

War crimes trial

FROM PAGE 1
Noman, now Vice-chairman of BNP and his elder brother late Abdullah Al Harun, former Awami League leader, made arrangements for us to go to India so that we could be saved," he said.

"However my father [Naton] refused to go anywhere leaving his country and ma [the idol of the temple]," Profulla added.

On the motive behind the killing, Profulla told reporters that families of some 27 Chittagong University teachers including that of Prof Anisuzzaman and Prof Ali Ahsan had taken shelter at their home after March 25, 1971.

He claimed that it angered Salahuddin's father former president of the Muslim League Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, who was for an undivided Pakistan.

"Fazlul spread rumours branding our home a safe haven for freedom fighters and Indian forces and made us a target of the occupation force," he said.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had once visited their home just before the national election of 1970. All along undefeated Fazlul lost in that election for the first time. He was perhaps infuriated by a defeat in the election in which a large number of people from minority communities could cast their votes, he said.

Profulla said that his elder brother Satya Ranjan Singha filed a murder case with Raozan Police Station on January 29, 1972 against 10 people including Salahuddin and his father Fazlul.

Of the accused Fazlul Quader, Abdul Mabud, Golam Ali, Nowab Mia and Abdul Ahmed were arrested while Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, Md Bakshem, Fazal Haque, Abul Kashem and Abdus Salam were on the run, he said.

The then sub-inspector A Hossain of Raozan Police Station submitted a charge sheet against the 10 on January 25, 1973. Fazlul died as a prisoner in Dhaka Central Jail on July 18, 1973.

A few hours after the visit of the investigators, Salahuddin at a press conference at his Goodshill home in the port city said, "I had no role to play in '71. I left for Pakistan on April 8 in 1971..."

"I was not involved in politics in 1971. After the war people of the country brought me into politics."

"I can also say that I heard Profulla Chandra conspired to kill my father," Salahuddin said.

About the murder case against 10 people including himself and his father, Salahuddin said he did not know anything about the case.

"We urge the government not to take any path or steps for

which the people of Chittagong get the chance to get themselves separated from the national government," he said.

"I want the trial of war criminals too. My appeal to the tribunal is that it identify the true war criminals."

"If the trial process is not acceptable to the people and the nation, they may not accept the verdict," he said.

"I am proud of the communal harmony existing in the country. Please don't initiate anything that could jeopardise this harmony," Salahuddin said.

The investigation team is on a two-day visit to Chittagong. After visiting Nutan's home, the team went to two killing fields at Jagatmallapara and Unasatturpara.

The Pakistani army with the help of local collaborators had killed 37 pro-liberation War people, including seven of a family, at Jagatmallapara on April 13, 1971, and 79 Hindus at Unasatturpara the same day, witnesses told investigators.

The Razakers and the Al Badr gathered 37 people irrespective of age and sex at the house of Kiron Chowdhury at Jagatmallapara of Gohira in the name of a peace committee meeting.

The Pakistani force opened fire on them killing them all, said Kiron's nephew Ashis Chowdhury who lost his father, elder brother and other family members including uncle Kiron. All the 37 were Hindus.

In Unasatturpara of Pahartoli union in Raozan, collaborators gathered over 100 villagers, again all Hindus, at the yard of Jogesh Chandra Mohazan in the name of holding a meeting for peace. The Pakistani army sprayed bullets on them killing 79. They dumped the bodies near a spring, said witnesses.

Seventy-year-old Urmila Paul miraculously escaped death that day. She, however, lost her husband Dharendra Paul, mother Biraja Paul and other members of her family. She is still haunted by the barbarism of that day.

After visiting the killing grounds tribunal prosecutor Zead Al Malum told reporters that the team will visit some other mass graves in the port city and will speak with families of war martyrs.

"Media has long been publishing war-crimes allegation against Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and his father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury. We are also getting such witness accounts," Malum added.

Obama slams Ahmadinejad 9/11 remarks

AFP, New York

US President Barack Obama yesterday slammed "hateful," "inexcusable" and "offensive" remarks by Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad about the September 11 attacks in 2001.

