

Brutality personified

FROM PAGE 1
try the mutineers.
When they were taken inside the Darbar Hall, Gofran was restlessly looking around the place where the mutiny broke out and eventually killed 74 lives including 57 army officers.

He was seen whispering with the other accused besides him, all in handcuffs. The prosecutor told the court 218 alleged mutineers attended the Darbar of slain BDR DG Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed and all of them including Gofran left the Hall to take part in the mutiny.

Insiders say Gofran was allegedly involved in other brutality during the mutiny including destroying evidence of killings by dumping the bodies in the mass grave.

After the first day of the trial, a top BDR official said without mentioning any names that some of the accused killed their commanding officer Lt Col Lutfar Rahman, Intelligence Officer Maj Md Mominur Rahman, and DADMS Maj Mamun.

The prosecutor told the court seven alleged mutineers including Gofran extremely humiliated Lt Col Lutfar Rahman during the mutiny.

The prosecutor added 15 accused including Gofran were involved in a preparatory meeting for the mutiny at the basketball ground and a Gol Ghar in the morning on February 25.

Gofran and six others played a major role in the mutiny and they directed other soldiers to take the arms

and ammunition.

A few months before the mutiny, Gofran performed the Hajj and BDR gave him expenses for that. But he became a leading rebel just after coming back from the Hajj.

The number of accused in this particular case is still the highest among other cases in the BDR special courts for the mutiny charges. The manpower of the 24 Rifle Battalion was 911 during the days of mutiny and 668 of them are accused.

The prosecutor told the court some rebels took the officers' vehicles and provoked other soldiers in megaphones to take part in the mutiny.

Some valuable stuffs of the officer's families and some arms, ammunition and some other official belongings were found in position of some alleged mutineers.

The prosecutor added seven of the alleged mutineers even gave interviews to TV channels, while some of their activities are evident in the video footage and in the pictures published in newspapers.

They also verbally abused the officers before killing them, while some of them battered the officers even after killing them, he said.

After the one hour-long trial, chief of the three-member court BDR DG Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam Gajdar adjourned the proceedings till 10:00am on June 20 and fixed the day for charge framing.

Till then, the accused would now get time to prepare their defence.

Zardari's powers to be clipped

ANI, Islamabad

In what could further clip the powers of Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari, the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PCCR) has signed the draft of the 18th Constitution Amendment bill.

The Amendment bill proposes the transfer of powers from the Presidency to Parliament and the Prime Minister House.

The Parliamentary committee led by Mian Raza Rabbani has finally approved all 93 amendments proposed in the bill despite the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif raising objections over some of the amendments, saying a consensus between all the stakeholders was a must.

The PML-N and the Awami National Party (ANP) had differed on some of the issues, including that of renaming the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

The committee has proposed the name of Khyber-Pakhtunkwa for NWFP, The News reports.

The draft also proposed removal of dictatorial amendments, and abolition of the name of former President General Zia-ul-Haq from the Constitution. However, it has no mention of General Pervez Musharraf, who had also amended 26 articles of the Constitution through his 'dictatorial' 17th Amendment.

According to sources, the proposed draft would be presented in the National Assembly and Senate on Friday while the process of legislation is likely to start from next Tuesday, following the President Asif Ali Zardari's address to the joint session of the Parliament on Monday.

Rajapakse visits Tamil heartland

AFP, Jaffna

Sri Lanka's President Mahinda Rajapakse reached out yesterday to the country's ethnic minority Tamils as he made his first visit to their cultural heartland since his re-election.

Rajapakse, on a trip to battle-scarred Jaffna, the former stronghold of separatist Tamil rebels in the island's north, promised to work for national unity and reconciliation.

The campaign stop in Jaffna ahead of parliamentary elections on April 8 saw the 64-year-old address thousands of supporters at the Alfred Duraipappa Stadium, named after a former Jaffna mayor assassinated by the rebels.

Rajapakse resoundingly won re-election in January, largely due to a wave of popular support for his successful onslaught against the Tamil Tiger separatists last year, which ended their 37-year fight for a homeland.

2 pirates

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and other passengers, the pirates threw their weapons in the river and attempted to flee with their motorboat.

