Witness tells of brutal

FROM PAGE 1

Nirmal Chandra Sharma, 67, the sixth prosecution witness in the war-crimes case against the BNP leader, lost his mother Panchabala Sharma, brother Sunil Chandra Sharma, uncles Jotilal Sharma and Makhan Lal Sharma, and nephew Dulal Chandra Sharma in the raid.

His father Joyonto Kumar Sharma's left hand and leg were riddled with bullets. He eventually died after suffering for 5-6 years with the wounds.

Nirmal narrowly escaped bullets and later joined the Liberation War as a freedom fighter.

During his around 100minute-long deposition yesterday, the witness often burst into tears narrating what had happened at his Modhya Gohira village in Chittagong.

The Pakistan army troops reached Hathazari on April 12, 1971. Hearing the news, people of the village became worried, said the witness, adding that his family members were contemplating

"On April 13, my mother suggested that we have meals before leaving home as we didn't know our destination," Nirmal said, adding that while they were thinking about taking their meal an announcement was made from a nearby mosque asking people to stay in their

"Don't leave your homes. Shanti [Peace] committee has been formed. There will be looting if you leave your homes. Don't leave home, there won't be any problem," said Nirmal, adding that they felt reassured by the announcement. Nirmal, his nephew and

brother began having their meals which his mother served.

He said, "As we were about to finish our meals, we saw an armed Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury along with the Pakistani army at our door."

One of the soldiers in their own language told them not to be afraid and asked them to come out of the room.

request to it at this moment,"

Cabinet Secretary Mosharraf

Hossain Bhuiyan told jour-

nalists after a cabinet meet-

The meeting, chaired by

Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina, also decided to

mobilise both internal and

multipurpose bridge.

external resources for the

Mosharraf said the gov-

ernment would welcome the

co-financers -- Asian

Development Bank, Jica and

Islamic Development Bank --

if they showed interest in

financing the project. "We

hope to get positive

The WB scrapped its \$1.2-

billion credit for the Padma

bridge project on June 29,

claiming it had proof of a

corruption conspiracy

involving Bangladeshi

officials, executives of the

Canadian firm SNC-Lavalin

In Japan to attend the inter-

national conference on

Afghanistan, the Bangladesh

foreign minister also met her

Japanese counterpart

Koichiro Gemba and Jica

President Akihiko Tanaka

At the meeting with

Gemba, Dipu Moni reiter-

ated Dhaka's firm resolve to

initiate the Padma bridge

project on its own and sought

Tokyo's support in this regard

as a "trusted friend and

Highlighting the mea-

sures taken by the govern-

ment to ensure absolute

transparency in the project,

she said the government was

ready to undertake the

project with its own

resources, but it would

appreciate it if countries like

Japan could extend their

In response, Gemba

confirmed that the Japan

government understood the

feelings of the people of

Bangladesh with respect to

the significance of the Padma

separately.

partner"

support.

and private individuals.

DIPU MONI INTOKYO

responses from them."

Japan hopeful

they shouted at us, 'Hands up'. We raised our hands. Two soldiers came towards me pointing guns. My mother, father, brother and uncle pleaded for our lives, holding their legs," Nirmal One of them in Urdu

"As we stepped outside,

ordered the witness and his family members to calm down and go inside the room and they followed the order. But five minutes later, the Pakistani army dragged Makhan out of the room to the yard.

Nirmal's parents, uncle and nephew came out of the room and again pleaded for mercy, grabbing the legs of Salahuddin Quader and Pakistani army personnel.

The army ordered them to form a line. "They ordered us to sit in line facing west. Salahuddin Quader and other army personnel went to the east about 15 hands [a local unit of measure roughly the length of one's hand] away," he said.

"I leaned to a side just before they opened fire. They sprayed bullets twice. I dropped to the ground for sometime."

He said it was quiet after the shooting and all he heard was some groaning.

Nirmal got up after Salahuddin Quader and the Pakistani army had left.

At this point, Prosecutor Zead Al Malum asked the witness what he saw.

The witness lost the power of speech for some time. Nirmal, struggling to control his emotions, told the tribunal, "I saw that a bullet had entered my mother's belly from the left and exited from the right...the insides of her belly had come out."

The tribunal asked the witness to sit down and rest for some time.

His nephew, who was very dear to his mother, had the same fate. He also found his younger brother Sunil and uncle Jotilal dead.

A bullet had hit the upper portion of his uncle Makhanlal's head and he died after a few days, the witness said.

