

Alim indicted

FROM PAGE 1

Of the 15, three were for committing genocide, which claimed the lives of 406 people, mostly Hindus. Born on November 1, 1930, in West Bengal of India, Alim with his family migrated to Joypurhat in 1950-51. In 1958, he joined the Muslim League. He was an influential leader of the Convention Muslim League and Vice-Chairman of Bogra District Council in 1971. According to the charges, Alim allegedly committed all the crimes in Joypurhat. After Ziaur Rahman took over the helm of the country, he made Alim a minister in 1978. Alim also joined Zia's then newly formed party the BNP, according to the information at the tribunal and defence documents. He was elected as a lawmaker from Joypurhat in 1979, 1996 and 2001 elections. "He [Alim] established an army camp, peace committee office [a collaborator force] and training centre for Razakars and accommodation for one Pakistani Major Afzal occupying the Gadi Ghar [trading office], business and homestead of one Shownlal Bajla, a jute trader of Joypurhat, after he was compelled to go to India leaving behind all his assets," said the tribunal. Members of the peace committee and the Razakar force actively collaborated with the Pakistani forces to commit genocide and mass killings in the nine-month-long war during which 30 lakh Bangalees were killed and over two lakh women raped, historic documents say.

In one of the charges of genocide, the Tribunal-2 said: on April 26, 1971, local peace committee chairman Alim accompanied by other members of the committee and the Pakistani army personnel launched a surprise attack on Hindu civilians in the Hindu-dominated villages of Koro, Kadipur, Chawkpura, Sonarpara, Palpara, Munshipara in Joypurhat. The attack was planned in consultation with Pakistan army Major Afzal. "Entering their homes, [they] started damaging property, looting and arson and thereby created havoc and then you [Alim] and your accomplices brought the Hindu civilians out their homes and lined them up and 370 Hindu unarmed civilians of those villages of Koro, Kadipur locality were shot to death," said Tribunal-2. "One 90-year-old Kanchira Mohan's throat

was slit and he was killed, and one Aswini Kumar Debnath was buried alive. Then you [Abdul Alim] and your accomplices left the crime scene and afterwards the bodies were dumped in a mass grave," the charges read. "Therefore, you Abdul Alim are hereby charged for substantially abetting and contributing to the commission of the offence of large-scale killing of the Hindu community as genocide with the intent to destroy the community either in whole or in part," the tribunal said.

When yesterday's court proceeding began around 10:40am, Justice ATM Fazle Kabir read out the charges along with an introduction to the formation of the Tribunal, a brief history of the Liberation War, a brief profile of Abdul Alim and submissions of the prosecution and the defence along with the court's views on the case. "Since we find that there are prima facie [first glance] allegations against the accused, the charges are thus framed against him," said Tribunal-2 Chairman Justice Kabir. Wearing an off-white fatua, a white lungi with black stripes and leather sandals, Alim was sitting on a wheelchair outside the dock. He listened to the charges against him for 90 minutes from the beginning. According to another charge of genocide in May, 1971, Abdul Alim accompanied by Pakistan army Major Afzal and other accomplices arranged a meeting at Uttarhat Shahor under Khetlal and delivered a provoking speech that triggered looting of assets of the Hindus.

According to the charges, Alim in his speech said, "The Hindus would not be forgiven" and also encouraged to loot whatever they [the Hindus] had. The charges said after such inciting speech, members of the peace committee and the Razakar force along with the Pakistani army attacked the Hindu-dominated neighbourhoods of Uttarhat Shahor, Harunjahat and surrounding areas and apprehended 10 Hindus who were killed on Alim's orders. The charges said Alim along with peace committee members, Pakistani army, Razakar force and Major Afzal posed for a photograph at open site on the west of Joypurhat Railway Station with 26 detained freedom-fighter suspects. The photo shows arms laid in front of

them. The tribunal also said, "Thereafter, you [Alim] consulted Major Afzal following which the 26 detainees were taken to Joypurhat College and killed there. Alim, arrested on March 27 last year, has been on conditional bail since March 31 last year. The prosecution pressed charges against him on March 15 this year before Tribunal-1. Tribunal-1 accepted the charges on March 27. On April 16, Tribunal-1 transferred Alim's case to Tribunal-2 along with two other cases for quick disposal. Tribunal-2 started the hearing on charge framing on April 24. Yesterday, after framing charges, Tribunal-2 directed the defence to submit its list of witnesses and documents on July 9. The court had asked Alim how would he plead. Alim pleaded not guilty and delivered a five-minute speech claiming his innocence.

