

Ishraq was to head

FROM PAGE 1
named Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haque alias Major Zia is on the run.

After the two were arrested, they requested that they be allowed to give their confessional statements before a civilian court.

According to the Prothom Alo report, they were taken to a Dhaka Metropolitan Court on January 9, where magistrates Shahriar Mahmud Adnan and Keshab Roy recorded their statements under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

However, sources in the ISPR said they did not know anything about it. The ISPR on January 19 at a press conference formally revealed to the nation news of the plot to topple the government.

The two former army officials were given three hours to mull over what they would say in their testimonies, court sources said.

According to court sources, Ehsan Yusuf in his statement said he knew businessman Ishraq Ahmed as a friend of his elder brother Lt Col Mehbub. The two had fought together in the Liberation War.

Ishraq is a former student of Faujdarhat Cadet College. He left the country for Denmark after Mehbub was killed following the 1981 abortive coup.

Yusuf and Ishraq used to meet twice or thrice a year in the 1990's. In 1997, Yusuf came to know that Ishraq was living in a house at Dhaka's Mohakhali DOHS. Yusuf went there to visit him. Ishraq told him that he had prevented a coup in 1996.

In his statement, Yusuf said after he retired, Ishraq invited him to his house in 2009 and offered him a position in a foreign company, the Bangla daily reported. He asked Yusuf about the internal situation of the army after the 2009 BDR carnage.

Yusuf said Ishraq asked him to introduce him to army officials affected by the carnage. Yusuf then took Ishraq to Major (ret'd) Zakir and Lt Col (ret'd) Shams.

Shams did not like Ishraq. He said Ishraq thinks about taking over power like the army officers of the 1960s, which he thought was pointless now.

Yusuf also told the court that in 2011 Ishraq asked him whether he had met Major Syed Ziaul Huq. In February 2011, Ishraq gave him a book and asked him to give it to a brigadier general.

Ishraq was in touch with that brigadier general, Yusuf said.

In his statement, Yusuf said Ishraq told him that a seminar would be organised in England by the organisation of Mostak Ahamed, a teacher at a British university. The seminar would be used to inform the west about the possible consequences of the anger and antagonism in the Bangladesh army following the BDR carnage.

According to Yusuf, Ishraq used to say that China was a factor for the region in the future; and he was in touch with some Chinese leaders, Prothom Alo reported.

Yusuf said he went to see Major Zia in July or August 2011 on the request of Ishraq. Major Zia was studying at the Military Institute of Science and Technology then.

Ishraq told Yusuf that Major Zia would be able to lead and he also spoke about Major Zakir.

In his statement, Yusuf told the magistrate that on a Friday during the last Ramadan, he took Major Zia from Gulshan Shooting Club to Ishraq's home on a rickshaw. When they arrived, Major Zakir was already there. They discussed the government they would form after overthrowing the present one, the Bangla daily reported.

During that meeting, several former army officials, bureaucrats, journalists, intellectuals, teachers and other eminent personalities were discussed.

Major Zakir had then said they almost went for a military operation following the BDR carnage, Yusuf said in his statement. He said Ishraq had the impression that any coup following the carnage would be made because of the carnage.

Ishraq also presented a military plan, which showed that a brigade would surround Dhaka cantonment, Bangladesh and Gonobhaban.

According to the plan, the prime minister was to be taken to a safe place; many army officials from 34 Bengal regiment would take positions at army headquarters; and the president would dissolve the government and announce a new one; and the head of that brigade would be made the new army chief.

A brigadier general was to be made the chief of general staff and businessman Ishraq was to be the country's new ruler, Yusuf said, adding that the reason behind making Ishraq the ruler was that he used to be a freedom fighter.

A major general was to be given authority over the home ministry, he added.

Yusuf told the court that Ishraq had the impression that there would not be any parades in winter 2011 and he wanted to get everything over with before the winter.

Some two or three days after the meeting, Yusuf went to see Ishraq at his home. At that meeting, Ishraq told him that action would be taken against several generals.

They also discussed Ishraq's position in the new government; the war crimes trial; reinstating Bismillah and faith in Allah in the constitution; repealing women's rights laws; decreeing the hijab; Islami banking; enforcing Sharia law; creating zakaat funds; stopping indecency on TV and films; appointing a Dhaka University teacher as education minister; and forming a high-powered committee for the National University.

