

Errant lawmen

FROM PAGE 1
people in 2011, bringing the number of such deaths to more than 700 since 2004, the London-based global rights body says in its annual report titled "The State of the World's Human Rights 2012" released yesterday.

"In many cases, family members told Amnesty International that victims died after being arrested by Rab and not in an encounter as Rab claimed. The authorities failed to investigate these incidents credibly," the report says in its Bangladesh chapter.

At least three people died in police custody last year, allegedly after being tortured, but none was charged or prosecuted even by the end of the year though the government announced of bringing criminal charges against the police personnel responsible for custodial deaths.

As example of torture by law enforcers, AI mentioned the name of Jhalakathi's Limon Hossain, who was shot in the leg by Rab officials, and Amar Desh editor Mahmudur Rahman, who told AI that he was beaten severely on his back over the course of a night at a police station inside the army cantonment after his detention in mid-2010.

Quoting Rahman as saying, the report says the beating was so severe that he lost consciousness for several hours and later saw no point in complaining as he knew the authorities would not bother to act.

ICT

The Amnesty International in its 50th global report says amendments to the rules of International Crimes Tribunal has reduced, but did not eliminate, the possibility of unfair trial of the accused of 1971 war crimes.

"Its amended rules of procedure provided for bail, presumption of innocence before guilt is proven, and measures to ensure the protection of witnesses and victims. However, a constitutional ban on the right to challenge the jurisdiction of the Tribunal remained in force," it notes.

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

The rights body says the Bangladesh government has failed to prevent confiscation of indigenous peoples' land by Bangalee settlers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. This led to violent clashes between the two communities.

"Bengali settlers, emboldened by the army's tolerance of their actions, had frequently set fire to indigenous homes, usually in clear sight of soldiers or other law-enforcement personnel, without being stopped," the report adds.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Under the National Women Development Policy, the women and children affairs ministry announced a plan to provide medical treatment, legal assistance and counselling to abused women and children.

However, the authorities have failed to implement the plan and many women and children subjected to sexual and other violence were receiving no support from state institutions.

Highlighting the courage of those who protested rights violations across the globe last year, the report says the leadership has failed to address the issues of concern. It adds the UN Security Council seemed tired, out of step and increasingly unfit for purpose.

"Failed leadership has gone global in the last year, with politicians responding to protests with brutality or indifference. Governments must show legitimate leadership and reject injustice by protecting the powerless and restraining the powerful. It is time to put people before corporations and rights before profits," said AI Secretary General Salil Shetty.

Saudi signs \$3 b deal with Britain to buy jets

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi's defence ministry signed a \$3 billion deal with Britain to buy trainer jets for the kingdom's air force, SPA state news agency reported yesterday.

The deal also includes simulators, ground and training equipment and spare parts, SPA said, quoting a defence ministry official.

No bail, again

FROM PAGE 1

BNP Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi who also is in jail in the same case.

BNP leaders yesterday reiterated the allegation that the government is conspiring to keep the top opposition leaders away from participating in the next general election by convicting them under the Speedy Trial Act.

"But the conspiracy will not succeed and all the leaders will come out of jail through a mass upsurge," opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Faroque said while addressing a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club, organised by Jatiyatabadi Mahila Dal.

Moving the bail petitions yesterday, senior jurists like Rafiq-ul Huq, Moudud Ahmed, Aminul Haque and Zainul Abedin said their clients were implicated in the case to harass them politically. And at least four of the accused leaders including Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu were outside the capital on April 29, they added.

Rafiq-ul Huq told the court, "Most of them are former lawmakers, ministers and important persons of the country. People of

such standing cannot run away, and it is clear that the case filed by the police is fabricated."

Opposing the bail petitions, Metropolitan Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdullah Abu and Dhaka District PP Khandaker Abdul Mannan said the investigation officer of the case pressed charges against 45 accused since those were primarily proved. So, their bail petitions should be rejected.

On May 21, another Dhaka court accepted bus torching charges against Mirza Fakhrul and 44 other leaders and activists of the BNP-led 18-party alliance. The court also sent BNP Joint Secretary General Mahbub Uddin Khokon, MP, another accused in the case, to jail rejecting his prayer for extension of bail.