Ahmadinejad sparked outrage in the United States on Thursday and a partial walkout in the UN General Assembly chamber when he said in a speech that most people believe the US government staged the attacks.

"It was offensive, it was hateful," Obama said in a television interview with the BBC Persian service, according to an excerpt released by the White House.

Obama said it was particularly offensive for Ahmadinejad to make such a statement in Manhattan, just north of the Ground Zero site of the felled twin towers of the World Trade Center.

The president described the site as a place "where families lost their loved ones, people of all faiths, all ethnicities who see this as the seminal tragedy of this generation -- for him to make a statement like that was inexcusable."

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6-month

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poor wages, he added. "Regularising such workers would have been a better option," he said.

The Arab News reported the foreigners overstaying in the kingdom have been advised to complete the necessary procedures for their departure by reporting to the nearest Department for Foreigners' Affairs from September 25, 2010 to March 23, 2011.

The Saudi ministry has advised all those who overstayed as well as other illegal foreigners to benefit from the clemency, and leave the kingdom within the grace period.

"Violators caught after the grace period will receive tough punishment including jail sentence and fine," it said, and warned those who transport, shelter or employ the overstayers would also receive severe punishment.

The newspaper report said Saudi authorities have been grappling with the problem for the past several years with little success. Jeddah being a commercial and employment centre near the holy city of Mecca is considered a magnet for unauthorised migrants.

Saudi government officials have been seeking ways to resolve the problem, as the expenses of deporting them land squarely on Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom spends Saudi Real (SR) 420 million (Tk 78 crore approximately) annually to send such migrants back to their home countries.

Villagers clash

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and Khatihata village in Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila had a squabble over buying of video CD at Khatihata Biswa Road Market in the morning.

A little while later the villagers of Kuttapara, armed with locally made weapons, attacked the people of Khatihata in the Khatihata Biswa Road area. They damaged at least 12 shops including one hotel and looted the goods and cash.

Villagers of Khatihata responded to the attack resulting in the riot, which lasted for one and a quarter hours. Vehicles on Dhaka-Sylhet and Comilla-Sylhet highways remained stranded from 11:30am to 12:45 pm. Long queues of vehicles were seen at the Khatihata Biswa Road roundabout.

Two police teams from Sarail and Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Station rushed to the spot and charged baton on the rioters. They also fired 19 rounds of rubber bullet and lobbed 14 teargas canisters to bring the situation under control.

Officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Station, Md Hamidul Islam admitted the incident saying that the people of Kuttapara always try to dominate the villagers of Khatihata.

Jihadi books

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Panel of DU teachers. Locals said the building was left abandoned for the next few months till the new tenants moved in.

Police arrested Prof Majumder's nephew Mostafizur Rahman, who is also a DU employee, and his caretaker Siddique Ullah in connection with yesterday's recovery. The arrestees live in the next building, which also belongs to Prof Majumder. The professor lives in a DU teachers' quarter.

Meanwhile, Prof Majumder told journalists that he did not know that the tenants of the building were Shibir activists.

ADC Nurul Islam said the recovered items indicate unlawful activities. Police are investigating the matter and actions will be taken against those who are involved in this, he added.

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Student killed

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congestion. They withdrew the blockade after one and an half hour.

Mustafizur hails from Hatibanda of Lalmonirhat and had been staying at a mess at Kalabagan since 2009, said Asaduzzaman, an uncle of the dead, said.

He also said Mustafizur joined the university after completing his diploma engineering from Rangpur Polytechnic Institute.

Police said the van left the scene immediately after the incident. However, they are trying to trace the vehicle and arrest the driver.

CNG stations

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He is hopeful that the crisis might be resolved by the middle of the next year, as Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL) is setting up new pipelines there with a view to supplying more gas.

Titas Gas Managing Director M Abdul Aziz, however, believes that it might take at least a year to increase gas production and overcome the crisis.

Tanvir Rahman, owner of a CNG refuelling station, said every month he incurs a loss of around Tk8 lakh in bills, bank interest and staff maintenance.

