

ICT issues

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The English daily ran an article titled "A crucial period for International Crimes Tribunal" in its OP-ED page written by David Bergman, Editor (special reports).

The tribunal asked New Age Editor Nurul Kabir, Publisher ASM Shahidullah Khan and David Bergman to give their explanation within October 23.

The three-member tribunal headed by its Chairman Justice Nizamul Huq observed that certain parts of the article were "contemptuous".

He also observed that the whole article has been written with the intention to tarnish the image of the tribunal.

As per the ICT Act, "The tribunal may punish any person, who obstructs or abuses its process or disobeys any of its orders or directions, or does anything which tends to prejudice the case of a party before it, or tends to bring it or any of its members into hatred or contempt, or does anything which constitutes contempt of the tribunal, with a simple imprisonment which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to taka five thousand, or with both."

Rights boss

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"We are seeking cooperation from the home ministry and the others concerned to ensure the commission can carry out its duties as required by the law," NHRC Chairman Mizanur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

He hinted that the commission would move to the High Court if no action is taken.

According to section 12(c) of the National Human Rights Commission Act, 2009, the commission is empowered to visit any jail or any other places where persons are detained or lodged for correction, custody, treatment, or such other welfare, and to make recommendation to the government thereon for the development of those places and conditions.

Failing to enter the Sylhet jail, Mizanur on Thursday accused the IG (prisons) of violating the NHRC act and demanded his removal.

The NHRC chief insisted the local administration was aware of his visit to Sylhet. "The commission staff can visit any place like prison without prior approval."

Earlier, Mizanur was denied entry to Rangamati jail last year.

Maha Ashtami

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The goddess over Mahishasura (the buffalo-demon from Hindu mythology).

Kumari Puja, Suvasini Puja and Dampat Puja are also performed on Durga Ashtami.

Today's celebration marks the triumph of good over evil.

The goddess is bathed symbolically and dressed for the final battle. This happens just after dawn. It is believed that on this day Durga killed the demon. In old days, a buffalo was offered as sacrifice to the goddess. These days bananas, pumpkins and cucumbers replaced the animal.

Also known as Maha Ashtami or Veerashtami, the day holds special significance in the Hindus' social and religious calendar, which comes after Maha Saptami.

On Maha Saptami, worshippers seek divine blessings through reciting hymns and offering flowers.

Devotees celebrated the day yesterday with elaborate rituals since early morning at about 28,000 mandaps across the country.

The spectacular puja mandaps with colourful idols of the goddess gave a festive look to cities, urban centres and even rural villages of Bangladesh as the Hindus make up 10 percent of the country's total population.

Sayedee indicted

FROM PAGE 1
Sometimes as a member of Shanti (peace) Committee. He often led teams of razakars (collaborators).

After the war started, Peace Committee and Razakar Bahini were formed to collaborate with the Pakistan occupation forces.

The 20 charges against Sayedee, Jamaat nayebe-ameer, cover crimes against humanity; genocide; attempt, abetment or conspiracy to commit any such crimes; and complicity in or failure to prevent or commission of any such crimes, according to different subsections of section 3(2) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

The offences carry a maximum sentence of death.

One of the charges cites Sayedee's involvement in killing three Bangalee government officials in the then sub-division of Pirojpur and throwing their bodies in the Baleshwar river.

Foyzur Rahman Ahmed, father of famed writer Humayun Ahmed and noted educationalist-writer Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, was among the three. He was a police officer.

The other two were Saif Mizanur Rahman and Abdur Razzak, deputy magistrate and sub-divisional officer (in charge).

The prosecution pressed 31 specific charges against Sayedee on July 11. Three days later, the tribunal took the charges into cognisance. Last month, it heard arguments from the prosecution and the defence.

Tribunal Chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq along with its two other members--Justice ATM Fazlul Kabir and AKM Zaheer Ahmed--started the proceedings at 10:30am yesterday.

Though charge framing was the only item on the day's agenda, the tribunal issued a show-cause notice against national daily New Age for publishing an article, which it said was contemptuous and written with the intention of blemishing the tribunal's image.

Passing the order on charge framing, the court gave an introduction to the case, first in its history. It also introduced itself and explained the context of crimes it is dealing with.

Besides, the tribunal narrated a brief history of the partition of India in 1947, Bangladesh's liberation in 1971, formulation of International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, and formation of the tribunal in 2010.

After reading out the charges in English, the presiding judge asked Sayedee if he was guilty or not.

At that point, Sayedee's counsel Tajul Islam said the charges should be read out in Bangla too so that his client can understand those properly before pleading guilty or not guilty.

