

Quit war

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quit. You should take the responsibility of your colleagues...and resign," Kabir said at a discussion, demanding appointment of skilled lawyers in the prosecution team.

Lieutenant General (ret'd) Harun-Ur-Rashid, general secretary of Sector Commanders Forum, echoed his call.

Despite repeated attempts for comments, this correspondent could not get through Ghulam Arief's mobile phone. However, BBC Bangla service reports that Arief refused to comment on the matter.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed, however, termed "illogical" the demand for Arief's resignation.

"Those who are demanding the resignation of the chief prosecutor must have knowledge about the trial of crimes against humanity and the relevant laws. Such a call is not acceptable," he told The Daily Star.

The call for his resignation comes just days after the International Crimes Tribunal sent the charges of crimes against humanity against former Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Ghulam Azam and two other top Jamaat leaders back to the prosecution due to "classification flaws".

On December 26, the tribunal refused to accept the charges against Ghulam Azam and ordered the prosecution to re-submit those in proper manner by January 5. Just two days later, it refused to consider charges against Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed on the same ground and ordered the prosecution to re-submit those in orderly fashion by January 12 and 16 respectively.

However, addressing the discussion, Kabir yesterday said the government would have to take the responsibility if any of the war criminals escape punishment due to the "incompleteness and inexperience" of the tribunal.

Projnomo '71, an organisation of the children of martyrs of the 1971 war, organised the discussion titled "Trial of war criminals and present perspective", marking the 40th anniversary of the independence of Bangladesh at Liberation War Museum in the capital.

"Losing this case would mean losing the Liberation War...a defeat for the entire nation and losing the meaning of independence just because of the callousness of a few lawyers.

"We cannot let this happen," said Kabir, a war veteran and an eminent writer.

The government has set up the tribunal but did not provide necessary logistic support to it, he said, adding that the tribunal cannot deliver without required support.

He also urged the government to set up more tribunals for trying the top war criminals within its tenure, which ends in early 2014.

"For now, three tribunals are needed in Dhaka and at divisional level if the government wants to complete trial of at least the top war criminals within 2013," he said.

Kabir said the statements of Ghulam Azam printed in the daily Sangram in 1971 are enough to try and punish him. The case of Ghulam Azam is easier than that of other Jamaat leaders, he added.

Captain (ret'd) AB Tajul Islam, state minister for Liberation War Affairs Ministry, said he himself was a victim of war crimes, his sister being violated on the night of March 25, 1971, in his presence.

He, however, said the government was working to expedite the trial and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina herself is involved in it.

There might be some lack of coordination but the government is trying to overcome those, he added.

Gopalganj

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College, Hazi Lal Mia City University College, Swarnakoli High School, UDCL, BM Hasan Kabir Sanu, Ali Nayem Khan Jimi and other organisations and people.

Aside from the arches, however, the streets were cleaned and illegal roadside shops evicted.

Besides, the town was colourfully decorated with different kinds of banners and portraits of Sheikh Hasina, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and local MP Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

Since the ruling party took office for the second time, this is Sheikh Hasina's first time visit to Gopalganj albeit visiting Tungipara for a few times and Kotlilpara once.

Drivers of change

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He said in a democratic society the lead drivers of change must be the elected political leadership.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) jointly organised the event in the National Museum auditorium on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, with Sultana Kamal, executive director of ASK, in the chair.

Planning Minister Air Vice-marshal (ret'd) AK Khandker, and Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen spoke at the programme as chief and special guests respectively. Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, and Editor of Prothom Alo Matiur Rahman also spoke.

Prof Sobhan, also CPD chairman said, "We will need to invest in upgrading the skills and productivity of our farmers, artisans, our rural industries, our garment workers. We will need to give the deprived majority an investment state and price regime, which enables them to capture more of the gains from their labours and improved productivity."

He stressed the need for democratisation of the economic opportunities by providing resources to the deprived for acquiring productive assets like land, water, and technology -- so they may compete more equitably in the market place.

"Five million acres of khas assets, mostly under illicit occupation, needs to be recovered and distributed to the land poor," he said.

