

Religion-Based

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with the destruction of Buddhist temples and homes," said Hasina, who is the leader of the House.

The government acted quickly after the brutal attacks on the Buddhist temples and houses at Ramu, Ukhia and other places on September 29 and the following day.

Hasina, president of the ruling Awami League, said her party had always believed in a secular and non-communal political philosophy since its inception, and her government would not tolerate any activities that would destroy communal harmony.

She said work was underway to rebuild the damaged Buddhist temples and monasteries under the supervision of the army.

On the launch of fourth generation technology, she said her government had plans to launch 4G technology and give it to private mobile phone operators for the telecom sector's development.

The drafting of guidelines for giving 3G and 4G licences to private mobile operators was now at the final stage. It would be possible to give them 3G licences in the first quarter of the next year, she said.

The government planned to issue 4G licences immediately after providing 3G licences to private mobile operators, said the prime minister.

War tribunal

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Onion, died of severe torture.

He said he had heard about Alam's death from a member of the then Convention Muslim League who was locally known as Harun Contractor. Harun used to go to SQ Chowdhury's father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury's residence in the evening.

Fazlul Quader was the president of the Convention Muslim League.

During cross-examination, Faiz said he had lived in Harun's house during the war.

Faiz said a person named Syed Wahidul Alam had resigned from Bangladesh Chhatra League and joined the Convention League.

The witness said Mahbulul Alam was picked up from a tea-stall and taken to 'Goods Hill' at the end of July 1971.

Faiz added, "He [Mahbulul Alam] was put on a bed of nails and tortured in the presence of SQ Chowdhury and Wahidul Alam. Mahbulul died of the torture."

Defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena cross-examined the witness after his deposition.

In reply to suggestions from the defence, Faiz said it was not true that Harun had never gone to Goods Hill in 1971 or there was no bed of nails there.

Huq also said Mahbul was against the Liberation War and soon after independence he had fled to Pakistan where he was still living with his family.

"It's not true," Faiz responded.

SQ Chowdhury was produced before the tribunal. The proceedings of the case were adjourned until November 19.

Meanwhile, International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday completed the cross-examination of Rustam Ali Molla, the fifth prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed.

The three-member tribunal headed by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir recorded the cross-examination before adjourning the case proceedings until November 20, when the sixth prosecution witness is expected to testify.

On Tuesday, Rustam testified that he had seen Jamaat leaders Ghulam Azam, Motiur Rahman Nizami and Mojaheed at a Pakistani army camp at Mohammadpur during the Liberation War.

The tribunal also completed the cross-examination of Solaiman Ali Fakir, the sixth prosecution witness in the case against former minister Abdul Alim.

The seventh prosecution witness is expected to testify on November 19.

Mojaheed is facing seven charges, while Alim is facing 17 charges of crimes against humanity committed during the war.

Prosecution

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The government on Tuesday appointed the 12 prosecutors, raising the total to 27 lawyers, to deal with the cases at the two international crimes tribunals.

Trial of nine Jamaat and BNP leaders is going on at the two tribunals, while investigations into alleged crimes of some other suspects continue.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star that the new members of the prosecution were appointed to assist the senior members of the team as a case had already moved into the closing argument stage and some others were close behind.

"Scrutiny of the pieces of evidence is important at closing argument stages for which they could be helpful," said the minister, adding, "Besides, the number of crimes against humanity cases is also increasing."

"They [new prosecutors] have been appointed as we had requirement and if needed, more will be appointed," Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arief Tipoo told The Daily Star yesterday.

A senior member of the prosecution said they needed more lawyers since very beginning of the trials as it was difficult to conduct cases without junior lawyers.

About the delay, he said, "Better late than never."

The newly appointed prosecutors are: Latif Ahmed Khan, Abul Kalam, Tapos Kanti Bal, Sifat Mahmud, Rezia Sultana Begum, Farah Khan, Syed Sayedul Haque, Sheikh Mosef Kabir, Jahid Imam, Sabina Yasmin Khan, Riaz Uddin Ahmed and Fatima Jahangir Chowdhury.