Jamaat-e-Islami acting Ameer Maqbul Ahmed and two others went into hiding after the case was filed.

The accused in the arson case filed by Tejgaon police on April 29 also include BNP leaders Mirza Abbas and Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, and Liberal Democratic Party President Oli Ahmed.

Prof Muzaffer

FROM PAGE 20

and civil society member breathed his last on Tuesday night at the age of 76. He was laid to eternal rest beside his mother at Azimpur Graveyard yesterday afternoon.

His first namaz-e-janaza was held at Dhanmondi Eidgah Mosque after Zohr prayers and the second at Dhaka University, his long-time workplace.

Earlier in the morning, his body was taken from Birdem Hospital to his Shankar residence in the capital where his relatives, friends, well-wishers, and people from all walks of life paid their last tribute.

His kulkhani will be held tomorrow after Asr prayers at Taqwa Mosque near Dhanmondi Lake.

He was a founder member and chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh trustee board.

Born in Kolkata in 1936, Muzaffer completed his matriculation from Noakhali Zilla School in 1950, intermediate from Dhaka College in 1952, honours in economics in 1955 and master's in the same subject in 1956 from Dhaka University.

He began his career at Govt Haraganga College, Munshiganj, as economics lecturer after completing his master's. Before proceeding to the University of Chicago for a PhD, he joined the economics department at Dhaka University.

Prof Muzaffer emerged as a fearless and outspoken spokesperson of the people, said Serajul Islam Choudhury, professor emeritus at Dhaka University.

"He was a role model," Prof Choudhury said, "We have few role models and we have lost one, and the loss has made a big void."

He had an amazing commitment to anything he was involved with, he said, adding that Muzaffer was unwavering when it came to patriotism and he was different from others.

Prof Choudhury and Prof Muzaffer spent their childhood together at Azimpur colony.

Eminent jurist and former foreign minister Dr Kamal Hossain, who was a colleague of Muzaffer at Dhaka University, said Muzaffer was a voice for the people without political allegiance.

"He pursued a non-violent movement for the people even in his ailing condition and a fearless and uncompromising Ahmad had never stepped back despite life risks," Kamal said.

As a frontline economist of the country, Muzaffer Ahmad contributed significantly to imparting knowledge of economics, said Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, an eminent economist.

His contribution to making the Institute of Business Administration

an institution of international standard is unforgettable, Kholiquzzaman said.

Prof Muzaffer fought for poverty alleviation, good governance and civic rights, he added.

Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus, in a condolence message, said Muzaffer's enormous contribution to establishing a society free of corruption will be remembered with deep respect.

Justice Habibur Rahman, former chief advisor to caretaker government, termed Ahmad a great soul, who made big contributions in different fields of society.

Among others, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, Prof Rehman Sobhan, Prof Anisuzzaman, former caretaker government adviser M Hafizuddin Khan, Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Ghulam Rahman, Prof Jamilur Reza Chowdhury and Prof Nazrul Islam, attended the namaz-e-janaza.

PRESIDENT, PM SHOCKED

President Zillur Rahman in a condolence message expressed his deep sorrow at the demise of Prof Muzaffer.

Muzaffer was a dedicated teacher and his unique contribution to education, research and social development will remain memorable, said the president.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her message expressed her deep shock and prayed for his departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Speaker Abdul Hamid in his condolence message said Muzaffer was an extraordinary and brilliant teacher and a distinguished leader of human rights movement.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Bangladesh Bank Governor Atiur Rahman also expressed their deep shocks.

"Personally, I lost a guardian," said the BB governor.

ORGANISATIONS CONDOLE

Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, expressing deep shock in a condolence message said Muzaffer was a visionary of the movement against corruption in Bangladesh.

The anti-graft movement lost a courageous guardian and a pioneer, who will remain a source of inspiration, Iftekharuzzaman said.

Abdul Matin, general secretary of environmentalist group Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, in a condolence message said Prof Muzaffer's relentless struggle for environment conservation, good governance and human rights will remain as ideals for future generations.

"We lost a guardian," he said.

Woman kills herself

Poisons her baby

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mother allegedly fed her 10-month-old son insecticide and then drank the poison to her death at their Rayerbazar home in the capital last night.

Her only son Dweep, in critical condition, was having treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, DMCH sources said.