A few days after the meeting, Yusuf went to Ishraq's home once again to hold further discussions, Yusuf said in his testimony. During that meeting, Ishraq told him that the seminar in London had been a success. Plans were made in the seminar on how small groups would execute their operations.

They also discussed the responsibilities of each army official, their positions, sources of arms and bullets, and what would be done to any deserters, Yusuf said.

"At that meeting, Zia said that past coup instigators either had to die or leave the country. What will happen to us now?" said Yusuf.

Yusuf said Ishraq responded by saying that they needed to establish a chain of command in the military. They then dwelt on how the

situation would be presented to foreign countries.

Some days later, Yusuf spoke to Ishraq over the telephone, when the businessman told him that the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence was on to him and he would have to go into hiding.

He also said that Ishraq was not in the country during Eid-ul-Azha. The businessman, however, asked everyone to gather at Major Zakir's home on Eid day and they had a teleconference. They had then expressed disappointment at an army officer backing out of the plot.

According to Yusuf, their last meeting was held on December 9, 2011. In the course of it, a major proposed calling off the plot to overthrow the government. After that, Yusuf had contacted a major in Bogra, who later went on to disclose the entire plan.

Court sources say that the statement of Major Zakir is very similar.

Ehsan Yusuf was arrested at Dhaka's Matikata area, close to Dhaka cantonment, on December 15 and Maj Zakir Hossain was arrested at a relative's house at Indira Road in Dhaka on December 31.

Following the revelations and the January 19 press conference, an investigation court was formed in Dhaka and five others in other parts of the country.

Padma Bridge

FROM PAGE 20
South Asia Datuk Seri Samy Vellu said the consortium, comprising experienced Malaysian construction companies, will be set up after the Bangladesh government accepts Malaysia's technical and financial proposals on the project submitted last week.

"Bangladesh has seen our success in building bridges such as the first and second Penang Bridges. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina requested us to look at the proposed bridge [Padma bridge]," Samy told Bernama in an interview.

Asked when the project would commence, he said details on the timeframe could only be decided once the agreement had been sealed, slated to be on Feb 21.

"We worked with due diligence for the past one month and finally, with the consent of [Malaysian] Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, we told the Bangladesh government we were ready to build the bridge," he added.

Samy said several big names in the Malaysian construction industry and government-linked companies had been earmarked to join the consortium, which would be monitored by the Malaysian Prime Minister's Department, through the special envoy's office.

"The contractor has brought in a financier from Dubai. Serious negotiations are currently going on between them. The Malaysian and Bangladeshi governments have no say in identifying and deciding on the financier," said the news agency.

Construction of the 6.15km bridge became uncertain when the World Bank suspended a \$1.2 billion loan last year alleging corruption in the pre-bidding process.

India, Russia

FROM PAGE 20
The European Union (EU) imposed the tax with effect from January 1, but over two dozen countries, including India, Russia, China and the United States, have opposed the move saying it violates international law.

The Press Trust of India late Friday quoted what it said were official sources as saying over 30 countries would meet in Moscow on February 21 and 22 to decide on retaliatory measures against the EU if it insists on imposing the carbon tax on non-EU flights as there was "growing agreement" on the matter.

The report did not name the sources. The news agency added that India delivered "a strong message" on the carbon tax issue to an EU delegation led by EU climate chief Connie Hedegaard on Friday in New Delhi.

"Even if only India, Russia and China decide to start charging for over-flights by European carriers or decide to restrict the number of flights operated by them citing emission concerns, it could have a devastating effect on the European airline industry," a source said, according to PTI.

Biman

FROM PAGE 20
passenger who was coming to Dhaka with his wife and daughter, said after seven hours of agonising wait at the airport, Biman officials informed them that the flight was rescheduled for noon the next day and only then they were taken to a hotel.

"Biman rescheduled the flight twice more and in the mean time they asked us to change the hotel," alleged Monwar Hossain.

According to him, the technical fault, in terms of money, may have cost Biman little but the consequences will cost millions. He also complained that the cabin crew of the flight stop serving almost an hour before the landing which also may harm Biman's reputation.

Meanwhile, a number of Biman officials were found pretty disappointed with the new aircraft of Boeing. They said such faults usually do not arise in new aircraft.

Asked Mazharul H Chowdhury, director for customer services of Biman who is now its acting managing director, said glitch of this kind can occur in new aircraft too.