They would enjoy financial and other facilities equivalent to that of an assistant attorney general, says a law ministry notification of November 13.

Abul Kalam, a newly appointed prosecutor, told The Daily Star that he had joined the team after getting appointment on Tuesday.

On March 25, 2010, the government announced the first tribunal, a 12-member prosecution team and an investigation agency for trying the crimes against humanity suspects.

On March 22, 2012, the government established the second war crimes tribunal for quick disposals of cases.

Over the last two years, some members left the prosecution team while the government appointed new

Zillur too

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sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority."

In July 2011, Biplob, son of Abu Taher, an Awami League leader and mayor of Laxmipur municipality, was pardoned by the president in advocate Nurul Islam murder case, in which he was given death sentence.

Biplob was convicted in absentia in three cases. After being on the run for more than 10 years, he surrendered before a court on April 6 last year. His father then filed mercy petitions with the president, following which the latter granted clemency to Biplob in the Nurul Islam murder case last year.

In a case for the killing of Natore Jubo Dal leader Sabir Ahmed Gama, the president in late 2010 pardoned 20 death row convicts, media reports said.

One of the condemned killers in this case was not pardoned as he was on the run.

Meanwhile, President Zillur Rahman's grant of mercy drew sharp criticism from different quarters, including rights groups, legal experts and the media.

Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission Mizanur Rahman reacted sharply to granting of presidential pardon, saying, the nation must come out of this culture.

"A convict in a criminal case should in no way be forgiven," he said at a programme of the Cox's Bazar district administration on February 26 this year.

members. The number of the team members was 15 before the latest appointments.

Different organisations advocating for war crimes trial on several occasions demanded that the government increase manpower of the tribunal including the prosecution for expeditious trial.

Shahriar Kabir, executive president of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, told The Daily Star, "It is positive but I think it is not enough. More senior lawyers should have been appointed."

He proposed formation of an advisory body to the prosecution comprised of senior jurists.

The trial of Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayeede is now at closing argument stage, the last stage before the verdict is delivered.

Defence witnesses are testifying in the case against former Jamaat ameer Ghulam Azam after which trial would move into the closing argument stage.

Prosecution witnesses have already completed testifying in Abdul Quader Mollah's case and defence witnesses are expected to start giving their depositions from today.

In five other cases, prosecution witnesses are placing their testimonies before the tribunals.

In the case against Abdul Kalam Azad, prosecution witnesses would begin giving their depositions on November 26.

The investigation agency of the international crimes tribunal has submitted probe reports of crimes against humanity allegations against Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman Khan and the prosecution is working to prepare formal charges against them.

On September 26, the investigation agency said it expected to complete by December its probes against six other war crimes suspects including Jamaat leaders Maulana Abdus Subhan, ATM Azharul Islam and Mir Quasem Ali, who are behind the bars now.

Tanvir

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The two made the confessions in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

In his confession before Metropolitan Magistrate Keshab Roy Chowdhury, Tanvir said some employees of his company in league with some officials of Sonali Bank's Ruposhi Bangla Hotel branch had misappropriated the money, said court sources.

He named several people, including suspended deputy general manager AKM Azizur Rahman of Sonali Bank, who helped him secure the loans on forged documents.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Saifur Rahman recorded the confessional statement of Tushar, which was almost identical to that of Tanvir.

Earlier on October 18, the Hall-Mark boss had made a similar confession in another graft case.

ACC Deputy Director Mir Joynul Abedin Shiblee, who is the investigation officer of the case, produced the two before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) Bikash Kumar Saha. The CMM assigned Keshab and Saifur for a recording of their confessional statements.

Later, the two accused were sent to jail.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday sent Tanvir's wife and group Chairman Jasmine Islam to jail after she was produced before it on completion of a four-day remand in a graft case.

According to a Bangladesh Bank investigation report published in May, the controversial Hall-Mark Group and five other companies took Tk 3,547 crore in loans from the state-owned bank between 2010 and 2012 on forged documents.

