

## It's last chance to try war criminals: Ashraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The tenure of the present government is probably the last chance to hold the trial of the war criminals, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraf Islam said yesterday.

"The party is in power and may assume power in the future. But it won't be possible to try the war criminals then if the trial is not held this time", he said.

Ashraf, also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, urged all to keep united in favour of the war crimes trial until it completes.

The government has brought only a few war criminals to justice, he said.

"The war criminals and the anti-liberation war forces have huge invisible power. They have power of money, arms, bombs and terrorism.

"They have also collaborators at both home and abroad, and these collaborators have been conspiring locally and internationally to foil the war crimes trial spending big money".

The AL spokesperson said he received e-mail from Europe, USA and Muslim Middle Eastern countries everyday about the plot to foil the trial.

"So everybody must be united for the trial until it is completed".

The AL leader made the call at a grassroots meeting of Awami Jubo League at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the capital.

Jubo League, AL's youth front, organised the meeting to prepare itself for according "Youth Reception" to Prime Minister and AL chief Sheikh Hasina for attaining maritime victory with Myanmar on April 18. Jubo League Acting Chairman Omar Faruk Chowdhury chaired the meeting.

Referring to the formation of Jubo League after the Liberation War, the LGRD minister criticised Hasanul Haque Inu's Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) saying that had the politics not divided through the formation of the JSD, the cruel incident of August 15, 1975, would not have taken place.

## Inflation

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He said wage rate increased at a faster pace than inflation and helped raise people's purchasing power. In March, wage rate increased by 12.63 percent, outpacing inflation by 2.53 percentage points.

Mollah said a bumper rice yield helped bring down inflation in March, as the weight of rice in the inflation basket is about one fourth.

Bangladesh Bank's weekly report on the economic situation said price hike of essentials on the international market, and increase in energy tariffs and domestic demands had pushed up inflation.

Zaid Bakht, research director at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), told The Daily Star that the rise in energy prices and high price of dollar largely pushed up non-food inflation.

He said prices of all imported items soared due to a rise in dollar price.

Bakht said the Bangladesh Bank's contractionary monetary policy failed to contain non-food inflation. The central bank has been discouraging import financing that has made imported items costlier.

Prices of both local and imported fruits will go up, as the National Board of Revenue has increased import duty on fruits, he said.

The BIDS research director also said it was unlikely that non-food inflation would fall in the future, as the government would increase energy and power tariffs further under pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

## Biman board

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also recommended that the minister of this ministry be made Biman Bangladesh Airlines board chairman, removing Air Marshal (ret'd) Jamal Uddin Ahmed.

In its meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, the House watchdog brought allegations against incumbent Biman Board Chairman Jamal Uddin of contempt of the JS as he failed to show up before the committee yesterday.

"The existing Biman Board has failed to turn the national airliner into a profitable venture as aviation experts are not involved in it. The air-service men will not be able to operate Biman efficiently as they are not professionally sound," Mosharrarf Hossain, chief of the committee, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

Biman pilots, officials and employees under the banner of 'Biman Bachao Oikya Parishad' have recently announced a 48-hour strike from April 16 demanding immediate resignation of Jamal Uddin and dissolving the present Board. They claim that due to the Board's inefficiency, the national flag carrier has incurred a loss of Tk 1,000 crore.

Mosharrarf, also a ruling Awami League MP, said many members of the present Biman Board are "incompetent" to run the national flag carrier skillfully.

On Jamal Uddin's non-appearance before the JS body, he said the committee

has several times requested the Biman boss to attend the committee's meeting to discuss irregularities in operating the airliner which is causing a huge loss.

"Finally on Sunday, the committee in its meeting requested him [Jamal Uddin] to appear before the committee on Thursday [yesterday]. But, he did not turn up," Mosharrarf said, adding, by refusing their request Jamal Uddin shows committed contempt of the House of the nation.

The committee will inform the issue to Speaker Abdul Hamid as well as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Mosharrarf went on.

Asked about Biman board boss's allegation against some members of the JS body of gaining personal interests instead of Biman's, Mosharrarf said, "Honourable prime minister may investigate the allegation."

"And we must resign as MP if the allegation is found valid," he said.

Biman was turned into a public limited company in 2007 to make it a profitable venture and to run it professionally avoiding political interference.

Surprisingly, within one year of turning into a public limited company, the crisis-riddled Biman saw profit after long years.

But the state airliner got back its poor look within a few months after the ruling AL assumed power in 2009.

