

Muntasir Mamoon

FROM PAGE 20
"What the tribunal told today [yesterday], we have been voicing this for long, but no rulers paid any heed to us," Muntasir, also a teacher of Dhaka University, said.

He said it would be an obstacle for establishing good governance in a country if the guilty were not tried, if the guilty got a place in the government.

This is a message form the tribunal that ultimately the accused have to face the trial, he observed.

Anwar Hossain

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has crossed the hurdle and begun the trial, we hoped that it will reach this end. We are hopeful that his [Ghulam Azam] trial will be completed and the verdict of the trial will be effective," Prof Anwar, also a freedom fighter, said.

Shahriar Kabir

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the first step of our movement launched 20 years ago under the leadership of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam has been completed," Shahriar told The Daily Star in his immediate reaction.

The eminent journalist said the party Ghulam Azam belonged, its philosophy and the accomplices would also have to be brought to justice.

"We have to remember that we are not holding trial of the person Ghulam Azam, we are trying the chief of the party which not only had created the scope for genocide but also justified and legitimised it," he said.

There is no scarcity of evidence and documents against Azam, he said, adding, "Now we are looking at the prosecution and hope that they will conduct the case efficiently."

Sultana Kamal

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huge scrutinising, would ensure full transparency during the proceedings," she said.

A noted human rights activist and Chairperson of Transparency International Bangladesh Board of Trustees, Sultana expressed the hope that a fair and transparent trial would be held and rights of the accused would be ensured.

"We want to see punishment of the war criminals; otherwise we will not be relieved from the huge burden," she added.

MA Hasan

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worst accused of the crimes against humanity," he said, adding that the beginning of his trial was a big step towards breaking the culture of impunity.

"We want to see the end of the trial and want to see the perpetrators other than Ghulam Azam get due punishment. We want to see that justice is delivered," he added.

Shyamoli Nasreen

FROM PAGE 20
at the end of the Liberation War in 1971.

Termining Ghulam Azam the mastermind of the killers during the Liberation War, she said, "This is the day, for which the families of the martyrs have been waiting since 1972."

"Now we will be able to feel the real taste of independence," said Shyamoli, adding, "We may not get back our near and dear ones, but trial of the killers is our due demand."

"We will get peace when the trial will be completed," she added.

Six killed in Japan hotel blaze

AFP, Tokyo

Six people were killed when a fire swept through their hotel in southwestern Japan yesterday, the local police and fire department said.

Police had earlier said seven people were killed in the blaze but later revised the toll down to six.

Officers gave no further details with the identities of the dead yet to be confirmed.

The blaze occurred at a hotel in Fukuyama, 600 kilometres west of Tokyo, in Hiroshima prefecture, the officials said.

WB report

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went to the ACC office last month and handed over the second report to the ACC chairman for investigation, an ACC high official said.

A finance ministry official said, the INT official along with WB Country Director Ellen Goldstein also went to the finance minister's residence and handed over the second report to him.

In a statement on May 10, World Bank Country Director Ellen Goldstein told The Daily Star they have evidence of corruption. He expressed hope the government would investigate and make the wrong-doers accountable.

The ACC chairman said the WB has provided the commission with some information about alleged corruption found by the government of Canada in appointing a Canadian company as the consulting firm for the main bridge.

The WB gave the information based on the findings of the Canadian Mounted Police, Rahman said adding: "The information was not adequate for proving the wrong-doing."

The ACC chief said that is why they will go for further investigation.

Asked whose names have been mentioned in the information provided by the WB, Ghulam Rahman said, "Details cannot be disclosed for the sake of investigation."

Replying to another query as to how long it will take to complete the probe, Rahman said they are now seeking more information from both the WB and the Canadian government.

He said they will maintain more contact mainly with the Canadian Mounted Police for information.

Finance Minister AMA

Muhith replying to the editors' query said the WB has given some information about alleged corruption based on the report of the Canadian government. Muhith added the WB mentioned that there is some probability of graft in appointing consultant and they have got some information in this regard.

The minister said the money spent so far on the Padma Bridge project is government money, not a single penny of donor fund has been spent.

He also said there is no complaint about the work so far done for rehabilitation of those displaced by the project. "Therefore, there has been no corruption; absolutely no corruption took place."

On the WB's first report, Muhith said the ACC investigated the allegations and found no wrong-doing.

He also said, "The work of the Padma Bridge construction has been delayed by one and a half years because of suspicious allegations of corruption. It is a ridiculous matter."

The finance minister added: "Now our position is that we will start the work next year at any cost. There will be provision in the budget for this. We hope that the donors will be with us."

Muhith also said they have an alternative offer from Malaysia. The detailed proposal is yet to come. When it comes, its economic viability will be considered, he added.

On financing the Padma Bridge, the minister said the government will take a final decision by July so that the work can be started next year.