"The case was filed to disgrace me politically as I was a minister of the BNP government," claimed Alim. "I was neither Chairman of the local peace committee nor a commander of the Razakar force," he claimed. Alim claimed he was involved in progressive politics since his student life and took part in the Language Movement in 1952. "I was not involved with the crimes and even it was not in my knowledge," Alim claimed. He claimed that the 26 "detainees" he was photographed with were still alive. He claimed that he went into hiding on April 20, 1971, and took shelter in the house of one Mafiz Member for two and half months. But if the charges against him were proved, he could face the death penalty. Alim, however, did not say anything about his whereabouts after the war. Defence documents, however, say that in March 1972, Alim was arrested for allegedly being a collaborator of the Pakistani force and he was released on bail in 1974. In 1975, the act under which the case was filed was repealed. Around 11,000 collaborators were behind bars when the government of Justice Sayem and General Zia repealed the Collaborators Act on December 31, 1975. An appeal glut and release of criminals en masse followed the scrapping of the law.

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Polls 3 months before time

FROM PAGE 1

not go back to that "unconstitutional" system. She was speaking at a meeting of A L Parliamentary Party at Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan. Her statements reject the opposition's demand for restoring the caretaker system and clearly indicate that the constitution will not be amended again to introduce the provision for holding the parliamentary polls after dissolution of current parliament. The latest constitutional amendment in 2011 introduced the provision for parliamentary polls within 90 days preceding dissolution of the House. This means lawmakers of this parliament will remain in office when the next parliamentary elections will be held with the AL-led alliance still in power. She told her party MPs

the next general polls will be held anytime between October 24 next year and January 24, 2014, the lawmakers present at the meeting said. "This time polls will be held three months earlier than the previous parliamentary elections," AL lawmaker Shahiduzzaman Sarker told reporters, quoting the premier as saying. Also, AL MP Maj Gen (retd) Shubid Ali Bhuiyan said the premier urged them to take preparations for the next polls from now on. Urging the MPs to be more pro-people, Hasina said she conducted a survey in all the parliamentary constituencies of her party's MPs engaging government agencies, party mechanism and other sources. She said performance of 25-30 lawmakers is very poor and they risk winning

the polls if held now, while another 25-30 MPs have fifty-fifty chances, meeting sources say. The AL chief urged those MPs to work hard to make their records better. "In the next polls, party nominations will be given on the basis of the survey results," an AL MP quoted Hasina as saying. Relying on the survey, Hasina, however, said there is nothing to be upset now. "People are still with us," an MP said quoting Hasina as saying in the meeting. In the December 29, 2008 parliamentary polls, AL alone bagged 230 out of 300 seats. Each of the AL MPs present at the meeting was given a 19-page document containing detailed description of the government's success and activities in various sectors in last three and half a years. The premier urged them

to inform people in their respective constituencies about the government's successes. She also urged them to speak about the government successes taking part in the discussion on the proposed budget for next fiscal year. In response to the MPs' speech, the premier also informed them that in the proposed budget Tk 5,000 crore was allocated for educational institutions under Monthly Pay Order. AL General Secretary and LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam urged the MPs to behave well with the party's grassroots leaders and activists, meeting sources say. "We have to be humble," a lawmaker quoted Ashraf as saying. The minister said only carrying out development activities may not ensure votes. "Showing party leaders

Face it after Eid

FROM PAGE 1

Blasting the Hasina administration for killings and disappearances of political activists, Khaleda said, "Our senior leaders are in jail. You [ministers and ruling alliance lawmakers] will not be able to go anywhere in the country after leaving power. You will not be allowed to stay outside [prison]."

