

Sayedee's trial

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case against Sayedee, also presented as evidence many photographs and footage of the places where the atrocities were committed. He had recorded them during his investigation.

Places of mass murders, a building that was used as army camp, victims of the atrocities and people who witnessed them, were among the photos placed as evidence.

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday recorded the deposition of the investigation officer for the seventh day. He would resume his deposition today.

Sayedee, who is facing 20 charges of crimes against humanity, was produced before the court. He seemed little interested in the court proceedings and spent much of his time reading a book.

The investigation officer also presented a special video report of ETV on Delawar Hossain Sayedee and his involvement in the

atrocities committed in Pirojpur during the Liberation War.

The investigation officer yesterday picked up from where he left off on Tuesday, when he was about to start talking about the Liberation War in the context of Pirojpur.

Helal started by giving a brief profile of Sayedee, who was apparently suspended from Pirojpur's Chharchina Darus Sunnat Alia Madrasa because of his active involvement in student politics.

"Under his [Sayedee] leadership, Shanti Committee and armed Razakar force members committed atrocities between March 25 and December 16 of 1971, at times individually and at times with help from the Pakistani occupation force," he said.

The Pakistani occupation army and the armed Razakars killed at least 30,000 people and raped several hundred women in

Pirojpur during the war, he added.

To suppress the pro-liberation people in Pirojpur like any other part of the country, Col Atiq, Maj Nader Parvez and Cap Ezaz among other Pakistani occupation force officers took the charge of Pirojpur district, said Helal.

They set up an army camp at the Pirojpur Government High School and held meetings with local Shanti Committee members. The Pakistani forces were later provided with information on the pro-liberation people, Awami League leaders and Hindu community members, the witness added.

Sayedee, the Nayeb-e-Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami, is among four Jamaat and one BNP leaders who are facing charges of crimes against humanity at Tribunal-1.

It is the first of the two courts set up to deal with crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War of 1971.

Dada is clean

FROM PAGE 1
headquarters and hollered that there was bribe money in the vehicle," Omar Faruq Talukder, the fired assistant personal secretary of Suranjit, said yesterday.

He was talking to journalists after giving to the Anti-Corruption Commission his wealth statement and an explanation about the April 9 cash haul.

Faruq, who was a political appointee, however, would not disclose the source of the money or where and two top railway officials were heading that night.

It was his first appearance before the media since the railwaygate scandal surfaced.

The two suspended railway officials -- general manager (east) Yusuf Ali Mridha and Dhaka division security commandant Enamul Haque -- also appeared before the ACC probe committee that is looking into the scam and also the alleged recruitment business in the railway.

Like Faruq, they also termed the railwaygate scandal "a stage-managed drama as part of a conspiracy".

Talking to the reporters separately, the trio dismissed the allegation that they had pocketed huge bribes from the railway job seekers and claimed not to have any illegal asset.

The ACC will submit a report into the scandal within 30 work days starting from Tuesday, ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman told reporters after the three placed their statements before the committee.

On whether the anti-graft body will also talk with Suranjit, he said: "It depends on our investigators."

The government in a dramatic move made him a minister without a portfolio on Tuesday.

Sources in the government told this paper that "he has been advised not to talk with the media or attend any programme for a few days".

The railwaygate scam involves the seizure of Tk 70 lakh from Faruq's microbus around 11:30pm on April 9 when his driver suddenly drove into the BGB headquarters in the capital, leading to the detention of the four men who were kept in BGB's custody that night.

Sources said the driver, Ali Azam Khan, had created the scene as he was refused Tk 5 lakh as share of the amount.

BGB officials, including its chief, claimed to have freed all the four the next morning, but Enamul Huq told The Daily Star and also other journalists that the border force did not release Azam.

Whereabouts of Azam remain a mystery since.

"DADACLEAN"
Asked about the source of the money and whether they were going to Suranjit's house to give him the money, Faruq said: "I've answered all these questions before the Anti-Corruption Commission officials."

"You know where the money is now," he said when asked where the money was now.

Faruq deposited Tk 70 lakh in his account with the Mercantile Bank's Dhanmondi branch on April 11. Bangladesh Bank has already opened an investigation into the "abnormal" transaction.

During his three-minute interview with the journalists, Faruq repeatedly protested Suranjit's innocence, saying his former boss was not involved in "any kind of corruption". "Dada [Suranjit] was not involved in any crime, he is not now, and he can't be."

Faruq, who was fired on April 15, accused his driver Azam of executing a "plot to malign" Suranjit.

Without answering further questions he left the place hurriedly in a motorcycle.

He submitted a written explanation and answered queries during a 45-minute interrogation at the ACC headquarters at Segunbagicha in the capital.

