

SQ Chy shot at Nutan

FROM PAGE 1
Gouranga Singha, nephew of Nutan Chandra, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 during his one-hour deposition yesterday. The recording of the testimony began at 11:00am.

Gouranga's father Dwarka Mohon Singha, his uncles Nilambar Singha and Nutan Chandra Singha used to live as a joint family at Kundeshwari of Gahira village in Chittagong during the Liberation War in 1971.

"We, Himangshu Boidya, Brozohori Karmakar, Gopal Das, Monoranjan Singha, Nutan Chandra and I, were at my uncle's [Nutan] house that day. We were trying to convince him to move to a safe place but he did not agree," said Gouranga giving the date of the incident as Chaitra 30 (according to the Bangla calendar).

At this, the defence asked the witness to give the date according to the English calendar but Gouranga failed to recall.

The witness said while they were talking at Nutan's house, Salauddin along with Pakistani army came to the house by a military jeep around 9:00am. Seeing them, all but Nutan Chandra fled and took refuge in nearby woods south from the house.

"Brozohori told me that he and Gopal hid on the first floor of the house from where he saw Salauddin and the army personnel force entered the house. They left after talking to Nutan Chandra," said Gouranga, who also used to look after the family business of herbal medicine.

"A few minutes later they came back. Brozohori later told me that through the window he had seen them

drag my uncle out from the temple and riddled him with bullets. After a few minutes, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury shot at him and left," said Gouranga.

Brozohori also told Gouranga that Nutan's body had laid there for two to three days before chairman of the village Amanat Khan called some people and cremated it.

Gouranga also shared his experience of that time with the tribunal.

"I understood they had talked with my uncle and left," he said.

As the defence drew the tribunal's attention over the word "understood", Gouranga said he assumed it hearing the sound of the engine of the jeep from the woods.

"Ten minutes later, I heard the vehicle coming back. Then I heard the sound of firing, perhaps of sten guns. After a few minutes, I heard two to three more gunshots," said Gouranga adding that they then moved further south to save themselves.

They took shelter in their neighbour Ahmed Bashir's house and requested him to collect information about Nutan Chandra. Bashir told them that their uncle had been killed and his blood-stained body had been lying in front of the temple.

"Hearing this, we -- Himangshu, Monoranjan, Bhaskar, Bashir and I -- rushed home and covered the body with a piece of canvas," he said, adding that they found the left side of the face and chest riddled with bullets."

Gouranga then moved to his father-in-law's house in Binajuri and there on to India through Ramgarh. He returned to Bangladesh eight

to 10 days after the independence. After the return, Brozohori narrated that day's story to him.

Satyanarjan, son of Nutan Chandra, had filed a case in connection with the killing with Rajan Police Station after the Liberation War, said the witness adding that he did not know about the fate of the case.

He said all his family members except for himself and his cousin Profulla, who witnessed the liberation war, were dead.

Defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena began cross-examining the witness by asking whether Gouranga could identify Salauddin Quader Chowdhury in the courtroom.

Gouranga responded in the affirmative and turned his face towards the dock where Salauddin was. At this, Salauddin waved his hand at Gouranga and the witness waved him back.

Salauddin is facing 23 counts of charges of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

The proceedings of the case were adjourned until June 6.

The tribunal asked the prosecution to bring the third witness of the case, Sirajul Islam alias Shiru Bangalee, on June 6 for cross-examination.

The court then began recording cross-examination of the investigation officer of a case filed against Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee in connection with war crimes.

Sayedee is facing 20 charges of crimes against humanity committed in 1971. The proceedings of the case were adjourned until June 5.

ATN chairman

FROM PAGE 1
killing of the journalist couple Sagar-Runi.

The demand came after Mahfuzur Rahman recently claimed in London that "Sagar-Runi were victims of an extra-marital affair".

Protesting the remarks, the journalist leaders in a statement released yesterday said, "Such a speech about Rumi who was a journalist of ATN Bangla by the owner of the organisation is inhuman, discourteous and defamatory."

The journalist leaders demanded that Mahfuzur be quizzed immediately as he claimed to have video footage on the motive behind the murders.

They said this sort of comment was not only indecent and objectionable but also illegal, at a time when an investigation into the murder is underway.