He said a bullet severed the flesh from his father's left

He reaffirmed that Japan

of funding the project along

with other bilateral and

multilateral donor agencies.

officials, Dipu Moni

explained Bangladesh's

position regarding the WB's

cancellation of the Padma

bridge loan. She told them

that the bank had neither

followed due process nor had

come up with any credible

evidence about alleged

Akihiko Tanaka, the meeting

was attended by Jica Director

General Nakahara Masataka,

Jica Chief Representative in

Bangladesh Toda Takao and

Jica Director for South Asia

Division Ichiguchi

government was determined

to start work on the Padma

bridge without further delay,

noting that it would ensure

"zero tolerance" for corrup-

urged the Japan government

to remain "steadfast in its

pledge for continuation of

expressed regret over the

He said they were satis-

fied with Dhaka's firm

determination to go ahead

with the project and com-

mitment to ensuring trans-

parency and accountability

that Jica, as the implement-

ing agency, would consult all

other government agencies

in Japan to further discuss

the possibilities of a "contin-

uation of funding the pro-

ject" under the new frame-

The Padma bridge issue

dominated the cabinet

meeting, though it was not

Muhith made a presentation

Finance Minister AMA

work of arrangement.

CABINET MEET

on the agenda.

The Jica president

The foreign minister

tion in executing the project.

Dipu Moni said that the

Tomohide.

the project".

WB's decision.

in the process.

Apart from Jica President

corruption in the project.

Later, meeting top Jica

leg and other bullets pierced

his left hand. Hearing the gunshots, Nirmal's brother Bimal Sharma rushed to the spot. Bimal lost his speech at seeingthe bodies.

Bimal and Nirmal left the house and planned to go to Chittagong on the night of April 13, but they failed as the Pakistani military was patrollingthe Rangamati road. They took shelter in a

neighbour's house, who was a Muslim. Nirmal and his brotherleft at daybreak.

Before they left, one of their neighbours, Daru Mia, gave them two topis (Islamic cap used during performance of religious rituals). Daru advised them to say that they were going for Fajr prayers if anyone asked them where they were going. Daru also taught them the Kalima (the word of purity and an essence of Islam).

Nirmal then loudly said, "Laa ilaaha illal Lahoo MohammadurRasoolUllah".

When tribunal chairman Justice M Nizamul Huq was giving directives to the typist on how to write the Arabic bit, the defence objected recording the Arabic verse. Justice Nizamul said

"Why can't it be written?"

Defence counse Ahsanul Huq Heena could not give any suitable answer but accused Salahuddin Quader, who was present in the dock, stood up and said "My lord! It does not sound pleasant to hear the Kalima from a non-Muslim. But if you [the tribunal] see it fit, you can write it."

"When the accused make requests, we become weak, replied Justice Nizamul and asked for the verse to be recorded with the defence's objection. Nirmal eventually went to

India and joined the Liberation War and fought in Sector-1. After independence, he heard that his family members had been buried in a big burrow near Shilpara pond.

The tribunal yesterday fixed the defence three sessions of the court proceedings, including yesterday, for cross-examining Nirmal.

on the project.

for other sources.

would pursue the possibility Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan

The defence will get two

Cabinet Secretary

said construction of the

bridge would start primarily

with the country's own

resources, and the govern-

ment would also be looking

instructed the ministries to

be selective in implement-

ing projects. She said not all

allocations are needed at

once to implement the

projects. In this way, we can

save some money this year

and channel those to the

Padma bridge project," he

life had shown interest in

contributing to the project

and the cabinet decided to

explore all options available,

construction materials with

foreign currency, we need to

mobilise resources in terms

of foreign exchange. Many

have expressed their willing-

chunk of remittances from

would be required this year

\$1 billion can easily be used

from the foreign exchange

reserve," said Mosharraf

adding the government

nal resources, the cabinet

Board of Revenue could also

the Economic Relations

Division would work out

how much foreign exchange

would be required for the

minister told The Daily Star

the government had

received some proposals for

loans at 4 percent interest.

Officials were now in talks to

bring the interest rate down

Wishing anonymity, a

project, he mentioned.

The Finance Division and

On mobilisation of exter-

could also issue bonds.

take steps in this regard.

to start construction work.

He said \$275 million

"The prime minister said

them.

Tanaka also mentioned secretary said the National

"Since we have to import

Mosharraf continued.

People from all walks of

"The prime minister has

Govt sells

FROM PAGE 20

month of Ramadan, when the countrywide monthly demand for sugar rises to 1.5 lakh tonnes from nearly 1.04 lakh tonnes in the other months.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua inaugurated the open-market sale of sugar on Wednesday at Tk 60 per kg at Motijheel, saying, "The move is to help stabilise the sugar market."