"IAMCLEAN"
Yusuf Ali Mridha, the suspended railway GM (east) who is said to have pocketed huge money through recruitment business, insisted on his innocence.

"Neither do I have any illegal asset," he told journalists after his appearance before the ACC probe body.

He also claimed he had no link with the Tk 70 lakh scandal.

Mridha entered the ACC office not through the main entrance apparently to avoid the press, and dodged journalists' queries after coming out.

"I've submitted my written statement to the investigation team and answered their questions verbally," he said about his two-and-a-half-hour interrogation.

"I'm a victim of a conspiracy," he said and left the place in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw.

"DRIVERAPUPPET"
Dismissing any role in the railwaygate scandal and also in the "recruitment business", Enamul Huq said Ali Azam had acted on someone's direction.

"I think it is not possible for the driver to stage this drama alone. Someone else from behind the scene made him do it."

He added that after entering the BGB headquarters, Azam had asked him to leave the place, saying he would get Faruq and Mridha arrested.

SACKS OF MONEY
Swapna Aktar, wife of Ali Azam, said Faruq had been carrying sacks full of bribe money in his car over the past five months.

Faruq forced Azam to drive the car with stashes of bribe money, she told private TV channel Maasranga on Tuesday night.

She said Azam told her about 15 days ago that he would not carry such illegal money anymore.

"I told him, 'You are only a driver. You shouldn't bother about whether it is bribe money,'" Faruq said.

Around 1:00am on April 10, Azam called her over the mobile phone and told her that he had entered the BGB headquarters as "there might not be another opportunity

to get Faruq captured with bribe money."

"He told me that he was unable to bear the burden any longer."

The last time she talked to her husband was around 2:00am on April 10, around two and a half hours after he entered Pikhana, when he asked her to pray for him.

Azam has been Faruq's driver for the past three years for Tk 9,000 a month, she said.

Unaware of her husband's whereabouts, she and her eight-year-old daughter are also hiding since April 10 out of fear.

She sought prime minister's help in finding Azam.

Rain

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Rajshahi was sizzling at 38.8 degrees, the highest temperature in the country.

Today, the highest temperature in the country is likely to be 38 degrees Celsius while the mercury may drop to a lowest of 20 degrees, the department said.

The mild to moderate heat wave sweeping over Rajshahi, Rangpur, Khulna, Tangail and Faridpur is likely to continue.

Although the evening showers with the accompanying winds blew the blazing heat out of the Dhaka dwellers' lives, the rain presented difficulties in various forms to those returning home from work.

Meanwhile, two people were killed by electrocution when they came in contact with live cables at Labagh and Jatrabari last night right after the storm.

The diseased were identified as Mohammad Naime, 12, an employee of a cloth shop in New Market, and Alamgir Hossain, 30, a street vendor of Sayedabad Janapath.

Kalu Miah, maternal uncle of Naime, said Naime was on his way home in Labagh around 10:00pm when he came in contact with a live wire that fell during the storm. He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors on duty declared him dead.

In another incident, Alamgir was electrocuted after a live wire fell on his shop at Janapath intersection in Sayedabad around 9:30pm. He too was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Egypt confirms 10 barred from presidential vote

AFP, Cairo
Egypt's first post-Arab Spring presidential election is thrown wide open after the electoral commission confirmed that 10 candidates have been barred, rejecting challenges by two Islamists and the old regime's spy chief.

The commission had held a day-long meeting Tuesday to hear appeals from disqualified candidates, including former intelligence chief Omar Suleiman, the Muslim Brotherhood's Khairat El-Shater and popular Salafist politician Hazem Abu Ismail.



Students of Kurigram Nursing Training Institute diagnosed with Influenza A (H1N1) virus, commonly known as swine flu, lie wrapped in blankets in a temporary ward. The photo was taken on April 12.

PHOTO: STAR

Reception

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League's youth wing, and other organisations from across the city started thronging to the venue in processions and on vehicles from 11:00am yesterday creating tailbacks on different other city roads.

Many people, particularly those heading towards Sadarghat to catch launch, had no option but to walk on foot with their luggage as the roads stretching from Paltan to Gulistan were made off limit to vehicles and rickshaws from noon until evening.

Mohammad Elias, aged around 15, was found in Muktangan area almost dragging two bags as he was walking to Sadarghat from the Paltan Intersection. Hailing from Bakerganj of Barisal, Elias came to visit the residence of his elder brother at Moghbazar.

The IEDCR said it noticed a rising trend in the number of swine flu patients across the country. If anyone has symptoms similar to that of the flu, the person should immediately consult a physician and be diagnosed properly, said the IEDCR director.