He repeatedly demanded the court allow Sayedee to consult with his lawyers before pleading anything.

In reply, Justice Md Nizamul Huq asked Tajul not to say anything that might taint his own image. The judge then directed the police to bring Sayedee to the front dock.

At that time, Tajul hurriedly walked towards Sayedee and whispered something in his ears.

Seeing this, Justice Nizamul Huq said: "Tajul sahib, this is not fair. Now he [Sayedee] is talking to the tribunal."

After the court read out the charges in Bangla, Sayedee said he had understood the charges when those were read out in English. He also asked for the court's permission to consult with his lawyer.

The judge told him there was no scope for him to consult with his lawyer at that stage, and that he was supposed to plead guilty or not.

In response, the Jamaat leader said he wanted to say something before pleading anything.

After the court gave him the permission, Sayedee gave a 15-minute speech, reciting verses from the Quran.

He claimed he is a "victim of lies and political vengeance" of the government.

Complaining that a prosecutor mispronounced his name, Sayedee told the tribunal chairman: "As you've recently performed hajj, I expect you to ask the prosecutor about it."

He then went on to explain the value of judges to Allah.

He said there have been no complaints against him in the years following the

Liberation War. But when he became a member of Majlish-e-Sura of Jamaat in 1980, he started being referred to as a former member of Shanti Bahini and razakar.

"Let me say this in clear terms, I'm not a razakar. Indian razakars call me a razakar," Sayedee said, adding that he never worked against humanity and that he rather spoke for humanity in many countries.

"Every line, word and sentence in the investigation report is a lie," he told the court. "I was never a razakar or Al-badar. Those who prepared this false [report] have no fear of Allah."

He said the entire proceedings and the case against him are stage-managed. He claimed he was never part of any of the activities mentioned in the charges and he never held any meeting with the Pakistani army for even a minute.

He appealed to the court for exemption from the "false accusations".

"I'm an innocent man," he said, "Allah's curse will befall them who have isolated me from the people and humiliated me."

Terming his accusers "dictators," he said he would wait to see Allah's gazab (wrath of god) and lanat (curse) come down on them.

Tribunal Member AKM Zaheer Ahmed then told Sayedee that framing charges does not mean he will be punished. He also explained the process of holding the trial.

The court has set October 30 as the date for opening statement of prosecution and examination of prosecution witnesses.

"The proceedings shall take place every workday until further order," it said.

Sayedee's counsel Tajul Islam sought three months' time for preparations to defend his client. The court, however, did not respond to his prayer.

According to the tribunal's rules of procedure, the accused will get three weeks for preparing his defence if he pleads not guilty.

The International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, allows a convicted person to appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against his conviction and sentence.

Charges brought against Sayedee

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday brought 20 charges against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee for committing crimes against humanity and others during the 1971 Liberation War. Chairman of the tribunal yesterday read out the charges in an open court. The charges brought under the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 are published here in brief:

1. On May 4, 1971, Sayedee as a member of Peace (shanti) Committee carried secret information to the Pakistan army about a gathering of a group of people behind the Madhya Masimpur bus-stand under Pirojpur Sadar and took the army to the spot. The army killed 20 unnamed people by firing.

2. On May 4, 1971, Sayedee along with his accomplices accompanied by the Pakistan army looted goods of members of the Hindu community living in Masimpur Hindu Para under Pirojpur Sadar. They also set the houses of Hindus alight and opened fire on the scared people, who started fleeing from the scene, with 13 people being killed.

3. On May 4, 1971, Sayedee led a team of the Pakistan army to Masimpur Hindu Para, where the team looted goods from the houses of two members of the Hindu community -- Monindra Nath Mistri and Suresh Chandra Mondol -- and completely destroyed their houses by setting them on fire. Sayedee also directly took part in the large-scale destruction by setting fire to the roadside houses of villages Kalibari, Masimpur, Palpara, Sikarpur, Razarhat, Kukarpara, Dumur Tola, Kalamtola, Nawabpur, Alamkuthi, Dhukigathi, Parerha and Chinrakhal.

4. On May 4, 1971, Sayedee and his accomplices, accompanied by the Pakistani army looted the houses of members of the Hindu community and opened fire indiscriminately on them in front of Dhopa Bari and behind the LGED Building in Pirojpur, leaving four persons killed.

