

## Gloom again

FROM PAGE 1

The panel and the ACC had a difference of opinion over the draft enquiry report, as the ACC dropped some names, including that of ex-communications minister Abul Hossain, though the WB gave sufficient evidence of corruption against him along with others.

The WB panel argued that there was no scope for excluding their names from the enquiry report.

On November 13, the WB sent the ACC a third report on corruption evidence. The report contained detailed evidence of corruption against public officials concerned as well as others.

The ACC Chairman claimed that the commission's meetings with the WB panel were not a total failure.

"We will listen to what the World Bank and its external panel say...but it is the ACC that will make decisions in line with the laws of the land," he told reporters after a second meeting with the WB panel at the ACC headquarters yesterday.

Rahman said the two sides shared their views and the ACC will try to take legal steps in a day or two.

Asked whether the WB panel will visit Bangladesh again, he said the panel will inform the ACC about it.

Apparently discontent with the ACC's argument, the panel at one stage walked out of the first meeting with ACC officials in the afternoon, saying it needed to have some internal consultations.

Coming out of the meeting, Ellen Goldstein, WB country director for Bangladesh, said, "We continue to have some unresolved issues...as a result we are going for some internal consultations now."

"It is possible that we will be coming back today for further discussion," she told reporters.

The WB panel then met with Finance Minister AMA Muhith at his residence at about 5:00 pm. Prime Minister's Foreign Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi and two top officials were present at the meeting.

The panel returned to the ACC headquarters without Goldstein in the evening and held talks with the ACC officials for about 20 minutes.

The panel, however, did not comment on the outcome of the second meeting.

Before leaving for the airport from the ACC, panel Chief Ocampo told reporters, "The panel appreciates the openness and frank discussions with the ACC."

ACC Commissioner Shahabuddin told The Daily Star that there were some unresolved issues about the interpretations of some laws.

A source in the ACC said the panel reiterated that the WB had sufficient evidence of corruption against Abul Hossain and others.

The ACC chairman and its commissioners on several occasions said the ACC enquiry team has found evidence of corruption concerned as well as others.

The WB panel talked to a number of Bangladeshi lawyers for the last few days, and exchanged views on the ACC enquiry.

A high official of Asian Development Bank said they took a very positive decision about the project's financing in a meeting of the co-financiers in Manila at the end of the last month.

The official said the project's financing will finally depend on the outcome of the ACC enquiry.

The ACC launched the enquiry in September last year after the WB raised corruption allegations in the project.

The WB panel headed by Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, earlier visited Dhaka in October.

The two other panel members are Timothy Tong, former commissioner of the Independent Commission against Corruption of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and Richard Alderman, former director of Britain's Serious Fraud Office.

ACC sources said that unless the anti-graft body files a First Information Report, it cannot proceed from its enquiry to an investigation as expected by the global lender.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after the Bangladesh government agreed to the WB's terms and conditions.

## Muhith slates Star report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday criticised The Daily Star, saying the English daily provides "baseless information".

He said this, referring to a report published on November 11, in which he was quoted as saying, "Bapex is a stupid company."

The minister criticised Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) while speaking at a discussion marking the first anniversary of Business Initiative Leading Development (BUILD) on November 10.

"No representative of the newspaper was present at the programme, but The Daily Star quoted me that I called Bapex stupid," Muhith yesterday said at an award giving function in Dhaka organised by Economic Reporters' Forum.

"It [the English daily] also wrote [quoted him as saying] that Bapex is a dysfunctional company, but I did not say it."

However, it is to be mentioned that The Daily Star had one reporter at that programme to cover the event. Representatives from the Financial Express and Bangle daily Prothom Alo were also there.

Towards the end of April, 1971, the Pakistani army killed eight priests of Prabhu Jagatbandhu Ashram (temple) on their way to the town, said the witness.

He said the army set up camps at Rajendra College, Faridpur Circuit House and stadium, and began their atrocities.