BSFIC had a stock of nearly 1.7 lakh tonnes of sugar, said Barua last week. Asked about the reason

for the higher prices, Ferdous Begum, secretary of BSFIC, said BSFIC was selling below the production cost. She added, "The corporation provides Tk 20 as subsidy for each kg by selling atTk60".

BSFIC began selling sugar at a time when many of its dealers have been refraining from taking delivery of sugar against allotments as the mill gate price of BSFIC sugar is Tk 55 per kg. Wholesale price of sugar was Tk 50.5 per kg in Moulvibazar yesterday.

In tears

FROM PAGE 20 that we could not even see

for the last time the faces of our father, mother and brothers when they were killed in 1975!"

These were the few remarks that Sheikh Rehana, younger daughter of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, made while speaking at a publication ceremony of the book, 'The Unfinished Memoirs' written by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and published posthumously. The ceremony was organised by the Awami League.

Rehana's speech had the entire audience at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre break down in emotion and tears.

Not even Rehana was in control of herself after saying those words. Her elder sister, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was seated on the stage as chief guest, rushed to the dais and held Rehana in an embrace for a few moments to make her calm. The effort only led to both sisters giving vent to their pent-up feelings over the tragedy of August 1975. Party leaders and workers could not control themselves either. Many of them were seen shedding tears.

At the beginning of her speech Rehana said she and her sister had nothing left except tears after the assassination of their father and other family members. "We had always wondered whether we could go back to the country or not, whether we could stay in our Dhanmondi house, whether we could visit our Tungipara home. When these thoughts came to us, we burst into tears and our hearts would

"But we had faith in Almighty Allah and an objective to work for the welfare of the people of the country, to implement the ideology of our father. Today we have been able to publish the unfinished autobiography of our father and now it's the wealth of the people. This history will inspire the younger generation to be

patriotic," Rehanasaid. expatriate Bangladeshis Sheikh Hasina, who too was emotional while delivness to contribute to the ering her speech, said by project. We can get a large reading 'The Unfinished Memoirs' people would learn how deeply and fully a leader could sacrifice his entire life for his country, its people and independence.

The prime minister said it was her mother had who always encouraged her father to write on every incident. Hasina said three more books would be published on their father's memoirs on the Agartala conspiracy case, his China visit in the 1950s and an account of his remembrances.

Among others who also spoke at the function were Mostafa Nurul Islam, Ramendu Majumder, Syed Shamsul Haque, Baby Moudud, Prof Fakrul Alam, UPL proprietor Mohiuddin Ahmed and AL General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam. The occasion was chaired by Deputy Leader of the House Syeda Sajeda

Illegal stay thru

The Rohingyas have

settled in hills and forests of

the rural areas of Cox's

Bazar. They cut down trees

to cook and earn some

bucks and are also involved

in crimes like killing, traf-

ficking and drug smuggling,

of Rohingyas maintained

close links with banned

Islamist outfits Harkat-ul-

Jihad-al Islami (Huji) and

Jama'atul Mujahideen

Bangladesh (JMB). They

helped the Bangladeshi

militants in many ways,

including by providing

training on arms and explo-

sives and also financially, a

former arms trainer of Huji

at grassroots level has any

said, depended on govern-

ment policy and decision.

"First we have to address

the issue of registered refu-

gees and then that of illegal

Bazar district administra-

tion also said, "We should

let them [Rohingya intrud-

ers] know that it wouldn't

be anymore possible for

them to stay in Bangladesh

Another local adminis-

tration official said

Bangladesh by allowing a

quarter of a million refugees

in 1991-1992 had opened

the door for other

Rohingyas to come here

illegally in the name of

visiting relatives and former

neighbours and co-

villagers. "But their sole

intrusion had become easy

as the refugee camps were

very close to the

Myanmarese bordering

away from the border,

establishing a network

between the Rohingyas on

both sides would have been

protected either. In the

absence of fences, refugees

can go outside the camps

though they are not allowed

to do so. Other Rohingyas

can sneak into the camps

around the 29 thousand

registered refugees of the

two camps as their repatria-

tion has been stalled since

Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) has been pushing

Bangladesh for a resettle-

ment of those refugees in

third countries. According

to the agency's website, in

2006-2010, more than 900

2010, the Bangladesh

authorities suspended

"However, in November

refugees had the chance.

The United Nations High

Concern is there for

The camps are not well-

Had the camps been far

The official added that

purpose is to settle here."

The chief of the Cox's

Rohingya immigrants.

Despite all this, nobody

told this correspondent.

Some insurgent groups

locals say.

solution.

illegally."

area.

difficult.

easily.