"Boeing purchased the replacement equipment and fixed it as the warranty for the aircraft is still valid," he said, adding that the equipment cost around \$1,400.

Palki joined the Biman fleet in October last year and started its commercial operation in the first week of the next month.

Days into its operation armrests of around 50 out of 384 seats in the economy class fell apart. US company Weber, which had supplied the seats, later replaced the armrests at its own cost.

Besides, some more complaints had also surfaced regarding the remote controls of movie screens and the galley of the \$ 152 million aircraft.

Miladunnabi

FROM PAGE 1
highlighting the significance of the day.

Islamic Foundation Bangladesh will also organise various programmes on the occasion.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will air special programmes while newspapers publish special articles on the day.

President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia in separate messages wished peace and welfare for all including the Muslim Ummah on the occasion.

In his message, Zillur Rahman said the Prophet had left eternal lessons and ideals for establishing the rights of all. "It's possible to achieve peace both in this world and hereafter through following his ideals," said the president.

The prime minister in her note said proper practice of Prophet's universal teachings can bring peace and progress in this conflict-ridden world.

Neutrality is the key

FROM PAGE 1
Secretariat to bid farewell to him and his two colleagues - election commissioners Muhammed Sohul Hussein and M Sakhawat Hossain.

The EC Secretariat staff gathered at the National Economic Council auditorium at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital to say farewell to the outgoing EC.

"Always behave properly whenever people approach you for service. They may not speak or be articulate in the way we are, but never misbehave with them. You will be able to take people's confidence in the commission to new heights if you serve them well," Huda told the EC staff.

He said the image of many departments had been tarnished because of the misbehaviour of their staff with the general public.

"We get our salaries and allowances from taxpayers' money. Whom will we serve, if we don't serve people?"

Huda took charge of the CEC on February 5, 2007 amid a volatile political situation. Having accomplished a number of challenging tasks, he ended his five-year term yesterday.

On his work as CEC, Huda said: "To me it was a noble call of duty, not a job."

The outgoing CEC also advised EC officials to keep themselves prepared for the huge tasks ahead, including

an updating of the voter list before the next spate of parliamentary polls.

"There is no alternative to cooperation. There will be total failure if you do not cooperate with one another."

During Huda's stint as CEC, the commission successfully prepared a voter roll with photographs, held the ninth parliamentary election, brought about electoral reforms and introduced electronic voting machines.

It also held several elections to local government bodies that included polls to city corporations and union parishads.

"Please take care of the things I am leaving behind, and take them forward," Huda told the EC officials.

Earlier, his two colleagues Sakhawat and Sohul called upon EC officials to maintain their neutrality at any cost.

Election Commissioner Sakhawat, who retires on February 14, urged the officials to keep up their good work. "If you have a clear conscience, you will be able to take a strong stance under pressure."

Outgoing Election Commissioner Sohul Hussein echoed his view, and said no EC staff should be partisan towards anyone, any party or any candidate.

"If you are not neutral,

you cannot perform your duties. And you will have to face pressure," Sohul told the EC staff.

"The commission's present image gives you honour. You have to work relentlessly and neutrally to uphold the image."

EC officials said none of the previous ECs had been accorded such a farewell from the EC Secretariat in the last 30 years. Before Huda, only MA Syed completed his five-year term as CEC.

Abu Naser, a computer operator at the EC Secretariat, said he now took pride in being an employee of the EC.

In an emotion-choked voice, he expressed his gratitude to the outgoing EC for its excellent performance in the last five years. It had boosted staff morale, he said.

Sirajul Islam, additional secretary to the EC Secretariat, lauded the leadership of the outgoing EC, saying it took the EC to new heights.

"We are grateful to them."

On behalf of the EC Secretariat officers, Syed Mohammad Musa expressed gratitude to the outgoing EC, and said the EC's contribution to establishing democracy in the country would be remembered forever.

JU teachers

FROM PAGE 20
newly-appointed Proctor Prof Tapon Kumar Saha told The Daily Star.

Following the hunger strike, Vice-Chancellor (VC) of JU Prof Sharif called a meeting with the JU Teachers Association (Juta), in the afternoon and assured the agitating teachers of reconstructing the proctorial body by next Monday.

In the 90-minute meeting, Prof Kabir assured that steps would be taken against the former proctor Prof Arzu Miah after the probe report on the assault of Juta

President Prof AA Mamun is submitted, said Prof Nasim Akhter Hossain, a spokesperson for Juta.