Of the amount, Hall-Mark alone swindled Tk 2,686 crore.

Govt cannot split BNP-led alliance

Says opposition chief whip

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Farroque yesterday said the government would not be able to create a rift in the BNP-led political alliance by oppressing its allies.

"Our [alliance's] unity is strong ... it cannot be split through repressive acts," he said while addressing a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

His comment came amid speculation that the ruling party was trying to take Jamaat-e-Islami into its fold.

Farroque said the attack on the motorcade of the law minister would not have happened had the registered political parties been allowed to hold their rallies.

Terming the Jatiya Sangsad a dead and inactive institution, the opposition chief whip said there was no scope to speak in parliament on any national issue as it had become a place to attack Khaleda Zia, Tarique Rahman and the BNP.

About the opposition's return to parliament, Farroque said they would get back to the House if a bill on the non-party caretaker government was tabled in it.

He also said the Election Commission had to be reconstituted in consultation with all political parties to hold a free and fair election.

Bangladesh Republic Forum organised the human chain demanding the release of detained Jubo Dal President Moazzem Hossain Alal.

EU worried

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The EU is firmly committed to core labour standards and human rights, meaning no discrimination as well as equal opportunities for men and women.

"We do not expect you to match our own high labour standards, but we expect at least minimum standards."

Government officials, representatives from buyers' groups, workers' leaders, mid-level managers of different factories and garment makers also spoke at the discussion.

Praising the country's achievements in the garment sector, Hanna said: "I did not see such a success in my 30 years of career that a trade leads to job creation and growth in any least developed country."

Bangladesh has been doing well consistently in the EU. It exported garments worth \$8.5 billion to the market last year.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua urged the garment makers and buyers to be rational in making profit.

The minister also called upon the buyers to increase the prices of garment items so that the makers can pay more to the workers.

Workers will not do well without good working environment, said the minister.

Economist Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said there should be elected representatives of workers to bargain with the management or owners at the factory level.

The workers should also enhance their productivity, he said.

Rubana Huq, managing director of Mohammadi Group, urged the buyers to come up with a joint fund managed by the factory management and buyers to ensure the workers' welfare.

"We could have done a lot for the workers, but we did a little under pressure from the buyers."

The workers' representatives urged the garment makers to share profit with the workers.

The buyers said Bangladesh needs to address labour issues and ensure better working conditions at the factory level.

Organised by Christian von Mitzlaff, managing director of LIFT Standard, a social compliance auditing firm, the discussion was moderated by Sekondar Khan, vice-chancellor of East Delta University.

Confusion over ransom

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Khandker differed on the issue of ransom and claimed that the child had been rescued through police intelligence activities and application of "strategic techniques".

IGP Khandker declined to disclose the "strategic techniques", saying, "The strategy of the law enforcers and intelligence should never be disclosed for the sake of arresting the criminals."

He refused to admit the failure of law enforcers and intelligence in rescuing the boy as well as in arresting the criminals. "The police may not be successful instantly in every case. There is still scope of arresting the criminals and bringing them to book."

While the family of the boy still remains anxious about the child's security and safety, both the IGP and Rab intelligence chief claimed that they were firm in their position to arrest the abductors keeping the safety of the boy and his family in their consideration.

Yesterday, Director of the Legal and Media Wing of Rab Commander M Sohail said now that the boy had been found they were trying to arrest the criminals.

"The criminals had assigned one Kala Chan in Keraniganj to watch the movement of Parag's family. We learnt that he was paid a split of Tk 4 lakh from the ransom money. But all of a sudden he has mysteriously disappeared [from yesterday]."

Sources say this Kala Chan was actually arrested by Rab.

Rab said it had failed to arrest the main culprit, although it was keeping track of the kidnappers by tapping mobile phone conversations until Parag was found early yesterday.

Lt Col Ziaul Ahsan added the battalion had identified a

mid-level criminal, active mainly in Old Dhaka and Keraniganj area, as the main culprit. "The criminal had planned the abduction soon after he came out of prison on bail recently."

