

Ugandan army dismisses UN accusations of Congo crimes

REUTERS, Kampala

The Ugandan army yesterday dismissed accusations in a leaked UN draft on atrocities in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo that it committed war crimes during operations there in the 1990s.

Ugandan troops entered Congo in the 1990s to uproot the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a rebel Ugandan group that had established bases there.

But Ugandan soldiers eventually got sucked into the country's various wars including helping to topple the country's long-serving dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko, and twice clashing with their erstwhile ally, Rwanda.

The UN report, however, says Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) soldiers committed grave crimes during its operations, some of which could be classified as war crimes.

Felix Kulayigye, the UPDF's spokesman, said the U.N. charges were false because they lacked detail and sound evidence.

"I dismiss that report as rubbish, absolute rubbish," he told Reuters. "We've been through this before with the International Criminal Court which didn't find any evidence of war crimes against the UPDF. Secondly, we conducted our own judicial investigation which cleared us of such accusations."

The leaked report has sparked a diplomatic row between the United Nations and Rwanda as it says troops

from that country may have committed genocide in Congo.

Rwanda has threatened to pull its U.N. peacekeeping soldiers out of Sudan's Darfur region in protest and the U.N. is delaying publication of the final report to give concerned states a chance to comment.

REIGN OF TERROR
The U.N. report documents several incidents in Congo where UPDF soldiers are accused of atrocities such as massacres of civilians, torture and destroying critical civilian infrastructure.

"In the town of Beni, UPDF soldiers instituted a reign of terror for several years with complete impunity. They carried out summary executions of civilians, arbitrarily detained large numbers of people and subjected them to torture and various other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatments," the report said.

The report said the UPDF used a particularly cruel form of detention that involved putting detainees into deep holes in the ground, where they were forced to live exposed to bad weather.

"What's the motive of the authors of this report? We currently have excellent relations with DRC. Now are these authors aiming at achieving instability or chaos?" Kulayigye said.

In one incident, the UPDF was accused of disabling the turbines on the Inga dam in 1998, depriving the capital Kinshasa and large areas in the province of Bas-Congo of electricity for three weeks.

NHRC to visit

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commission might recommend suspension of the staff for the negligence in carrying out duty.

He mentioned that the drive is likely to begin from next week.

NHRC chairman made the announcement in a press briefing at his office following a courtesy call he made on President Zillur Rahman yesterday morning along with a seven member delegation. He also mentioned that the president has instructed the commission to look into the issue.

"Nothing can be superior to human rights in a democratic society. Democracy and human rights are correlative and synonymous," said Mizanur Rahman as he quoted President Zillur Rahman.

The commission sought assistance from the president for its permanent office and resolving the manpower shortage.

The president also urged the commission not to hesitate in practicing its power ensured by the law to help improve human rights situation in the country and inform him of any influence or intervention from any quarter of the government, NHRC boss said.

"Activities of the commission will not remain limited only to containing extrajudicial killing. The commission will work for the poor people's rights across the country," Mizanur Rahman added.

The NHRC boss also pointed out that the commission is failing to carry out any probe into the extrajudicial killing in absence of investigation and research cells.

NHRC's only permanent member Kazi Reazul Hoque said process is underway to arrange human rights training for government officials including police, Rab, NGO workers, journalists and even for university students.

The NHRC will also visit jail, shelter home and victim protection centres across the country to find out the status of living there.

China pledges

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the deep-sea port.

The Chinese Ambassador invited a delegation to be headed by Hasan Mahmud to discuss the climate change issue with the Chinese Environment Ministry in Beijing.

The state minister said since China is the second largest economy of the world, he sought assistance from Beijing for the socio-economic development of Bangladesh.

He thanked the ambassador for the completion of various projects and in undertaking new projects in the power generation and communication sectors with Chinese assistance.

Earlier, Hasan Mahmud had a preparatory meeting on Bangladesh's participation in COP-16 to be held in Cancun, Mexico in December 2010.

Robber

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Islam of Kotwali Police Station said the angry villagers beat up the robber and he died on the spot.

Police sent the body to Comilla Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

SC stays

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court against the HC verdict within the six weeks' period.

