

Abul spared

FROM PAGE 20
bridge graft allegation] if Abul's name is included [in the case]," she told a reception of freedom fighters at Mahanagar Natya Mancha in the capital.

It may be mentioned the Anti-Corruption Commission on Monday sued seven people for alleged corruption in the Padma bridge project. Though the initial inquiry report named former communications minister Abul Hossain and former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan as suspects, the duo were not made accused in the case.

The former prime minister alleged a conspiracy was on to change the country's map, and urged all to join the "struggle to save the country" and the ongoing movement to force the government to quit power.

The main opposition party organised the reception marking the Victory Day. Several hundred freedom fighters and a large number of party leaders, workers and supporters attended the programme presided by Maj (ret'd) Shahjahan Omar.

Referring to the scams involving share market collapse, Hall-Mark, Destiny and VOIP, Khaleda said everyone in the government -- ministers, MPs, advisers -- are "thieves". Even the relatives of the prime minister are involved in looting money.

She called upon all to join the anti-government movement for strengthening democracy by establishing a people's government through an election under a non-party, neutral administration.

"No election will be held under the Awami League. We won't allow it. We'll continue our agitation. People have started to leave the Awami League and they are now joining us," Khaleda said.

Hinting at the release of top criminal Bikash, the opposition leader said killers and top terrors were being freed when leaders like Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir (BNP acting secretary general) were being arrested and false cases filed against opposition leaders and workers.

She added Sheikh Hasina was still making false statement about the murder of Bishwajit Das. "Trial of this killing must be held in this country one day and none will be spared."

Bishwajit, a 24-year-old tailor, was beaten and hacked to death by a group of Chhatra League activists on December 9.

According to Khaleda, the country was now facing a situation like one that prevailed in 1972-75.

The government wants to cling to power for ever by banning all political parties "as if Bangladesh is their paternal property," she alleged.

"But we won't allow it. Everyone has to come forward to resist this government."

The BNP chief claimed 40,000 freedom fighters had been killed after the Liberation War and the Awami League should be tried for their killings.

She promised increasing freedom fighters' allowance and setting up a hospital for them if voted to power.

BNP leaders Tariqul Islam, Sadeque Hossain Khoka, Abdullah Al Noman, Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury, Hafizuddin Ahmed and Kalyan Party Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Iraq president 'improving' in hospital

AFP, Baghdad

President Jalal Talabani, a key figure in Iraqi politics for decades who has sought to bridge political and sectarian divides, was showing "improvement" in hospital yesterday, a doctor said.

Deputy Health Minister Issam Namiq said both Iran and Germany had sent teams to assist with Talabani's treatment, and that a British team was to arrive by midday.

Clothing brands

FROM PAGE 20

and Bangladesh, which together killed some 400 workers and injured hundreds others in September and November.

Auditors demand for a better working environment that requires an additional investment is often ignored when buyers negotiate contracts with manufacturers only on the basis of price and quality of products.

The report also says the US and European corporate investment in the Bangladesh's garment industry has grown steadily over the last two decades though most of its workplaces are unsafe as it works products at the world's cheapest rate.

Bangladesh has emerged as the number-two garment exporter in the world after China. According to an industry analysis, the country is expected to triple its garment export over the next ten years and may well surpass China.

The ILRF report said Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry is founded on rock-bottom wages, labour rights restrictions and poorly enforced health and safety standards.

"Nowhere in the world are garment workers valued less than in Bangladesh," it said, adding their current minimum wage of \$37 per

month -- just about a dollar a day -- is \$24 less than what Cambodian garment workers, the second cheapest, get a month.

Building and fire safety standards in the factories are notoriously poor, causing frequent fatal accidents, said the report.

"The deadly fires [in Bangladesh and Pakistan] are the inevitable product of an industry founded on the idea of underpaid and disposable workers."

The ILRF calls on apparel companies to put a stop to the epidemic of garment factory fires in South Asia by sharing their knowledge about workplace hazards, paying factories for necessary building repairs and respecting the voices of workers.

"The report calls for a new openness in the garment industry, where companies share what they know about dangerous workplaces and workers can speak up and organise to protect themselves," said Bjorn Claeson, author of the report.

"We are not there yet, but the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement is a sign that change is possible. In the wake of the enormous tragedies at Tazreen Fashions and Ali Enterprises [in Pakistan], let's seize the opportunity for action. Let's make sure the workers have not died in vain."

Ghulam Azam

FROM PAGE 20

The defence filed the petition even though section 6 (6) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, reads, "A tribunal shall not merely by reason of any change in its membership or the absence of any member thereof from any sitting, be bound to recall and re-hear any witness who has already given any evidence and may act on the evidence already given or produced before it."

Ghulam Azam, considered by many as the symbol of war crimes during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, was indicted on five charges of crimes against humanity on May 13.

Razzaq yesterday said the defence would file two more such petitions for war crimes accused Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee and Motiur Rahman Nizami.

