

Ties with KSA might dip for PM's remarks

Claims BNP

 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday apprehended that the relationship between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia "might dip" due to the prime minister's recent remarks in which, BNP claimed, she linked Saudi Arabia and BNP to the war crimes trial.

The party's Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at a press conference at BNP's central office in Naya Paltan said the government should have thought about Saudi Arabia being a large labour market for Bangladesh before launching propaganda against BNP involving Saudi Arabia.

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FIRST VERDICT IN PANCHAGARH

All 29 accused jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

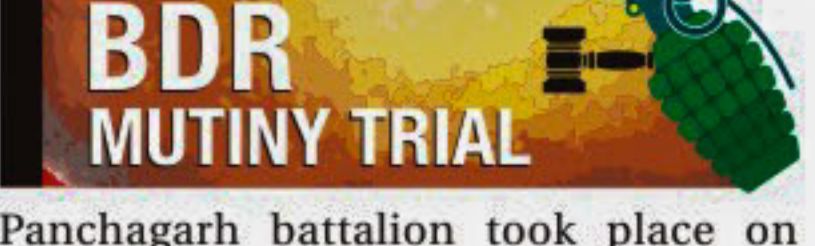
 A special court of Bangladesh Rifles yesterday sentenced all the 29 accused of 25 Rifle Battalion to different terms of rigorous imprisonment for their involvement in February 25-26 BDR mutiny in 2009.

BDR Director General Maj Gen Mohammad Mainul Islam delivered the first verdict of BDR mutiny case in Panchagarh. After the arguments from the defendants and prosecutors on Tuesday, the Special Court-2 delivered the judgment yesterday around 4:00pm.

Thirteen jawans were sentenced to seven years' term while one to six years', one to four years', six to three years', two to two years', five to thirteen months' and another to four months'.

The same court on Sunday framed charges against the 29 accused.

Before delivering the verdict the president of the court said all the facts and evidence proved that the mutiny in



BDR MUTINY TRIAL

 Panchagarh battalion took place on February 26 and the accused were involved in it.

Sentenced to seven-year-term are Assistant Nayek Manjur Hossain, lance nayeks Siddiqur Rahman, Jakaria and Nuruzzaman, sepoy Giasuddin, Shafiqur Rahman, Mohibur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, SM Suman Ahmed, Abdul Karim, Monir Hossain, Sepoy Armourer Md Mehedi Hasan and Habilder Monwar Hossain.

Lance Nayek Zahidul Islam was sentenced to six years' term while Sepoy Waheduzzaman to four years'.

The mutineers sentenced to three years' imprisonment are Medical Assistant Lance Nayek Abu Md Nazer Chowdhury, Sepoy driver Balai Chandra

Biswas, Sepoys Ahsanul Azam, Masudul Karim, Mostafizur Rahman and Kamal Chandra Roy.

Lance Nayek Akhteruzzaman, and Nayek DM Enamul Kabir were awarded two years' imprisonment while sepoy Lutfor Rahman, Faruque Hossain, Mozammel Hossain, Habilder Armourer Md Rafiqul Islam and Sepoy (driver) Fasiar Rahman to thirteen months'.

Sepoy Mizanur Rahman was awarded four months' imprisonment.

The court awarded lesser punishment to seven of the 29 accused as they sought mercy confessing to their guilt at the beginning of the trial, which saved time in completing the proceedings.

The president of the court said this day and the verdict would remain as an example in the history of BDR. All legal proceedings were maintained during the trial and the accused were given 57 days' time instead of 27 days.

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EC for DCC polls on May 31

Govt wants it in winter

SHAKHAWAT LITON and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The Election Commission decided to hold the overdue polls to Dhaka City Corporation on May 31 but the government policymakers do not want the election now.

In a letter, the EC Secretariat yesterday informed the LGRD ministry about its preparation and decision to hold the polls on May 31, around three years after expiry of the current DCC's tenure, EC officials said.

The policymakers and ruling Awami League leaders believe the ongoing crisis of power, water and gas and high prices of essentials might go against ruling party's mayoral candidate in the battle for ballots.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday they said holding election to the DCC at this juncture might benefit the opposition's candidate, as they will certainly try to cash in on the ongoing crises.

They favoured holding the polls in winter as they believe the power situation will improve then and prices of essentials would come down.

The EC has decided to announce schedule for the polls sometime in the middle of this month, around 45 days ahead of the polling day, EC officials said.

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Top outlaw killed in 'shootout'

AMANUR AMAN, *Kashtia*

 A top leader of outlawed Gono Bahini Ashrafur Islam alias Mandar was killed in a shootout with Rab in the district town yesterday.

An accused in 50 criminal cases, including 17 killings, Mandar was claiming responsibility to police and local journalists from the spots after the killings.

Rapid Action Battalion officials said their team raided a field of Khorobakhail village in Sadar upazila at 8:15pm when Mandar and his cohorts were holding a secret meeting.

Sensing presence of Rab, the gang opened fire and blasted bombs targeting the law enforcers. Rab retaliated it

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Army personnel prepare water trucks for rolling out at Fakirapool Water Tank, after being deployed yesterday morning to help Dhaka Wasa in easing the acute water crisis in the capital.

 PHOTO: RASHED SHUMAN

Troops in to manage water

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Army personnel yesterday joined in helping Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority ease the persisting water crisis in the capital.

The army men will maintain security and manage smooth supply of water to the city dwellers at every zone of Dhaka Wasa.