Deputy Attorney General Nazrul Islam Talukder said Mufti Shahidul will have to surrender before the trial court immediately in connection with the corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) after the SC stay order.

If Shahidul does not appear before the trial court, the police can arrest him in this case, he added.

A special court, set up at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, convicted Shahidul on March 19, 2008 and sentenced him to 10 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth worth over Tk 18 lakh illegally.

In response to an appeal filed by the IOJ leader against the special court's verdict, the HC on August 16 this year scrapped his jail sentence and acquitted him of the corruption charges.

Earlier in 2008, Shahidul secured bail from the HC in this case.

Barapukuria coal mine

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The villagers besieged the power plant in Parbatipur upazila in the morning for over two hours to realise their two-point demand including smooth power supply in the area.

The aggrieved residents from Yousubpur, Sherpur, Rambhadrapur, Chakkabir, Ghugumari, Chawhati, Durgapur, Shahapara, Rasulpur and Hamidpur villages threatened to stage greater agitation as the talks failed.

They later withdrew their siege at 1:20pm and announced the October 26 programme. They also demanded an immediate end to lifting excessive underground water for the power plant as their tube-wells are not functioning thanks to a fall in underground water level.

The agitating villagers laid a siege to the plant as the authorities concerned failed

to meet their demands within the deadline. Earlier on September 4, they set the September 13 deadline to meet their demands.

Md Anwarul Haque, general secretary of the committee, alleged hundreds of tube-wells at Dudhipur, Ishabpur and Sherpur remained out of order for long because of the falling underground water level.

The villagers now have to collect drinking water from distant areas and use tainted water released by the power plant for shower and washing, they claimed, adding that skin diseases are spreading in all the nearby villages.

They said though the government set up the 250 MW plant in their area, they are not getting any benefit from it.

"We appealed several times to the authorities concerned to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the villages

but in vain," said a leader of the villagers.

The chief engineer of the power plant said he formed a five-member committee in late August to conduct a survey over the persisting water crisis at the surrounding villages.

After completing the survey he would send the report to the ministry concerned and Bangladesh Power Development Board for a possible remedy, he added.

The water released by the plant is harmful to public health and is widely spreading skin diseases, say health officials. But the authorities claim they are releasing water after treating it inside the plant.

Additional forces from different law-enforcement agencies including Rapid Action Battalion and police were deployed around the plant to avoid any untoward incident.

JMB still getting

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Investigators could not say any further about Ahmed, as JMB never uses real name or identity.

Saidur also said Mamun, a person who was involved in fake currency business in India, had been donating Tk 50,000 every month to JMB fund until he was arrested.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of Saidur's statement.

Saidur, also the former ameer of Habiganj district Jamaat-e-Islami, disclosed JMB gets cash around Tk 50 to Tk 60 lakh in Ramadan.

In Bangla month of Baishakh they also get around Tk 10 lakh mainly from North Bengal in the form of Zakat and Ushr (a portion of harvested crop given as donation).

The statement also reads the highest earning by a unit (comprising several villages) is Tk 10 to 12 thousand, by a upazila unit Tk 50,000, a district unit Tk 2 lakh and a divisional unit Tk 5 to 6 lakh.

An Esher (full-time) member is put in charge of each of the financial units.

Money collected from members' monthly contribution and other sources is first deposited to the unit chief. After meeting the unit's expenditure he sends the surplus to the organisation's upazila level.

Thus money flows through

different tiers -- village, upazila, district and division. Finally, if there is any left over, it goes to the finance division head.

Saidur as the finance division boss was accountable to four Majlish-e-Sura (highest decision-making body) members.

Moreover, the outfit earns around Tk 50,000 from the organisations' taxicabs, CNG-run three wheelers, vans and rickshaws.

JMB members used to operate those vehicles with two objectives -- to disguise as part of the masses and to get used to tough job.

Security and Defence analyst Prof Intiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University International Relations department stressed the need for a big investment in research on militancy as militants, who earlier used different channels and money laundering to send money, are exploring new systems to get the job done.

Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan, director of Rab's intelligence wing, said the militancy funding is really a concern for them as they usually don't know how militants are getting or spending the money.

Contacted, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker said they were inquiring into the matter.

Power plant

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According to PDB officials, Sinohydro submitted two certificates to prove its experience. The first certificate was issued in March, 2002, against a hydro power project in Ghazi Barotha in Pakistan.

A senior PDB official said Sinohydro has participated in two other bids in Bangladesh using the same experience certificates. It participated in tenders under the Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh and Northwest Power Company Ltd, both of which verified the certificates and had found no flaws.

In addition, no other bidder had lodged any complaints against Sinohydro's certificates. He said an influential ruling-party man representing a bidder was trying to foil the tender as his company could not get the job.

Fraud case

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officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station to submit a report on implementation of the arrest warrants by January 3, 2011.

Mizanur Rahman, managing partner of Fein International Company Ltd, filed the case against three brothers of SQ Chowdhury with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court on May 20.

The court did not issue arrest warrant against Samir Quader Chowdhury, another accused of the case, as summons is not yet served to him.

According to the case, Saifuddin and Giasuddin, chairman and managing director of Dhaka Dyeing and Manufacturing Company, had made an agreement with Mizanur Rahman and bought products worth Tk 15 lakh on credit from Fein Ltd.

After a period of delay, Giasuddin, on September 30 last year, had given a cheque for Tk 15 lakh to the company to withdraw the amount from Dutch-Bangla Bank (online).

But the cheque bounced when Mizanur deposited it in his account with Shahjalal Bank Ltd.

Potholed

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have raised my prices to Tk 8, which discourage customers," he said.

Urme, a class eight student of Khilgaon Model School said she goes to school on foot for the last two months as she frequently experienced falling into ditches during the monsoon when the roads get submerged.

The road had been in a wretched state over the last 10 years and the digging only worsened their sufferings, said Nasrin Sultana, a resident of Madhyapara.

"I have seen roads being repaired twice in the last eight years but it got damaged within a week of its completion due to poor construction materials and movement of heavy vehicles," she said.

Executive engineer of zone-4 of the DCC, Abu Saleh Md Mainuddin said though six months was allocated for the job initially it was not enough to complete it.

"We have been setting storm sewers for two km from Banosri canal to Meradia Tempo Stand and another 1.3 km from the canal to Bhuiyapara, he said.

"In the process we have to replace lines of different utilities services which add up to the delay," he said.

It will take us at least three more months to complete the job, he assured.

Gani Miyar, a contractor said the work is slow due to replacing old sewerage lines.

"We spend three days for a work which was supposed to take only one day," he said.

Rivals ready

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"If you want to help democracy, then join the parliament in the next session, and strengthen it. And then the country, its people, and politics will be benefited," Quader said adding that the number of opposition lawmakers is not an issue, rather their participation in the parliament is important.

The AL leader said it will not be positive for democracy if the opposition keeps maintaining its aggressive posture.

BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said his party is planning to organise human marches, grand rallies, human-chains and other democratic demonstrations in a peaceful manner.

"If the government or the ruling party tries to obstruct those programmes then clashes will be imminent," said the former army chief, adding that the government must allow the opposition its democratic right to demonstrations.

He however said politics of conflict is harmful for democratic political atmosphere, and both AL and BNP should shun destructive politics.

He said the government should be tolerant of the opposition, since the opposition is speaking for the people. "The government should sit with the opposition to listen to their concerns. If those are logical then it should address those."

Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, a former Dhaka University vice-chancellor also a member of the AL Advisory Council, said the ruling party could chalk out street level propaganda programmes to let the people know about its development activities, at the same time the opposition could lawfully criticise the government on the streets for its failures.

"But, if the opposition launches a movement to topple the government, that will be highly unwanted and unexpected. And that will eventually lead to clashes," he said.

Referring to The Daily Star-Nielsen August 29 survey, Dr Azad said the people want the opposition to speak in the parliament instead of the streets.

BNP sits on reform

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against people misusing Tarique Rahman's name, create opportunity for party activists so that they can meet the chairperson at least once a week, making front and associate bodies more dynamic, forming fully-fledged committees at all levels of the party and ensuring central leaders' presence at BNP's field-level programmes.