Bangladesh Federal Journalist Union (BFJU) presidents Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Ruhul Amin Gazi, Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan, acting secretary general M Abdullah, Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) presidents Abdus Shahid and Omar Faruque, general secretaries Muhammad Baker Hossain and Shaban Mahmud, Jatiya Press Club President Kamal Uddin, General Secretary Syed Abdal Ahmad, Dhaka Reporters Unity President Shakhawat Hossain and General Secretary Sazzad Alam Khan signed the statement.

A journalists' rally will be held today demanding trial of all journalist murders, including those of Sagar and Rumi, end to oppression of journalists and freedom of media before the Jatiya Press Club.

Journalist leaders will submit a memorandum to the speaker of parliament after the programme.

Credit card

FROM PAGE 1
deposited in the bank's accounts. But the money was not deposited at all," he added.

Most of the 21 cards were issued against the close relatives, including brothers and wives of the accused officials, according to the bank's investigation.

Credit card fraud is common in developed countries, particularly in the US and in Europe, where scammers use spy ware or other mechanisms to obtain a credit card's details, which they use to withdraw money through a duplicate credit card.

There are examples of credit card fraud in India and other Asian countries.

But the UCB case is the first such instance in a bank in Bangladesh.

The inquiry shows that Nahidul Haque, the assistant vice-president, withdrew more than half of the Tk 10 crore using nine cards. He is the highest beneficiary of the scam.

He pocketed more than Tk 1 crore through using a card belonging to one Sabbir Ahmed Hussain. He used another card belonging to one Liton Talukder to pocket another Tk 1.5 crore.

"Their luxurious life style prompted me to open an internal inquiry," said Shahjahan Bhuiyan, managing director of UCB.

Shafiqul Alam, the additional managing director, said, "The investigation is underway and we don't rule out the thought that more officials might be involved in it."

However, the scam would not hamper the bank's operations and no client of the bank would bear the brunt, he added.

Teesta deal

FROM PAGE 1
He also held out the assurance that India would not build the proposed Tipaimukh dam without Bangladesh's consent. It would only implement a project there to generate electricity.

The Indian minister was talking to a group of Bangladeshi journalists visiting New Delhi.

He said the Teesta treaty had not yet been signed due to objections from the West Bengal government. However, he noted, his country would surely sign it for the sake of continuing the bilateral development, private TV channel ATN Bangla reported.

"This delay of a few months isn't so crucial and we all are agreed on the fact that we should try to do it as early as possible," Bansal observed.

He added, "We are engaged in discussion with them (West Bengal government). We are hopeful we will be able to convince them."

Kamaruzzaman indicted

FROM PAGE 1
The pro-Jamaat student body was later renamed Islami Chhatra Shibir.

ICS members formed AL Badr to collaborate with the Pakistani military that committed genocide and mass killing during the war, according to historical records.

The war that ended with the birth of a new nation after nine months saw at least three million people killed and over two lakh women raped.

During the charge framing yesterday, Tribunal-2 said Kamaruzzaman had played the key role in the formation of Al Badr with selected students of Ashke Mahmud Collage in Jamalpur. All of them belonged to ICS.

Under his leadership, all members of ICS of greater Mymensingh were recruited in Al Badr, the court said while presenting a brief profile of the accused.

On receiving summary training, they started committing atrocities targeting the Hindu community and unarmed Bangalee civilians in Kishoreganj, Netrokona, Sherpur, Jamalpur and Mymensingh.

"He [Kamaruzzaman] allegedly being in close association with Pakistani army, actively aided, abetted, facilitated and substantially contributed in committing dreadful atrocities during the War of Liberation in 1971 in the territory of Bangladesh," it said.

Now senior assistant secretary general of his party, the Jamaat leader has also been charged with complicity in and failing to prevent such crimes.

Six of the seven charges were for his involvement in crimes, including murder, torture, abduction and confinement.

One charge related to his "inhuman acts" against Syed Abdul Hannan, the then principal of Sherpur College, in 1971.

"During the period of the War of Liberation, on an afternoon in mid-May, you [Kamaruzzaman], being the chief organiser of Al-Badr Bahini as well as leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha or

member of a group of individuals, and your accomplices caused inhuman acts to distinguished pro-liberation intellectual Syed Abdul Hannan, the then Principal of Sherpur College, by compelling him to walk through the town, making him almost undressed and by constant whipping, as he was a gallant supporter of the War of Liberation," the court told the accused.

"Therefore, you, M u h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman, are being charged with participating in and substantially facilitating and contributing to the commission of offence of 'inhuman acts as crime against humanity' caused to Syed Abdul Hannan."