## BSF tortures Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Satkhira

A Bangladeshi national who went to India legally suffered brutal torture by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on April 4.

BSF men tortured Gopal Chandra Roy near the Ghojadanga border in Basirhat police station of India opposite to Bhomra land port of Satkhira.

Gopal, 40, son of Puranjan Roy of village Paikpara in Debhatta upazila, went to India through Ghojadanga maintaining all the immigration formalities on March 29.

As soon as the victim reached a BSF camp on his way to Bangladesh on April 4, BSF men stopped and interrogated him. At one stage they beat him mercilessly with bamboo sticks and fractured his right leg at about 8:00 pm.

The BSF men left him at Bhomra immigration point and the victim's relatives rescued him.

He was admitted to Satkhira Sadar Hospital in a critical condition, hospital sources said.

Officer-in-charge Ali Ashraf of Bhomra immigration check post confirmed the incident.

Border Guard Bangladesh of Satkhira protested the torture of Gopal.

## Japan passes \$1.1 trillion budget

AFP, Tokyo

Japan passed a \$1.1 trillion budget yesterday, with about half the spending expected to be financed by new bonds that will add to Japan's massive debt mountain.

Although the opposition-controlled upper house of parliament voted down the budget earlier in the day, it was still passed after a draft was approved last month in Japan's slower chamber.

"The budget bill was enacted, based on the constitution," a parliamentary official said.

## 9 killed

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the auto-rickshaw and they included its driver.

Seven of the dead were identified as Jotish Chandra Sheel, 60, Shahidul Islam, 55, Aminul Islam, 25, Abdul Malek, 22, Mizanur Rahman, 20, Rashedul Islam, 25, and bus helper Hira Mia, 25.

Among the injured, 15 passengers were admitted to Sirajganj General Hospital and Belkuchi Upazila Health Complex. Of them, the condition of five persons, including pregnant Rahima Khatun, 22, Yusuf Ali, 18, Tofazzul Hossain, 52, Sona Ullah Mia, 50, and Khalilur Rahman, 20, was critical, doctors at the Sirajganj hospital said.

The Karim Paribahan bus bound for Sirajganj from Enayetpur rammed into the three-wheeler in Ambaria area about 4:00 pm, said Belkuchi UNO Ananda Kumar Biswas and Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Belkuchi Police Station.

The bus, skidding off the road, fell into a roadside ditch. The road has become narrower due to repair work at this point, reports our correspondent, adding that the CNG-run auto-rickshaw was totally damaged. The driver of the bus fled the scene.

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdul Latif Biswas visited the spot and asked the authorities concerned to ensure proper treatment of the injured.

A case was filed in this connection. Our Rangamati correspondent reports the reason behind the accident was not clear but many witnesses said the vehicle had plunged into the roadside ditch as it lost control.

Army and police personnel and fire-fighters with the help of local people rescued the survivors and recovered the bodies.

However, they were yet to salvage the bus.

The bodies were sent to Rangamati General Hospital while 12 injured and in critical condition were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

## Traffic thrown

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upazila, Satkhira.

The agitating students withdrew the blockade around 1:45 pm following a home ministry assurance of a probe into the alleged incident and at the request of DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique.

At Mohakhali, people who had been evicted from the Karail slum in government action were joined by those in fear of losing homes through a similar drive.

Police stopped traffic on the Gulshan-Mohakhali link road and Kemal Ataturk Avenue, suspecting the slum dwellers could vandalise vehicles, Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station, told The Daily Star.

The ensuing tailback stretched several kilometres on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Navy Headquarters to Mohakhali and Tajuddin Ahmed Sarani.

Traffic on all roads at Gulshan, Banani and Mohakhali came to a standstill. The congestions had an impact on other city streets as well.

The scorching heat of April compounded the distress of commuters, including office-goers and students, who found themselves stuck on their way to their various destinations. Those travelling with children and elderly people were the worst

sufferers.

"I remained stranded near my office for two hours," said Naimul Hasan, an executive of a private company on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue.

Nafis Alam Khan, a commuter from Uttara, said it took him three and a half hours to get to his office at Farmgate by car.

"Reaching near Navy Headquarters, I found a long tailback ahead and many vehicles taking detours," he said. "I then headed through Dhaka Cantonment and came out through Jahangir Gate."

Many HSC examinees, who had their English first paper test yesterday, were late for the examinations.