The meeting was held after more than a hundred JU teachers went on a five-hour hunger strike in front of the registrar building around 11:00am as part of their five-day agitation programme which began last Wednesday.

Appointment of new teachers will also be halted for the time being, Prof Nasim quoted the VC as saying.

The VC will also form another probe body to investigate the recent streams of violence on the campus, including Zubair's death, she

added.

Following assurances by the VC, the agitating teachers decided to suspend their agitation programmes scheduled for Monday.

However, they would announce fresh programmes if the VC failed to keep his promises, Juta warned.

The seven-point demand includes removal of the proctorial body and ensuring punishment of the former proctor, Prof Arzu Miah, for his alleged attack on Prof Mamun.

The agitating teachers were singing inspirational songs protesting the authorities' decision to postpone the fifth convocation of the university which was earlier scheduled for February 7.

The JU authorities on Wednesday postponed the convocation and are yet to announce fresh date for it.

"The authorities were compelled to postpone the convocation due to the prevailing hostile atmosphere on the campus," JU Registrar Abu Bakkar Siddiqui told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

However, it will be held this month, the proctor told The Daily Star.

Pro-VC Prof Farhad Hossain, Proctor Prof Tapon and Registrar Abu Bakkar

Siddique told The Daily Star that they were not aware of the meeting's outcome as they were not present.

The VC could not be reached over the phone, despite repeated attempts made by this correspondent.

Britain distracting public with Falklands

AFP, Buenos Aires

Argentina said Thursday that Britain was trying to distract its public from high unemployment and other domestic problems by saber-rattling in the disputed Falkland Islands.

Vice President Amado Boudou's reaction came amid rising tensions with the approach of the 30th anniversary of the brief but bloody war the two countries fought for the South Atlantic archipelago.

His remarks followed Prince William's arrival in the Falklands on Thursday for a six-week Royal Air Force deployment and London's announcement earlier this week it would soon deploy a warship to the islands.

Ashraf sees

FROM PAGE 20
(ALCWC) with party chief Sheikh Hasina in the chair at the Gono Bhaban.

The minister, however, did not name anybody in this connection.

Referring to his January 14 talks with the UK's Secretary of State for International Development Andrew Mitchell in Dhaka, Ashraf said he had informed Mitchell about the matter during the meeting.

"If any such incident [attack] occurs in Bangladesh, it'll have an impact on the entire world, including the neighbouring countries. The international community is worried about it," he mentioned.

Ashraf called upon the people as well as his party men to remain alert about keeping the BNP out of power. "So you have to remain cautious about any probable attempt to turn the country into Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh. We don't want to be recognised as a corrupt nation in the world."

The AL spokesperson accused the BNP and its chairperson of doing everything possible to foil the ongoing trial of war criminals.

On the confidence of the stockmarket investors, he said there was no instrument to measure their confidence level. The average loss and gain should be measured after five years of the government instead of on a day-to-day calculation.

About his recent statement made in parliament on road accidents, he claimed that the media had misquoted him. He said if any driver did not have any licence, took drugs, drove recklessly and killed someone in an accident, that would be a crime. "If any accident is pointed out as an accident, it is treated as an accident," he clarified.

Mentioning the different successes of the present government, the AL general secretary said the government was on the right track. He directed the party leaders to let people know about the government's achievements.

He also noted that the media could play a vital role in holding a national dialogue on some major national issues. The media and the people were the two main components of democracy,

headed.

The meeting discussed the latest political situation in the country and chalked out programmes for February 21, the International Mother Language Day. The party will also observe historic March 7 and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birthday on March 17.

Children

FROM PAGE 20
invitation by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The group led by 36 BSF Battalion Commanding Officer Col AK Sinha was given a guard of honour near the Benapole check post.

Lt Col Dewan Akbar, commanding officer of 22 BGB Battalion, greeted the group with flowers on arrival.

During the tour, the group will visit places of historic significance, including National Memorial in Savar, Bangabandhu Memorial Museum, Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, National Museum and Bangabandhu Bridge.

The group will also meet Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid and Director General of BGB Maj Gen Anwar Hossain, during the trip.

Earlier, on December 21, last year, 23 school-going children of BGB officials went to Kolkata on a three-day tour.

