

INT'L CRIMES TRIBUNAL-1 Zia was at Ramgarh till May 2 in 1971 Says prosecution witness

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major Ziaur Rahman had left Kalurghat Shadhin Bangla Biplobi Betar Kendra on March 30, 1971 after the Pakistani army destroyed it with bombs and stayed at Ramgarh Post Office till May 2 that year.

A prosecution witness, Sirajul Islam alias Shiru Bangalee, provided the information before the International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday.

The defence counsel was cross-examining Sirajul in the case against the detained BNP lawmaker, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, who is facing 23 counts of crimes against humanity charges at the tribunal.

The chief of the defence counsels, Ahsanul Huq Hena, asked Sirajul whether he saw Zia in Kalurghat area.

The 64-year-old Sirajul, the third prosecution witness against Salauddin, said he was a freedom fighter and fought a battle in Kalurghat area from April 7 to 11 during the 1971 Liberation War.

Ramgarh Post Office is within Indian territory, prosecutor Zead-Al Malum told The Daily Star.

Sirajul's statement meant that Zia was at Ramgarh and had not taken part in the Liberation War between March 30 and May 2 of 1971, he said.

The three-judge tribunal headed by Justice Nizamul Huq will resume recording the cross examination today.

Sirajul said he had heard from one, Captain Karim, about the murder of some people at Sultanpur, Jagatmallapara, Unosatturpara and Kundeshwari by Salauddin and his men but he did not know how Captain Karim died.

When Ahsanul suggested that Sirajul's name was not in any official list of freedom fighters, the latter replied, "I had not taken part in the Liberation War to get a certificate".

Ahsanul also suggested that one, Mohammad Faruk, had filed a criminal case with Bayezid Police Station against Sirajul in 2010 and Sirajul had threatened to implicate Faruk as a war crimes accused.

Sirajul said Faruk withdrew the case after admitting his mistake.

At this, Zead said the defence can not ask such a question, which is related to any judicial proceeding, to the witness since the documents of the case are not before the tribunal.

The tribunal halted Zead, saying that it was the court's discretion on which parts of the testimony it will record.

Earlier in the day, Zead had prayed to the court to take appropriate action against Salauddin, saying that he had made a political statement to journalists the previous day to purposefully malign the tribunal.

The tribunal said it had earlier warned Salauddin several times about making any comments and if it now takes any action against him, it will have to try him in his absence, which the court does not want.

The court asked Ahsanul to control Salauddin in the court.

The tribunal-1 also recorded the cross-examination of the investigation officer in the case against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee for the 13th day yesterday. The cross-examination will continue today.

The Jamaat leader is facing 20 counts of crimes against humanity charges at the tribunal.



British Minister for South Asia for Foreign and Commonwealth office Alistair Burt calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban, left, and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan residence in the capital yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

PHOTO: PMO, BNP

PM for public, private efforts to reduce maternal, child mortality

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday stressed the need for coordinated public and private efforts as well as participation of all in a bid to bring down maternal and child mortality rate in the country to the desired level.

"Sincerity of health service providers is very much needed to improve the standards of mother and child health, and overall improvement of the public health services. Active participation of ordinary people and their awareness are needed at all these levels," she said.

The premier was addressing a function marking the Safe Motherhood Day 2012 and the prize distribution on 'prosuti seba' (maternity service) at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital.

Hasina said the role of a mother was pivotal in building a healthy nation and her government was very much sincere about ensuring safe motherhood and also pledge-bound to ensure quality healthcare for all.

She mentioned that the present government had increased the maternal leave to six months from the existing four months. "It will be possible to build an enriched nation only when each and every family has a conscious,

healthy and educated mother," she said.

She urged the members of a family to ensure nutritious food as well as proper rest and care for the mothers during their period of maternity.

She said her government was working earnestly to achieve the desired goal in maternal and child health.

Hasina said the government was pledge-bound to fulfill all basic rights of the people including food, clothes, shelter, health, and education so that every citizen of the country could become self-reliant.

She said her government was implementing public and private community based 'Skilled Birth Attendant Training Programme' to ensure safe delivery at home and to identify and send the women with complicated pregnancy to hospital.

In this context, she said so far 6,659 people were trained under the Skilled Birth Attendant Training Programme.

The premier said her government had started to impart training to midwives to ensure safe delivery.

A three-year midwifery course will begin from July next, she said, adding that a total of 180 nurses have already been imparted train-

ing to run the course.

Apart from the government efforts, she mentioned that various non-government organisations including Unicef, UNFPA, World Health Organisation (WHO) and JICA are jointly implementing different programmes on mother and child health in the country.