On the matter of ransom, he said, "The money was handed over to the kidnappers at a place in the city outskirts, a few kilometres away from Aminbazar around 9:00pm, about three hours before the child was found at Atibazar [a few kilometres off the place where the transaction took place]."

When the money was handed over, a Rab team was nearby. But since the child had not yet been found, they could not make a move. The gang managed to get away, he added.

A day before, Commanding Officer of Rab-10 Lt Col Kamrul Hasan had said they had information that the abductors had demanded Tk 2 crore from the family. But the family did not disclose this to the law enforcers.

So far, the family has remained tight-lipped on the issue of ransom fearing a backlash. However, Parag's uncle Pradip Kumar Dutta Tuesday night said the family had its own "arrangement" to rescue the child.

Meanwhile, police arrested a person in Munshiganj in connection with the abduction of Parag. Mamun Mia, 43, of Shuvadya Purba Gram, was arrested in Nimitla area of Sirajdikhan upazila, reports our Munshiganj Correspondent.

Afzal Hossain, sub-inspector of South Keraniganj Police Station, told The Daily Star last night that they were certain about Mamun's involvement in the crime.

Captain Abhishek Ahmed, Rab's legal and media wing deputy director, said last

night that they had identified some of the criminals involved in the abduction.

Son of businessman Bimol Chandra Mondol of Keraniganj, Parag was abducted by a band of armed criminals on the morning of November 11 while he along with his two sisters and mother was about to get into their car for going to school.

The criminals also fired two shots at his mother, one at his elder sister and another at the driver of the car.

Heart patient

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College Hospital, (DMCH) from where critically wounded Nabil was shifted to Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Hospital. He was put on life support there.

Dilara Islam, elder sister of Nilu, said her brother fell sick around 1:00am and was rushed to a private clinic in Uttara. As his condition deteriorated, doctors referred him to the National Heart Foundation Hospital in Mirpur.

Accordingly, the attendants of the patient hired the private ambulance. When they came near the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre around 3:00am, the truck coming from the opposite direction smashed into the microbus, causing the casualties.

Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police said the truck was heading for Farmgate from Gabtoli. Following the accident, the truck driver and his helper managed to flee the scene, leaving the vehicle on the road.

Nilu had been abroad for years. Since his return home, he had been looking after his properties.

Naief, the other son of the deceased couple, was inconsolable after hearing of his parents' death and the critical condition of his brother.

Not sympathy

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Rehabilitation and Research Association (DRRA), Manusher Jonno Foundation and The Daily Star at the English daily's office in the capital.

"Physically challenged people want special care, not sympathy. We should ensure a level-playing field for them," said Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation.

Women entrepreneurs face many challenges when they deal with financial, marketing and networking issues, said Sangita Ahmed, president of the Bangladesh Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BWCCI).

"If we can bring at least five percent of the physically challenged women into the skilled workforce, it would help the country raise its productivity," she said, adding BWCCI would consider working with these women.

A small number of women were now involved in the mainstream economy because of social impediments and negative attitudes, said Shagufta Yasmin Emily, a ruling party whip in parliament.

Infrastructure should be built, keeping physically challenged people in mind, she said. "They face many challenges. So they need extra care."

Shagufta also suggested that the government should distribute khas land among people with disabilities.

Mosharraf Hossain, country director for Action on Disability and Development (ADD), Bangladesh, said, "We have to provide the physically-impaired with all support so that they can become entre-

preneurs." In India and China there is a good number of entrepreneurs with disabilities, he added.

Women entrepreneurs should use social media for promoting their products in the international market, said Mosharraf, adding information and communication technology could play a significant role in this regard.

Farida Yasmeen, DRRA executive director, said government and private organisations should work together to ease their (the physically-challenged) path to self-employment.

The mandatory financial security and marketing of products for taking loans are the major barriers to the development of women entrepreneurs, said Rokia Afzal Rahman, former adviser to a caretaker government.

"I will extend all sorts of support to these women so they can easily market their products and get loans," she told the roundtable over the phone.