A CNG station needs a gas pressure of 15 PSI (pound per square inch) to run its pumps properly, he said, adding that all the refuelling stations in the area hardly gets 5 to 6 PSI--sometimes zero PSI--which has made business difficult.

Kafiluddin Ahmed, managing director of Confident CNG and Filling Station Ltd, said, "The government's direction to keep CNG stations closed from 3:00pm to 9:00pm amid this gas crisis has severely affected us."

He claimed that every month he has been suffering a loss of Tk6 lakh for the last one and a half years.

"Three years ago, I invested Tk 7.5 crore to start my CNG filling station. Last year I tried to sell the station for Tk 2.5 crore, which was although devastating for me, but no one showed any interest," said Kafiluddin.

Talking to The Daily Star driver of a CNG-converted three-wheeler said he now makes only two trips a day due to the gas crisis. "On good days, I can easily make 10-12 trips," he added.

During a spot visit in the area hundreds of vacant buses--which mostly operate on Nabinagar-Ashulia-Chandra routes-- were seen waiting for hours at gas stations. This triggered scarcity of transportation in the area and forced passengers to thrash about for vehicles risking lives and limbs.

The vehicles operating between short distances are suffering more compared to the long-distance vehicles.

The buses to and from North Bengal do not face the difficulties because they have options to take gas from Dhaka city or if necessary, near Bangabandhu Bridge, said a driver of Shyamoli Paribahan.

The BNP standing committee has observed the government's move to bring amendment to the charter will throw the country into constitutional crisis.

Meanwhile, as per the standing committee decision BNP chairperson will address a mass student rally on October 10 at Ullapara in Sirajganj on the occasion of Shaheed Jehad Day. Jehad was killed while participating in a movement against military dictator Ershad's regime.

Khaleda Zia will also address 21 public meetings in different districts in November to build an anti-government movement.

The standing committee meeting also expressed concern over a number of issues including ruling party's interference in administration and missing of BNP ward councillor Chowdhury Alam.

Children

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NGO that works with children, said awareness-building campaigns are imperative for the laws against hazardous child labour to be of any effect.

Syngenta Bangladesh, an agro-input marketer, conducts farmers' meetings throughout the country to promote safe and judicious use of pesticides, the organisation's Managing Director Sarwar Ahmed said.

Under the programme, farmers are educated on cautionary measures to be taken prior, during and after spraying pesticides, which is necessary to safeguard their health, he added.

Selected firms

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of a regional connectivity study by Centre for Policy Dialogue, said a feasibility study would set the benchmark to evaluate the bidders' offers before the final selection.

The government has to ensure the coordination of Mass Rapid Transit (MRT-4), which is a priority, before commencing the DEE construction, he said.

Prof Md Shamsul Hoque, director of Accident Research Institute and a member of the DEE expert team, said neither the Buet team nor the IIFC would conduct the feasibility study or go for alternatives.

"Our job will be to estimate the outlay on the project and deal with the rehabilitation issue so that the government can take a convenient stance while bargaining with the bidders," said Hoque.

The DEE project has been taken on Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis and it would be built mostly on Bangladesh Railway land.

The four-lane elevated expressway still requires acquisition of a stretch of three kilometres of private land. The government would make a financial arrangement and also contribute fund for this from the PPP allocation.

Private car owners will have an easy passage from the north to the south of the capital saving an hour's time.

The government on August 23 approved the DEE route along the existing railway corridor and intends to complete the construction of the elevated expressway by the end of 2013.

BBA Secretary Mosharrif Hossain said a tangible progress is possible in completing the project in due time if the government expedites acquiring and handing over the required land along with relocating utility service network and the investor is ready with finance.

Meanwhile, some filling station owners alleged that two CNG stations in the zone-- Anonna CNG Filling Station and Maliha Filling Station--are illegally using low differential regulators to puff more gas.

The authorities of the two refuelling stations, however, declined the allegation.

On the contrary, Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Maliha Filling Station, blamed the government for approving so many filling stations which, he believes, triggered the crisis in the area.

BNP won't

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in the House. "Opposition members are taking part in parliamentary standing committee meetings as they get the chance to speak there."