Twenty-year-old Puja Sukul took the poison around 10:30pm last night after a heated exchange of words with her husband Shantonu Sukul, who owns a drug store, said Shantonu's uncle.

The mother and son were rushed to a local clinic and then to DMCH where doctors declared Puja dead around 11:30pm.

Russia offers to host Syria peace talks: ministry

AFP, moscow

Russia is ready to host direct talks between the Syrian regime and rebel representatives, a top official yesterday said in a bid to end 14 months of bloodshed that has claimed over 10,000 lives.

Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov said peace mediator Kofi Annan's deputy was trying to secure agreement with the fractured foreign-based Syrian opposition on who could meet Bashar al-Assad's Vice President Farouq al-Sharaa.

"Russia has proposed starting this dialogue in Moscow, considering the opposition's fear of coming to Syria and the authorities' refusal to hold a meeting in Cairo under the auspices of the Arab League," Bogdanov said in comments posted by the foreign ministry.

The Syrian strongman appointed Sharaa as his official negotiator last year. But the rebels had previously rejected negotiations because of the raging violence and the regime's refusal to offer real power to Assad's foes.

NSI involvement

FROM PAGE 20

director Maj (ret) Liakat were involved in the arms smuggling.

"But the probe body chief didn't pay heed to my opinion and the committee didn't make any comment on this matter in its report," said the former commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

During a meeting with Lutfozzaman Babar and former IGP Shahudul Haque at the CMP commissioner's office at Dampara Police Line on the day following the arms haul, Sabbir had raised his suspicion about the involvement of some NSI officials in the arms smuggling.

But Babar told Sabbir not to say or do anything about the matter, mentioned Sabbir.

Abdus Sobhan Tarafdar, attorney for former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, initiated the cross-examination of Sabbir after the conclusion of his deposition in the cases.

The court fixed today for continuing the cross-examination of Sabbir and recording deposition by the rest of the prosecution witnesses.

Ten of the accused, including Lutfozzaman Babar and former industries minister Matur Rahman Nizami, were present in the dock.

Police had seized the huge cache of guns and explosives being unloaded from two engine-driven boats to be loaded onto 10 trucks at the jetty of Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL).

Karnaphuli police had filed the cases on April 3, 2004 in connection with the incident, which were transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) 22 days later.

The CID on June 26 last year submitted supplementary charge sheets following further investigation into the cases.

Goods Hill

FROM PAGE 1

questions from the defence with quips and calm composure. His overblown exchanges with defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena was the highlight for the audience at the court.

It is not unusual for a prosecution witness to be baffled and irritated in the face of defence questioning but on several occasion yesterday defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena appeared to have lost his cool. But the witness seemed rather collected.

During his third day of cross-examination, Salimullah at one stage even said he had heard Hena's father was the convener of a Shanti Committee.

Salimullah, a businessman from Chittagong, also said it was likely that Salauddin Quader and his father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury took funds from the then East Pakistan government and gave them to the forces working against Bangladesh's liberation.

The Al Shams, Al Badr, Shanti Committee and Razakar forces were formed during the Liberation War of 1971 to collaborate with the Pakistani occupation army and actively oppose the country's independence.

Salauddin, an MP from Chittagong, is facing crimes against humanity charges on 23 counts at the tribunal.

At one point of the cross-examination yesterday, a seemingly crossed Hena said, "I have cross-examined many people in my life. But I haven't seen such an impish person in my life!"

Several prosecutors were up on their feet protesting the remark.

However, the witness never lost poise. He repeatedly said, "It's okay. Let him say. I'm quite enjoying it."

To this, AKM Zaheer Ahmed, a judge at the three-member tribunal, said he has always seen that witnesses become agitated at the questioning of the defence lawyers. "But today it seems it's you [defence counsel] who is getting agitated."

Answering questions from Hena, the witness yesterday said he had not filed any case with the police or the court because he did not dare to.

At one point of the questioning, the defence counsel asked the witness whether advocate Zohurul Huq, father of counsel Hena himself, was the convener of Rahmatganj Sangram committee.

The witness said he had heard that Zohurul Huq was actually the convener of the Shanti Committee (collaborator force) in Cox's Bazar.