The noted economist pointed out that Bangladesh gained a lot in the last 40 years for which the people of the country should feel proud. "We have established a globally competitive garment industry moved ahead of India in particular areas of human development and gender parity."

He said today Bangladesh is much less aid dependent with aid accounting for around 2 percent of the GDP. In the last decade Bangladesh moved from being an aid dependent to a trade dependent country, he said adding, at the time of liberation in 1971, Bangladesh's export volume was around \$500 million which is apparently \$25 billion today, a fifty fold increase.

Speaking about India-Bangladesh relations, Prof Sobhan, who was a close aide to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, said the country needs to develop a strategic vision for defining relations with India. "This relationship is too important to be kept hostage to the shifting sands of our party politics. Designing such a strategy demands a process of public consultation and would eventually need to be backed by all political parties so that India-Bangladesh relations are addressed as a national rather than a party issue."

He said restoration of secularism in the constitution, as a founding principle of the state, is a positive development. On the war crimes trials he said the trials should be held through due legal process so that the collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces cannot claim political victimisation.

He also pointed out the people's unfulfilled expectations since the liberation of the country. He said contrary to public aspirations, mass poverty has been perpetuated at an unacceptably high level over the 40 years since the independence, even though its percentage level has been reduced.

Politics of confrontation and intolerance appear to be once again permeating the country's political culture, he added. "Our administration has become ineffective where both recruitment and advancement have been politicised and divorced from performance. Virtually all public services as well as law enforcement have become partisan and commoditised to a point where the machinery of government has lost virtually all capacity for functioning as an instrument of public service."

Even the last bastion of the rule of law, the judiciary, is now under threat, said Prof Sobhan adding, the history of electoral politics in Bangladesh, going back to the period of Pakistani rule, indicates that in the absence of non-partisan caretaker government no incumbent government has ever vacated office through defeat at the polls.

The CPD chairman urged conscious citizens to join political parties to struggle for democratising the parties and establish accountability. "If we wait upon our leaders to voluntarily make themselves more accountable we may wait for ever...many more citizens must seek this accountability more directly by joining political parties and participating in the struggle to democratise our political parties," he said.

"In the vacuum left by a non-performing parliament and a casualised civil society, full time terrorists and commercialised mastaans will continue to undermine the sustainability of the democratic process," Rehman Sobhan warned.

Another hike

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this year to bridge the gaps between CNG and diesel prices.

At present, diesel sells at Tk 61 per litre while the price of CNG is Tk 30 per cubic metre. Energy ministry officials earlier said the price of CNG could be hiked up to Tk 35.

Officials of Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (Berc), the sole responsible body of the country empowered to increase the price of CNG, said they have not received any proposal from Petrobangla on the CNG price hike.

"We will see to it when we receive the proposal from Petrobangla," Dr Salim Mahmud, a member of the regulatory body, told The Daily Star yesterday. "But so far we have not received any proposal."

When it receives any proposal from Petrobangla, the regulator usually goes through a consultation process with the stakeholders including gas distribution companies, CNG filling station association and consumer rights groups in the form of hearing.

Salim, however, said the price could still be increased without a hearing as Berc has the power to do so through an interim order.

Prime minister's energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury yesterday told reporters that the prices of fuel oils and electricity would be increased in phases.

PM, Amartya

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ship crests and certificates to the prime minister and Sen at the 34th general meeting of the academy.

Addressing the function, Hasina said her government is continuing its efforts to establish Bangla in every sphere of society as well as its inclusion as an official language of the United Nations.

"UN can take Bangla as its official language considering the number of Bangla-speaking people across the globe," she observed.

Receiving the fellowship, the premier thanked the Bangla Academy authorities for giving her the rare honour along with the Nobel laureate.

Terming the academy as the home ground of practicing Bangla literature, culture and research, Hasina assured the academy authorities of giving all-out support for its further development.

The premier mentioned that the seed of independence was sowed through the achievement of language movement, and Bangla Academy and Shaheed Minar were established as the symbols of movement of Bangalis and their feelings.