Locals caught nine fleeing pirates and beat them mercilessly, leaving two dead on the spot.

Schoolboy

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A local group of young men, emerged recently in the area under the leadership of Shanto, had made the attack, police sources said.

Police said Shanto's group is engaged in mugging and other petty crimes in the area.

On March 23, Shoumen Biswas Anik, 14, a class IX student of Chittagong Collegiate School, was stabbed to death by students of another school over a trifling matter.

Toxic wastes

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Department of Maulana Bhasani University of Science and Technology, told The Daily Star no crops can grow and no aquatic life can survive in such water.

Meanwhile, Sushasner Jannya Procharabijjan, a non-government organisation, has recently conducted a survey in the district and identified two industries for polluting Louhajang river.

The organisation also formed a human chain and held demonstration before they submitted memorandum to the deputy commissioner.

Tangail Deputy Commissioner M Bazul Karim Chowdhury told The Daily Star that he had already informed the Directorate of Environment about the matter.

Banks asked

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The NBR letter mentioned Mir Kasem Ali as the director of Keari Limited and Rabiat Al Alam Al Islami.

Kasem's family members whose bank accounts have been suspended are his wife Khandker Ayesha Khatun, sons Dr Muhammad Bin Kasem and Meer Ahmed Bin Kasem, daughters Hasina Tayeba, Tahera Hasnin and Sumaiya Rabeya.

Meer Kasem Ali, who is known for his anti-Liberation War role, left Bangladesh for Saudi Arabia on March 24 by a Qatar Airways flight through the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Sources said his name is on the list of suspected war criminals barred from leaving the country. But he had left before the list reached the airport authorities.

Kasem was the general secretary of East Pakistan Islami Chhatra Sangha in 1971 and addressed a rally organised by the Al Badr on December 10, 1971, at Baitul Mukarram Mosque to create public opinion against "Hindustani attacks".

He called upon people not to get misled by the "rumours and false publicity of Hindustani warmongers and

Akash Bani", reported the Daily Azad on December 11, 1971.

Kasem was also the president of Chittagong City Islami Chhatra Sangha and chief of the Chittagong district Razakar forces. It is alleged in several historical documents that Kasem led the Al Badr force in Chittagong.

On Wednesday, the civil aviation ministry sought explanation from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh on Kasem's departure through the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The same day Home Minister Sahara Khatun told the media that she did not know whether Kasem was in the country or abroad. "I have read the news in different newspapers," she said.

Asked how he could leave the country, Sahara said, "We have asked the investigation agencies to probe the matter," and that she would not be able to say anything before getting the investigation report.

After the media revealed that Kasem had left the country, Diganta Media in a statement said its chairman went abroad on a business trip and will return on time.

Saarc Summit

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raise the climate change issue and she may call for greater regional cooperation to face the threat.

Officials said that observers from China, Japan, the European Union, Republic of Korea, USA, Australia, Mauritius and Iran would also attend the summit.

The leaders would vow to face the common challenges in order to realise the aspirations of over 1.5 billion people in the region, said the officials.

Although this year's theme is "conservation of environment and climate," vital issues such as terrorism are likely to be high on the agenda of both official and unofficial discussions.

The Maldives had been scheduled to host this year's summit but it had to withdraw due to the effects of the global recession on its economy.

On three previous occasions Bhutan had stated its inability to host the Saarc summit because of a lack of infrastructure. It is obligatory for each member state to host the summit.

The last summit was held in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo in August 2008.

Media sources in Bhutan said that around 450 delegates are expected to attend the summit, as well as a media contingent of approximately 200.

In addition, 86 editors and journalists from South Asia have confirmed their participation in the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA).

The event is customarily held in the host country at the same time as the Saarc summit.

Pre-summit meetings will commence from the third week of April at the Royal Banquet Hall, while the summit on April 28-29 will be held in the National Assembly Hall.

The Saarc leaders will stay at Terma Linkain, a hotel in Babesa.

The 2-day summit will be preceded by a series of meetings involving the director generals, foreign secretaries and foreign ministers of the member states.