Earlier in the day, war crimes accused BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and his lawyers locked into a heated argument with the prosecution over their petition to remove prosecutor Zead Al Malum for "professional misconduct" in connection with the leaked Skype conversation.

The petition read, "That Mr Malum being party to the scandalous events to obstruct or abuse the process of the tribunal and deliberately committed so many wrong to prejudice the case beyond his professional capacity, hence he may kindly be brought to justice to ensure fair trial..."

There was a lot of commotion when Salauddin's defence argued for adjourning the case proceedings until disposal of their petition. The tribunal fixed Sunday for hearing the defence petition to remove Malum.

Yesterday was fixed for recording behind closed doors the testimony of 17th prosecution witness in Salauddin's case, but defence counsel Ahsanul Huq Hena prayed for not holding it in camera.

The tribunal rejected the prayer and fixed 2:00pm for recording the testimony.

Ahsanul Huq then prayed the tribunal for privilege communication with his client for instructions. The tribunal gave the defence 10 minutes.

In the afternoon session, Salauddin was produced before the tribunal. As bench officer called up his case, Salauddin sought permission of the tribunal and began speaking without waiting for its consent.

Referring to Ghulam Azam's case, Salauddin said he wants similar adjournment until his petition on removing Malum was settled. He vociferously told the tribunal that the matter should be disposed of to establish integrity and credi-

bility of the tribunal.

The tribunal then called Ahsanul Huq, who also echoed his client.

Expressing astonishment, the tribunal reminded the defence that in the morning session they had agreed to carry on with the proceedings.

"Yes I did agree, but my client instructed not to carry on with the proceedings until the matter is disposed of," Ahsanul Huq said.

Malum then approached the bench and replied to Salauddin and the defence counsel's claims while the accused and defence kept making comments taken from the alleged Skype conversation.

The tri-party cacophony created quite a scene at the tribunal.

Addressing the tribunal, Malum said Salauddin's language was not decent and did not follow the decorum of the tribunal. "He is not supposed to talk as his lawyers are to talk on his behalf," said Malum.

"You [Malum] came here learning from the chamber! I thought prosecution will be embarrassed. The tribunal will be embarrassed. But now I am embarrassed," Salauddin said.

At one point, the war crimes accused passed comments about the tribunal chairman and a member of the tribunal.

The Daily Star could not quote some comments made by the accused from the alleged Skype conversation as the International Crimes Tribunal-2 on December 13 directed all media to refrain from publishing or airing any piece or "transcript" related to the alleged conversations.

The tribunal patiently went through the commotion and later adjourned proceedings for the hearing on the petition until Sunday.

The three-member tribunal yesterday also adjourned proceedings of the war crimes cases against Motiur Rahman Nizami following a defence petition.

Congo rebels demand ceasefire

AFP, Kampala

Democratic Republic of Congo's M23 rebels yesterday demanded Kinshasa sign a formal ceasefire, accusing officials of dragging out peace talks to bolster the army's position on the ground.

The talks are the latest in several bids to end a long-running conflict that has forced more than 900,000 people in war-torn eastern DR Congo from their homes.

Foundation

FROM PAGE 1

construction of yards for the project will start before the tenure of the present government ends," Muhith told reporters yesterday after a meeting of the cabinet purchase committee at the cabinet division.

He made the comment after reporters asked him about the fate of the Padma bridge project that once again ran into a snag.

Replying to a query, Muhith said, "The Padma bridge will be built with funds from co-financiers. But I don't know which financier will stay or leave the project."

The minister earlier had discussions with Ellen Goldstein, World Bank country director for Bangladesh, at a function in the capital.

He said Goldstein's three-year tenure as country director in Bangladesh will end in about three months, and she will be replaced by another WB official.

Goldstein on Tuesday said they will inform the government about the Bank's decision after getting the WB external panel's opinion about the adequacy of the ACC investigation into the corruption allegations in the project.

Her comments came after the Anti-Corruption Commission on Monday sued seven persons for their involvement in a corruption conspiracy over the \$2.9 billion project.

Muhith yesterday told reporters, "I have told Ellen that time is running out. We can't wait too long...Give your opinion soon."

He said Goldstein, in reply, told him that it was her hunch that the WB might need time till January for giving its opinion.

The minister said, "I am still hopeful that they [the WB] will finance the Padma bridge project. I am absolutely certain that no corruption took place [in the project]."

Referring to the case filed by the ACC, Muhith said the WB provided the ACC with sufficient evidence on November 13 for filing case in connection with the corruption conspiracy. What the global lender gave the commission earlier was not "credible" according to Bangladesh laws.

And the ACC filed the case against seven persons on the basis of the evidence it received on November 13.

The evidence showed that the seven persons made arrangements to favour a party by exchanging some information, Muhith said.

He said there are allegations that the party involved in the corruption conspiracy met a minister [ex-communications minister Syed Abul Hossain], but this is not considered a crime in Bangladesh.

