

Mobile court

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However, neither the court nor police talked to the girl who was not present during the trial.

Officer-in-charge (OC) Shiblee Noman of Ramna Police Station said they could not talk to the girl as her father kept her away for security reasons.

No defence witness testified in the trial. Asked why there was no defence witness on the stand, the OC said in mobile courts cross-examination is not necessary.

After the sentencing, Sajib told reporters that he did not kidnap the girl, neither did he ever stalk her, rather they had been dating for more than three years.

He said he has many letters written to him by the girl, and many amorous SMS sent to his cellphone by her.

The girl's father however said Sajib's claim of dating his daughter is completely false.

When The Daily Star asked Executive Magistrate Babul Mia whether he took the girl's deposition about the matter before delivering the verdict, he said as the girl is a minor her statement is of no consequence.

The OC also said that deposition of the victim was not necessary in the mobile court, as her father was representing her.

He said Faruque stated in the GD that Sajib used to stalk his daughter on her way to school, and Faruque had to shift his residence from Gabtala to Nayatola two months back due to the stalking.

In the police station Faruque said, "I and my family had to flee to Uttara in fear, after my daughter was kidnapped by Sajib before the Eid. I several times complained about him to his father, but his father asked me to shift my family to a different area, saying his drug addict son is out of control."

NEIGHBOURS' VERSION
During a visit to Gabtala by The Daily Star, local residents however gave a different account.

Shopkeeper Polish, who was a witness when the girl was handed over to her parents by Sajib's parents, said the girl went to Sajib's house on her own in the evening three days before the Eid.

The girl told Sajib and his parents that she left her parents' house with bag and baggage, and would not go back.

Sajib's parents immediately informed the girl's parents, and forcefully handed her over to them, while she kept saying that she would not survive without Sajib, said

Polish. Some other neighbours also said the girl used to frequently visit Sajib's shop, and they never heard that Sajib stalked her, but they were also not aware that the two had been dating.

HOW THE VERDICT WAS DELIVERED
On information that a mobile court would be convened to try an alleged stalker, reporters thronged Ramna Police Station at noon where Sajib was in custody.

OC Noman informed the reporters that an executive magistrate was on his way to convene the court.

Around 3:30pm Executive Magistrate Babul reached the police station in a car and started the trial in the OC's room in front of the reporters, the girl's father, and other police personnel.

A statement was prepared by police and the girl's father, which was handed over to the magistrate who took a signature of Sajib on that. Sajib was not allowed to read the statement on which he signed.

When The Daily Star asked the magistrate what the statement was about, he replied it was a confession.

After Sajib signed on to the confession, the magistrate asked the OC who will sign as witnesses.

The girl's father Faruque then arranged prosecution witnesses.

OTHER INCIDENTS SPARKED BY STALKING
Our Sirajganj correspondent reported that one was arrested and at least five were injured in an incident of protest against a stalker in Senbhagabari village under Belkuchi upazila of the district yesterday.

Police and local sources said Momin Sheikh of the village used to stalk a girl of class VII on her way to school.

Yesterday morning the girl's uncle protested when Momin was stalking her. In retaliation an angry Momin beat up the uncle severely.

Hearing the news, locals launched an attack on Momin's house, leaving five of the family injured.

Police arrested Tutul, one of Momin's accomplices, after a case was filed with Belkuchi Police Station in this connection.

Our Gopalganj correspondent reported that a mobile court sentenced Subrata Sarker, 16, to 6-month imprisonment yesterday for stalking a girl of class V, and for making unwelcome advances towards her.

After receiving complaints from the victim and her elder sister, Gopalganj police arrested Subrata from a mobile phone shop in Keramat Plaza of the town.

Govt wary

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high," Razzaque noted. Pointing at the mismatch between production and demand for rice, an expert said it is very important that the government steps up efforts to increase production of food crops, particularly rice.

Former director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), Dr Quazi Shahabuddin, who monitors the grains market, said the government decision is practical since price of rice is already high, which is an incentive for farmers.