Deputy Managing Director of Wasa Liakat Ali Khan told The Daily Star that the army men have started working with the Wasa.

Liakat said troops have been deployed to coordinate with Wasa to deal with the current crisis.

"They will continue to assist until the water situation improves," he said, adding, "The water situation will improve if the electricity supply improves."

One commanding officer in each zone will lead the taskforce, Wasa authorities said.

There are 546 pumps under Dhaka Wasa, of which generators run 293 pumps, sources said.

Kyrgyzstan govt ousted in revolt

47 killed in violence; president flees capital

AFP, *Bishkek*

 Opponents of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev took control yesterday of Kyrgyzstan after a day of spectacular violence that ended with Bakiyev fleeing the capital of the strategic Central Asian state.

Opposition protesters seized the presidential administration last night and announced on state radio that they had formed a provisional government with former foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva at its head.

A worker at Bishkek's international airport told AFP that the 60-year-old Bakiyev had fled the capital aboard a small plane as his opponents consolidated their grip on key national institutions.

Opposition leader Temir Sariyev said on Kyrgyz radio that Prime Minister Daniyar Usenov had signed a letter of resignation and Otunbayeva vowed that the new leadership in the country would move quickly to normalize the situation.

"Power is now in the hands of the people's government," Otunbayeva said in an address on state radio.

"Responsible people have been appointed and are already working to normalize the situation."

The fast-moving events in Kyrgyzstan capped a day of ferocious clashes in Bishkek and other cities that quickly turned into a nationwide revolt against Bakiyev that was believed to have left scores dead.

As unrest swept the Central Asian republic, the opposition

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FOREST GOBBLERS' TRICK Ministry's clarification

In a clarification of a story published in The Daily Star on April 6 titled "Trick Works for Forest Gobblers", the Ministry of Environment and Forests said it permitted Nahar Tea Garden to chop down only dead trees in Khasia settlements.

The explanation says Nahar Tea Garden and others got a High Court order in favour of chopping down all the trees, which the Supreme Court recently stayed.

Regarding poisoning of Garjan trees at Medacchapia Reserve Forest, the ministry said actions were taken against the offenders. It, however, also claimed "no incidence of poisoning took place because of the strong vigilance on the part of forest guards".

Terming the number of

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PM lambasts tardy embankment repair

Asks water ministry to finish work before monsoon

 STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sternly admonished the water resources ministry for failure to repair flood protection embankments in cyclone Aila affected coastal districts of Satkhira and Khulna even 10 months after the storm.

She directed the authorities to finish the job within this month before the monsoon arrives.

She said rehabilitation of Aila affected people, and the repair work should have started by October last year and completed by January this year.

The Water Development Board (WDB) got Tk 115 crore from the food and disaster management ministry in July last year for the repair work.

"It has already been late, and people will suffer

AILA-HIT AREAS Water all around yet not a drop to drink

WASIM BIN HABIB, back from Khulna

With a pitcher held against her waist and a five-litre jerry can in her hand Bijli Dhali takes a three-kilometre walk every day in scorching heat to fetch drinking water for her five-member family.

The water for which she toils is, however, not from any deep tubewells or shallow pump, rather a pond in the area.

Bijli, from Gunari village under Dakope upazila, spends most of the time of day collecting drinking water but her children refuse to drink it, as it is turbid and smelly.

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More loyalty to constitution can put end to coup

Effective training sought in first defence policy

 SHAKHAWAT LITON and RASHIDUL HASAN

The parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry has recommended consolidating the armed forces' loyalty to the country's constitution to prevent military takeovers in future.

It suggested inclusion of an effective training curriculum in the first defence policy to be enacted in Bangladesh to strengthen every soldier's loyalty to the constitution and civil and political authority, sources in the parliamentary body said.

The committee observed that a lack of faithfulness to the constitution had prompted army generals to take over state power twice since independence, violating and ignoring the constitution.

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Shah Alam must face quizzing at DB office

HC rejects his appeal for a stay on bid to interrogate him in ward councillor killing case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected an appeal from Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam, who challenged a police move to interrogate him with links to Ahmed Hossain murder case.

He now has to appear before the Detective Branch of police at its Minto Road office on April 11 to face the grilling.

The HC also refused the prayers for court directives on police to quiz Shah Alam at his residence or any other "neutral place" in presence of his counsel and issuance of a rule seeking explanation from the government on the police move.

During the hearing, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam opposed the writ petition, saying police have the right to ask anyone to appear before them for interrogation in any case.

The petitioner is a very rich and powerful person. He is moving freely despite being convicted and sentenced in a criminal case over a year ago, the attorney general said.

The court directed police not to torture him mentally or physically during questioning with

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In remembrance of Late Humayun Zahir

In our hearts there is a wound which will never heal, in our minds there is a face we will never forget. We, the members of the Board of Directors and the employees of United Commercial Bank Ltd. remember our Founder Director Late Humayun Zahir with deep respect and a heavy heart.

Apart from being a Sponsor Director of United Commercial Bank Ltd., Late Humayun Zahir was the Founder of Ananta Group, Chief Legal Advisor of Janata Insurance Company Ltd., Chairman of Bangladesh Lion's Foundation and Founder Chairman of Dhaka Women's College. On 8 April 1993, he was assassinated in front of his residence at Dhanmondi.

On this very day, we all pray for his departed soul. May the Almighty bless him with eternal peace.

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