5. Sayedee declared publicly to arrest Saif Mizanur Rahman, then deputy magistrate of Pirojpur Sub-division, when the magistrate organised a Sarbo Dalio Sangram Parishad to inspire people to join the Liberation War. On May 5, 1971, Sayedee along with his associate Monnaf (now deceased), a member of Peace (Shanti) Committee, accompanied by the Pakistani army picked up Saif from the hospital where he was hiding and took him to the banks of river Baleshwar. On the same date and time, Foyezur Rahman Ahmed, sub-divisional police officer, and Abdur Razzak (SDO in charge of Pirojpur), were also arrested from their workplaces and taken to the river bank. Sayedee as a member of the killer squad was present there and all three government officials were gunned down. Their bodies were thrown into the river Baleshwar. Sayedee directly participated and abetted in the acts of abduction and killing of those three officers.

6. On May 7, 1971, Sayedee identified the houses and shops of Bangalees belonging to the Awami League, Hindu community and supporters of the Liberation War at Parerhat Bazar under Pirojpur Sadar. Sayedee as one of the perpetrators raided those shops and houses and looted away valuables, including 22 seers of gold and silver from the shop of one Makhlan Shah.

7. On May 8, 1971, Sayedee led a team of the Pakistan army to the house of Nurul Islam Khan, where he identified Nurul Islam as an Awami League leader and his son Shahidul Islam Selim as a freedom-fighter to the army. Sayedee then detained Nurul Islam and handed him to the army, which tortured Nurul Islam. His house was then looted and finally set on fire.

8. On May 8, 1971, Sayedee and his accomplices accompanied by the Pakistan army raided the house of one Manik Posari at Chitholia under Pirojpur Sadar and caught his brother Mofizuddin and one Ibrahim. Sayedee's accomplices then burnt five houses there. On the way to the Pakistani army's camp, Sayedee instigated the members of the occupation force to kill Ibrahim by gunshot and dump his body near a bridge. On the other hand, Mofiz was taken to the army camp and tortured. Sayedee directly participated in the abduction, murder and persecution of the victims.

9. On June 2, 1971, armed associates of Sayedee under his leadership and accompanied by the Pakistani army raided the house of one Abdul Halim Babul at Nalbonia under Indurkani Police Station and looted valuables from Halim's house. The team then razed the house to ashes.

10. On June 2, 1971, Sayedee's armed associates under his leadership and accompanied by the Pakistan army burnt 25 houses of a Hindu Para in Umedpur village under Indurkani Police Station. At one stage, a victim, Bisabali, was tied to a coconut tree and was shot dead by Sayedee's accomplice.

11. On June 2, 1971, Sayedee led a team of Peace (Shanti) Committee members, accompanied by the Pakistani army, to raid the house of Mahbulul Alam Howlader (freedom-fighter) of Tengra Khali village under Indurkani Police Station. Sayedee and the team then detained Mahbulul's elder brother Abdul Mazid Howlader and tortured him, and looted cash money, jewellery and other valuables from the house.

12. One day a group comprising 15-20 armed accomplices under Sayedee's leadership entered the Hindu Para of Parerhat Bazar under Pirojpur Sadar and captured 14 Hindus, who were all supporters of Bangladesh's independence. The fourteen were then tied with a single rope and dragged to Pirojpur and handed over to Pakistani soldiers, who killed them. Their bodies were thrown into the river.

13. One night, about 2 to 3 months after the war commenced, some members of Peace Committee under Sayedee's leadership accompanied by the Pakistan army raided the house of Azhar Ali of Nalbonia village under Pirojpur Sadar Police Station. They then caught and tortured Azhar Ali and his son Shaheb Ali. The team then abducted Shaheb Ali and ultimately he was taken to Pirojpur and killed.

14. During the final stages of the war, Sayedee one morning led a team of Razakar Bahini consisting of 50 to 60 Razakars, into attacking the Hindu Para of Hologlabunia under Pirojpur Sadar. Seeing the attackers, the Hindus managed to flee but one Shefali Gharami failed to do that. Some members of Razakar Bahini entered her room and raped her. Being the leader of the team Sayedee did not prevent them from committing rape upon her. Sayedee and the members of his team also set fire to the dwelling houses of the Hindu Para.

15. During the last part of the war, Sayedee led 15 to 20 armed Razakars who entered the Hologlabunia village under Pirojpur Sadar Police Station and caught 10 members of the Hindu faith. The attackers then tied all the members of Hindu community with a single rope, dragged them to Pirojpur and handed them over to the Pakistani army. They were all killed and their bodies were dumped into the river.

16. In the course of the Liberation War, Sayedee led a group of 10-12 armed Razakars and Peace Committee members, which surrounded the house of Gouranga Saha of Parerhat Bandar under Pirojpur Sadar. Subsequently, Sayedee and the others abducted three women and handed them over to the Pakistan army at Pirojpur where they were confined and raped for three days before being released.

