Mega trial opens

FROM PAGE 1 judge in his inaugural speech. "It is such a case which can get a place in the Guinness Book of World Records," he commented

Considering the number of accused and security of the court the government has built a special onestorey tin-shed building near the Dhaka Central Jail at Bakshi Bazar. Around one thousand members from different law-enforcement and intelligence agencies were on hand to ensure security.

The court in its proceedings also took into cognisance charges of another case filed for possessing and using explosives and arms and ammunition during the carnage against 808 of the accused. It also rejected six dozens bail petitions filed earlier and assured the lawyers of giving them the documents at the shortest possible time.

Over a thousand relatives of the accused appeared from across the country with clothes and food to see their detained near and dear ones and feed them. But none of them was allowed except the wife of accused former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Though Metropolitan Sessions Judge, Dhaka Mohammad Zohurul Haque was scheduled to sit at the new courtroom at 9:30am, he came at quarter past 11:00am as it took time to bring all the accused in the dock from jail.

Considering the huge number of accused there was special type of dock instead of traditional wooden dock in the court. There were three parts in the 270 feet long and 53 feet wide courtroom and every part was separated by iron grill. The first part is for the judge's bench and lawyers, second part, the largest, for the accused and the third part for the visitors.

Sound system was used to cover the large courtroom and the judge and lawyers used microphones, the first ever at a sessions judge's court in the country.

During over one-and-ahalf-hour-long proceedings in the jam-packed courtroom, where all the lawyers and journalists did not have space to sit, most of the time the court environment was very noisy as most of the defence lawyers were busy alking to their clients. This prompted the judge to ask the lawyers to stop such "illegal" conversation.

The judge also requested defence counsel Sanaullah Mia, who is also the president of Dhaka Bar Association, to refrain his colleagues from talking to

the accused. But the judge's directive and Sanaullah's efforts went in vain and the lawyers continued their conversation. At one stage, the judge blasted the lawyers including

Sanaullah. As Chief Prosecutor Anisul Huq drew the court's attention to the noisy atmosphere, the judge said in utter disappointment, pointing to Sanaullah Mian, "Those of you who indulge in such activities don't obey the law and your leadership too. Why have they become lawyers who don't obey the

law themselves?" As the prosecutor again raised the point that the accused were talking and moving without permission, the judge said, "Our lawyers are 'double graduates' and they don't obey the law. If the learned advocates don't

obey the law, how their clients will do it?" From the beginning of yesterday's proceedings the judge repeatedly asked the lawyers to make their submission brief and speak about relevant issues only. The judge specially asked the defence to make submis-

sion by a few on behalf of them as it was not possible to give time to everyone and since most of the prayers were same in nature.

But almost everyone of the defence wanted to speak about their petitions, of which 72 were for bail including those for BNP leader Pintu and muchtalked-about BDR Deputy Assistant Director Mohammad Towhidul

Islam, who is the prime accused, and ex-BDR member and ward Awami League leader Torab Ali Akand.

The judge allowed every lawyer to deliver on their over four dozens separate bail prayers. But at one stage, he had to ask the lawyers only to mention their clients' names saying he gave the opportunity to ensure and make their clients happy that they moved for them. Sanaullah Mian who

moved for Pintu told the court that the government inquiry committee report mentioned that his client helped fleeing BDR jawans cross the Buriganga on boat, but no one saw him there. He told the court for such

offence the highest punishment is five-year imprisonment. He also argued that for such offence, section 302 couldn't be applied. He also said Pintu was

arrested and inducted in the charge sheet out of political vengeance.

Other lawyers mostly sought bail for their clients on humanitarian and health grounds and assured the court that the accused would not flee.

However, Chief Prosecutor Anisul Huq and another prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol opposed the bail prayers saying the trial of an important and sensitive case has just begun and at this moment no one should get

On Pintu, Kajol said there are witnesses and sufficient evidence against Pintu. He added Pintu has been charged with conspiracy for the mutiny and carnage. Kajol also said he will present the evidence and witnesses before the court in proper time.

Opposing DAD Towhid's bail Kajol said he went to meet the prime minister for negotiations during the bloody mutiny on February 25-26 in 2009 killing and leaving behind 74 people including 57 army officers.