BNP called the briefing to convey the decision of the party's standing committee meeting that started on Tuesday and Thursday night with Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair after Gulshan office.

Meeting sources said the issue was discussed Tuesday night and none of the committee members opposed the proposal of joining JS session.

Committee members empowered the chairperson to settle the matter.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain Tuesday night told reporters the standing committee would finalise the decision about returning to the House on Thursday.

But some other members confirmed that the issue was not discussed at all at Thursday's meeting.

Anwar also said no national problems are addressed in the Sangsad and ruling party members use abusive language towards the opposition.

Asked whether BNP will join the special parliamentary committee on constitutional amendment, the former minister said, "We are yet to be informed what is to be amended."

"They [Awami League] say they will return to 1972 constitution. It's not clear whether they will amend the fourth amendment or any thing else," he added.

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CID arrests

FROM PAGE 1

Mithu was arrested on information provided by Nizam, said Assistant Superintendent of Police Abdul Halim, also the investigation officer of the case.

Earlier the Detective Branch of police arrested Kamal Hossain Kala, driver of lawmaker Shaon, in this connection.

Ibrahim, 38, was killed by a shot from Shaon's gun in the lawmaker's car parked on Block-6 in front of the MP Hostel at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex on August 13.

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UN atomic watchdog throws out resolution against Israel

AFP, Vienna

The UN atomic watchdog threw out yesterday an Arab-backed resolution against Israel which the United States and its western allies feared could have jeopardised newly launched Middle East peace talks.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, on the last day of its annual general conference, voted against the resolution urging Israel to accede to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The paper -- which Washington had asked Arab countries not to table at all for fear it could jeopardise a conference on a nuclear weapons-free Middle East scheduled to be held in 2012 -- was thrown out by the 151-member general assembly, with 51 votes against, 46 votes for and 23 abstentions.

In the run-up to this week's conference, Washington had even flown in President Barack Obama's top nuclear advisor, Gary Samore, to try and persuade Arab nations to drop their plans, warning that it could also sour newly restarted peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Prior to the vote, Israeli ambassador Ehud Azoulay had warned: "Adopting this resolution will be a fatal blow to any hope for future cooperative efforts towards better regional security in the Middle East."

The non-binding resolution is purely symbolic, but had been adopted by a very narrow majority in 2009.

And this year's vote was preceded by some harsh exchanges between Israel and the resolution's Arab sponsors.

Nevertheless, in an initial reaction, US envoy Glyn Davies insisted that there were "no winners nor losers" in the vote.

"What's important about it is, is that it preserves the chance for movement eventually toward a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction once peace there is achieved," he said.

The vote "sends the right, positive signal to the peace process and really allows that process to go ahead," Davies said.

The US ambassador insisted the outcome of the vote did not engender any "feelings of elation or that we've won some great victory."

"What's important is that we've stopped some action from occurring that would have made it very difficult to move forward with both the peace process and toward a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction when that peace is achieved," he said.

Israel is the only Middle East power believed to possess nuclear weapons, but it has never officially confirmed or denied this, opting instead for a policy of ambiguity.

During the general debate earlier this week, Israel's nuclear chief Shaul Chorev reiterated the Jewish state's stance that acceding to the NPT would run against its national interests.

The NPT, which came into force in 1970, has been signed by 189 states. Only three countries -- India, Pakistan and Israel -- have not signed it.

Israeli ambassador Azoulay denounced the resolution as being "political by its nature."

UN holds

FROM PAGE 16

Global grain prices remain at a two-year high and are still rising. Rising incomes in developing countries have also boosted demands for meat.

Top FAO officials describe prices as stubbornly high and say the financial crisis is straining the ability of the poor to cope.

The agency also warns that prices in future are likely to be more volatile.

Officials say governments should consider more regulation of food markets and maintaining emergency stocks.

The FAO's own monthly index of food prices has risen by 25% since early last year.

The UN said of the meeting: "Delegates will share information on recent market instability and examine the role of market information and transparency for crops such as grains and rice."

Rises will be felt