Hasina said that Rabintranath Tagore, Ramendra Sundar Trevedi, Haraprasad Shastri, Dinesh Chandra Sen and others had taken initiatives in 1901 to compile a grammar for pure Bangla Language but they could not succeed.

Bangla Academy completed the desired work of Kabi Guru in only two and a half years, which is a matter of great pride for us, she mentioned.

She extended her sincere thanks to Bangla Academy, grammar experts from Bangladesh and West Bengal of India for completing the compilation of Bangla Grammar.

Speaking on the occasion, Amartya Sen said Bangladesh has made good progress in different areas, especially education.

Pobitra Sarkar, former vice-chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, handed over 'Bangla Grammar Books' to Hasina, Prof Rafiqul Islam and Amartya Sen on the occasion.

Presided over by AF Salahuddin Ahmed, the function was addressed, among others, by Director General of Bangla Academy Shamsuzzaman Khan.

BNP yet to get

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Golam Akbar Khandokar said the minister has asked the director general (DG) of railways to take necessary measure for BNP getting the Polo Ground. "He also assured us to convey the decision on Sunday [tomorrow]."

Meanwhile, railway east zone General Manager Yusuf Ali Mridha told The Daily Star last night that the Polo Ground has been used until December 25 for an event and the ground is now not ready to host another big event. He said the railway had to defer its own sporting event on the ground due to this. He said if his superiors ask, he would let them know his reservations about the ground.

BNP does, however, have a backup ground for the rally, Laldighi Maidan, but it is rather small for their liking.

A festive mood is prevailing among the BNP workers and supporters in the port city but they are worried about the rally ground.

When asked, president of Chittagong city unit of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal Mosharrar Hossain Dipti said, "We hope the government will provide us with the Polo Ground for holding the rally. If the government does not, then the sea of people will devour the whole city."

BNP chief Khaleda Zia on her road march towards Chittagong will address a rally at Feni on January 8. She will also address some unscheduled wayside gatherings between Comilla and Feni. After reaching Chittagong on January 8 evening, she will spend the night at the Chittagong Circuit House. She is scheduled to address a rally in Chittagong the next day.

Bike-riding muggers

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December 12, Tk 10.30 lakh was snatched from Kakrail and Tk 3.90 lakh from Pallabi. On December 11, Tk 12.20 lakh was looted from Chankharpool and Tk 8 lakh from Matuail in Jatrabari.

All the incidents happened in broad daylight and were carried out by motor-bike-riding criminals armed with firearms. Most of the incidents took place in crowded places.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner and other senior officials on December 20 at their "Monthly Crime Conference" at Rajarbagh Police Lines expressed concern over the increase in such incidents, sources said. They said DMP

Commissioner Benazir Ahmed had strong words for the deputy commissioners of different divisions, officers-in-charge of all police stations of DMP and other officials for their failure to prevent this type of crime.

Seeking anonymity, an officer-in-charge, who was in the meeting, said apart from expressing concern, the commissioner directed them to launch special drives, set up check posts and intensify patrol.

Talking to The Daily Star, DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed Tuesday evening said he already directed all his forces to launch special drives across the capital to control this type of crime.

Replying to a query on the upward trend of mugging,

CJ warns against

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and chief judicial magistrates are becoming involved in undesirable conflicts for personal reasons. This is adversely affecting the overall judicial system in the district level.

"My expectation is that the district judges, as senior and responsible officials, would bring changes to the situation with their wisdom and good conscience."

The chief justice said the judges have to discard the culture of wasting time and spend their entire office time on judicial work so that the backlog of cases could be eased.

"I have heard that many district judges do not perform their duties in court after lunch breaks. This is not acceptable. The cause list must be made in a certain way that sufficient cases are enrolled there for hearing, so that the court remains operational throughout the court hours," he said.

He said some district judges and their subordinate judges live in Dhaka with their families. "Among them, some judges leave for Dhaka around noon on Thursdays and return to their offices on Sundays."