Referring to the PM's allegation that BNP wants to return to power through the backdoor, she said, "BNP always came to power through election. I have been elected from different parts of the country, and people always elected me from everywhere [she contested]."

Blaming the government for "obstructing" the opposition supporters from joining the rally, Khaleda said the government itself had created a hartal-like situation by stopping bus and launch services. Besides senior leaders of BNP and its allies, Bikalpa Dhara Joint Secretary General Mahi B Chowdhury addressed the rally, presided over by Abdus Salam, member-secretary of Dhaka city BNP. Earlier, activists and supporters of the 18-party alliance had started streaming into Nayapaltan from noon while the rally began at 3:00pm. Defying obstructions and arrests in different areas, several hundred small processions came to the rally. Opposition supporters carried colourful banners, festoons, placards and portraits of BNP founder late president Ziaur Rahman, Khaleda and Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman. The whole area was under constant surveillance of Rab, police and other agencies while party volunteers were also active to ensure security. Greeted with thunderous applause from the massive gathering, the BNP chief got onto the dais in front of her party's central office at 4:00pm. She began her speech at 6:00pm. Earlier, at around 12 noon, activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir -- pro-BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami student bodies -- clashed over space in front of the stage. Senior leaders, however, brought the situa-

tion under control. Khaleda issued the ultimatum from a March 12 rally asking the government to make a formal announcement on reinstatement of the caretaker government system for holding the next general elections, and said her party would not participate in the elections if they were held under a political government. But Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina repeatedly said the government would not hand over power to unelected people. Pointing at Hasina, the leader of the opposition in parliament said, "Meet the demand for caretaker government system. Find out a solution through discussion. I hope good sense will prevail on the government. Otherwise, tougher programmes will be announced after Eid."

Khaleda said they [government] held talks at the prime minister's residence with those who had killed 57 army officials at Pikhana. They even had lunch with the killers but could not sit with the opposition to resolve a political crisis. Throwing down a challenge to the prime minister, Khaleda said, "Check your popularity, [and that of] your party and alliance by holding an election under a neutral administration. A level playing field is a must for that, and [then] you can see with whom the people are."

The government fears election under a neutral administration since it has become isolated from the people due to its misrule, repression and failure to run the country, she said.

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and activists pistol and handing over them to police cannot be accepted," said Ashraf without naming an AL MP who recently opened fire on a crowd.

A number of lawmakers, who spoke at the parliamentary party meeting, raised the issues of power crisis, prices of rice and enlisting educational institutions under MPO.

"We informed the prime minister about people's grievances at the shortage of power. Villagers are happy if they get power for eight hours a day. But they even don't get that," AL MP Abdur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL MP Amir Hossain Amu said he proposed not to give new power connections, but the prime minister rejected the proposal saying it will be an injustice.

Environment and Forest Minister Hasan Mahmud earlier claimed on different occasions at home and abroad that the number of tigers in the Sundarbans in Bangladesh was increasing as their habitation was well protected.