Around 12:15 pm, law enforcers managed to convince the agitating slum dwellers to clear the roads, said OC Rafiqul Islam. Traffic congestion in Gulshan-Mohakhali areas started to ease around 2:00 pm.

B a n g l a d e s h Telecommunications Company Limited along with the district administration knocked down over two thousand slum houses and shops set up illegally near T&T School, Wireless Gate, around the BTCL satellite station and on the Gulshan lakeside.

Hasina Begum, a domestic aide who was left homeless after the drive, stationed herself on a sidewalk with her meagre household

belongings.

"I had been living in the Jheelpar slum for the last five years along with three children and my rickshaw-puller husband," she said. "Now I don't know where to go."

Md Selim Hossain, executive magistrate of Dhaka district, who led the drive Wednesday, said the administration had taken the action in compliance with a High Court order.

The HC on January 25 in a suo moto rule directed the government to remove within two months all the illegal structures on a 170-acre land owned by BTCL, Public Works Department and Ministry of Information and Communication Technology.

Known as Karail and T&T Bosti, the biggest slums in the capital, along with thousands of small makeshift structures occupy a large portion of that land by the Gulshan-Banani lake.

"We freed the BTCL land of illegal occupancy in Wednesday's drive," said Selim.

"The next drives are expected in Karail," he said, adding it depends on what position the government takes on the HC order.

### DU STUDENTS' DEMO

The students' barricades at Shahbagh intersection stopped traffic on roads up to Matsya Bhaban, New Market, Science Laboratory, Ruposhi Bangla Hotel and

Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

The patients bound for DMCH and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University went through a terrible ordeal.

The students cooled down on being informed that the Satkhira police superintendent and officer-in-charge of Kaliganj Police Station had been closed for negligence in duties, Syed Nurul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of police (Ramna zone), told The Daily Star.

Palash Devnath, a post-graduate student of DU, told The Daily Star that the attacks on minorities took place over four days from March 30 centring on a play at Fatehpur High School on March 27.

"At one stage of the drama, an actor mistakenly uttered some words that made a section of the audience angry," said Palash, who himself is a witness.

The matter was published in a newspaper on March 29, fuelling religious bigotry.

A group of Muslim zealots attacked minority community members and set fire to a number of houses, he added.

## Disclose

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headquarters on Minto Road in the capital, said meetings sources.

The eight-member Saudi team arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday to probe the homicide of the 45-year-old official, who was shot dead some 30 yards off his residence in the city's Gulshan area early on March 6.

The team accompanied by Saudi Ambassador to Bangladesh Dr Abdullah Bin Naser Al-Busairi went to DMP office around 11:30 am to know about the progress in the investigation. They stayed there for nearly two and a half hours.

The DMP team was led by its Commissioner Benazir Ahmed.

Emerging from the meeting, the Saudi delegation declined to respond to the queries from the journalists.

The DMP has provided all the necessary information to the team without compromising on the ongoing probe, Monirul Islam, DMP spokesperson and deputy commissioner of Detective Branch (South), told news-men.

## Realtor staff

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snatched the money kept in a bag soon after drawing the money from Dhanmondi branch of IFIC Bank on Mirpur Road.

He said they were going to the firm's Bijoy Nagar branch office.

Nuruddin Shipon, driver of the car, told this correspondent that when they reached in front of Harun Eye Hospital at Dhanmondi's Road No. 6, two men riding on a motorcycle, coming from behind, stopped in front of the car. Assuming that an accident might have taken place, he stopped the car.

As Shipon moved back, he found another motorcycle standing there that obstructed the car's movement. Two men sitting on that motorcycle brandishing firearms ordered him to come out of the car.

As Shipon rolled the windowpane down, the miscreants snatched away the keys and unlocked the back door. Then they dragged Alamgir out of the car.

As Alamgir tried to resist them, the criminals fired a shot near his feet and snatched the bag from him.

They fled towards Science Laboratory intersection without wasting any more time, Alamgir told The Daily Star.

The driver said all the criminals possessed firearms with them and the whole incident took place within two minutes.

A security guard of Harun Eye Hospital who witnessed the incident said the criminals came in three motor cycles.

Md Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Dhanmondi Police Station, said they are investigating the matter.

## Big buys done

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Cooperatives under which DMCSL is registered.

Interestingly, the MLM venture started operations with Destiny-2000 Ltd 12 years ago.

The controversial Destiny Tree Plantation was sold to DMCSL at Tk 4.7 crore while Destiny Transit System, Air Destiny, Destiny Security Force and D2K Express were sold at Tk 7 crore each.