Justice Muzammel said some district judges use government cars to go out of their districts without permission from the authorities. Some even use other cars of the courts instead of the one given to them," he said.

"The cars of some district judges, who are posted outside Dhaka, are often seen in the capital. These things are not acceptable. I expect that all judges would arrive at the court on time and conduct their duties throughout the court hours; and they would help other judges be as punctual and disciplined," he said.

The chief justice directed the district judges to bolster their anti-corruption activities. He said a lot has been said about corruption in the lower judicial system and many speculative surveys have been conducted in this regard. "Newspapers have published news reports and articles. I accept any information

regarding corruption of the judiciary with the utmost importance, because there is no room for corruption in the judiciary. My stance against corruption is clear and firm. Any indifference to or tolerance of corruption would not be allowed," he said.

He said corruption makes way for injustice; and injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

"I would never take into account any false or harassment-intended complaints against any judge. However, I will consider all logical complaints regarding corruption and an appropriate judge would investigate the allegation," he said.

Justice Muzammel said a district judge's delay in issuing an Annual Confidential Report (ACR) may cause delays in the posting or promotion of the judicial official concerned, which is not desirable. "I hope that all of you would record previous year's ACRs by February 15 and send them to the High Court," he said.

He said a judge should be a student of law, disciplined, punctual in the court, honest, respecting humane qualities, and an ideal human being with good-natured behaviour towards other human beings. "Are these expectations of the people illogical? Of course, not! This is not just an expectation of the people of Bangladesh, people of every country expect their judges to have these qualities," he said.

The chief justice said, "We have to be more sincere in fulfilling these just and logical expectations of the people. We have to remember that the faith of the people is the source of hope for an independent judicial system."

"To earn this faith of the people, the judges need to have high moral values and awareness of the ever-developing and changing laws, technological developments and social values. These can be achieved only with regular studies and lawful, punctual conduct of court activities," he said.

The chief justice termed the huge backlog of cases and procrastination in disposal of cases a big

obstacle to delivering justice to the people. "We are carrying a backlog of some 19 lakh cases in our courts. This pile of cases is slowing down the judicial system and increasing the cost of conducting cases," he said.

As a result, people feel discouraged to bring their conflicts to the court, and are encouraged to use extra-judicial methods and muscle power to get favourable solutions, he said, adding that this, in turn, reduces people's faith in the rule of law and increases impatience and conflict in society.

Journalists were not allowed in yesterday's meeting but Supreme Court Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam provided newspersons with the printed speech of the chief justice.

BNP MPs

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absent for 53 working days while some others did not turn up for 56 sittings.

According to the constitution, an MP's seat falls vacant if he or she remains absent from parliament for 90 sittings at a stretch without any prior permission from the Speaker.

Talking to The Daily Star, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque yesterday said they are aware about the issue and would discuss it in the party forum soon.

He, however, mentioned that they will return to the House if the government places a bill for restoration of the caretaker government system in the constitution.

"We have no way but to join the session if it continues beyond 34 sittings. But it would be better for our MPs," said a BNP lawmaker asking not to be named.

Earlier on Wednesday BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said like the ongoing presidential dialogue they also want to attend the next session of parliament, but the atmosphere must be congenial.

BNP-led four-party alliance has already decided to attend the dialogue initiated by President Zillur Rahman on formation of the new election commission.

One killed

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in-charge of Jurachhari Police Station, said two rival groups clashed around 7:00pm over establishing supremacy at Bhitur Balukhal village.

Around 500 bullets were exchanged during the five-hour long gunfight that left Supayan dead on the spot and injured another member of his party, he said.

On information, police reached the spot yesterday morning and sent the body to Rangamati General Hospital for an autopsy.

Police are taking preparation to file a case in this connection, the OC added.

Supayan's body was sent to his village home after the autopsy.

Sajib Chakma, publicity secretary of PCJSS central committee, denied his party members' involvement in the gunfight, saying it occurred due to internal feud of UPDF.

"We do not believe in terrorism and politics of killing," he added.