FROM PAGE 1

Mir Qashem, the UP chairman, also echoed the same and regretted that some Bangladeshis let the Rohingyas use their names and addresses to put on citizenship papers. "Many Rohingyas move

to other districts, including Dhaka, to manage national ID cards and passports and enlistment in the voter list by using false information," he said. Middlemen help them on this in exchange of money. "Rohingyas desperately

try to be Bangladeshi; they get financial help from their network in different countries, including Saudi Arabia, and thus pay the brokers who charge Tk 30 to 40 thousand for illegal documents.' Asked about the birth

certificate he had signed for a Rohingya girl, Qashem said, "If so, of course it was my mistake. We don't know all those who come to us for birth certificates." The chairman claimed

he had issued the birth certificate through "due process" following recommendations from elected members of his office or qualified organisations in his area.

Due to weak and flawed monitoring as well as a lack of awareness among locals, many Rohingyas have even purchased land in this area, he said.

At a meeting last month, elected representatives to local government and officials of district administration and Election Commission in Cox's Bazar widely discussed the problem over the inclusion of Rohingyas on the voter list. Mir Qashem was present

at the discussion. "We suggested removing the Rohingyas from the voter list and preventing such attempts," he said. "We're also trying our best to stop Rohingyas getting birth certificates.

Jainal Bari, deputy commissioner of the district, said, "Already 30 to 35 thousands such names have been dropped from the voter list [in Cox's Bazar]." He said the authorities

were moderating the voter

registration process in the district to obstruct Rohingyas from being vot-The district admin boss admitted that a very large

number of illegal Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar had created a lot of problems. Apart from around 29 thousand registered refugees of camps in Teknaf and

Ukhia, quarter to half a million Rohingyas have also been living in the region for vears. DC Bari said these illegal immigrants mean a huge socioeconomic pressure.

"The population also has

damaged the environ-

political allies, but even military men appeared

once inside parliament. pleased to see the veteran activist, despite NLD plans to ease them out of the legislature by scrapping a constitutional provision granting

No special provisions were made for the attendance of Myanmar's most famous political figure, who listened attentively as other MPs spoke in a morning debate.

them a quarter of seats.

Suu Kyi barely created a stir among legislators in the lower house, but was surrounded by members of the press during a coffee break, telling reporters she had yet to decide on any proposals to submit to the parliament.

MPs have a number of pressing issues on the table for discussion during the current session, which began last Wednesday.

Communal violence in June between ethnic Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya, which left dozens dead and tens of thousands homeless, is on the agenda, with an ongoing state of emergency requiring parlia-

policy. The UNHCR has made strong appeals to the Government to revoke its suspension of the resettlement programme," reads the website. Also, the Bangladesh

government and the UNHCR are locked in debate on programmes for the camps, building walls around them and repatriation, reintegration and resettlement of refugees. However, amid all com-

plications, the authorities have been teaching the Burmese language to the children of Rohingya refugees in schools in the camps so that they do not get detached totally from their own culture.

Top Buddhist idea yet about an ultimate FROM PAGE 1

The solution, the DC Thailand.

He was 80 years old and suffering from various diseases, including lung cancer, according to a press release.

became the 27th Sanghanayaka [chief] of Bangladesh Buddha Bhikkhu Mahasabha in 1998 and observed the duty of Sanghanayak after the death of his predecessor Priananda Mohather.

Upashompoda in 1952 and served as general secretary of Pakistan Bhikkhu Mahashabha in 1966. Born in Pingola village

Chittagong on February 1, 1933, Mohathero took his MA degree from the Buddhist Studies Department of Chittagong University in 1975. Later, he was accorded

was a schoolteacher from 1960 to 1990. Dhammapal Mohathero

and titles, including Bichitradharmakathic [expert in various religions] in 1962, Bishuddhanada Gold Medal, Sasanajoti Mahasaddharmmajitikadha jja [great flag carrier of Buddhism] from the Myanmar government in 2007.

honorary doctorate degree from Vietnam Buddhist University in 2011. He was known as a

edge and gentle demeanour. His body is expected to

arrive in Bangladesh today.

Hasina has expressed deep shock at his death and recalled his contributions to peace in society through preaching the message of Lord Buddha. Members of Bangladesh

"I will try my best for the country," she told AFP. The democracy cham-

pion's first taste of public office comes at an uncertain time for Myanmar after recent communal violence and a series of student arrests cast a shadow over promising changes in the former pariah

Suu Kyi will join fellow members of her National League for Democracy (NLD), as both the party and its charismatic leader transform from dissident outsiders to mainstream political players in the wake of landmark April

The 67-year-old, one of the NLD's 37 lower house members of parliament, postponed her debut in the mentary approval. A new foreign investment fledgling legislature last week

formulation of a refugee

Hospital at Bangkok in

Dhammapal Mohathero

He was awarded

under Patiya upazila of

the title, Tripitok Scholar. He

received a number of awards

He also obtained an

Sanghanayak for his knowl-

Prime Minister Sheikh

Buddha Krishti Prochar Sangha expressed their condolences at Mohathero's resettlement pending the

Suu Kyi makes debut

FROM PAGE 20

in the capital Naypyidaw.