The deadline for loan effectuation will expire on July 27.

Ghulam Azam indicted

FROM PAGE 1
Justice Huq said the materials in hand support that Ghulam Azam had conspired with the occupation forces, planned and incited crimes, and was complicit in crimes against humanity; and he was responsible for commissioning of international crimes in 1971.

He did these by delivering speeches, issuing directives, making press comments and meeting heads of different civilian and army administrations, the tribunal chairman said.

"There is no bar to holding the trial after 40 years," Justice Huq said while reading out the charges between 10:40am and 12:45pm yesterday.

"The tribunal also found that the trial can be held [against Azam] for offences committed in 1971 under this [International Crimes Tribunal] act of 1973."

Ghulam Azam sat still in the dock as the tribunal chairman read out the charges.

The 89-year-old was wearing a Jinnah cap (a brown cap named after Pakistani leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah) and white punjabi and pajamas.

He was produced before the tribunal at 10:35am in a wheelchair. He first took a seat in the dock at the back of the courtroom. Following requests from his counsels, the tribunal allowed him to sit in the dock near the judges' bench.

On permission, the former Jamaat ameer stood up, grabbed his crutch with the right hand and walked to the dock unaided.

After the charges were read out, he was asked if he pleaded guilty or not guilty.

At that, he stood up and delivered a 10-minute speech.

He said, "I don't consider myself guilty."

He said he was on the list of collaborators of Pakistani forces but claimed he was not a war criminal.

One of the charges against him was involvement in the torture and

murder of 38 people in Brahmanbaria on November 11, 1971, including Shiru Miah, a sub-inspector of Mohammadpur Police Station.

The Pakistani forces with the help of their collaborators -- Razakar and Al Badr Bahini -- killed the 38 after receiving a written order from Ghulam Azam, the charges said.

The tribunal also charged him with conspiring to commit crimes on six occasions upon which different crimes against humanity were perpetrated across Bangladesh.

The former Jamaat chief was charged with planning to commit crimes on three occasions, which resulted in different crimes against humanity committed across the country.

He was also charged with 28 instances of provoking crimes and his complicity in 22 incidents of crimes against humanity.

The five charges against Ghulam Azam cover crimes against humanity; attempt, abetment or conspiracy to commit such crimes; other crimes under international law; complicity in or failure to prevent commissioning of any such crimes; and liability for crimes as an accomplice and commander, according to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

If convicted, he could get the death penalty. The act only allows a convict to appeal to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court against his conviction and sentence.

The tribunal took the charges into cognisance on January 9 this year, four days after the prosecution placed the charges. Ghulam Azam was sent to jail on January 11 after the tribunal rejected his bail.

Among other family members, Ghulam Azam's wife and his son former Brig Gen Abdullah Aman Azmi were present at the courtroom during the charge framing yesterday.

After the indictment order was passed, they had

lunch in the courtroom during the recess.

After the proceedings, Abdur Razzaq, chief counsel for the Jamaat leader, told the media that the tribunal had passed a "completely wrong order".

Factories

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meeting with the home minister and other high-ups of the police department, we have decided to reopen our factories," said BGMEA President Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin at a press briefing at the association's office in Dhaka.

He said owners of around 350 factories on the city's outskirts, Ashulia, were suffering from a sense of insecurity following the two-day violence over a rumour of a co-worker's death on Saturday.

After the workers rampaged through the area, the owners shut down their units, fearing any further unrest among the labourers, said Shafiqul.

He urged all workers and others concerned not to pay heed to any rumour, saying any kind of violence causes huge loss as it disrupts production.

Replying to queries of newsmen about Kamrun Nahar Golapi, who was run over by a speedy bus during Saturday's clash between police and workers, he said, "It was a blatant lie that she was killed inside the factory."

"We are struggling to maintain a positive export growth from Bangladesh as two major markets -- EU and the US -- are going through troubled economy," he said, adding any bad incident at this point of time would be destructive for the country's garment sector.

Asked about the practice of trade unionism at the factories, he said the owners had already helped the formation of participatory committees from previous welfare bodies. "In future we will allow formation of trade unions," he added.

I was on list

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The International Crimes Tribunal-1 chairman Justice Md Nizamul Huq asked him if he pleaded guilty or not guilty of the five war crimes charges read out to him.

"I don't consider myself guilty," replied Ghulam Azam, who stood up from his seat in the dock.

He then sought the tribunal's permission to say something and went on to give a speech of around 10 minutes.

In 1973, the then Bangladesh government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made a list of war criminals, he told the court.

"My name is not on that list."

The listed war criminals were pardoned at a meeting between the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India.

"I was among those who were branded collaborators," said the former chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, adding that he had then been pardoned.

The collaborator's act was formulated at the time and many were arrested, he said.