"He [Zohurul Huq] had never been to Cox's Bazar," said Hena.

"Where is your grandfather's [maternal] house then?" was the reply from the witness, who went on to add that Zohurul Huq's in-laws were from Cox's Bazar.

The three-member tribunal then told the witness that he was not allowed to ask the defence lawyer questions.

"You, an IA [intermediate equivalent to HSC] graduate, are quizzing me? Go pass [bachelor of] law and then you can question me," said Ahsanul Haq Hena.

The 68-year-old witness in his testimony on Monday told the court how he was abducted on September 2, 1971, taken to Salauddin Quader's Goods Hill family home, tortured and kept hostage in a garage where he almost died.

The defence lawyer asked Salimullah whether he had lied to his mother when leaving his home on the day he was abducted and tortured in 1971.

"Defiling my character won't help the defence," remarked the witness, adding that he was being insulted after making his deposition as a witness.

The remark drew an audible murmur from the defence bench.

"This is a very bad noise. If this happens again we will not allow anyone in the courtroom," the tribunal chairman said.

Answering other questions, Salimullah said he had seen many beautiful girls in the building in which the Al Shams force had set up camp.

In his testimony, he had said that the Al Shams force used to pick up beautiful young women from different parts of Chittagong and bring them to the camp.

Yesterday he said he did

not dare to speak to those girls at the camp.

At one point, defence counsel Ahsanul Haq told Salimullah that the "Khalifa", who the witness had claimed to have been tortured along with him in Salauddin's house, was called Prafulla Biswas, father of Ratna Biswas.

"Astagfirullah [I seek forgiveness from Allah]" said the 68-year-old witness. "That Khalifa was a Muslim. I can't turn a Muslim Khalifa into a Hindu."

Later the defence counsel told the witness that there were no dogs in Salauddin's Goods Hill home in 1971.

"The house kept a number of dogs fearing the Mukti Bahini [pro-liberation force]," said Salimullah. The witness in his testimony had said during captivity in the house, he had woken up to dogs barking.

As the day's proceedings were about to end, the defence counsel told the tribunal that he needed more time to wrap up his questioning.

The tribunal reminded the counsel to keep the time limitations of the court in mind.

To this, the witness said, "The trial of war criminals is taking place after 40 years. Give them some time. Let's see if [they] can save [the war criminals]."

The cross-examination of the witness will resume today.

Meanwhile, Tribunal-1 asked the prosecution to submit a written response on May 29 to a prayer from Delwar Hossain Sayedee's defence seeking review of an earlier decision of taking the statements of 15 witnesses given to the investigation officer as evidence against the Jamaat leader.

Prosecutor Haider Ali made a submission yesterday countering the defence application submitted on May 22. Abdur Razzaq, chief counsel for the Jamaat leaders, also argued against the prosecutors' submission.

The tribunal adjourned the cross-examination of the final prosecution witness against Sayedee until May 26.

Govt out

FROM PAGE 20

During the meeting held at a Gulshan hotel in the capital, the BNP leaders alleged that the country's judiciary was not working independently and the top opposition leaders, including BNP acting secretary general, had not get bail in an arson case due to government interference.

Showing a photograph of ruling party lawmaker Giasuddin Ahmed, in which he was firing his gun to disperse people, the opposition leaders claimed that ruling party men had established a reign of terror across the country, meeting sources said.

They said the BNP leaders had placed a statement regarding the judiciary and the "government's repression on the opposition" before the diplomats. The BNP leaders said getting justice has become quite impossible.

BNP leaders Moudud Ahmed, Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, Reaz Rahman, Shafik Rehman and Bangladesh Jatiya Party Chairman and opposition lawmaker Andaleeb Rahman Partha's younger brother Hasibur Rahman Shanto were present in the meeting.

Partha is now in the jail in connection with the arson case.

Asked about the meeting, Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury last night told The Daily Star that it was a regular event between foreign diplomats and the opposition.

"We have discussed a lot of issues related to country's interest," he said.

Mosharraf

FROM PAGE 20

salaries and travel allowances between April 13, 1988 and February 28, 1990, during his tenure as the secretary to the Ministry of Industries and chairman of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation.