All the defence lawyers complained that they did not even have the copies of the case, let alone copies of charge sheet, seizure list, inquest and post-mortem reports and other documents. They blamed the prosecution for not cooperating with them in this regard.

Sanaullah Mian and | yesterday. some other lawyers said they could not give their submission without knowing the content of the docu-

The judge repeatedly mentioned that it needs time to make copies of 1.6 crore pages because of lack of necessary equipment and manpower in the court. He however assured the lawyers that they would get the copies as soon as possi-

The judge gave a short explanation about why the case is important saying more than 50 army officers were killed, 559 accused have already made confessional statements containing 2,053 pages, while 775 accused made statements under section 161 (of the Criminal Procedure Code).

He said the total number of accused in the case is 824. Of them, two (deputy assistant director Abdur Rahim and havilder Shafiqul Islam) died, while 21 of

them are absconding. Now 801 accused were present at the court as the date was fixed earlier to take the case into cognisance.

"We will establish 100 percent justice and set precedence in the world. This is absolutely a court of session. It is a court controlled by the Supreme Court and we'll not deviate from justice in any way,' said the judge.

The court's proceedings were adjourned till February 3. On that day hearing on the charge framing will be held.

After the bloody carnage CID investigated the criminal cases filed with New Market police and pressed charges on July 12 last year. The trial for the mutiny against the accused are now going on in Dhaka and different other BDR units in the country.

PM's life

FROM PAGE 20 of banned Jama'atul

Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) detained in Chittagong Central Jail are not released within a month.

Rafiqul Quader, jailer of Chittagong Central Jail, received a letter containing the threat around 1:00pm yesterday.

The senders of the letter claimed themselves to be members of JMB's suicide squad. Though names of two brothers Abdul Mannan and Abdul Hannan are mentioned in the single page letter, only the name of Abdul Mannan is written as the sender on the envelope, said Quader.

He told The Daily Star that the return address written on the envelope is West Ghoramara, Pakka Mashjid, Kumira, Sitakunda, Chittagong. The senders also threatened to bomb police stations, the jailer added.

The letter reads Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina survived this year's August 15, "but she will not be alive in future as she will also be blown to smithereens". The senders also men-

tioned a name Alauddin in the letter as their nephew, and demanded his release first, the jailer added. The letter, however, did

detained JMB operatives the senders want to free. Quader said security measures were beefed up

not mention how many

following the threat. "We have strengthened security measures and informed the inspector general of prison, police commissioner, and other

senior civil administration

and law enforcement offi-

cials," he said. He said he filed a general diary with Kotwali Police Station in connection with the threat.

Twenty seven JMB men, including its Chittagong Commander Javed Iqbal alias Mohammad, are serving various terms of sentences in Chittagong Central Jail.

Afghan kidnap **FROM PAGE 20**

"We are living in our worst nightmares", Hamida Yasmin, spouse of Lablu Rahman, said at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity in the city

"We are still in the dark about what is going on with our family members", Hamida added.

While speaking about the kidnapping in the conference, the anxious wives, sons, daughters and parents of the abducted workers sought PM's intervention for their safe release.

The miscreants abducted seven Bangladeshis at gunpoint from an asphalt plant. Two of them were released later. The five Bangladeshis, who had been working in Samwon Company for last six years remain hostage to the mili-

Mujibur Rahman, who managed to escape from the kidnappers, said "Some 16 masked terrorists firing several rounds of bullet and two rockets entered into the camp and took the Bangladeshis away at gun-

point". Some local cattle herders saw the terrorists and informed the local police. The police later managed to rescue some of the abducted workers, Mujibur

According to a press release issued from the foreign ministry on December 20, the government contacted the released Bangladeshi workers who informed that five Bangladeshi hostages were in good health and had been moved to Mazar-e-Sharif.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has formally requested Afghanistan to extend allout support to secure release of the five hostages.

The Afghan government has given assurance that they would look into the matter.