But it also comes amid expectations that several senior hardliners are to be replaced by reformists in an imminent cabinet reshuffle that would mark the first major change of personnel in the top echelons of government since it replaced junta rule last year.

by-elections.

"the legislative concert" and push for greater transparency

The party's involvement in mainstream politics comes as a result of sweeping changes by a new regime, including the release of hundreds of political prisoners, liberalising sections of the battered economy and tentative ceasefires with several major armed ethnic rebel groups.

But the government came under fire from other activists last week after authorities on Friday briefly detained around 20 student leaders ahead of the 50th anniversary of a brutal suppression of a student

ACC to probe FROM PAGE 20

This is the first time the ACC asked for so many files from the CCC, a higher official of the CCC said. He also said the ACC had not specified the projects which had corruption charges. Abdul Aziz Bhuiyan, also

investigation officer of the ACC, said he had sent the letter on the basis of some complaints. He said the letter men-

Indian SC FROM PAGE 20 border area of West Bengal.

A bench of Justice B S Chauhan and Justice Swatanter Kumar asked the government to file its response within three weeks.

The court's order came on an application by Banglar Manabadhikar Suraksha Mancha (Masum), a Kolkata-based NGO, which alleged that the BSF personnel indulged in extrajudicial killings or torture in the border along Bangladesh and that those cases were never probed by the state police. "This petition pertains to

the cases of torture or tor-

ture followed by extrajudi-

cial executions of more than 200 Indian nationals by the Border Security Force between 2005 and 2011," said senior advocate Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the petitioner. "In over 100 cases, there are eye witnesses to the BSF taking into custody the person concerned and there

are eye witnesses to the

torture in custody of the

person concerned leading to

his death," he further said. Not a single one out of more than 200 cases, set out in this petition, of torture and killings, was investigated by the police, the petition alleged.

FROM PAGE 20 But the tiger was lying under a tree and it did not return to the woods.

Bengal Tiger

The team surrounded the tiger with fishing nets, keeping one side open towards the Sundarbans, so that the tiger could go in that direction. The tiger returned to the

forest around 9:30am yester-

day but showed up again after two hours, said a WTB press release. It finally went back to the forest yesterday around 3:00pm but it could appear

again, said Toufiqul Islam, a forest official of Satkhira. Locals are still in anxiety

and remaining indoors. Northeast

FROM PAGE 20

and Akhaura. India's Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has recently submitted a field survey report to the Railway Board which envisages connecting Tripura, Bihar, Assam, Manipur and West

ment and tourism in the region. "We have already sent the report to Railway Board and waiting for their reply," IANS quoted a senior official of

the NFR.

Bengal with the neighbour-

ing countries to boost bilat-

eral trade, usher develop-

Work on the rail links from Tripura capital Agartala to Akhaura in Brahmanbaria of Bangladesh has already started, he said, adding, "The central government had sanctioned an amount of Rs 493.52 crore for the rail connectivity projects between Agartala to Akhaura and Jagboni in Bihar and Biratnagar in

Nepal. India will build a 15km railway track linking Agartala with Akhaura -- an important railway junction connected with Chittagong port, Sylhet and Dhaka -under its railway budget proposal this year.

There is also a road link between Akhaura and Agartala. The Dhaka-Agartala bus service was introduced in 2003

The proposed rail links with Bhutan are Hasimara in West Bengal to Phuentsholing in Bhutan, Rangiya in Assam to Samdrupjonkhar in Bhutan, Banarhat in West Bengal to Samtse in Bhutan and Kokrajhar in Assam to Geleka in Bhutan and Pathsala in Assam to Namlang in Bhutan.

Proposal has also been

made for establishing rail links between New Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and Kakrabita in Nepal. A survey on the connec-

tivity with Jiribam in Myanmar to Moreh in Manipur will start very soon, the official was quoted by

law aimed at resuscitating the to recover from a gruelling tioned some specific projects country's moribund economy European tour and visit her and the ACC needed the files is also in the pipeline. constituency. of those projects for enquiry. Suu Kyi on Tuesday Parliament is still domi-"We did not seek any pledged her party would join nated by the military and its additional file." IANS as saying.