"However, if there is a situation that farmers are not getting proper price, the government has to change its decision."

He pointed out that since the price of rice is already high, building an adequate public food stock from whatever sources is "crucial for having a social safety net".

The minister said if the government finds its decision adversely affecting farmers, it will go for procurement of Aman rice from them.

He mentioned that the government has decided to import rice and wheat to ensure adequate supply and lower prices of those in the domestic market.

The FPMU, comprised of representatives from the ministries of food, finance, agriculture and commerce, took the decision at a time when the price of coarse rice ranges from Tk 31 to 34 a kg compared to Tk 22-24 a year back.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), flour price ranges from Tk 28 to 31 as against Tk 19-22 a year ago.

Razzaque said import price of rice will be Tk 33-34 a kg.

In reply to a question on the government decision, he said, "We have to think also about the 40 percent people below the poverty line. So, we want to increase the total supply (of food grains) to stabilise food prices."

Razzaque said despite a good harvest in Boro season this year, price of food grains was more than that of last year.

Asked if the increasing import of cereals indicates the government target of food autarky by 2013 might not be achieved, he said the domestic demand for wheat is 40 lakh tonnes a year, but the production is only 10-12 lakh tonnes.

Aman production this year will be around 1.35 crore tonnes.

The minister said Bangladesh is almost self-sufficient in rice, but not in wheat. So, there is no alternative to importing wheat.

"Food prices are globally high now. No country other than Vietnam and Thailand is now exporting rice," Razzaque said.

And it is only a global good harvest of wheat next year that can lower food prices, he added.

Primary

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are taking the exams from the madrasas.

1,878 physically challenged students and 366 overseas students will also take the exam.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Asraf Ameen is likely to visit five centres outside Dhaka while Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will visit some centres in the capital.

6,94,501 examinees from the Dhaka Division will take the exams while 4,29,611 students from Chittagong; 2,79,683 from Rajshahi; 2,66,439 from Rangpur; 1,42,393 from Sylhet and 1,18,236 students from Barisal division will sit for the exams, according to official data.

The government introduced the public exam instead of primary scholarship examination last year with a view to imparting education of similar standards to all students.

Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of their results in two categories -- talent-pool and general which again will be distributed equally to both boys and girls.

The students of class V must pass the terminal examination and collect their certificates before they enrol for class VI.

The government has decided to increase the number of scholarships in general category by 5,000 this year.

The exams will end on November 29 and results will be published sometime between December 22 and December 27.

AL MP Lutful

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his wife, a son, a daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

He came to his Gulshan residence from Brahmanbaria around 2:30am yesterday and went to bed. At 11:00am, his daughter entered his bedroom and found that his body had become cold, family sources said.

He was rushed to Apollo Hospital, where an attending doctor declared him dead. The doctor said he died around 10:00am while asleep, they added.

His first namaj-e-janaza was held yesterday after Maghrib prayers at a mosque in Gulshan.

His second namaj-e-janaza will be organised at the South Plaza of Sangsad Bhaban today, to be followed by a third one at his village home in Brahmanbaria, where he will be laid to eternal rest with state honour.

President Zillur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed profound shock at the demise of Lutful Hai.

In his message, the president recalled the colourful political life of the late lawmaker (Brahmanbaria-3) and said the nation would remember his contribution in establishing democracy in the country.

Prime Minister Hasina, who is now in London en route to Russia, recalled his courageous role in different democratic movements.

Hasina, also president of AL, said the death of the seasoned politician is an irreparable loss to the nation.

They prayed for the salvation of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to his bereaved family members.

Speaker of Jatiya Sangsad

PM reaches

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Habitat" conference received the premier at the airport.

Besides, Bangladeshi expatriates living in Russia also welcomed her showering flowers petals and presenting bouquets.

Later, the PM and members of her entourage were brought to guesthouse by a ceremonial motorcade.

Hasina will join the high level plenary of global "Tiger Natural Habitat" conference in Russia and hold bilateral talks with Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao today.

She will address the conference at 3:15pm (Local time) today.