Hasina said emergency services were being provided to mothers, who gave birth to children at all medical college hospitals, 59 district hospitals, 132 upazila health complexes, 70 mother and child welfare centres and union health centres across the country.

Mentioning that her government has already established some specialised hospitals in different districts, she said a 500-bed hospital would be launched soon at Khilgaon in the capital. The government recently established a 500-bed hospital in Kurmitola.

The premier said Maternal Health Voucher Scheme was introduced and lactating mother allowance was being given to ensure healthcare services to marginally poor mothers during their pregnancy and child birth and after the child birth.

She listed various measures of the government in the health sector including running of over 11,000 community clinics in the rural

areas, increasing beds in government hospitals, providing internet connections and web camera up to upazila level hospital for 24-hour specialised healthcare service, health service through mobile phones, recruitment of physicians, nurses, and healthcare providers, and bringing the entire healthcare system under digital network.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque, PM's Health Adviser Dr Syed Modasser Ali, State Minister for Health Mujibur Rahman Fakir spoke as special guests at the function, organised by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Health and Family Welfare Secretary Humayun Kabir presided.

Director General of Department of Health Dr Khandaker Mohammad Shefaatullah gave the address of welcome while director general of Family Planning Department AKM Amir Hossain also spoke at the function.

Earlier, the Prime Minister distributed prizes among representatives of 10 organizations for their outstanding contributions in providing healthcare services to ensure safe motherhood. A total of 42 organizations in seven categories had been declared as winners of the prize.

Arrest warrants against 8 OCCD officials

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued warrants for arrest of eight officials for Organisation for Children's Care & Development (OCCD) in a case filed against them for misappropriating Tk 1 lakh from a father of an autistic patient.

The accused are OCCD Chairman Umme Kulsum Koli, Vice Chairman Kazi Zia Shams, former secretary general Ziaunnahar, Secretary General Nusrat Jahan and Treasurer Rawshan Ara Majumder and executive members -- Zohra Begum, Rezaul Hossain and Baby Tabassum.

Metropolitan Magistrate Atiqur Rahman issued the order as the eight officials did not appear before the court, even though summon was duly served upon them.

The court directed officer-in-charge of Paltan Police Station to submit report on execution of arrest warrants against the accused by August 28.

Advocate Shaker Hossain filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka against them on April 10 last year.

After the hearing, the court issued summons upon them. But they did not appear before the court on three consecutive dates.

In his complaint, Shaker alleged that the accused had received Tk one lakh from him on May 10 of 2010 for his son's (Shakib) treatment who is an autistic patient. After receipt of the amount, the accused took his son admitted for treatment.

Meantime, the accused demanded Tk 1.5 lakh more for his son's treatment. But the complainant refused to pay the additional fee. Being angered, the accused cancelled his (complainant) son's admission and released his son from the organisation, Shaker added.



Chairman of the Board of Directors of Pubali Bank Ltd Hafiz Ahmed Mazumder MP, on behalf of the bank, hands over a cheque worth Tk 4 crore to Dhaka Ahsania Mission President Kazi Rafiqul Alam as a donation to Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital. Vice-Chairman Habibur Rahman, Directors Moniruddin Ahmed, Sk Wahidur Rahman, Syed Moazzem Hussain, Ahmed Shafi Choudhury, Suraiya Rahman, M Faizur Rahman, Fahim Ahmed Faruk Chowdhury, Alternate Director Muhammed Kabiruzzaman Yaqub, Independent Director Khurshid-UI-Alam, Managing Director Helal Ahmed Chowdhury and Additional Managing Director MA Halim Chowdhury of Pubali Bank were also present at the programme held at its head office in the capital recently.

PHOTO: COURTESY

APPOINTMENT IN NAZRUL UNIVERSITY

Job aspirant blames lawmaker for taking bribe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A job aspirant of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Trishal of Mymensingh yesterday alleged that the lawmaker of Mymensingh-7 constituency took Tk 25 lakh as bribe from two candidates for appointment as assistant exam controller.

The aspirant for the post, Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, hailing from Mymensingh, read out the allegation at a press conference at Bangladesh Crime Reporters' Association in the capital.

But the lawmaker, Reza Ali, talking to The Daily Star over phone, denied the allegation.

He said none had raised any question or brought any allegation against him regarding any appointment or other activities till date.

"After joining as a syndicate member of the university, I never favoured or came to harm anyone. I even refused to listen to the requests of ministers centering such issues as everything here follows the due procedure," said Reza.

Rafiqul said Reza, present at the viva board for the post on April 28, directed

the registrar to confirm the appointment of the two candidates while there were four more candidates waiting to appear before the board.