Michael Chakma, secretary of Gono Tantrik Juba Forum, the youth front of UPDF, said armed members of PCJSS came to the area and started firing on Supayan.

He also demanded exemplary punishment to the killers.

Fuel price

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Rahman Mallick in a joint statement the same day expressed their concerns over the hike in fuel price.

Citizens' platform Gonosanghati Andolon staged a demonstration in the city to protest the government decision.

Govt to re-fix

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The Daily Star. Quader, who sat with the transport owners yesterday to discuss the matter, said the ministry's costing committee would prepare a list of hiked fare in the morning. "At 3:00pm, I will convey the decision on increased fares," he said.

Yet again, the government on Thursday raised the prices of all fuel oils by Tk 5 per litre, the second time in less than two months and the third in less than four months.

The energy ministry in an order increased diesel and kerosene prices from Tk 56 to Tk 61 a litre, petrol from Tk 86 to Tk 91, octane from Tk 89 to Tk 94 and furnace oil from Tk 55 to Tk 60 a litre. It came into effect from Thursday midnight.

On November 10, the government raised the prices by Tk 5 a litre. Earlier in September, the price of furnace oil went up by Tk 8 a litre while the prices of kerosene, diesel, petrol and octane by Tk 5 per litre.

Quader, also a presidium member of the ruling Awami League, said the energy ministry did not notify the ministries of communications and commerce till Thursday evening about the price hike decision.

"If we were informed earlier, we could have coordinated well with the stakeholders," the minister added.

War crimes

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to do," she said. "But", the prime minister said, "It's unfortunate when the sons of this soil joined the Pakistani military in committing murder, rape, loot and arson. With such evil and heinous activities, the Razakars, Al-badrs and Al-Shams blemished the whole nation.

"How could they do this? Their trial must be held in this soil and that will be. Or else, the nation will not be free from the stigma, which the nation has been bearing for the last 40 years. It's time to change this," she said.

The government will free the nation from this stigma by completing the trial process, she added.

After the Liberation War, Hasina said, the trial of the war criminals had started, but after the killing of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, military dictators stopped its process.

"That was not the end; they had been awarded citizenship and made ministers and MPs," the prime minister lamented.

Hamidullah Khan

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well-wishers to mourn his death.

His first namaz-e-janeza will be held at Allama Jame Mosque at Dhaka Cantonment around 10:00am today.

His body will then be taken to BNP central office at Naya Palatan around 11:00am where the party leaders and workers will pay their last respect. Another namaz-e-janeza will be held there.

The decision on his burial will be taken after his younger son returns home from Japan, BNP leaders said.

Hamidullah was taken to CMH after he fell sick yesterday morning, said BNP leaders quoting his daughter-in-law Raisa Wali Khan.

He breathed his last at the hospital around 2:30pm, said BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

Hamidullah, also the Liberation War affairs secre-

tary of BNP, had been suffering from high blood pressure, family sources said.

His body was taken to his Dhaka Cantonment residence from CMH yesterday afternoon. Hearing the death news, relatives, well-wishers and BNP central leaders including its acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir rushed to his residence.

Atiqullah Khan Masud, editor of the daily Janakantha, is the younger brother of Hamidullah while Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Faruk Khan is his brother-in-law.

Born on September 11, 1938 at Medinimandal village of Louhajang upazila in Munshiganj, Hamidullah took the charge of sector-11 after legendary freedom fighter Col M Abu Taher was wounded seriously in the battle against Pakistani

occupation forces during the 1971 war.

He joined the then Pakistan Air Force in 1959 after his graduation. He was beside AK Khandkar during the surrender of Pakistan army on December 16, 1971.

Hamidullah was elected member of parliament thrice from Munshiganj-2 constituency (Louhojong and Sirajdikhan) in 1979, 1991 and 1996 (February 15 election).

He was defeated in 2008 election in a constituency of Dhaka.

Hamidullah had joined Awami League in 1996 but returned to BNP within a year and stayed there until his death.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami condoled his death.

Hamidullah wrote books on Liberation War.