All 31 accused

FROM PAGE 1

a test for recruitment of class-III government employees after Deputy Commissioner AFM Manjur Kadir refused to entertain demands from local AL lawmaker Golam Faruk Prince. The attackers assaulted

government officers including two additional deputy their vehicles.

vehicles, forcing the authority to halt the examination. Magistrates Sarwar Alam

31 Awami, Jubo and Chhatra League leaders and activists. Sarwar charged them with vandalism and arson attack while Moinul accused them of attacking govern-

Defence lawyer Abdul Ahad Babu said the court acquitted the accused of the charges for lack of evidence and witness accounts that could prove them guilty.

duced before the court and the statements of the witnesses could not prove the charges against my clients," said Ahad, also office secretary of AL district unit. Assistant public prosecu-

tor Ahsan Habib Hassan blamed the acquittal of the accused on the complainants and the witnesses. "Although summoned

several times, the main witnesses did not appear before the court," he said. Of the 18 witnesses, only

court to give statement.

requested the main witnesses -- the then ADC Emam Uddin Kabir, Monir Hossain, representative from the DC office and his driver -to give statement before the court. But they never showed

court official said complainant Sarwar did not mention the names of the accused during the hearing but he did so in the case statement.

during the hearing asked him whether he knew the names during the attack.

attackers. "These contradictory statements also helped the accused get cleared of the charges," the prosecutor

The eight witnesses just

"In her address the prime

minister will point out the

development activities of

the government, how much

of its electoral pledges has

been met and how it is deal-

ing with them," said

Mahabubul Alam Hanif,

prime minister's special

She will also mention the

current political situation

and how the government is

moving forward, added

Hanif, also AL acting general

and building a digital

Bangladesh by 2021, the

grand alliance government

started its journey on

January 6, 2009, after its

landslide victory in

The prime minister will

iterate the economic prog-

ress the country has made

with increasing exports and

compare those with the

previous BNP-Jamaat coali-

increased foreign invest-

ment, remittance from

Bangladeshi workers, for-

eign currency reserve,

import, tax collection,

Her address will cover

She will also cite the

tion government.

among others.

December 2008 elections.

With a vision for change

assistant.

secretary.

PM addresses

described the incident, said

were very happy with the

that we had been implicated

in the case for harassment,"

said former BCL leader

Police arrested six

accused in the cases while 25

others surrendered before a

court on September 26 last

Hossain, investigation offi-

cer of the case filed for van-

dalism and arson, submitted

a charge sheet against them

on September 28 for vandal-

ism, halting the examination

forcibly and obstructing

The IO said, "The accused

beat up teachers and

examinees of two exam

centres and snatched admit

cards, question and answer

papers, and application

forms. They assaulted com-

plainant magistrate Sarwar

Alam, the additional deputy

commissioner (revenue),

the additional district mag-

istrate, upazila nirbahi offi-

cer (Sadar) and other offi-

cers when they tried to calm

drew the DC, superinten-

dent of police and the UNC

in Pabna to end the row

between the local adminis-

tration and ruling party men

Clarification

perception of the judiciary

were given in three compact

disks", TIB says, should read:

the litigants' experiences in

the form of raw data were

submitted to the Court in a

compact disk containing

three files in EXCEL, STATA

"Salauddin Quader

Chowdhury declined to get

admitted and even did not

agree to have his lab tests

done," claimed Brig Gen

Abdul Mazid, director of

BSMMU at a press briefing

held at his office yesterday

per the court order, they had

formed a three-member

medical boardfor his treat-

himself to be fit and healthy

while he was taken to the

hospital for medical check-

2:30pm for health check.

The jail authorities took

The Supreme Court

however, on Tuesday stayed

BNP's stance on war crimes

trial, their hartal, previous

cantonment residence of

Khaleda Zia, corruption by

the BNP-Jamaat coalition

government and trial of war

inform the countrymen

about the government's

initiatives for infrastructure

development, achievements

in the communications

sector, resolving housing

crisis, renovating river ports,

protecting environment,

strengthening parliament

and local government and

passing of acts in the parlia-

ernment's initiatives in

agriculture sector, tackling

price hike of essentials,

resolving power and gas

crisis, increased recruitment

for freedom fighters, educa-

tion policy, text book distri-

bution, women, children

games.

She will refer to her gov-

The prime minister will

criminals.

the HC order for six weeks.

him back to Narayanganj jail

"The BNP leader claimed

The physician also said as

and SPSS."

SQ Chy

FROM PAGE 20

morning.

up," he added.

around 3:30pm.

"All documents containing

over the incident.

The government with-

them.

government activities.

Sub-inspector Anwar

Mostafizur Rahman.