Mayeeda Choudhury, a director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said women entrepreneurs should be given training so they could improve their skills to compete in the global market.

They have a very little or no access to finance, she said, and that was the main obstacle. "So we have to address this problem and ensure loans for physically-challenged women entrepreneurs."

Mayeeda urged the women entrepreneurs to build a broader network with others so that they could always be informed of market trends, new business opportunities and

Parag sedated heavily

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convey the news. Lipi, who had been unable to sleep from worries, became ecstatically energetic at getting the information.

Lipi was transferred to Square Hospital to be close to Parag, and they reunited at 5:30pm.

Another sister of Parag shot by the kidnappers is now at home after receiving treatment while the driver has admitted to Mitford Hospital as he too was shot.

Meanwhile, family sources revealed to The

Daily Star Parag's account of the abduction.

Parag recalls that he was taken to a yellow-painted building and there were two or three men apart from the four kidnappers. One of them, as Parag says, was a fat person with a beard.

The minor boy was slapped about and threatened with syringes. Amidst his own pain, Parag was able to recall the scene of his mother, sister and driver having been shot.

Hospital sources said Parag was still mentally disoriented to a degree,

though his condition was improving. He often failed to keep track of what he was saying.

A physician said Parag would become normal within two or three days.

In the meantime, the family's Shuvadya Paschim Para house was visited by crowds, many of whom had come from afar to enquire about Parag.

Parag's relatives think that the family will have to bear the brunt of the incident in future. The scars caused by the tragedy will take a long time to heal.

Star's CU reporter gets death threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An anonymous caller on Tuesday threatened to kill a news reporter of The Daily Star unless he apologised publicly for "reporting against Jamaat-Shibir".

Calling on the personal mobile phone of our Chittagong University (CU) correspondent, Nirjha Majumder at 10:35pm, the person asked him to apologise for publishing the reports or else he would be killed within 24 hours.

Quoting the caller, Nirjhar said "You have to beg pardon publicly for your reports against Jamaat-Shibir including the one titled 'Banned books of Maududi still in CU syllabus'."

A general diary has been filed yesterday with Double Mooring Police Station in this regard.

Kazi Matul Islam, officer-in-charge of Double Mooring Police Station said they were trying to track down the caller.

On September 2, a report was published on books written by controversial writer Syed Abul Ala Maududi, which were banned in 2010 for encouraging extremism and militancy.

However, his books are still taught as prescribed textbooks in three departments of the university.

Speaker for political consensus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday stressed the need for "consensus" among all political parties "for the sake of the country."

He also assured extending an all out cooperation to the opposition parties so that they could play their due role in the House.

The Speaker was addressing the inaugural sitting of the 15th session of the ninth Jatiya Sangsad that kicked off yesterday in the absence of the BNP-led opposition, who had been boycotting the parliament since March, 2011.

"It is desirable that the opposition lawmakers take part in the House activities because it's an imperative for all of us to win people's confidence with our activities," he said.

The Speaker also said lawmakers are accountable to people as their representatives and the parliament will become effective only when all its members actively participate in their respective duties.

The Business Advisory Committee of parliament decided that the present session will continue till November 29, the parliament secretariat release said.

FIVE-MEMBER PANEL

The Speaker yesterday selected a panel of five lawmakers to preside over the current session of parliament in his and the deputy speaker's absence in the House.

The panel members--Mojibur Rahman, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, A B M Golam Mostafa, Mojibur Rahman Sarwar and Begum Shahin Monwara Haque-- will preside over the session in alphabetical order of their names.

Chopper crashes kill 10 in Iran

AP, Tehran, Iran

A helicopter carrying victims of a car accident to a hospital in northeastern Iran crashed yesterday and all 10 people on board died, state TV said.

The helicopter was en route to the northeastern city of Mashhad when it went down, according to M o h a m m a d R e z a Vafajad, a local official.

Vafajad was quoted by the Mehr news agency as saying that the helicopter was flying at low altitude due to bad weather and hit a power cable on the way.