17. During the Liberation War, Sayedee along with other armed Razakars kept Bipod Shaha's daughter Vanu Shaha confined at Bipok Shaha's house at Parerhat under Pirojpur Sadar Police Station and regularly used to go there to rape her.

18. During the Liberation War, one Bhagirothi used to work in the camp of the Pakistan army. One day, after a fight with the freedom fighters, and at the instance of Sayedee, Bhagirothi was charged with passing information to the freedom fighters and killed.

19. During the war, Sayedee, being a member of Razakar Bahini and exercising his influence over the Hindu community of Pirojpur, converted 100-150 Hindus of Parerhat and other villages and compelled them to go to the mosque to offer prayers.

20. On a day at the end of November 1971, Sayedee got information that thousands of people were fleeing to India in order to save their lives. A group of members of the Razakar Bahini consisting of 10-12 armed forces, under Sayedee's leadership, then attacked the houses of Talukdar Bari at Indurkani village and detained a total of 85 persons and looted goods from there. Of them, all but 10-12 persons were released in exchange for bribes negotiated by Fazlul Huq, a member of the Razakar Bahini. Male persons were tortured and female persons were raped by Pakistan soldiers deployed in the camp.

Charge-framing

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forever, and warned that everything will change.

During the nearly one-hour proceedings that started around 11:45am, the Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 rejected the bail petitions of three accused -- former director of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) Maj Gen (retd) Rezzakul Haider Chowdhury, former deputy director of National Security Intelligence (NSI) Major (retd) Liaqat Hossain and Deen Mohammad -- in the cases.

Judge SM Mujibur Rahman also directed the jail authorities to decide as per jail code on a petition by Babar's lawyers to allow them to visit the former state minister in jail.

All the 11 arrested in the case, including Nizami and Babar, were produced before the court. Nine of them were made accused in the supplementary charge sheet while two others -- Deen Mohammad and Hafizur Rahman -- were in the original charge sheet.

Deen Mohammad allegedly supplied workers for unloading of the arms and ammunition.

India's Ulfa (United Liberation Front of Asom) leader Paresh Barua and former additional secretary of the industries ministry Nurul Amin are among those charged in the supplementary charge sheets.

On September 6, the court rejected the bail prayers of Nizami and two others -- former general manager (admin) of CUFL Enamul Hoque and Deen Mohammad -- in the cases and fixed October 3 for further hearing.

On the same day, the court ordered the authorities to publish an advertisement in two national dailies, asking two fugitives Paresh Barua and Nurul Amin to appear before the court within October 3.

Public Prosecutor Kamal Uddin told The Daily Star that as the advertisements were duly published, the case is now ready for trial and the court fixed date for hearing on charge framing.

ANGRY BABAR
Witnesses said as soon as Babar came out of the courtroom, police tried to keep off some of his lawyers who tried to get closer to him, making the former state minister angry.

"Iqbal, stop," Babar shouted at Sub-inspector Iqbal Hossain, who tried to bar the lawyers.

"This government is not permanent. Everything will be reversed. Curse of Allah will befall," he continued.

"All the charges against me are false."

Pointing finger at Iqbal, Babar warned, "Mind it...there should be a limit to excesses."

Some pro-BNP lawyers chanted slogans in support of Babar.

Iqbal said he tried to stop the lawyers from coming close to Babar for the sake of security.

"How many cases will be filed against me?" Babar screamed, as he got on the prison van.

Unique fair at 300 high schools

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from October 12 to inspire students to improve their proficiency in English.

The fair will start from a well-known school in the capital under English in Schools (EIS) initiative of The Daily Star and Robi, and will be gradually held in other schools till April next year.

The fair will also cover students of 700 more schools that are under the EIS programme.

Two world famous films -- Alice in Wonderland and Lion King -- will be screened at the daylong fair.

Besides, students will take part in spot quiz on vocabulary, one word question, extempore speech, etiquette test, and competition for describing pictures. Prizes will be handed out to the winners at the fair.

The announcement came at a meet the press in a city hotel yesterday.

Michael Kuehner, managing director and CEO of Robi Axiata Ltd, Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, Prof Shafiqur Rahman, director of Secondary Education of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Segufta Y Samad, vice president of Robi and Mahmudur Rahman, executive vice president of Robi, spoke there.

The three-year EIS programme covers seven lakh students in a thousand schools including 317 public and 683 non-government schools across the country. The programme was initiated two years ago to promote English learning in secondary schools.

Three complimentary copies of The Daily Star with a special page of English lessons are given to a thousand schools five days a week under the EIS initiative, coordinated by the

education ministry.