When Rafiqul drew the attention of Reza and Registrar Md Humayun Kabir over the matter that day, they misbehaved with him, he said.

On May 5, the university authorities placed the names of the selected candidates before the syndicate to confirm their appointment. Two syndicate members raised questions over the selection process and refrained from signing the approval letter, he added. However, the university appointed one, Mokarrrom Hossain Masum, whom Reza had brought before the board on his own car, said Rafiqul.

Reza denied having any knowledge as to who Masum was.

On the contrary, he said he had urged Rafiqul to review the exam sheets if he wanted to when the latter went to meet him after the appointment with the reference of a senior journalist.

Rafiqul also alleged that Reza's personal secretary, SH Pavel, had told him that if he had arrived beforehand and

agreed with his (Pavel's) conditions, he would have got the job.

Pavel, talking to The Daily Star over phone, denied the allegations and said he had only provided Rafiqul with the opportunity to meet Reza.

Another aspirant for the post of assistant professor at the fine arts department, Hossain Muhammad Faruk, alleged that the university authorities, in 2009, appointed a candidate who had submitted fake experience certificates.

Faruk, present at the press conference, alleged that four teachers were also appointed in the department last year although the High Court had issued a show cause notice on the university authorities, asking to stop the appointment.

Vice Chancellor Prof Gias Uddin and Registrar Md Humayun Kabir, over phone, denied the anomalies and defended Reza.

Prof Gias claimed that the university appointed eligible candidates on the basis of their skills and there was no scope or incident of corruption or anyone influencing the appointment process.

Establishing democratic culture a long term process Says Akbar Ali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Completion of the tenure and peaceful transition of power through a free, fair and credible election are the only two measuring units which can determine whether a government is successful or not, said Dr Akbar Ali Khan yesterday.

"In a democratic state they (the ruling and opposition parties) do not wrestle, instead, they engage in debates and discussions to reach a level of understanding," he emphasised.

Quoting from Wendell Phillips, Dr Akbar said, "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

While criticising the extent of success or failure reached in establishing a democratic culture, it must be also remember that the whole process is long term, he added.

Dr Akbar was addressing as chief guest a mock parliamentary debate competition, "The present democratic context of Bangladesh", organised by Debate for Democracy at ATN Bangla's studio in Bashundhara City in the capital.

On how far the Awami League-led government achieved the qualitative changes in national politics, by promoting mannerism, openness and averting confrontation, as promised in its electoral manifesto, is a matter of observation, he said.

"As a freedom fighter I think it will be a great big failure of ours if we are unable to materialise the vision of a Sonar Bangla (a prosperous nation) of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," he added.

Debate for Democracy Director Hasan Ahmed Chowdhury Kiron, addressing as the chair, said a dialogue between the government and the opposition is essential and the duo must act responsibly to sustain the country's democratic practices.

Two teams of students from Eastern University and Green University debated as the government and opposition respectively.

Debating on a draft resolution, "The country enjoys democracy to the fullest", proposed by the government, the opposition raised issues of forced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, murder of the journalist couple and jailing of its leaders, including eight lawmakers.

The ruling party defended the resolution, claiming that people were experiencing the rule of law, improved law and order situation and democratic practices.

Afterwards, the parliament dropped the resolution, as supported by the majority of the House when the speaker placed it for a voice vote.

Int'l Day of UN Peacekeepers today

UNB, Dhaka

The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers will be observed in the country as elsewhere across the world today to honour the 120,000 peacekeepers serving in 17 missions in some of the world's most volatile and dangerous environments.

This day is also a time to mourn the fallen peacekeepers. During its history, nearly 3,000 'Blue Helmets' have died devoting their lives to peace.

This marks the fourth year in a row the United Nations will honour 112 blue helmets who lost their lives the previous year while serving the cause of peace.

Commemorative activities will be held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, as well as United Nations peacekeeping operations and offices around the world.

This year, the United Nations is marking the day by highlighting the global partnerships that help sustain UN Peacekeeping and make it the success that it is.

The day was introduced by the General Assembly in 2002.



Seminar

UN Women Bangladesh and Steps Towards Development will organise a seminar; Venue: Cirdap Auditorium; Time: 10:30am.

View exchange meet

Manusher Jonno Foundation and two other organisations will arrange a view exchange meeting; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 3:30pm.

Discussion

Asia Human Rights & Journalist Foundation will hold a discussion; Venue: VIP Seminar Hall, Public Library; Time: 11:00am.

Seminar

Brac University will organise a seminar; Indoor Games Room, the university, Mohakhali; Time: 9:30am.

Discussion

Deshpremik Jonogoner Mancha will arrange a discussion; Venue: Gono