"There is no meaning of trying the collaborators, pardoning the real [perpetrators]. I was not on the list of war criminals. I am not a war criminal."

Ghulam Azam's counsels in their submissions during the hearing of charge framing argued in the same manner, saying 195 Pakistani army personnel, who were the principal accused of committing war crimes, were pardoned and released from jail.

Therefore, there is no point of trying their abettors, the counsels argued.

During the charge framing yesterday, the tribunal said the ICT act is very clear to have been promulgated for the trial of persons who committed international crimes and the release of 195 prisoners of war, the collaborators order and the clemency extended to persons cannot bar the trial of the accused under the ICT Act 1973.

It is evidence alone that determines the principal offenders and their associates, and the release of the principal offenders cannot prevent the trial of the collaborators, the tribunal said.

In January 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's government passed a law to try the collaborators and war criminals.

"Those who were punished for or accused of rape, murder, attempt to murder or arson will not come under general amnesty under section 1," reads section 2 of the act.

According to historical records, out of 37,000 sent to jail on charges of collaboration, about 26,000 were freed following announcement of the general amnesty.

I'm different

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"I fully agree with his [Rafique] remark. Because I could not achieve the quality of sucking blood of the country's general people like Dr Muhammad Yunus' Grameen Bank to own crores of taka," said the minister in a press statement.

"My political ideology is to serve people," said Dilip, also general secretary of Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal, a component of the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance.

According to him, Rafique ul Haq does not know that many have lost their lands and houses to repay the Grameen Bank loan while some others have committed suicide failing to pay back the money.

In an apparent effort to ridicule the Nobel Laureate, Dilip invited Yunus to enter politics to check his popularity.

On Saturday, eminent lawyer Rafique said, "With due respect for Dilip Barua, I want to say that he is not worthy of Dr Yunus' nail even."

Dilip Barua had on Friday sharply criticised Prof Yunus for raising the caretaker government issue before US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during her 5-6 May Dhaka visit.

Around 11,000 were behind bars when the government of Justice Sayem and General Ziaur Rahman repealed the Collaborators Act on December 31, 1975. An appeal spree and release of war criminals en masse followed the scrapping of the law.

During the entire period, Ghulam Azam remained outside the country.

Yesterday, he told the tribunal that the term "war criminal" first surfaced after the 2001 national polls, following which the BNP-Jamaat led four-party coalition formed government.

"The Awami League and the BNP bagged almost equal percentage of votes in that election," said Ghulam Azam.

Nevertheless, the AL won 58 seats in parliament and the BNP 197 seats, he said, adding, "Why such a big difference in the result? Because the Jamaat and the BNP were united."

This proves that the AL had lost the polls because of the alliance between the two parties, the court heard him say.

"Whenever there is an alliance, it is feared that the AL may lose the election."

Citing the election results at the Supreme Court Bar Association and teachers' associations at public universities, he said in many cases the AL could not win an election when the BNP and the Jamaat were united.

"The Awami League thinks the alliance should be broken and Jamaat should be eliminated from politics," he said, "therefore, after 30 years, the Awami League [in 2001] decided to hold the [war crimes] trials to eliminate the Jamaat."

The law for trying war criminals is now being used to try the collaborators, he said. "There is no logic behind trying me as a war criminal."

"I say India helped us not for our liberation, but for its own interests," he said.

As Ghulam Azam went on, the tribunal tried to assure him that he would be given the opportunity to speak further at a later stage of the trial.

"You are a highly educated person. You do understand that there are rules and laws," said Justice Huq, requesting Ghulam Azam to take the court's advice.

Order to arrest RCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi labour court has issued arrest warrants against Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton and three top officials for not appearing before it as per its earlier summons order.

Rajshahi Divisional Labour Court judge M Ansar Ali issued the arrest warrant on May 10 after the four failed to appear before it on the day with a charge of not paying pension money to a staff, said Korban Ali, lawyer of the plaintiff Abdul Jabbar.

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police was to carry out the order by today [yesterday], he added.

The three other officials are RCC Chief Executive Officer Azahar Ali, Secretary KM Abdus Salam, and chief accountant Abdur Rashid.

However, M Obaidullah, RMP commissioner, denied receiving any such order. "I heard about it but am yet to see it," he said.

According to Korban Ali, his client Abdul Jabbar, a retired supervisor of RCC's conservation section, filed a case with the labour court on May 25 in 2010 for not receiving gratuity and provident fund money from pension worth Tk 2.30 lakh.

In August 2011, the then court judge Kobita Khanam ordered RCC authorities to pay the money to Jabbar plus a 25 percent compensation within 60 days.

But they [RCC authorities] did not comply with the court order and also did not appeal against it.

Jabbar, then on April 11 this year, filed a criminal case against the four for violating court order and the court on the following day summoned them to appear before it on May 10.

another driver arrived there in the morning."