He said the flu is not new to the people and their immune systems have built resistance to the disease to a certain level over the last three to four years.

Mahmudur, however, said the flu may take a heavy

Due to the traffic congestion, it took more time than usual to reach destination.

"Generally, it takes an hour to reach my office at Karwan Bazar from Dhaka Judge's Court in old part of the city, but today it took me more than two hours," a lawyer who worked at a newspaper office said. "I felt almost sick due to sultry heat," he added.

4 cops sued

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At about 6:00pm on February 19, Faruque Hossain Kamal, 25, was picked up from his residence at 591 North Kafrul by a group of Kafrul police. While in custody Faruque was allegedly tortured inhumanly by the policemen who attempted to extort a sum of Tk 10,000 in cash from him.

He later succumbed to his injuries on February 28 at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

The victim's sister Parvin Haque filed the case against the accused with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka on the charges of torturing her brother in custody for extortion that led to his death.

In her complaint, Parvin said Si Nuruzzaman picked up her brother on February 19 and implicated him in an extortion case filed with the same police station. Later police tortured her brother inhumanly to extort Tk 10,000, leading to his demise in hospital.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Anwar Shahdat recorded the statement of the complainant, took into consideration the charges against the accused and directed Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner to submit probe report investigating the matter within 30 working days.

Swine flu returns

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in different parts of the country from January to March.

Two cases were detected in January in Dhaka and Kishoreganj, 10 more cases in February in Dhaka, Bogra and Barisal, and another 93 cases in March in Kishoreganj, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Bogra, Dinajpur, Chittagong, Comilla, Jessore, Sylhet and Barisal.

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Mahmudur, however, said the flu may take a heavy

toll on patients of chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and heart diseases.

Influenza vaccine could help prevent swine flu but Bangladesh is yet to launch any flu vaccination programme, he said.

The vaccine works in the immune system for a year. The vaccine needs to be modified every year making it difficult for a country like Bangladesh to introduce flu vaccination programme, said Mahmudur.

"We can also check it by creating awareness among people. Patients of this highly infectious disease must refrain from coughing or sneezing in public places. And they should be kept separate from other family members."

In June 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO), declared the new strain of swine-origin H1N1 as a pandemic. In Bangladesh, at least eight people died of swine flu and

another 1,411 got infected by it the same year.

Dr Aminul Islam, health officer at Kurigram Sadar Upazila Hospital, said 50 students of Kurigram Nursing Training Institute were admitted to the hospital with flu symptoms.

"They have been receiving treatment in isolation from April 10. They had symptoms such as cough, fever, vomiting and upset stomach."

He said their condition is now stable and the symptoms are gone. However, they will be kept in the isolation ward for two more days to complete the cure.

The IEDCR said the flu's outbreak in the nursing institute's dormitory indicates that the students were kept in cramped rooms where they might have to share beds. Steps should be taken to ensure proper accommodation for students in such facilities, it added.

Quader to run rail too

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Communications Minister Obaidul Quader who took over the railways portfolio yesterday.

"I myself don't tolerate irregularities and won't allow it in recruitment. I can't endorse an illegal recruitment process. If necessary, we will take fresh exams for recruitment," Quader told reporters at Rail Bhaban in his immediate reaction after taking the additional charge.

He said he would consult with the prime minister and "maintain zero tolerance to irregularities and corruption in running the affairs of the ministry".

The prime minister gave him the additional charge according to the authority vested in her under article 3 (IV) of the Rules of Business 1996.

The move came two days after former railways minister Suranjit Sengupta resigned amid criticism over cash haul scandal from the car of his sacked assistant private secretary on April 9.

Quader, who is already under pressure to show his performance in the communications ministry, said he would try to discharge his additional responsibility "sincerely, seriously and in a transparent manner".

He admitted that despite taking some steps at the communications ministry he has yet to show some visible success. "I am a minister for about four months. I hope to show something visible after one year," he argued.

He said he would face pressure in discharging his new responsibilities.

Insiders say the cash haul scandal and removal of Suranjit from the newly created ministry would heavily disrupt the government's move to upgrade the long-ignored rail sector.

They add Obaidul Quader would face huge challenge to continue with the effort.

Some 40 projects are under way involving around Tk 14,000 crore to purchase locomotives, coaches, wagons and build new tracks. All in the railway were happy after Suranjit took over as he had made serious efforts to rescue the sector.

Quader said one of his first tasks would be getting rid of the ministry's bad reputation. "I will extend full cooperation to the probe committees for a fair and neutral investigation into the cash haul and the alleged corruption in recruitment."

Earlier, Rail Secretary Fazle Elahi, Rail Director General Md Abu Taher and other high officials received Quader with flowers upon his arrival at the ministry around 1:45pm.