Iran denies planning attacks on US

AFP, Tehran

Iran on Friday rejected allegations by the US director of national intelligence James Clapper that the Islamic republic was more willing now to carry out attacks on American soil.

"Iran categorically denies James Clapper's unfounded allegations," foreign ministry spokesman Rami Mehmanparast said.

"Those who are themselves accused of supporting the assassination of Iranian scientists in Tehran cannot allow themselves to make such false and inexact allegations," he said.

In written remarks on Tuesday to senators, Clapper said an alleged plot last year to assassinate the Saudi ambassador to the United States showed Tehran might be more willing now to carry out attacks on US soil.

Syrian army

FROM PAGE 1
intervention against Assad.

It was the second time, following a similar veto in October, that Russia and China have used their votes to block a UN resolution condemning the Assad regime.

Supporting the resolution were the Arab League and Western members, including the United States.

Susan Rice, the US representative to the United Nations, said the United States was "disgusted" at the "shameful" vote that shielded a "craven tyrant."

"This is a sad day for the Security Council," Rice declared.

Syria objected to the resolution as a formula for international intervention.

The joint veto came despite days of behind-the-scenes negotiations to craft a compromise acceptable to Moscow. Russia feared a repeat of last year's Libya scenario, in which a Security Council veto designed to protect Libyan civilians resulted in a Western-led bombing campaign that led to the ouster of Libyan leader Moammar Kadafi.

Observers say Russia and China feared that the resolution could have led to the rise of another pro-Western regime in Syria, which is a close ally of Russia and Iran.

In response to Russia's concerns, negotiators reportedly agreed to omit a demand that Assad hand over power to his deputy as part of a transition to democracy. Western and Arab nations also reportedly agreed to remove language that would have called for an arms embargo and economic sanctions against Syria. In addition, negotiators were said to have explicitly ruled out any kind of foreign intervention in Syria.

But, in the end, the concessions weren't enough to persuade Russia and China to go along with the plan.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 20
Villagers informed him of the killing, Nazrul added.

The victim's family members informed local BGB of the matter Friday noon.

In connection with the incident, BGB, Phulbari-40 Battalion held a flag meeting with BSF of Bhimpur camp Friday afternoon when BGB claimed the body, sources said. But BSF denied the incident of torture and killing.

BSF later informed Rajab Ali, company commander of BGB, Bhaigarh camp of Birampur, that they had recovered a body from Lalpur, about 2km inside India from Bangladesh border.

Another flag meeting was held yesterday afternoon when SK Singh, company commander of BSF, Bhimpur camp said that on information BSF had gone to the spot, and following the recovery of the body they had sent it to Hill hospital for an autopsy.

Yesterday at about 7:10pm, BSF handed over the body to BGB.

Maj Tareque Iftakhar, acting commanding officer of Phulbari 40 Battalion confirmed the incident saying, "We have strongly protested the killing".

In a similar incident on December 17 last year, BSF gunned down two Bangladeshi cattle traders on Daudpur border of the upazila.

Wild driving

FROM PAGE 20
live with her sister so that he could attend a better school in the capital.

He was visiting his mother at Ashulia's Nischintapur when the tragic accident occurred.

The boy's maternal uncle, Imam Hossain, told The Daily Star that on the fateful day he sent his nephew to fetch his brother-in-law Shobuj Chowkidar from Nischintapur bus stop.

Likhon was crossing the road in front of the bus station when he was hit by a passing CNG. Losing balance, Likhon fell on the street and was instantly crushed under the wheels of a passing truck.

He died on the spot.

Shobuj, a relative of Likhon who had not him met before, witnessed the accident having no idea about the boy's identity.

Likhon was carrying Imam's mobile phone when he came to the bus stop. All calls to the phone was answered by a bystander who broke the news that the owner of the phone had died.

This led to some confusion among acquaintances who feared Imam had met with an accident. They rushed to the spot and found Likhon's body.

The victim's mother also thought her brother had died. She learnt the tragic news of her son's demise

after reaching home.

Sabina has been drifting in and out of consciousness, since the incident unable to accept the news.

"I can't believe my son is dead," is all she could say to people around her.

Likhon was eager to fulfil his mother's dreams for him. He worked part-time at a computer store as a photocopier assistant where in exchange for his work he was taught to use a computer. During the short period he worked there he had already taught himself to type.

A case was filed with Ashulia Police Station but no one was arrested till yesterday evening.