"It is a new step. We took this initiative to help the government in its efforts to improve the quality of education," said Mahfuz Anam.

He said it is a must to raise the standards of English education at all levels of the society, if Bangladesh is to make its presence felt in the world.

About the EIS programme, he said students are provided with complimentary newspapers in many countries to help them learn English as well as acquire knowledge about the world.

"We took the initiative in an attempt to give students new education materials, besides textbooks."

The students come to learn many new things through newspapers that will eventually increase their curiosity and interest in education, he said.

Michael Kuehner said, "English is a language which is very much international", and a great number of people around the world communicate in English.

English language has great importance in any country, when it comes to development, he said.

"I am happy that we can contribute to equip more people of the country with English language skill."

Both teachers and students are enthusiastic about the EIS programme and they like the approach, Kuehner said.

"What we are trying to do is to make the programme interesting and to make it fun to learn," he said.

Prof Shafiqur Rahman said students still dread English like they did in the past.

The pass rates in English and maths are still alarming. High school teachers, who receive inadequate training, are not skilled enough in

English.

"We are grateful to The Daily Star and Robi that are making contributions to this vulnerable sector."

Prof Shafiqur said students will enjoy learning English, instead of fearing it, if such programmes are taken in the future.

He urged other organisations to come forward with such programmes to build a skilled manpower in the country since the government has many constraints.

Geetiara Safiya Choudhury, chairperson of Adcomm Ltd, which is the creative and event partner of the fair, was also present there.

SQ Chy's wife

FROM PAGE 1
Hannan Khan, coordinator of the probe agency of the tribunal, and its investigation officer Nurul Islam.

Farhat Quader Chowdhury filed the case in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court for implicating her husband SQ Chowdhury with crimes against humanity in a news item run by The Daily Star yesterday before the start of the trial.

She also claimed the two investigators declared her husband an offender even though the charges are yet to be pressed.

The court in its order said the charges of defamation brought against the two are baseless and concocted. They did not even make any statement implicating SQ Chowdhury.

The two investigators on Sunday told newsmen that they have found SQ Chowdhury's involvement in at least 32 incidents of crime against humanity including genocide, murder, torture, rape and abduction during the 1971 Liberation War.

Trio wins Nobel Medicine Prize

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complex defence system in which signalling molecules unleash antibodies and killer cells to respond to invading microbes.

Understanding this throws open the door to new drugs and also tackling immune disorders, such as asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and Crohn's disease, in which the body mysteriously attacks itself.

"Their work has opened up new avenues for the development of prevention and therapy against infections, cancer and inflammatory diseases," the jury said.

"They have made possible the development of new methods for preventing and treating disease, for instance with improved vaccines against infections and in attempts to stimulate the immune system to attack tumours."

It added: "These discoveries will also help us to

understand why the immune system can attack our own tissues, thus providing clues for novel treatment of inflammatory diseases."

Beutler, 55, and Hoffmann, 70, share one half of the 10 million Swedish kronor (\$1.48 million, 1.08 million euros) prize.

They discovered receptor proteins that activate the first step in the body's immune system.

Known as the innate response, it acts like a blunt instrument, seeking to swiftly block an assault through inflammation. Hoffman's work in 1996, at a research laboratory in Strasbourg, on how fruit flies combat infections, showed that a gene called Toll, known to be involved in embryonal development, helped sense harmful microorganisms and was needed to defend against them.

Beutler, meanwhile, expanded on that discovery in 1998 when he at the University of Texas discovered that a Toll-like receptor called LPS also acted in the same way in mice, thus proving that mammals and fruitflies shared a common immune pathway.

Canadian cell biologist Steinman, 68, died of pancreatic cancer last week, his employers said.

"Steinman passed away on September 30," Rockefeller University said in a statement. "He was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer four years ago, and his life was extended using a dendritic-cell based immunotherapy of his own design."

He won the other half of the prize for work on the second, slower line of defence, known as the adaptive response.

In 1973, he discovered a new type of cell, the dendritic cell, and demon-

strated its role in unleashing T cells -- the "heavy artillery" of the immune system.

T cells are part of an immunological memory, enabling a faster and powerful mobilisation of defences the next time the same microorganism attacks.

Steinman, who also won the 2007 Lasker Prize for his work, showed that the body's immune system was able to attack harmful microorganisms while staying clear of the body's own molecules.

Yesterday's award was the 12th Nobel Medicine Prize to honour research on the immune system, including the very first prize in 1901 to Emil von Behring.

The trio will receive their prize at a formal ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of prize founder Alfred Nobel's death in 1896.