round fraud, Abdullah said Sunday that he saw no point in standing, but stopped short of calling for a boycott.

The IEC initially said the run-off would take place as scheduled on Saturday, saying the deadline for Abdullah to withdraw had passed, but a senior official said talks had been convened about scrapping the whole process.

Karzai had opened the door to a possible alternative, saying he would "be obliged to follow" any ruling from the electoral or judicial authorities.

TIB worried

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Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman said, "We observe with concern that the proposal is in no way consistent with the government pledge to create competitive environment with transparency in government purchase."

He added, "it would heighten the risk of government influence in the name of giving scope to the inexperienced instead of healthy competition in government purchase. As a result, the base of ensuring transparency and efficiency in the sector would crumble and people's confidence in the government would wane."

The non-government organisation thinks it is urgent to take decisions regarding such matters of national importance on the basis of wide participation of the people including the civil society in the interest of the country.

It hopes all quarters concerned, especially the parliamentary committee, would take proper steps so that no corruption and irregularity get the upper hand in government purchase.

Pay wages

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Insistent that first round fraud had been overstated, Karzai only agreed to a run-off under extensive diplomatic pressure.

After the fraud in the first round on August 20, Abdullah demanded Karzai sack Ludin and suspend three cabinet ministers who campaigned for the incumbent -- conditions which were stone-walled.

Karzai's share of the vote in the first round fell to 49.67 percent after around a quarter of all votes were deemed fraudulent.

Abdullah won just over 30 percent and would have had a mountain to climb to overhaul Karzai.

Rab starts

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Rab sources said the two will be taken to Task Force for Interrogation cell.

Investigation officer of the case produced them before the court with 10 days' remand prayer following their arrest. The court, however, granted three days' bail.

A team of Rab-3 arrested them at their rented house at Mayakanon of the city's Sabujbagh on Sunday.

Rab also recovered some papers inscribed with instructions on how to make bombs, explosives circuits, some leaflets and books on Jihad and documents on JMB funds from their possession.

Former Habiganj district Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Saidur Rahman has been working as JMB Ameer and his son Abu Talha Mohammad Fahim alias Bashir as the coordinator since the execution of erstwhile JMB chief Abdur Rahman with five other leaders in 2007.

Parties get

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timeframe for cancellation of registration of a political party for failing to submit information required by the EC.

It said registration of a political party will be cancelled if it fails to submit required information to the EC for three consecutive years.

According to the existing provisions of the RPO, political parties were supposed to ratify the provisional changes in their constitutions by holding councils and submit the ratified charters to the EC by July 24 this year.

Many political parties including Awami League, Jatiya Party, and Jamaat-e-Islami have complied with the provisions.

But BNP and a few other parties failed to meet the provisions of ratifying the provisional changes within six months since the first sitting of the ninth parliament that began on January 25.

BNP applied to the EC for extending the timeframe by another six months.

All 39 registered political parties except one brought provisional changes to their constitutions before the December 29 parliamentary election to meet the registration criteria.

They promised to ratify the changes within six months from the first sitting of the ninth parliament.

Form full district

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and recently asked them to complete holding of councils by November 25.

But till Monday, no district unit could hold its council. And intra-party feuds marred the councils of many upazila, thana and union units that prompted resignation of at least two conveners of district units.

Contacted, Joint Secretary General of the party Gayeshwar Chandra Roy however said yesterday all district committees of the party would be formed through their councils by December 4, and many of the district units have already fixed the date for holding council.

But Gayeshwar could not make it clear if the party directive concerning holding of councils would be applicable to Dhaka city and district, and Manikganj district units which are yet to have convening committees.

He said problems of the district units would be resolved within the next 10 days so that all of those can hold councils to elect new

leadership. "No other problem will arise if we can complete holding of councils of 70 percent district units timely," he added.

On national council, Gayeshwar, also convener of the publicity sub-committee for the council, said, "We have already started preparations for it."

Party insiders however said it would be tough to organise councils of district units if the party high command remained strict about completion of upazila unit councils. According to the previous party directive, holding of upazila unit councils must be completed before district councils.

Earlier, the party high command had assigned six joint secretaries general to resolve internal conflicts of different committees. They brought some changes in convening committees of party units facing internal feuds.

BNP held its last national council in 1993 in the capital. But the party constitution provides for holding national council every two years.

Vested property

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resolved now.

The vested property, which was termed Enemy Property before the Liberation War in 1971, was left behind by the Hindus during the 1947 partition and the India-Pakistan war in 1965.

The government took its ownership by enacting the enemy property act after independence in 1971 and renamed the law as the Vested Property Act in 1974.

There is about 6.43 lakh acres of land counted as vested property, of which about 1.97 acres is returnable. According to the new bill, the government would have no authority on about 4.46 lakh acres of land.

The previous Awami League government, just before the end of its tenure in 2001, framed a new law -- the Vested Property Return Act. The government had also fixed a 180-day timeframe to prepare a list of properly documented vested property in order to take steps to restore falsely seized land.

The subsequent BNP government by the end of 2001 amended the bill replacing the 180-day deadline with an 'indefinite period'. The list was however never completed.

The immediate past caretaker government took an initiative to publish the list of vested property in 61 districts and sent it to the BG Press on November 30 last year.

After assuming office, the AL government decided to review the list and asked the BG Press to stop publishing it.

A parliamentary watchdog on March 11 asked the Ministry of Land to draft the new Vested Property Return Act restoring the six-month deadline for the local authorities to compile a list of the land seized under the law.

At yesterday's meeting, the cabinet also approved in principle the Acid Control (Amendment) Bill, 2009 in a

bid to establish "strict government control on the use of acid materials and curb acid related crimes".

It also approved in principle the National Institute of Biotechnology Act, 2009, Bangladesh Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2009 and the Environment Court Act, 2009.

Besides, the cabinet gave approval to amendment to the Bangladesh Private Sector Infrastructure Guidelines (BPSIG) providing that from now on, like Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buett), representatives of other public engineering universities will come under the purview of the guidelines.

Deputy Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Mahbubul Hoque Shakil briefed newsmen in the conference room of the Press Information Department about the cabinet meeting.

4th ODI

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three games have been played under lights at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka.

The Tigers are leading the five-match series against their southern African rivals 2-1. They won the second and third games by seven and four wickets respectively after losing the first game by five wickets. The home team are unlikely to make any changes to the winning side. But they might include a second pacer in a spin-pronged attack after having a look at the wicket, which promises plenty of runs.

Zimbabwe are expected to be boosted by the return of their skipper Prosper Uteya who had to sit out the last two ODIs due to ankle injury. However their ex-captain Tatenda Taibu is still not fit enough to take part.

State-run Bangladesh Television and satellite channel SuperSport 5 will telecast the match live from 10:30am.