Tribunal-2 Chairman Justice ATM Fazle Kabir read out the charges along with an introduction to the formation of the court, a brief history of the Liberation War, a brief profile of Kamaruzzaman and submissions of the prosecution and the defence along with the court's views on the case.

"We are of the view that there are sufficient materials before this tribunal to presume that accused M u h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman has committed offences specified under section 3(2) of the Act for which he is criminally liable under section 4(1) of the Act."

"Since we find that there are prima facie allegations against the accused, the charges are thus framed against him," said the three-member Tribunal-2 that includes Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge M Shahinur Islam.

The 60-year-old Jamaat leader was produced before the tribunal yesterday at 10:26am. He first took a seat in the dock at the back of the courtroom.

Before reading out the charges, the court asked Kamaruzzaman to go to the dock near the judges' bench if he could not hear.

Kamaruzzaman, wearing white shirt, black pant and black shoes, went to the dock and kept standing.

SIX OTHER CHARGES
On June 29, 1971, under the leadership of

Kamaruzzaman, a group of Al Badr members abducted Badiuzzaman, son of Md Fazlul Haque, in Ramnagar village under Jhenaigati upazila, Sherpur.

He was tortured at Ahammed Nagar army camp all night long and shot to death the following day. His body was dumped in a waterbody.

In the early morning of July 25, 1971, Kamaruzzaman advised members of Al-Badr and Razakar [another auxiliary force] to commit a large scale massacre, in association with Pakistani troops, in Sohagpur village of Nalitabari upazila, Sherpur.

The collaborators murdered 164 unarmed civilians, 44 of whom are named, and raped women.

On August 23, 1971, on Kamaruzzaman's instruction, collaborators took Golam Mostafa, son of late Asir Uddin of village Gridda Narayanpur in Sherpur, to an Al-Badr camp.

The Jamaat leader and his accomplices brought Mostafa and one Abul Kasem to Serih Bridge and gunned them down.

Kasem survived as he jumped into the river but suffered injuries in his fingers. Mostafa died on the spot.

In mid-Ramadan in 1971, Kamaruzzaman and his followers picked up Liakat Ali and Mujibur Rahman Janu from their houses and brought them to a Razakar camp at Raghunathpur Bazar where they were tortured. Afterwards, the duo were kept detained for four days at a police station.

On Kamaruzzaman's order, the two along with 11 other civilians were shifted to Jhenaigati Ahammed Nagar camp. Afterwards, eight of them were shot to death. At the time, the accused and his aide Kamran were present.

In November 1971, under the instruction of Kamaruzzaman, some members of Al-Badr abducted Tunu and one Jahangir from Golki Bari and took them to the District Council Dak Banglow in Mymensingh.

Tunu was tortured to

death. Jahangir was detained but freed later on.

On Ramadan 27, one Tepa Mia and his elder son Zahurul Islam Dara were abducted by Kamaruzzaman, who was accompanied by 15-20 armed Al-Badr members from Golapjan Road, Mymensingh. They were taken to the Al-Badr camp at District Council Dak Banglow.

The next morning, along with five others, the father and son were lined up on the bank of river Brahmaputra.

Tepa Mia, when he was about to be charged with a bayonet, jumped into the river.

As the collaborators fired at him, he received injuries in the leg but managed to escape. But the remaining six got killed.

Yesterday, after the charges were read out, the tribunal chairman asked Kamaruzzaman whether he pleaded guilty or not.

Kamaruzzaman pleaded not guilty, saying, "The charges brought against me are totally false, baseless, politically motivated and imaginary."

"I am totally innocent," he claimed.

If convicted, he could get the death penalty under Section 20(2) of the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act, 1973. The act allows a convict to appeal to the Supreme Court Appellate Division.

Detained on July 13, 2010 in a criminal case, Kamaruzzaman was shown arrested on war crimes charges on August 2 the same year.

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 took the charges against Kamaruzzaman into cognisance on January 31 after the prosecution submitted formal charges of nine counts of crimes against humanity on January 15.

The case was transferred to tribunal-2 on April 16.

The court yesterday said the trial of Kamaruzzaman, starting with the opening statement of the prosecution on July 2, will continue every working day until further orders.

Telecoms project

FROM PAGE 20
to a significantly higher amount of \$24.73 million.

The inflated figure, as Kawabata justified, was due to an increase by 83 kilometres of the fibre optic line to 1,514km from the initial 1,432km and the country's "severe environmental conditions".