Apart from this, Hasina will join a working lunch to be hosted by her Russian counterpart.

No wild tigers

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The Associated Press. "In the end, the tigers are the inspiration and the flagship for much broader efforts to conserve forests and grasslands."

The program aims to protect tiger habitats, eradicate poaching, smuggling, and illegal trade of tigers and their parts, and also create incentives for local communities to engage them in helping protect the big cats.

The summit, which runs through Wednesday, is hosted by Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, who has used encounters with tigers and other wild animals to bolster his image. It's driven by the Global Tiger Initiative which was launched two years ago by World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

Leape said that along with a stronger action against poaching, it's necessary to set up specialized reserves for tigers and restore and conserve forests outside them to let tigers expand.

"And you have to find a way to make it work for the local communities so that they would be partners in tigers conservation and benefit from them," Leape said.

"To save tigers you need to save the forests, grasslands and lots of other species," he added. "But at the same time you are also conserving the foundations of the societies who live there. Their economy depends very much on the food, water and materials they get from those forests."

About 30 percent of the program's cost would go toward suppressing the poaching of tigers and of the animals they prey on.

Russia's Natural Resources Minister Yuri Trutnev said that Russia and China will create a protected area for tigers alongside their border and pool resources to combat poaching.

Leape said that for some of the nations involved outside financing would be essential to fulfill the goals.

Abdul Hamid, Deputy Speaker Col (ret) Shawkat Ali, and Chief Whip Abdus Shahid also expressed deep sorrow at the death of the elderly AL leader.

Late Lutful Hai was chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry. He was also president of Brahmanbaria district AL.

The valiant freedom fighter was a guerrilla adviser of sector-3 during the 1971 Liberation War.

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent adds, Lutful Hai joined student politics in 1955 as a follower of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In 1957, he was elected assistant general secretary of Magura College Central Students' Union.

Dhaka College authorities expelled him for taking part in anti-Ayub government movement in 1958.

Hai, also a renowned lawyer, was elected member of the provincial government of the then East Pakistan in 1970.

CID given

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Court passed the order after CID's Special Superintendent of Police Abdul Kahar Akand submitted a petition seeking four months time to submit the report of the case.

Abdul Kahar, also investigation officer (IO) of the case, said former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, Islamic Democratic Party (IDP) leader Moulana Sheikh Abdus Salam, Lasker-e-Taiba (LeT) member Abdul Majid Butt, Dhaka City Corporation Ward Councillor Ariful Islam Arif, Lt Col (Ret) Saiful Islam Duke and LeT leader Abdul Malek were shown arrested in the cases.

Earlier, the arrestees provided important information about the collection and supply of the grenades for attack on the rally at Bangabandhu Avenue.

More over, of the arrestees, Majid Butt and Abdus Salam made confessions before magistrates about their involvement in the attack, the IO said.

So, he sought more time to arrest the culprits involved with supplying grenades. The other case filed under the Explosive Substances Act is pending with the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court.

On August 3 last year, a Dhaka court ordered the inspector general of police to reinvestigate the cases and submit its reports within two months after identifying the persons involved in the carnage of August 21, 2004.

It's all for a mobile

8-yr-old boy murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An 8-year-old boy was murdered for a mobile phone in Sujanagar upazila of the district.

The boy, Md Rahat Pramanik, son of Md Hafiz Uddin of village Hassampur of Nazirganj union, was a student of class two at the local primary school.

Rahat was missing since Sunday. Later, the police recovered his body from the river Padma at Hassampur village at around 8:00am yesterday.

Following information from the locals, police arrested Jahidul Islam, a neighbour of the dead child.

Officer-in-Charge of Sujanagar police station ABM Jahid Hossain said, "Jahid has confessed to killing the boy. Police also recovered the mobile set from him."

"Jahid is a listed criminal. He took Rahat to snatch his mobile and then strangled and dumped him in the river", the OC added.

A case was filed with Sujanagar police station.

Mir Shawkat

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chief whip of the opposition in parliament, leaders of different political parties, distinguished personalities and wellwishers took part.