Also on the purchase list are Destiny Developers, Destiny Saasco Properties, Destiny Environment and Savings Energy and Destiny Nihajute Spinners.

More than half a dozen of these companies, including Best Aviation, Destiny Transit System, Destiny Environment and Savings Energy and Destiny Developers, are yet to start operation.

In the last 10 months, the cooperative has also bought the Ananda Cinema Hall building along with its land

at Farmgate at Tk 65.65 crore, the document shows.

Over the last few days, various newspapers have published reports on numerous irregularities of Destiny-2000 following a Bangladesh Bank inquiry that found evidence of illegal banking by DMCSL.

Unlawful banking by the company is creating disorder in the country's financial sector, said the BB probe report, which was sent to the finance ministry recently.

Rafiqul Amin, chairman of the cooperative and also Destiny Group, admitted to The Daily Star that some of the companies were indeed inoperative but that they were sold out to DMCSL with approval from the Department of Cooperatives.

"I don't want to take interest from the banks. So I've to invest the cooperative money for profits," he told The Daily Star yesterday,

justifying the purchase of name-only companies.

He said Destiny Developers was supposed to begin operations after recruiting two engineers who were working at Roads and Highways. But the two are yet to join the company, which is delaying its launch.

"Some of the companies will start operations in the next two to three months," he told The Daily Star.

Asked why the members of the cooperative were not given dividends proportionate to its growth in assets, Amin said this year's dividend would rise to 20 percent, which was 15 percent last year.

Currently, DMCSL has 6.5 lakh members with about Tk 3,000 crore in assets.

The cooperative began operations in 2005. In 2006-07, it had Tk 19.47 lakh in current assets and Tk 4.49 lakh in fixed assets, according to its 2010-11 annual report.

## Recruiting system

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for job information and help in preparing travel documents like passports and medical certificates, he told The Daily Star.

ESCAP in a report launched yesterday in Dhaka said many countries had suspended recruitment from Bangladesh due to issues like forged skill certificates and migrants seeking a second job or overstaying visas to pay off the loans taken to meet the pre-departure expenses.

The report is about international migration from countries in South and South-West Asia, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

Malaysia and Kuwait have recently frozen recruitment from Bangladesh whereas Saudi Arabia began taking fewer workers since late 2008, according to the report.

Job seekers often end up paying an amount equal to one or two years' of salaries and, in consequence, they do not see any positive changes in their lifestyles as expected after joining work, Donovan Storey, chief of ESCAP's social policy and population section, told reporters after the launching programme at Hotel Ruposhi Bangla.

The scenario is more or less the same in other countries of South and South-West Asia, he said, calling for stronger and effective laws and policies on migration.

The report says pre-departure migration costs often become twice the official maximum charge of Tk 84,000. Women, however, pay less recruitment costs than men.

Many borrow some or all of this money from private lenders, sometimes at an interest rate of 10 percent per month. Under such conditions, a \$2,000 debt becomes double in a year, the report adds.

Andrew Bruce, regional director of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said migrants could stay abroad legally until their job contracts expired. But when they are in debt, they tend to stay back, becoming irregular.

"Even governments in Europe are worrying about irregular migrants," he said, adding that the middlemen were making money, depriving workers.

As per the report, the recruiting agencies in Bangladesh play a significant role in helping job seekers prepare required travel-related documents but often subject them to deceit and exploitation.

It says, "As the middlemen are not registered with the recruiting agents or the government, it has become a major challenge to monitor their activities." And middlemen grab this scope to exploit people.

Referring to a study, the report says Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the Gulf countries mainly worry about not getting wages

regularly. Those receiving wages regularly do not get the promised sum.

It also says some migrants may have better access to health services, but the majority are exposed to dangers at work without any access to healthcare. With poor income, they can only afford a substandard living.

The ESCAP official said the government should be very tough against malpractices. Bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation is required to address the problems, he noted.

Overseas recruitments should come under government scrutiny to check fraudulent practices and exploitation, the ESCAP report says. It also suggests that accurate information about jobs and facilities should be made available for the benefits of migrants and employers.

The government needs coherent policies, legal and institutional framework as well as stronger technical and operational capacities to effectively address migration issues, the report says.

The IOM, UN Human Rights, UNAIDS, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Unicef, UN Women, UN Population Fund, UN Refugee Agency and the World Health Organisation made contributions to the report.

Expatriates' welfare secretary Zafar Ahmed Khan was also present at the launch.