However, he decreased the microwave links to 4 from the original plan of 11, along with a few other cost-cutting changes.

Whereas, in another project, the government is currently installing an optical fibre cable network in 1,000 union parishads at \$3.78 per metre.

Similar other previous ventures by the BTCL cost \$6-7 per metre. But the estimate for the JICA project was an alarming \$12.32 per metre.

When The Daily Star wanted to know from the BTCL about the reworked estimate by the Japanese consultant, it said the original plan was to lay 824 kilometres of fibre cable network but that has been extended to 1,514 km -- and caused the large rise

in the estimated costs.

The BTCL further added that half the length of the cable network will be laid out using the costly horizontal directional drilling (HDD) technology -- a method to lay cable without digging -- and that the cable route would include two river beds, which is always a cost-intensive exercise.

However, a reliable source of the BTCL contradicted the statement, saying that only around 30 percent of the route would employ the HDD method -- that too would not cost more than \$6 per metre -- and that the original plan included the two river beds.

The official also said the BTCL's claim on laying 824 kilometres of fibre cable was false.

Interestingly, the officials of the planning department of the BTCL said they never got the detailed break-ups of the new estimate from the consultant.

They also said the BTCL formed a committee to assist the consultant, but according to a letter that the committee sent to the managing director

on January 9 this year, the consultant never met the team.

In the letter, the committee said it was not possible to evaluate the new estimate as there were no breakdown of the equipment and their unit prices, the types of fibre cables and the methodology to be used.

"I was not the MD of the BTCL when the estimate was approved, so I can't comment on the estimate," said Managing Director of BTCL Azizul Islam.

On the other hand, the JICA authority in Bangladesh refused to be drawn into the allegation of over estimation or malfunction in the procurement process.

Kei Toyama, senior representative of JICA Bangladesh, said, "Procurement responsibility lies with the BTCL. We are waiting for BTCL officials' response to the procurement. We expect they should procure efficiently and accountably as per the country's procurement rules and regulations and our JICA guideline."

Forests for bricks

FROM PAGE 20
standing trees on around 96,000 acres of land is being consumed even if it is considered that only 30 percent of brick kilns' fuel is firewood.

According to UNDP statistics, Bangladesh is currently producing around 1,200 crore pieces of bricks every year as the country is having a rapid seven to eight percent urbanisation rate.

In his article, Asit Ranjan estimates that it needs around 25 tonnes of coal or 42 tonnes or 3,500 cubic feet of woods to burn one lakh bricks.

He says if a medium tree produces five cubic feet of firewood, standing trees on 96,000 acres of land would produce 12 crore cft of firewood that could cover 5,411 standard football fields.

According to the Department of Forest and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2.52 million hectares of land or nearly 17.4 percent of the land mass is forest, of which 1.52 million hectares is under the direct control of the department.

However, different studies show the actual forest coverage is not more than 1.44 million hectares.

Studies show that the current deforestation rate in

South Asia is 0.6 percent, whereas it is 3.3 percent in Bangladesh.

Interestingly, the brick kilns, which are largely responsible for deforestation, are regulated by the Department of Environment and the district administration and many of those are running in a freestyle manner.

No government agencies has the exact idea on the number of total brick kilns in the country as even the main regulator -- the Department of Environment -- does not have the exact number.

Currently, a single mobile team of enforcement and monitoring unit of the department is conducting drives against brick kilns violating laws.

An official from the Department of Environment said brick kilns are not only burning firewood and polluting the air but also destroying the environment by using alluvial topsoils.

"And it is happening everywhere across the country. But it is hard for us to monitor this practice due to shortage of manpower," said the official requesting anonymity.

A study conducted in

Madhya Pradesh in India assumes three to four hectares of fertile land is consumed by each brick kiln which ultimately turns into wetland in eight to 10 years.

According to the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Law, 1995 (amendment 2010), changing characteristics of the land is an offensive crime.

The government formulated the Bangladesh Brick Kilns Control Act, 2006 that prohibits setting up brick kilns within three kilometres of any reserve forest or residential area.

The same law says brick kilns only can use roots of bamboo and trunks of date palms as those do not have other use.

But brick kilns are found everywhere operating freely even at the corner of reserve forests, atop hills, in residential areas and also in commercial areas posing serious threat to environment and human health.

The green campaigners have been urging the government for long to convert the traditional brick kilns into environment friendly brick plants which could save a great number of trees and reduce air pollution.