A guard of honour was given to war hero Mir Shawkat Ali after the janaza.

On behalf of President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Opposition Leader in parliament Khaleda Zia, their representatives placed wreaths on the coffin.

Besides, Deputy Speaker Col (ret) Shawkat Ali, Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sazeda Chowdhury, Treasury Bench Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Ministry of Liberation War Affairs and other organisations placed wreaths on the coffin. The deputy speaker also placed a wreath on behalf of Speaker Abdul Hamid.

The last janaza was held around 2:30pm at the central mosque of Dhaka Cantonment where the army chief, officers and members of the armed forces, former army chiefs and retired senior officers were present.

Mir Shawkat Ali died Saturday evening at his Gulshan residence due to a massive cardiac arrest.

He was born on December 9, 1936 at Nazira Bazar in the capital. He joined the 2nd East Bengal Regiment in 1958.

During the Liberation War in 1971, he was appointed commander of sector-5. He was awarded Bir Uttam for his outstanding contribution to the country's independence.

4-lane

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government to cancel the deal and go for new consultants.

The consultancy row then turned into a legal battle. Nespak filed a writ petition with the High Court, which rejected it. Nespak then moved to the Supreme Court but the apex court in its verdict issued "no order".

Against this backdrop, the government went for the new consulting firm yesterday.

The delay might make the highway impossible to negotiate as the number of vehicles plying it has crossed 22,000 a day, prolonging a six-hour journey to 10-15 hours.

The country's busiest highway linking the port city and the capital has become a death trap due to increasing vehicular movement and frequent accidents.

The purchase committee yesterday also approved proposal for procurement of 211 vehicles for upazila parishes at a cost of Tk 87.56 crore. Each vehicle will cost Tk 41.50 lakh on an average.

A decision to buy 471 vehicles for upazila parishes was taken last year. Earlier, 260 vehicles were purchased in three phases.

Of the vehicles, 50 were bought for Tk 32.50 lakh each, 130 for Tk 35.39 lakh each and 80 for Tk 38 lakh each.

The Local Government Division informed the purchase committee that due to exchange rate fluctuation and increase in tax, vehicles of the same quality had to be bought at higher prices in the later stages. All the vehicles were bought from state-owned Progat Industries Ltd.

The committee meeting also approved import of 2.5 lakh tonnes of fertiliser from Tunisia under state-to-state arrangement, and 25,000 tonnes from Morocco in the same way.

Regret? No

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not made properly and I will examine the legal aspects of it. None will be able to detach me from BNP," he said at a press briefing at his Dhanmondi residence.

Huda said, "Moudud Ahmed [BNP standing committee member and former law minister] is the champion of Noakhali, not the whole country. How will the country survive if such clique tries to get the upper hand in Dhaka? We must not encourage regionalism."

He hoped that BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia would withdraw the expulsion order as she did many times in the past.

The BNP standing committee expelled Huda from the party on Sunday accusing him of breaching party discipline and making anti-party comments.

"I do not regret my comments and that is why I will not appeal for the withdrawal of the expulsion," said Huda.

On Friday, Huda slammed the BNP chairperson's counsels saying that Khaleda was "evicted" from cantonment house due to her lawyers' mistake and calling a hartal before Eid-ul-Azha was wrong.

During yesterday's press briefing he said, "I told that

hartal before the Eid created problems for the homebound people. It is a simple observation. Madam should have issued a show-cause notice to those who opted for the hartal."

On his next course of action Huda said he would launch a campaign across the country to make the two top leaders of the treasury and opposition sit together to resolve the country's problems and eradicate confrontational politics.

Replying to a question, Huda, who was a member of BNP's first standing committee led by Ziaur Rahman, said, "Madam gave me many things but I don't know why she does not want me to have a party post."

Huda was hinting at the standing committee membership.

Asked, he said he wishes to contest the next general elections as a BNP candidate. "People of my constituency [Dohar, Dhaka] would break legs of anyone willing to contest under BNP banner other than me," he added.

