



(From left) Journalists Simon Dring, Toufique Imrose Khalidi and Mark Tully and Major General (Retd) KM Shafiullah at a programme titled 'Smriti 71' (memory of 1971) organised by Mohammadi Group and Ha-Meem Group at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Pak army killed 7,000 Mar 25

Says British journalist Simon Dring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pakistan Army killed at least 7,000 people on the dark night of March 25 in 1971, said eminent British journalist Simon Dring, who covered the liberation war of Bangladesh.

"It is without dispute that in that night at least 7,000 people, as far as I know, lost their lives not because they were fighting the Pakistanis, rather the Pakistanis chose to kill those people and to give the people of this country a lesson," he said.

When the then Pakistan government asked the foreign journalists to leave the East Pakistan, Simon Dring hid himself in the then Hotel Continental (now Ruposhi Bangla Hotel) on March 25.

Simon Dring was speaking at a function titled "Smriti 71" at Pan Pacific

Sonargaon Hotel in the capital organised by Mohammadi Group and Ha-Meem Group.

Another British journalist Mark Tully, who covered the liberation war for BBC, and major general (retd) KM Shafiullah, one of the sector commanders of the war, were present at the programme. Toufique Imrose Khalidi, editor-in-chief of bdnews24.com moderated it.

Simon Dring, the then correspondent of UK-based Daily Telegraph, was the first to break story on Pakistan's crackdown. He said he would stand by what he saw 41 years ago if he can contribute to the trial of war crimes.

"I think the facts will speak themselves. People must be held accountable for what happened even forty years on," he said.

Simon Dring said the reports of his and other journalists covering from inside the then East Pakistan substantiate the levels of crimes committed against the Bangalee people.

Mark Tully said it was imperative what an individual did as Bangladesh is trying the individuals.

He said Pakistani army made a "terrible mistake" perceiving that they could win the war. "The lesson is military answer to problems never works," he said.

The two journalists said the infrastructure was totally destroyed by the war, but then gradually it was rebuilt, and that now Bangladesh has a stable democracy and good growth rate are all matters of pride.

Politicians, businessmen, journalists and cultural activists attended the programme.

WAR CRIMES TRIAL

3 cases transferred to ICT-2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday transferred three cases of crimes against humanity to the second tribunal, formed in March, as "much time" would be taken for it to dispose of the eight cases it is currently handling.

On April 11, an amendment to International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973 was made through an ordinance so that cases could be transferred from one tribunal to another.

The three-member tribunal-1 with its Chairman Justice Md Nizmul Huq made the transfer in response to three applications from the prosecution.

The applications prayed for the transfer for the quick disposal of the cases.

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 will now deal with the cases against Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Abdul Quader Mollah and Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and BNP leader Abdul Alim, who are facing charges of crimes against humanity.

It was dealing with the sole case of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad over the

same charges committed during the 1971 Liberation War.

The tribunal-2, set up to speed up the disposal of cases filed in connection with war crimes, would resume the proceedings from where the tribunal-1 had left off, the prosecution

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 will now deal with the cases against Abdul Quader Mollah, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Alim

sources said.

A defence counsel for the Jamaat leaders, Tajul Islam, yesterday told the tribunal that the transfer would open possibilities for "many anomalies".

He asked what would happen if the

prosecution decides to transfer the cases back to the original tribunal.

The new provisions also mentions nothing about the defence's role and does not give it any power in the matter, he added.

Yesterday, the tribunal-1 was scheduled to hear the defence's arguments against the charges brought against Quader Mollah and Kamaruzzaman, assistant secretary-generals of Jamaat-e-Islami.

However, it decided not to take up the two cases due to the transfer.

The prosecution submitted seven counts of crimes against humanity against Quader Mollah and eight counts against Kamaruzzaman.

The case against Alim, formal charges against whom were taken into cognisance, would also resume at the tribunal-2 with the prosecution placing the charges.

The tribunal-1 took the charges against Alim into cognisance on March 27 and directed the prosecution to place the charges on April 24.

Alim is facing 74 counts of crimes against humanity.

'91pc cabinet decisions met'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday expressed satisfaction over the implementation rate of its decisions, numerically 91 percent, taken in the Awami League-led grand alliance government's 39-month tenure.

The last BNP-Jamaat coalition government implemented 65 percent of their decisions over this period, says a report placed at the weekly cabinet meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Briefing newsmen after the meeting,

Cabinet Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan said the cabinet took 987 decisions in 145 weekly meetings, of which, 897 were implemented while 90 were being implemented.

A total 168 laws were passed in the parliament while 32 bills were being processed. The cabinet formulated 32 policies and signed 82 Memorandum of Understandings in this period, he added.

The BNP-Jamaat coalition government had held 142 cabinet meetings where 343 out of 523 decisions were

implemented.

The cabinet also endorsed the proposal to amend the mode of operation of "Border Haat" (market) set up in a village of Kurigram district, bordering India.

Currently, only locally produced goods are allowed to be sold at the "Border Haat" and an individual can sell or purchase goods worth a maximum US\$ 50.

The amendment allows goods produced in Bangladesh and India to be sold there and raises the individual's transaction total to US\$ 100.

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