Refreshing

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Asma's husband Shajahan said since she was in great pain and there was no hospital nearby on the other side, he had to contact leaders of India-Bangladesh Enclave Exchange Co-ordination Committee who facilitated her shifting to Dinhati hospital with the help of security.

Thanking the hospital authorities for admitting the woman, enclave committee spokesman Diptiman Sengupta said the authorities should issue a birth certificate to the newborn as otherwise a movement would be waged.

About the possibility of arrest of the Bangladeshi couple for getting medical facilities in India without papers, Dinhati Sub-Divisional Officer Chiranjib Ghosh said the administration was yet to decide on the matter.

There are 126 Indian enclaves (chhitmahals) on Bangladesh side and 96 Bangladeshi enclaves on Indian territory with movement allowed during certain period of time.

200 more trees

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reported officially," said Dibarmin adding, "Two DB men didn't go to the scene but talked to us and collected information."

Timber trader Salim Uddin Mohalder bought a total of 4,000 trees from Nahar Tea Garden at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore in 2008. Mohalder had already felled 1,200 trees in Aslom Punji immediately following a government permit in 2008.

He embarked on tree felling on March 13 at Kailin Punji after a High Court bench on February 22 directed the authorities to allow cutting down 3,550 trees.

Khasia people in the written complaint submitted to the Maulvibazar deputy commissioner (DC) alleged that 200 immature trees were felled in Aslom Paan Punji (Khasia settlement of betel leaf cultivation) and 290 in Kailin Punji. All of those were unmarked for cutting.

The garden authorities and the timber trader were allowed to fell only marked and mature ones.

The number of beneficiaries increased to 9.20 lakh in

50 villages

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Dakop Chairman Sheikh Abul Hossain said the river "Dhaki" is flowing in full fury and posing threat to two more embankments.

The villages that went under water are Srinagar, Fakirdanga, Joynagar, Dakhkhin Shaharabad, Bhitebhanga and Shaharabad under Kamarkhola union, Majhipara, Taltola, Bainpara, Gunari, Keorhatali, Gayerpara, Telirkona, Katakhal, Golbungia, Kalabogi and Doani.

Dakop UNO Kazi Atiur Rahman said the situation is very alarming with diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases breaking out.

Meanwhile, a Bangladesh Navy team comprised of Commodore Toufiquzzaman of Khulna Zone, Commanding Officer Waliullah of Mongla Zone, Contingent Commander Uttam and Executive Engineer of Water Development Board Mosaddek Hossain visited the affected areas.

They were assigned to supervise construction works of the damaged embankments.

The heads of state and government, foreign ministers and foreign secretaries will be housed at the Ministers' Enclave in Motithang, which is currently undergoing a major uplift.

Other dignitaries will be accommodated in 188 rooms in 10 different hotels. Journalists may have to stay in Paro if all the hotel rooms in Thimphu become fully booked. Elaborate security arrangements are being made, as well as preparations for entertainment showcasing Bhutanese culture.

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New species

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The researchers said frequent arrival of new species of butterfly at Jahangirnagar University (JU) indicates destruction of habitats.

"Butterfly wings have scales that work like tiny solar cells. Laboratory tests have revealed that butterfly wings can absorb sunlight more efficiently than conventional dye-sensitized cells," said Monwar Hossain.

In Bangladesh where power crisis is acute, butterfly wings can open a new possibility to ease the situation, said the researchers.

Recently a group of Korean and Japanese scientists claimed that replicating the biotemplates of butterfly wings, it is possible to make various optically active structures. These could be used as more efficient solar cells for powering homes, businesses centres, and other applications in future, they added.

In JU areas, butterflies are seen almost everywhere, especially in the botanical garden, swimming pool, dormitory gardens, nurseries, thickets and Bishmile area.

Butterflies in their adult stage can live from a week to nearly a year depending on the species. Leaves, especially of lime, pine, grass and aloe, are preferred diet for the larvae while the adults live on nectar and leaves of rangana. Hence, random deforestation and settlements can be fatal for butterflies.

The researchers said there should be up to 600 species of butterflies in Bangladesh.

Mahmudul Amin of Dhaka University and Shafique of Chittagong University (CU) for the first time in the country carried out a study on butterflies in 1968. They identified 27 species. MA Wahid Box Chowdhury spotted 33 species in 1983-85 while MS Alam and GM Ullah of CU 21 in 1987.