Fearing for his life, the witness left Faridpur town for his village home in the district.

He said on June 8, 1971, Azad along with eight-10 of his cohorts approached their home whilst firing their guns. All males of their home, including himself, hid inside a nearby jute field, said the

## Ershad takes responsibility of 2 children

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad has taken responsibility for bringing up two children who lost both their parents to the November 24 fire at Tazreen Fashions.

Ershad yesterday went to see the two orphans, 10-year-old Seema and her five-year-old brother Zakaria, at Buripara Narshingapur in Ashulia. The siblings come from Rangpur but are now staying with their two distant uncles in Ashulia.

The former president publicly announced that he would provide the orphans with food, shelter, treatment and education "until they are independent and married off".

He called the second officer of Ashulia Police Station and informed him of the decision. Then he contacted Seema's maternal grandfather who lives in Mithapukur, Rangpur.

The grandfather Md Shahjahan is coming to the capital today to discuss the matter with Ershad.

Ershad told The Daily Star that he will have a house built for the children and pay their expenses while they remain in the custody of their grandparents.

He made the decision following a report in this paper on Seema and Zakaria on Monday. Ershad had been deeply moved by the report.

The bodies of Seema's parents -- Shahin and Jannati -- are presumed to be among the 53 who were burnt out of recognition in the garment factory fire and buried at Jurain graveyard.

Rangpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

stall worker Hiron over their dues there and left him critically wounded in the evening.

As the news spread, locals locked in a clash with the youths. Chase and counter chase took place at the time, said police, adding that around 10:00pm, when the chase and counter chase was still on, locals had noticed fire in the camp.

Assistant Director of Rangpur zone fire service Nitya Gopal Das said six fire engines had doused the blaze around 12:30am.

Officer-in-Charge Altob Hossain of Kotwali Police Station said they had found no body in the rubble as of 2:00am, when their search operation ended.

Most of the residents of the camp could not save their belongings, as they had hurriedly ran to safety, said the OC, adding that some people had sustained minor burn injuries while trying to douse the fire.

None has been arrested in this connection, police said.

## Azad, his men raped

FROM PAGE 20

The 14th prosecution witness in the case against expelled Jamaat-e-Islami member Azad said the incident compelled 20 Hindu families in the locality to leave Bangladesh in fear.

Meanwhile, a prosecution witness testified that Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed used to hold consultation meetings with the Pakistani army at Faridpur Circuit House during the war.

"Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Abul Kalam Azad alias Bachchu Razakar, Kalu Bihari used to assist the Pakistani army [during the war]," said Mir Lutfar Rahman, the eighth prosecution witness in the case against Jamaat Secretary General Mojaheed.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir with members Justice Obaidul Hassan and Judge M Shahinur Islam recorded their testimonies before adjourning the case proceedings until today when the 14th witness in Azad's case and Lutfar would face cross-examination.

Mojaheed was produced in the dock yesterday while the tribunal has been holding Azad's trial in absentia.

The 14th witness during the 17-minute testimony said, in the beginning of the Liberation War, he was in Faridpur town and had been training at a tailor shop.

Towards the end of April, 1971, the Pakistani army killed eight priests of Prabhu Jagatbandhu Ashram (temple) on their way to the town, said the witness.

He said the army set up camps at Rajendra College, Faridpur Circuit House and stadium, and began their atrocities.

Fearing for his life, the witness left Faridpur town for his village home in the district.

He said on June 8, 1971, Azad along with eight-10 of his cohorts approached their home whilst firing their guns. All males of their home, including himself, hid inside a nearby jute field, said the

witness.

"Bachchu Razakar and his cohorts caught my mother, sisters-in-law and all the women of our home and forced them to stand up and sit down," said the witness.

Azad and four-five of his cohorts took two of his newly married sisters-in-law into a room for half an hour, said the witness, adding that they left his home after looting all valuables.