When asked about the driver, who was at the centre of the incident, Abu Taher said they could not interrogate him as he has remained untraced since the incident.

He claimed they did a complete probe and the driver's absence did not hamper their job.

The probe body was formed in April. The other committee member is Shashi Kumar Singha, a joint secretary of the railway ministry.

Meanwhile, another probe committee has found some irregularities in the recent recruitment in railway's east zone, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

"Some irregularities have been found. I cannot say anything more at this stage. We are scrutinising the documents on recruitment in 25 categories

where irregularities have been alleged," Bangladesh Railway Joint Director General Md Shamsuzzaman, who headed the probe body, told journalists in Chittagong.

The railway formed the committee last month following the Tk 70 lakh haul.

He hoped to complete the investigation in two weeks.

The committee members arrived in Chittagong in the morning and interrogated several officials of recruitment committees.

"We have already examined the activities of recruitment committees in eight categories in our previous visit last month. We will today examine the activities of the recruitment bodies for five to six more categories," said Shamsuzzaman.

The committee is also looking into allegations that came up in the print and electronic media between April 9 and April 16.

He said all documents including applications and answer sheets were being checked.

Tafazzal Hossain, general manager of railway's east zone, said another ACC team arrived in the port city to probe allegations of irregularities in railway recruitment.

Clash, demo in Ashulia

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protest, demanding information on Salman. They blocked the Dhaka-Tangail highway and clashed with police, leaving over 100 people injured.

The incident began at 9:00 in the morning and within four and a half hours, the industrial area turned into a battlefield, witnesses said. Police fired around 1,000 rubber bullets and more than 100 teargas canisters and baton-charged the crowd to control the situation.

In retaliation, the workers threw brickbats and stones. They also vandalised vehicles and set tyres and other roadside abandoned things afire, local people said.

Agitating garment workers smashed glasses of the seven-storey building of Scantex BD Limited, throwing brickbats, as police took shelter inside the building and fired rubber bullets and

teargas canisters from there, ABM Muklesuzzaman, assistant manager (admin) of the company, told The Daily Star.

Workers of other factories also joined the Ha-Meem Group workers and launched a protest against the death of a garment worker, Kamrun Nahar Golapi, during Saturday's clash. She was run over by a bus while she was trying to escape police action.

Owners of over 150 garment factories along the highway from Jamgorah to Narasingapur suspended their operations, fearing vandalism, said Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Meer Fasiur Rahman.

He said the marauding workers started damaging vehicles from the beginning of their protest.

Law enforcers including members of Rapid Action Battalion, Industrial police,

Armed Police Battalion were already deployed in the area following Saturday's incident. An additional police force rushed to the spot yesterday. Nearly 1,000 law enforcers were there to control the situation.

"Two of our policemen sustained injuries when attacked by the workers," Fasiur, also an assistant director of industrial police, said.

At one stage, Ashulia police around 1:00pm produced Salman before the agitating workers, he said. The situation then came back to normal.

Meanwhile, police recovered the firearm, which was looted during Saturday's clash, from Bumail village of Ashulia. A case was filed yesterday with Ashulia Police Station in connection with the looting and attacks on police.

17 Jagannath students

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Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), for their involvement in two separate clashes on the campus yesterday.

The students suspended in the first incident of clashes were Kanon, Ibrahim, Tuhin, Mosharrif, Roni, Shimul, Shakil, Rowshan Jaman and Saidul.

David, Zafar and Shubho of history department; Sumon, Hasan and Jalal of mass communication and journalism; Masud of Islamic history and culture; and Prottoy of political science department, were suspended over the second incident that took place yesterday afternoon.

Proctor Kamal Uddin Ahmed said the suspension order came following a primary investigation by the university's disciplinary committee yesterday.

A large number of police

personnel were deployed on the campus when the incidents occurred. But none was arrested.

Witnesses said accounting department student Kanon, also a BCL activist, locked into an altercation with Ahsanullah Mithu of English department over sitting on a chair at the university's canteen around 8:30am.

Kanon beat up Mithu following the argument. Later classmates of Mithu and several activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, a pro-Jamaat-e-Islami student body, beat up Kanon on the campus.

Proctor Kamal Uddin Ahmed, also chairman of English department, tried to ease the tense situation but of no avail.

But when the news of Kanon's injury spread, BCL

activists beat up one of Mithu's friends, Al-Mamun, around 12:30pm, campus sources said.

Mithu took treatment at National Medical College Hospital while Mamun was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The other incident took place around 3:00pm when followers of the university unit BCL Convener Saiful Islam Akand clashed on the campus with the supporters of its Senior Joint Convener Nizamuddin over previous enmity.

The clash left two members of the convener faction, Jamal and Shahim, injured, sources said.

Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Salaudun Khan said no case was filed in connection with the clashes. No one was arrested.