Project for widow

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She added that they were concentrating more on child and mother related issues.

However, Social Welfare Minister Enamul Haque Mostafa Shaheed and Social Welfare Secretary Quomaran Nessa Khanam declined to comment.

The programme of distributing allowance among poor widows and divorcees was launched in 1998 when the social welfare ministry was in charge, and from then, a monthly amount of Tk 100 was given to each of over 4 lakh women until FY 2002-03.

Director General of Women Affairs Department Rawshan Ara Begum said, from FY 2002-03, the charge was given to the women affairs ministry considering that the beneficiaries of the project are women.

But again the government has decided to give it to the social welfare ministry in the next fiscal year, she added.

The number of beneficiaries increased to 9.20 lakh in

FY 2009-10, and the budgetary allocation was Tk 331.20 crore. Of the amount, Tk 165.60 crore has already been distributed by December last year.

The monthly allowance increased to Tk 150 from Tk 100 in the last fiscal year.

An official of the women affairs ministry said, "Though the ministry has shortage of manpower, it implemented the project with efficiency."

Employees of the women and children affairs department and some union parishad chairmen have already sent letters to the prime minister and the state minister for women and children affairs asking them to assign the women affairs ministry to run the project in the next fiscal year, the official added.

The official also said, "It would have been reasonable to transfer it to the other ministry if we had failed to operate the programme in the previous fiscal years."

Reckless driving

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The injured pedestrian was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he died at around 3:00pm.

Sub-inspector Kazi Barkat Ali of Lalbagh Police Station told The Daily Star they have seized the bus. But they could not identify the victim and arrest the driver as of filing this report at 12:30am.

Earlier on Monday and Tuesday, seven persons died in road accidents in the capital.

Police constable Abdur Rouf, 32, was hit by a truck on Wapda Road in Rampura at around 10:30pm on Monday. Around two and a half hours later, he died at Pangu Hospital.

The same night Kamal, 35, was run over and killed by a speeding vehicle at Birulia Bus Stop in Pallabi Beribadh area.

Earlier in the day, Ansar Ali, 32, was knocked down by a minibus on Mirpur Road in Kalyanpur area. A few hours afterwards, he died in DMCH.

The following morning, three persons died when a bus rammed a pickup van from behind on Kawa Bridge near airport intersection. All three were aged above 50.

Debdas Bala, a labourer, died when a covered van hit him at the entrance to the cargo village in Hazrat Shahjalal Airport at around 11:30am on Tuesday.

On February 3, a speeding bus killed five-year-old Hamim Sheikh in front of Willes Little Flower School in Kakrali.

The boy was crossing the road with his mother who sustained critical head injuries but survived.

Just two days later, seven-year-old Sumi was killed and an infant injured in another hit-and-run accident on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue at Shaheenbagh. Police could not identify the vehicle responsible for the death.

The same day a minibus

HR Watch

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"Creating laws that shield government officials from prosecution would send a clear message that the government is not serious in fighting corruption," he said in a news statement issued in New York on Wednesday.

The statement said a cabinet committee formed last year to review Bangladesh's anti-corruption legislation has proposed amendments requiring the ACC to obtain permission from the government before taking legal action against government officials and lawmakers suspected of corruption.

According to Transparency International's corruption perception index, Bangladesh has for many years been one of the most corrupt countries in the world, HRW said. Awami League, which won national elections in December 2008, promised during the campaign to make the fight against corruption a top priority.

"In Bangladesh, those in positions of power have regularly used the law to undermine their political rivals," said Brad Adams. "While there has been a need to deal with this problem, it is important that the ruling party to ensure that it does not create an impression that it is favoring its members. It should leave it to the judiciary to weed out unfair charges."

Rather than adopting the proposed amendments and further undermining the fundamental principle of equality under the law, the government should repeal article 197 of CRPC and other provisions that place government officials above the law, he added.

killed garment worker Saiful Islam, 25, at Sonargaon Hotel roundabout.

On January 20, four of a family died when a truck running on the wrong side of the road hit a car at Jatrabari in the capital.