The executive committee members including many party lawmakers are still in the dark about the decisions on these recommendations.

Party high-ups announced some of the decisions through a press briefing a few days after the July meeting. Those decisions were only related to anti-government agitation.

Decisions related to the party's organisational affairs have not been announced and most of the leaders of the executive committee do not know anything about them even though Khaleda had made decisions on some.

BNP did not even issue any letter to the executive committee members to inform them about their recommendations that were verbally approved in the meeting.

During the meeting grassroots leaders raised allegation against a clique at the chairperson's office that was hindering the party's reorganisation but the party high-ups did not take any action against that.

As per a decision, all district and upazila units were asked to have phone and fax facilities in their office but most of the units responded negatively saying the ruling party was preventing them from having such facilities.

According to decisions, secretary level leaders will have to submit a report within three months. Apart from the youth affairs secretary none of the secretaries could even start working in this regard.

The meeting had decided not to encourage anyone to have more than one post in the party but an organising secretary of the party was selected also as president of the Gazipur district unit last month.

Many influential leaders including the senior joint secre-

Face-veil ban under vote in France

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

The French senate is to vote on a bill that would ban niqab or face-covering veils in public, a proposal that has sparked fierce debate in a country that is home to Western Europe's largest Muslim population.

Senators are expected to comfortably approve the bill, after it was passed in the lower house by 335 votes to one in July.

Critics of the proposed law hope that it will eventually be overturned by the constitutional council, France's highest legal body.

If implemented, women caught wearing the niqab in public places including streets, markets, government buildings, private businesses and public transport would be fined \$190.

Men who force their wives or daughters to cover for religious reasons would face tougher penalties of up to \$38,685 and a one-year jail term.

Nadal's career

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Grand Slam titles.

With eight Grand Slams already under his belt before this tournament began, the Spaniard was already assured a spot in the sport's elite, but conquering New York elevated him to a whole new level and left no doubts about who is the number one player in the world.

Nadal overcame the distraction of a two-hour delay and losing his first set of the tournament to beat the brave but ultimately outclassed Djokovic 6-4, 5-7, 6-4, 6-2 after three hours and 43 minutes of unrelenting tension at Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Djokovic, who had beaten Roger Federer in an exhausting five-set semifinal Saturday, expelled any doubts about his fighting qualities with a courageous performance, fending off an astonishing 20 break points during the course of the match, but the pressure eventually wore him down.

After losing the second set on a sloppy service game, Nadal ran away with the last two -- clinching the victory when Djokovic hit a forehand wide -- and collapsed on court as the enormity of his achievement sank in.

tary general have been holding more than one post for a long time.

Talking to The Daily Star about the recommendations of the executive committee, BNP Joint Secretary General Mohammad Shahjahan said he did not know about the decisions in detail. He said he was working to resolve organisational problems of district-level units of Sylhet division as per the decision of the meeting.

"The party disclosed a few recommendations through the press but we did not receive the details in writing," said Shahjahan, also a former lawmaker.

Party lawmaker and Khulna city unit President Nazrul Islam Manju said, "I did not get any formal letter from the party about the recommendations or regulations which was approved verbally in the meeting of the executive committee."

"A senior leader told me that they will issue letters to lawmakers and executive committee members regarding recommendations," Manju, a party lawmaker and assistant organising secretary, told The Daily Star.

Asked whether the party started putting the recommendations in practice, he said he did not see anything like that.

When contacted, party standing committee member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman said the issue was not placed before the standing committee. "It's true we did not discuss it but it's confirmed that the party is working on it and leaders of all levels will get the party direction in time," he said.

Shaon

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exchanging Eid greetings with common people on the Eid day.

Ibrahim Ahmad, an AL activist, was killed by a bullet from the pistol of MP Shaon on August 13. The incident took place in Shaon's car near the parliament building.

Shaon's driver Kala, now in jail, initially said the bullet went off the pistol while Ibrahim was "playing" with it but later confessed to pulling the trigger "accidentally" during a tussle.