On July 2, 1992, The Fourth Additional District and Sessions Judge, Md Abdul Gafur convicted Mosharraf and sentenced him to three years in jail and fined him Tk 6 lakh, as charges brought against him were proved.

In the same year, Mosharraf filed an appeal with the HC challenging the lower court's verdict and sought bail from the HC, which had granted him bail for six months. The bail was later extended several times.

After holding the final hearing, an HC bench of Justice Md Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan yesterday rejected Mosharraf's appeal and upheld his sentence.

Neither the defendant nor any of his lawyers appeared in the HC during the hearing.

Destiny 2000

FROM PAGE 1

Destiny Group transferred nearly Tk 100 crore of the organisation to their personal bank accounts, the officials said.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to immediately file a case against Destiny Group and its three engineers for constructing structures on the Cox's Bazar beach without the environment clearance.

Hearing a writ petition, the bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim asked the director of Department of Environment (DoE) of Chittagong division and assistant director of DoE of Cox's Bazar to jointly file the case under the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act, 1995.

The highest punishment of such offence is three years' imprisonment.

Manzill Murshed appeared for the petitioner.

After a Bangladesh Bank investigation, probe bodies of the ACC and NBR found "illegal banking" activities by Destiny Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd.

The tax administration had earlier asked banks to freeze more than 15 accounts of some concerns of the Destiny Group and its top officials to investigate tax related irregularities.

To investigate whether there had been any act of money laundering, the central bank earlier asked all banks to provide it with information about the accounts of the company's 14 directors, including its president and the chairman, and all sister concerns.

Catching up with time

FROM PAGE 20

huge area astride Chaktai canal and the Karnaphuli river.

A narrow register book, locally known as Balam Book, was all they used for maintaining accounts of trades of essential commodities like rice, wheat, sugar, cooking oil and so on.

The scene is still visible to some extent while changes are there. Many of the importers and traders have begun maintaining accounts in computers.

"Khatunganj has got the touch of digital technology," said Abul Bashar Chowdhury, chairman of BSM Group, sitting in front of a computer monitor in his office there.

He said nowadays importers maintain communication with their counterparts abroad through internet. Brokers also monitor prices of commodities such as sugar through internet, he added.

"This change was necessary," said Bashar. "The main thing is development of business, and adoption of modern tools is very important from the viewpoint of business development."

He said the use of technology has facilitated importers and buyers in getting easy access to information about current prices of any commodity on the international market.

"In absence of updated information about the market trend, importers would demand prices as per their wishes. Now it is difficult."

Tariq Ahmed, director in charge of operation and marketing of TK Group, said businessmen at Khatunganj now keep themselves updated with what is happening in the global commodity market.

"They are updated about every scenario," he said. "They have got all modern equipment in the past 8 to 10 years. Almost every company has opened IT departments with some using accounting software and ERP [Enterprise Resource Planning] system," he said.

Apart from it, hiring of educated professionals by businesses here has increased, said Tariq.

"There was a time when owners here considered paying one lakh taka to an executive as too expensive. Now they consider the salary as investment. So there has been a change in the mind set of the

entrepreneurs," he said.

Tariq, also a hired executive, said owners have delegated the authority of taking decisions to these management staffs. "It has provided scope for company owners to spend more time on taking strategic decisions rather than looking at daily sales," he said.

Despite the changes, the influence of Khatunganj, once popularly known as the Wall Street of Bangladesh, is fading slowly in the country's overall commodity market.

Bashar said Khatunganj, which has been a trade centre for the past 150 years, once used to control more than 80 percent of Bangladesh's commodity market.

Now its contribution to commodity trading has fallen down to 40 percent due to imports from India and rise in the number of importers in other parts of the country, he said.

"Khatunganj has given birth to many business tycoons in the past. Now it has become difficult to grow as its share as the trade centre in the domestic commodity market is declining," said Bashar of BSM Group, a leading commodity importer.

Woongjin conducts random hair and urine tests on a large number of employees at irregular intervals.

Seoul council plans eventually to make one fifth of the city's total area smoke-free.

Outside the workplace, Seoul city government has banned smoking in plazas and parks and near bus stops and schools. Offenders face a 100,000 won (\$86) fine.

By 2014, the city plans to make 21 percent of its total area a non-smoking zone.