The family was returning home after holidaying in Cox's Bazar.

At least one person gets killed and many more are wounded in road accidents in the city every day.

According to police, 98 percent of the accidents happen due to reckless driving. The usual culprits are minibuses, buses and other public transport.

Statistics of Accident Monitoring Cell of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority and Dhaka Metropolitan Police say 377 people died in 620 accidents in Dhaka in 2008. Of them, 283 were pedestrians. Another 79 walkers were seriously injured.

MRP project

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agent of the IRIS Corporation Berhad -- the project implementing company.

Though it will take more time initially to hand over the MRP, the process will run faster from next month.

Many people also visited the passport office yesterday to get emergency handwritten passport for overseas travel.

There is also a provision with ICAO to issue the handwritten passport with one year validity only on emergency purpose and in case of failure to issue MRP.

Kushtia BNP

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Dudu confined for hours.

The two factions -- one led by Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi and Sohrah Uddin, and the other by Minhazur Rahman ALO and Nurul Islam Ansar -- were embroiled in disputes over grassroots meeting of the party's Kushtia, Meherpur and Chuadanga units scheduled to be held here yesterday.

Mehedi-Sohrah group had selected the Shilpakala Academy as the venue and ALO-Ansar called the meeting at Zila Parishad.

As the central leaders reached the circuit house around 1:30pm, both factions attempted to persuade the leaders to join their meetings.

The central leaders decided to attend the meeting called by Mehedi-Sohrah. The rivals immediately staged demonstration on the circuit house premises and confined the leaders to the building for two hours.

On information, police rushed to the spot, rescued the central leaders and took them to Shilpakala Academy.

Both groups held separate meetings.

In the circuit house meeting presided by Minhazur Rahman ALO, president of the faction, was addressed by its general secretary and Kumarkhali Municipality Mayor Nurul Islam Ansar, Chuadanga district BNP organising secretary Abdul Jabbar, Kushtia town unit president AK Shamim Arzu and Jubo Dal vice president Firoz Aftab Uddin.

Mehedi Ahmed, president of the other faction, chaired the Shilpakala Academy meeting where its general secretary and Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal president Sohrah Uddin, Moyeen Khan and Shamsuzzaman spoke.

On Wednesday, the two groups clashed in the town leaving 15 persons injured. Police arrested a leader belonging to ALO-Ansar group.

Govt using admin

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He also demanded for appointing presiding and polling officers from other upazilas outside the upazilas belonging to Bhola-3 constituency.

He further demanded deployment of adequate number of journalists and election observers from home and abroad in the by-election.

The BNP secretary general said the government has been "losing its popularity" with every passing day and people are fed up with this government.

The BNP candidate will win the by-election if the polls are free and fair, he added.

Earlier, on March 22, a BNP delegation met with the chief election commissioner and formally sought deployment of army but Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain on March 25 said the army will not be deployed in Bhola-3 by-election.

BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi was also present at the briefing.

BNP STANDING COMMITTEE MEET

BNP standing committee, the highest policymaking body of the party, meeting yesterday night reviewed the latest political developments in the country.

With Khaleida Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office the meeting was continuing till 10pm.

Sources close to the meeting told UNB that they were discussing about Bhola-3 by-election, trial of war criminals, power, gas and water crisis, law and order situation and price hike of essentials.

Outcome of the meeting will be briefed to the media at 12 noon today.

Khandaker Delwar Hossain,

Ansar, VDP

FROM PAGE 1

The home minister said 155 closed-circuit cameras have been installed at 59 places in the capital to improve traffic situation.

And use of these cameras in phases to detect crimes and criminals is under consideration.

Moreover, the government has planned setting up more police stations and investigation centres, Sahara said.

Steps have been taken to purchase modern bomb disposal equipment for Rapid Action Battalion to strengthen its bomb disposal unit. Besides, modern equipment for its forensic laboratory is being purchased, she mentioned.

VACANT POSTS IN MISSIONS

In response to a query, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said nine posts of high commissioner and ambassador are now vacant in the country's missions abroad. The missions are in Islamabad, Ankara, Cairo, Nairobi, Mascot, Berlin, Bangkok, Jakarta and Tripoli.