Huda concluded the press briefing saying, "Has Madam forgotten how many meetings she had held here in this house?" He claimed that the anti-Ershad movement started from his Dhanmondi residence.

BNP calls hartal

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upazilas on November 25-27 and in divisional headquarters on November 28.

It will bring pro-hartal processions on November 29.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain announced the set of programmes while addressing newsmen at party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office during its standing committee meeting last night.

Meeting sources, however, said the party selected November 30 for hartal to mount pressure on the judiciary and the government.

The Supreme Court fixed November 29 for the hearing on Khaleda's leave-to-appeal petition against a High Court verdict that upheld a government notice asking her to vacate the Mainul Road house in Dhaka Cantonment.

The hartal may be extended for another day if the Supreme Court verdict goes against Khaleda or the government takes any sort of action

against the party's protest programmes including hartal, sources added.

The meeting also passed a motion of condolence for Lt Gen (ret) Mir Shawkat Ali, a war veteran who died on Saturday, amid opposition from Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, said a committee member requesting anonymity.

"Shawkat was not a BNP leader as he resigned from the party," sources quoted Salahuddin as saying.

Lt Gen (ret) Mahbubur Rahman and Brig Gen (ret) ASM Hannan Shah vehemently protested Salahuddin.

BNP standing committee on Sunday night expelled the party's vice-chairman Nazmul Huda for "breaking party discipline" and then the chairperson adjourned the meeting till yesterday evening.

It resumed at 8:00pm and continued till 10:00pm.

At one stage, Delwar came out of the meeting and disclosed the party decision to the newsmen.

BNP enforced a country-wide hartal on November 14 protesting the "eviction" of Khaleda Zia from the cantonment house.

Earlier on June 27, BNP called first hartal in more than three and a half years.

Delwar said, "We enforced the June 27 hartal making the same demands but the government failed to improve the situation within this time. The government even evicted Khaleda Zia from her house...they also conducted propaganda against the leader of the opposition using ISPR [Inter Services Public Relations]."

DB raids

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Station, told The Daily Star that none was arrested and nothing was seized from the party office.

Jamaat protested and condemned the raid.

In a written statement Acting Jamaat Ameer Mokbul Ahmad and Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam alleged that police broke one of the almirahs during the raid and took away copies of the party constitution and several other publications.

The Jamaat leaders also termed the raid harassment of its leaders and activists.

Dipjol's arms

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appeal claiming Dipjol had been using his arms in illegal activities including threatening people.

Dipjol has licenses for a single barrel shotgun, a pistol, a rifle, and a double barrel shotgun, said police sources.

Police have been on a massive drive for the last five days in the capital to arrest Dipjol on charges of assaulting a traffic police constable in Gabtala area of the capital on November 16.

The actor beat up Traffic Police Constable Altaf Uddin as the constable stopped his car for traffic rules violation.

Altaf later filed a case with Darus Salam Police Station in connection with the incident.

N Korea's nuke disclosures

spark global alarm

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's claims to have a working uranium enrichment plant -- a possible second route to a nuclear bomb -- sparked anger yesterday in Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

Top US defence officials said the plant would give the hard-line communist state the potential to build more nuclear weapons, while Japan called the disclosure "absolutely unacceptable" and South Korea voiced "grave concerns".

Washington's special envoy for Pyongyang Stephen Bosworth said the move was provocative but "not a crisis", and he left the door open for engagement with the reclusive communist state.

Asked about the crisis over the paper supply, NCTB Chairman Mostafa Kamal Uddin said since the matter lies with the primary and mass education ministry, they would soon discuss it with the ministry to find out a solution.

Evidence

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and the findings came about two months ago. But the matter came to prominence following the growing acrimony between Awami League and BNP over the evacuation of Khaleda Zia from her cantonment residence.

The print and electronic media ran reports and programmes based on the rumour that the government might move to file cases against Khaleda and her two sons to compel BNP to drop its plan for anti-government programmes.

ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman however brushed aside any possibility of the government using the commission for the purpose.

"The commission will file a case only after it is totally convinced that the case would lead to punishment of the accused," he said.