"The court verdict proved

judgement.

year.

the lawyer. Complainant Sarwar said, "It is not my duty to bring the witnesses to the court." He denied commenting on the court verdict. The ruling party men

commissioners and a female magistrate, and vandalised They set fire to question papers and government

and Moinul Hasan filed two cases with Pabna Police Station against more than a hundred people, including

ment officials and obstructing government activities.

"No evidence was pro-

eight appeared before the The lawyer said he

Wishing anonymity, a

When the defence lawyer

of the accused, Sarwar said he could not recognise them. The magistrate said he put the names in the case statement with the help of police personnel and others present But police denied his

claim and told the court that they did not give the complainant any name of the

said. Two teachers, who were in the exam centres during the

attack, also did not mention any name of the attackers in their statements to the court.

Majority FROM PAGE 1

are on a declining trend, sharply in some respects. The poll, fourth in a

series, was conducted on 2,520 respondents in 44 of the 64 districts covering all seven administrative divisions. Economy, and especially

inflation, appeared to be the weakest point of the government, and in the last two years people's view on the issues turned dimmer. But the respondents were

positive on the law and order situation. Although a large number of people (47 percent) think corruption decreased, a

large chunk (31 percent) also think the opposite. However, if compared with the previous polls, it shows that now more people think graft actually increased. Moreover, the majority (73 percent) think the Anti-Corruption Commission is government controlled, and not acting neutrally. Respondents' view on the

opposition's politics is almost evenly divided with 30 percent having a negative opinion and 28 percent thinking positively.

Khaleda Zia as the leader of the opposition saw a declining popularity, drawing endorsement of 30 percent respondents. Her approval rating was 39 percent a year ago.

Power generation remains a weak spot of the government as more people now think not enough initiatives have been taken here. Respondents are equally

divided in their opinions on the judiciary -- 40 percent thinking it is independent, and an equal percentage thinking it is not politically neutral. A high percentage of

respondents are hopeful

that allowing India to have

transit facilities will yield

benefits for Bangladesh. A large number of them also did not support the recent hartal called by BNP.

The respondents were asked which party they would vote for if an election was held immediately. Awami League came out the winner with 39 percent vote while BNP got 22 percent.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 20

officials that their bread and butter comes from people's taxes, the prime minister said police department has to earn people's sympathy and confidence through working honestly and sin-

Hasina reiterated that the government will continue its all out drive against militancy and all other terror-"We will allow no type of

crime to take place in the As per the High Court society. We want to build a order, SQ Chowdhury was peaceful Bangladesh," she brought to BSMMU around added.

The prime minister categorically said her government, since it took office, is working hard to ensure discipline in the civil administration and progress in the people's socio-economic

through its hard work and skill can expedite the government's development efforts," she said. The premier said they

"Police department

have come to power with the pledge to work for the people. "We did not come for doing business." The great responsibility reposed by the people on the

government will have to be

performed successfully, she

added. Hasina observed that since the present government took charge, law and order situation has improved much.

"Our image in the international forums has also improved. Yet, we have miles to go. We all have to work harder to reach the highest level of service," she said. Hasina said she wants to

build a modern and skilled

police force and assured of

better facilities to them in police and other law including risk allowance. enforcement agencies, right On housing and transport to information act, facilities problems, the prime minister said necessary steps will be taken to gradually over-

come the difficulties.

and youth development, The function to mark the examination results through Police Week-2011 was also online and SMS, different addressed by Home Minister kinds of allowances to Sahara Khatun, State reduce poverty, health care Minister for Home Affairs facilities and successes in Shamsul Huq Tuku and IGP Hasan Mahmud Khandoker.

Long, futile wait

FROM PAGE 1 makeshift court for the

BDR trial has been set up. With a few oranges in hand, Dana Bibi thought of meeting her son with a

breakfast treat. But all her waiting and anxiety since the morning went in vain as the security did not allow her in the court. "I have brought some breakfast for Kawsar. What would I do with the food

now as I was not allowed to see my son," said Dana Bibi with a deep sigh. The story of another sexagenarian Nurjahan was no better. She pre-

pared beef biriani, egg curry and traditional cakes and brought a few sweaters for her nephew Kamrul Ialam, another accused in the BDR carnage case. She also spent the day on the footpath outside the court with the tiffin carrier and sweaters. Nurjahan could not see her nephew. "Who shall I feed these who came from Sylhet to

now? There is none to meethis son. understand all my efforts," she said. Like Dana Bibi and

Nurjahan, over a thousand relatives of the accused BDR jawans thronged the BDR court but were denied his relatives.

entry and passed a worthless day. While waiting for almost

the whole day with their luggage on the footpath, they stared at prison vans as the last resort to see their near and dear ones just for once. However, this very effort also turned equally frustrating.