ADC Moniruzzaman said they will send a letter to the arms licensing authority within a day or two asking to seize Shaon's pistol as he "violated a particular condition" of the licence.

He, however, declined to mention which condition the Bhola-3 lawmaker violated. Replying to a query, he said they are not thinking of filing an arms case against Shaon.

In the meantime, Rina Islam yesterday said Shaon set some of his men around her Segunbagicha residence in the capital to watch her and to gather information about those who visit her.

Following Ibrahim's death, Kala filed an unnatural death case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station.

Five days after the incident, Ibrahim's brother Masum Ahmed filed a murder case with a Dhaka court accusing Shaon, his driver Kala and 15 others.

Later, in line with the court directive, police filed a murder case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station on September 2.

Floods tighten grip

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people in Chowhali, Shajadpur, Belkuchi, Kazipur and Sadar upazila have been flooded as the Jamuna rose sharply.

The flood control embankment at Shahjadpur might be damaged due to strong current of the mighty river, locals feared.

A severe crisis of drinking water is causing sufferings to the flood-hit people.

Our Kurigram correspondent reports: Flood situation in the district deteriorated yesterday as the Jamuna crossed danger level at Chilmari point in Chilmari upazilas.

Around 85 thousand people of 51 villages in Sadar, Ulipur, Chilmari, Raumari and Rajibpur upazilas have become marooned, according to local union parishad chairmen and agriculture office sources.

Many of the affected people have taken shelter on nearby embankment, roads, flood shelters and schools. They are facing scarcity of food and drinking water.

Contacted, Deputy

Commissioner Md Habibur Rahman said he had already contacted the higher authorities asking for food, clothes and monetary help for the flood-hit.

Our Madaripur correspondent said flood situation in the district worsened as the Arial Khan crossed red mark.

Movement of vehicles on Madaripur-Charmugira-Sreenadi road stopped as a 200-foot stretch of the road was damaged by gushing flood waters.

Around 50,000 people in Sadar and Rajoir upazilas have been affected.

Our Pabna correspondent reports: Rapid rise of the Jamuna at Kaitola point in Bera upazila might inundate fresh areas in the district.

The river is still flowing bellow danger level. If it rises for 2 or 3 days more, it would cross red mark, said an official concerned.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Md Amjad Hossain said the upazila administration has not yet submitted any report on the flood situation. "But we are monitoring the situation."

BNP, Jamaat

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stance regarding joining the parliament Friday.

Meanwhile, BNP and Jamaat high-ups asked their lawmakers to submit notices and questions for the upcoming parliament session that is beginning from September 20.

"Most of our lawmakers are now in their constituencies. The party asked us to submit notices and questions for the coming session although the leaders have not yet decided whether we would return to the parliament," said BNP lawmaker Nazrul Islam Monju, also assistant secretary of the party central committee.

Abdul Momin Talukder, a BNP lawmaker from Bogra, yesterday said he is coming to Dhaka today to submit notices.

Jamaat lawmaker Hamidur Rahman Azad said a decision regarding joining the next session might be taken after all the four-party alliance lawmakers return to the capital.

A number of BNP and Jamaat lawmakers said they were trying to convince their colleagues and policymakers, who are still trying to persuade the top leadership to wage an anti-government movement.

"We are trying to convince those who do not want to

return to the parliament as we believe that it's time to mount pressure on the government from in and outside the parliament," said a Jamaat leader asking not to be named.

Asked about BNP's stance, a senior leader of the party said, "The chairperson had urged the government to sit in a dialogue with all. I think that's enough for us to understand her direction."

He said the government must realise that only a fruitful discussion with the opposition can make the parliament effective.

Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia on Saturday urged the government to sit with all to remove people's problems. She was talking to reporters at a reception she hosted on the Eid occasion.

Khaleda's urge brought a silver lining to the rank and file of the party although at a number of Iftar parties she had hinted anti-government movement after Eid.

BNP-led four-party alliance has been refraining from joining the parliament since June 2, 2010, during the fifth session.

Out of 158 days of five sessions of the ninth parliament, Khaleda Zia was present in the House for five days while BNP 43 days.