As Azad and his cohorts left, the witness and other male persons returned and his mother and a sister-in-law rescued his two sisters-in-law from the room. They were unconscious and their clothes had been stripped off.

"As they [victims] came around after 20 minutes or so, they were saying 'we have lost our chastity, we don't want to live anymore. We have lost everything,'" said the witness.

The Daily Star as per its policy is withholding the names of the rape victims and the witness.

The witness said, "Then we thought, none could live in a place where women's chastity couldn't be protected. Afterwards, we and around 20 Hindu families of the area left for India."

The witness said he knew Azad as he was seen holding Jamaat-e-Islami meetings and processions.

"I have seen him [Azad] on the day of the incident."

"In cooperation with the Pakistani army, Azad used to provide Razakar training to local youths and these Razakars committed lootings and rapes."

Meanwhile, a female yesterday testified behind closed doors as the 13th witness in the case.

After lunch, state-appointed defence counsel Abdus Shukur Khan informed the tribunal that he could not submit any defence witness list in the case as he did not get any cooperation from Azad's family members.

Earlier, the tribunal had

extended time for submission of defence witness list.

**MOJAHEED'S CASE**  
During his 25-minute testimony, Lutfar of Faridpur said the Pakistani army entered the district probably on April 17 or April 18, 1971, and on that day, the army along with Al-Badr and Razakars looted their shop at Faridpur town and torched it.

The 58-year-old businessman said, "Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Abul Kalam Azad alias Bachchu Razakar, Kalu Bihari used to assist the Pakistani army."

"I have seen Mojaheed roaming in Faridpur town on a jeep."

He said Azad used to train Razakars and Al-Badr men setting up training camps at Maira Patti, house of Hira Lal Moktar, Ambika Hall and many other places.

"Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed was a leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha [the then student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami] and he used to travel to Dhaka and Faridpur frequently," said Lutfar.

"He [Mojaheed] used to hold meetings with the Pakistani army at Faridpur Circuit House for consultation to determine who would be detained."

Bachchu Razakar was seen with him at that time," said Lutfar adding, "Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed used to carry a sword..."

According to the prosecution, as a leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha, Azad was a close associate of the then central Chhatra Sangha leader Mojaheed.

Lutfar said Mojaheed along with other Razakars raided the house of Munnu and detained his brother Nannu as they did not find Munnu. Nannu was later let go.

On June 21, the tribunal indicted former minister Mojaheed on seven charges of crimes against humanity, including murder and imprisonment of people, genocide, and hatching a conspiracy to kill intellectuals.

back from moving forward," said Sultana Kamal.

TIB, however, suggested enacting a law to stop the culture of boycotting parliament and making parliamentary standing committees more effective, ensuring ACC's independence and effectiveness and enforce Right to Information Act for upgrading Bangladesh's status in the CPI.

Some other suggestions include fulfilling anti-corruption election pledges of the government, establishing integrity in judiciary and ensuring transparency in public procurement.

M Hafizuddin Khan, a member of the TIB trustee board, was present at the press conference.

**PARTY DISCIPLINE**  
**BNP warns MP Papia**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP has asked its lawmaker Syeda Asifa Ashrafi Papia not to participate in any political activities outside her own district, said party sources.

The BNP high command also told her to obey party disciplinary actions would be taken against her, according to a letter to Papia signed by the party's Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi.

The letter had been issued Sunday, said sources in the party's central office, adding that earlier a show-cause notice had been served on her. Taking her reply into consideration, the party high command decided to just warn her.

But Papia, who was elected lawmaker to reserved seat for women and also general secretary of Chapainawabganj district unit of BNP, denied of receiving any such letter.

Party insiders said her participation at a meeting in Natore district had created resentment among the district party leaders. They later sought BNP high command's interference about it.

## AL for 2-term

FROM PAGE 20

In the wake of intra-party conflicts in many areas of the country, the AL came up with the proposal to prevent dissidents from contesting the next parliamentary election as independent candidates, party insiders said.