"I don't want any percentage or commission," Quader told the rail officials while holding a brief meeting with them. He sought support from all so that he can perform his duty properly.

Referring to Suranjit's effort to timely operation and infusing new life to the rail sector, he said, "My predecessor deserves appreciation for what he did in a short period of time."

Meanwhile, the railways DG-led probe body yesterday sent letters to Suranjit's sacked APS Omar Faruk Talukder and his driver Azam asking them to appear before it next Sunday.

Suspended railway general manager (east) Yusuf Ali Mirdha and Dhaka Division security chief Enamul Huq have already submitted their statements.

Suranjit's Personal Secretary Akhteruzzaman, who was investigating the APS' involvement in the cash haul, declined to continue after Suranjit stepped

down. He handed over the APS' statement to Rail Secretary Fazle Elahi on Tuesday.

Be optimistic

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Health review of more than 200 studies -- reported in Psychological Bulletin -- suggests.

While such people may be generally healthier, scientists think a sense of well-being may lower risk factors such as high blood pressure and cholesterol.

Stress and depression have already been linked to heart disease.

The researcher from the Harvard School of Public Health trawled medical trial databases to find studies that had recorded psychological well-being and cardiovascular health.

This revealed that factors such as optimism, life satisfaction, and happiness appeared to be linked associated with a reduced risk of heart and circulatory diseases, regardless of a person's age, socio-economic status, smoking status or body weight.

Disease risk was 50% lower among the most optimistic individuals.

Dr Julia Boehm and colleagues stress that their work only suggests a link and is not proof that well-being buffers against heart disease.

And not only is it difficult to objectively measure well-being, other heart risk factors like cholesterol and diabetes are more important when it comes to reducing disease.

The people in the study who were more optimistic also engaged in healthier behaviours such as getting more exercising and eating a balanced diet, which will have some influence.

But even when they controlled for these factors and others, like sleep quality, the link between optimism and better heart health remained.

Ex-DIG

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from the day of his arrest or surrender, the court said.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of two prosecution witnesses including the complainant.

According to the prosecution, the children -- Marium, Aimon Rahman Anis, Alas Rahman Akand, Nafis Rahman Nais, Dian Rahman Jannatul Nafiza Rahman and Jannatul Anisa Rahman -- were from different places of the country.

In May 2006, different newspapers published reports that an ex-DIG had been living in a house with 14 children and seven of them had appeared to be of the same age. That drew attention of people and human rights groups.

The couple, however, maintained that they were parents of the children and the seven were "septuplets".

Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR) on June 2 of that year filed a general diary with Badda Police Station, based on which police sought permission from the court to investigate the matter.

BSEHR with the help of police then rescued the seven children between 18 and 24 months.

On June 15, 2006, advocate Alena Khan, the then executive director of BSEHR, filed a case with the police station, saying that Anisur and his wife had stolen the children with the intention of trafficking.

She at that time also appealed to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court to conduct DNA tests of the couple and the children to verify their parenthood. When the court ordered to carry out the tests, the ex-DIG and his wife refused to cooperate.

Later, Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) and BSEHR filed a petition with the High Court seeking permission for their DNA tests.

On August 6, 2008, the HC asked the Dhaka Medical College authorities to carry out the tests under the supervision of the Supreme Court and ordered BNWLA and BSEHR to bear all expenses.

Based on the DNA test reports, the HC on August 14 of that year ruled that the former DIG and his wife were not the biological parents of the "septuplets".

The children had been staying at Proshanti, a shelter home for children, run by BNWLA at Agargaon, as per the court's order since their rescue from the couple's house. Of them, Jannatul Nafiza Rahman died at a city hospital on November 16, 2009.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNWLA Executive Director Salma Ali yesterday said that about six months ago the children were shifted to a hostel for better care, complying with a court order. Some international and local organisations support the hostel.

"They are fine now. They are now studying nursery level. We are keeping in touch with them," she said. The children can stay there up to 18 years and complete their higher secondary education.

"If we find some of them doing extraordinarily well in their studies, we will try to get them admitted to cadet colleges or institutions of repute," Salma Ali added.

Alena Khan, who had filed the case, was present at the court yesterday. She expressed her satisfaction with the judgement and urged the government to take steps to arrest the fugitive, Anisur Rahman.

ICC envoy visits Libya

AFP, Tripoli

International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo arrived in Tripoli yesterday in a surprise visit, an AFP photographer said.

The fate of slain dictator Mummer Gaddafi's son Seif al-Islam, who is wanted by the ICC for crimes against humanity, is expected to top the agenda after Libyan officials repeatedly expressed their desire to try him locally.