However, wife and some other relatives of former lawmaker Nasiruddin Pintu managed to enter the courtroom and passed some time with Pintu. But the relatives who

travelled from distant

corners of the country

expressed deep dissatisfaction over the restriction saying they knew that they would be allowed to meet their relatives facing trial. "It was nothing but a harassment. We were informed that we would be able to meet our relatives,

but finally we were

denied," said Amzad Ali

Just a glance at the prisoners would have been a great mental relief for the us, said Didar Rahman, who came a from Lalmonirhat to meet one of

Dhaka to push **FROM PAGE 20** the final stage.

Bangladesh will vigorously

take up the issue of visa

would ask India to simplify the visa process as the current regime has created serious complexity for Bangladeshi nationals to obtain Indian visa and visit the country. On condition of ano-

nymity, a high official of the home ministry yesterday told The Daily Star that if India does not make the visa process easier, Bangladesh too would toughen its visa for the Indians and launch a massive drive against thousands of Indian nationals working illegally in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh will also stress the issue of handing over the notorious criminals now hiding in India. Like on quite a few occasions, Bangladesh has sent India specific information of around 50 criminals and their hideouts there.

Official sources said Dhaka would host a twoday bilateral Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting and another meeting on narcotics control on January 17-18, and home secretarylevel meeting on January 18-19.

The JWG meeting will be led by the joint secretaries concerned of the two countries and the heads of Department of Narcotics Control of Bangladesh and India will lead the meeting on combating drug smug-

Bangladesh home secretary Abdus Sobhan Shikdar and his Indian counterpart GK Pillai will lead their countries at the crucial home secretary-level meeting. For the two countries will start implementing the three security related deals signed in January last year.

The last home secretarylevel meeting was held in New Delhi in November 2009.

Highly placed sources said the home secretaries at their meeting would also handover the elements, rules and other documents prepared by the two countries in the light of the agreements signed during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's visit to New Delhi on January 10-13, 2010.

Bangladesh and India signed three accords: 1. Agreement on mutual legal assistance on criminal matters, 2. Agreement on the transfer of sentenced persons and 3. Agreement on district. combating international terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking. Both the countries have

already ratified the agreements and prepared necessary rules, which are now at Moulvibazar.

The one on transfer of convicted persons would allow the criminals to serve their sentences in their own countries, if they want to. Anyone condemned to death, however, will not get this opportunity. Bangladesh and India will provide transit facility for the extradition of sentenced persons and give them legal and consular assistance.

The agreement on combating international terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking is the bilateral implementation of a protocol under the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc). If terrorist activities are perpetrated in and against Bangladesh and India, the two countries can exchange the intelligence

and general information. The home secretaries will review the progress of implementation of the decisions taken at the joint secretary-level Joint Boundary Working Group (JBWG) meeting held in New Delhi on November 10-

11,2010. As per the JBWG decision, both the countries are currently conducting a joint survey to identify decadesold issues like adversely possessed land and enclaves, census in the enclaves, boundary pillars

and un-demarcated land. Official sources said the JBWG is expected to meet in Dhaka by the end of this month or early in February, after the joint survey finishes.

A senior official at the home ministry said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh during the former's visit to India agreed to comprehensively address all outstanding border issues in line with the Land Boundary Agreement, 1974.

The official yesterday told The Daily Star that the Awami League government is determined to solve the disputes involving 3,000 acres of Bangladesh land inside India, 51 enclaves and 6.5 kilometres of undemarcated border. Similarly, India has around 3,500 acres of land and 111 enclaves adversely possessed inside Bangladesh.

India's adversely possessed lands inside Bangladesh are situated in four districts Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Nilphamari while all of Bangladesh's exclaves are in Indian Cooch Behar Of the 6.5km un-

demarcated borders, 1.5km is at Doykhata under Nilphamari district, 2km at Muhurir Char in Feni and 3km at Lathitila in

regime and handing over of the listed criminals who took shelter in India. Officials said Bangladesh