Meanwhile, a rebel candidate defeated the AL-nominated candidate in the November 18 by-polls in Tangail-3 constituency.

As per the AL proposal, a political party will collect nomination papers from all its intending candidates in the constituencies in advance and nominate one candidate from each constituency.

"Therefore, only the candidate nominated by the party will be able to contest the polls. But in no way, others seeking party nomination can contest the polls as independent candidates," the AL said.

In its written proposal, the AL said if party men ignore the party decision, it not only hurts party discipline but also shakes the base of democracy.

Asked about the justification of such a proposal, AL General Secretary Ashrafal Islam said they just placed it.

"Now, the Election Commission may tally it with the provisions of the constitution and RPO, and seek opinions of other parties. Then it may make a decision."

Neither Chief Election Commissioner Kazi

Rakibuddin Ahmad nor election commissioners made any comment in response to the AL proposal.

The ruling party opposed the EC's move for redrawing the boundaries of constituencies ahead of the next parliamentary elections. It proposed that the EC hold the elections with the existing boundaries of the constituencies unchanged.

"The boundary of parliamentary constituencies was redrawn in 2008. And boundaries of 130 (out of 300) constituencies were changed at that time. Therefore, there is no need to redraw those so quickly," the AL proposal said.

It proposed redrawing the boundaries in 2018. "If the commission wants to redraw the boundaries of constituencies now, it will create many difficulties," AL leader Tofail Ahmed said.

At the talks held at the EC Secretariat, the AL leaders lauded the EC's activities and said their party will extend all out support to the EC for holding the next parliamentary polls in a free and fair manner.

"Awami League believes a free and fair parliamentary election will be held with the participation of all political parties. And we will extend our all out support to any of your [EC] move to ensure a free, fair and participatory election," Ashrafal said at the talks.

policemen sustained injuries when Jamaat-Shibir men clashed with the law enforcers in the town yesterday.

The injured -- Robi Charan Chowhan, sub-inspector of Narayanganj Sadar Police Station, constables Abul Kashem and Jewel -- were admitted to a local hospital.

Police detained four activists on the spot, said Sheikh Nazmul Alam, superintendent of police (SP) of Narayanganj.

In Jessore, police dispersed a Jamaat-Shibir procession by charging batons and firing two rounds of shots in the air.

In Chittagong, police filed 13 cases against more than 400 Jamaat-Shibir men on charges of vandalism, arson and obstructing vehicles on the city streets during Tuesday's hartal.

The cases were filed with different police stations of the district and the metropolitan area, said police sources. Of those, four were lodged under the Speedy Trial Act, 2002.

Nine Jamaat-Shibir men, detained during the hartal hours, were shown arrested in the cases.

paddy at Sarulia.

He added one early morning he heard sounds of gun shots from Alubdi and he along with people turned eyes towards Alubdi from Sarulia Ghat.

Pakistani army attacked Alubdi from three sides, killed people and continued shooting until 2:00pm, said Altob, adding that as the army left, Biharis looted their houses.

He said he heard from media that his brother Shafiuddin Mollah and Amir Hossain Mollah of his neighbouring village had testified as prosecution witnesses.

"Amir Hossain left Bangladesh to join the Liberation War eight to ten days before the incident," claimed Altob.

He added his brother Shafiuddin was in Alubdi the previous night of the incident and their uncle Nabiullah Mollah had sent Shafiuddin to Sarulia after an army helicopter landed on the west side of their village.

"My brother reached Sarulia at the time of Fazr prayers," he added.

During his cross-examination by prosecutor Mohammad Ali, Altob said according to the national identity card his date of birth is April 10, 1964.

"I am involved with the politics of BNP now. Earlier I was involved with Jubo Dal," Altob added.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice ATM Fazle Kabir adjourned the proceeding until today when Altob is set to face further cross-examination.