3 tiger cubs rescued

FROM PAGE 1

Rab arrested Abdul Kader's wife Jahanara Begum, 47, and their elder son Zakir Hossain, 19. Kader went into hiding with his another son Masud during the raid. Neighbours said they had seen Kader bring cages for animals and birds to the house but had never seen him entering the house or going out with any tiger or cub. Magistrate AHM Anwar Pasha told The Daily Star that they had been conducting raids in Satkhira and Dhaka for about a month in search of the cubs. Rab had information that the poachers had reached a negotiation with a party for selling each cub for Tk 20-Tk 60 lakh, he added. Asked about the allegations against Tapan, Chief Conservator of Forest Yunus Ali said they would thoroughly investigate the matter and take steps if the allegation was proved to be true. The forest department has opened an investigation against Tapan, said Anwar Pasha. In a 2004 survey, the United Nations Development Programme estimated 450 tigers, including 21 cubs, in the Bangladesh territory of the Sundarbans. The forest department has been running a World Bank-funded regional project to control illegal trading of wildlife and another project to save tigers by reducing man-tiger conflicts in the Sundarbans. What to feed the cubs on and how to take care of them. The forest department does not have any officer who has the expertise to take care of the cubs. Yunus Ali, chief conservator of forest, yesterday said they had communicated with Indian experts who suggested feeding the cubs on goat-milk. Reza Khan, head of Dubai Zoo, and other eminent wildlife experts from Bangladesh told The Daily Star that such cubs should be fed with animal milk called Cimicat which contained less carbohydrate and more protein. Soft chick or pigeon meat would be perfect for them. Cat's food, preferably foreign-made or animal fillets could also be given to them, Reza Khan said over the phone. Or if any pet dog or cat is found, the tiger cubs could be fed with their milk also, he said. The Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) recommended keeping the cubs under the wildlife rescue centre in India until they were old enough to be released into the Sundarbans. Bangladesh signed an MOU for the conservation of tigers and the Sundarbans during Indian prime minister's visit to Dhaka last year. The tiger cubs are too young to survive on their own, WTB said. Bangladesh, one of the

14 Tigerian countries, has pledged to play an important role in Tiger conservation.

Libya has announced that elections for a constituent assembly, the country's first national vote after four decades of dictatorship under toppled leader Moamer Gaddafi, has been postponed to July 7.

The election had originally been slated to be held by June 19. "The date for the elections will be July 7," the president of the electoral commission, Nuri al-Abbar, told a news conference in Tripoli Sunday, citing "logistical and technical" reasons for the delay.

The vote was postponed due to a delay in adopting a law to organise the elections, in order to give voters more time to register and to allow candidates who have been ruled out by the commission to appeal the decision, Abbar said. He said that the commission started its duties on February 12 which gave it only 128 days to prepare the elections... a very short time especially for a country that hasn't seen elections for almost half a century.

Abbar added that a note was sent on Sunday to the ruling National Transitional Council (NTC) to explain the decision to delay the vote. A member of the electoral commission said the postponement had been decided in consultation with UN officials working with the commission who had "proposed a date during the first week in July."

More than 2.7 million Libyans, or around 80 percent of eligible voters, have registered to participate in the election. The ruling National Transitional Council, having declared the country's "liberation" three days after the October 20 capture and killing of Gaddafi, launched a roadmap to a new Libya with a 20-month countdown to elections.

A transitional government was to be organised within eight months the election of a 200-member assembly, or "general national congress." The NTC is to step down once the congress holds its first session. Dozens of political parties, which were banned under Gaddafi's iron-grip rule as a "Western invention", have been founded in the months ahead of the Libyan elections.

A total of 120 seats on the assembly are reserved for independents, with the rest open to contest by political associations.

Border guards

FROM PAGE 1

coordinator in Yangon. The Myanmar government on Sunday declared a state of emergency in Rakhine to deal with the violence. Meanwhile, the intruders, who were denied entrance to Bangladesh yesterday, were mostly of Muslim Rohingya families. Out in the sea for the last few days, these panic-stricken people had very little food and water with them and were intensely unwilling to go back. Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) intercepted three engine boats carrying at least 182 Myanmar nationals in the Naf River, about one kilometre from the BGB Shah Pori Dwip observatory post in Teknaf, around 7:30am and sent them back, said Maj Shafiqur Rahman, second-in-command of 42 battalion. Most of the intruders were women and children, he added. Failing to cross the border the three boats headed towards the St Martin's Island later when another boat with refuge seekers joined the fleet. But they faced resistance from the coast guards. Station officer Lt Badroddoza of Bangladesh Coast Guard, Teknaf told The Daily Star that they had pushed back the four boats around 12:30pm. "We came to know that the boats had landed in Nakhunda area of

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British PM left daughter at the pub

AFP, London

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