He said not only contractors but also ambassador of the country concerned meet a minister for securing a work order in a project.

"I am the only exception, as I have never met anyone in such a case," Muhith said.

UK to press Maldives govt over human rights abuses

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Foreign Office ministers are to raise serious concerns about human rights abuses in the Maldives after a Guardian investigation revealed close ties between the British and Maldives police.

Alistair Burt is to pressure the Maldives government to tackle serious and persistent abuses by its police service, including attacks on opposition MPs, torture and mass detentions of democracy activists, on an official visit next month.

MPs and MSPs are tabling questions to the foreign secretary, William Hague, and ministers in the Scottish government about disclosures in the Guardian that at least 77 police officers in the Maldives, including the current commissioner, Abdulla Riyaz, were trained by the Scottish Police College.

Arguments in Azad's

FROM PAGE 20

after the closing arguments are over.

The case is the second among five crimes against humanity cases pending with the Tribunal-2 to reach the closing arguments stage. Prosecution has already started placing their closing arguments in the case against Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah on Monday.

However, at the other court, International Crimes Tribunal-1, the case against Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee has gone past the closing argument stage and is awaiting verdict delivery.

Azad's case is the only one at the tribunals being held in absentia of the accused.

The three-member Tribunal-2, led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge M Shahinur Islam, yesterday completed recording the cross-examination of the last prosecution witness Noor Hossain, also the investigation officer.

Closing the prosecution witnesses' testimony, the

tribunal asked state-appointed defence counsel Abdus Shukur Khan about defence witness.

Shukur virtually repeated what he had said before the tribunal on December 5 that he could not submit any list of defence witness as he did not get any cooperation from Azad's family.

The tribunal indicted Azad with eight charges of crimes against humanity on November 4. A total of 22 prosecution witnesses had testified in the case.

In the crimes against humanity case filed against Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah, the prosecution continued placing their closing arguments at Tribunal-2 for the third day yesterday.

Mohammad Ali, the conducting prosecutor of the case, placed his argument on charge number two, out of the six against him, citing testimony of the fourth prosecution witness, poet Quazi Rosy.

According to charge number two, Quader Mollah and his cohorts had killed pro-liberation poet Meherun Nesa, her mother

and two brothers at their home in Mirpur during the war in 1971.

The closing arguments are expected to resume today.

Tribunal-2 also recorded the cross-examination of Beauty Khanam, the eighth prosecution witness in the case against Abdul Alim, former minister of BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's cabinet, before adjourning the case proceedings until December 27.

Meanwhile, the tribunal yesterday accepted the "unconditional apology" of the editor and a reporter of Bangla daily Bangladesh Pratidin for publishing a report that had speculated the date the verdict in Quader Mollah's case would be delivered.

The tribunal on December 4 issued a show-cause notice upon them in this regard.

Responding through their lawyer, they apologised unconditionally and did not try to justify their conduct.

The tribunal warned them not to publish report based on "imagination" regarding ongoing judicial proceedings.

\$14.059b siphoned off

FROM PAGE 1

Asia, Bangladesh is placed second, India being the first, in terms of the illicit fund outflow.

Economists Dev Kar and Sarah Freitas prepared the fourth report of the GFI.

"The capital outflows stem from crime, corruption, tax evasion and other illegal activities," the report said, adding that the developing countries had lost \$5.86 trillion to illicit outflows from 2001-2010.

The study found that Asia accounted for 61 percent of total illicit outflows from the developing world with China losing the highest amount. Mexico, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Russia comes after China in the global ranking.

"Indeed five of the ten countries with the largest illicit outflows (China, Malaysia, the Philippines, India, and Indonesia) are from Asia," said the GFI.

It said globally trade mis-invoicing accountd for 80 percent of cumulative illegal flows from the developing countries over this period. The rest of the unlawful transfers took place through corruption, bribery, theft and kickbacks.

The GFI study revealed that \$1.406 billion had been siphoned off from Bangladesh on a yearly average. The highest amount of fund -- more than \$2 billion -- was sent out in 2006-2007.

The extent of the illegal money transfer dropped a bit in the next two years but shot up in 2010, according to the report.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of Policy Research Institute (PRI), said estimation of the real amount of illegal fund outflow is difficult.

"But it is well-known that large amount of money is going out of Bangladesh, India and other developing countries. The first world countries are the main beneficiary of the outflow," he said.

He blamed the political and economic insecurity for the loss. Lack of quality infrastructure for health and education sectors is another factor behind the illegal fund transfer, said Mansur, a former economist at International Monetary Fund.

Giving instances of many well-off Bangladeshi people buying houses abroad and sending their children there for education, he said, "There are hundreds of Bangladeshi families living in Canada, but they earn in Bangladesh."

On fake invoicing of exports and imports, he said over-invoicing takes place in those products that have lower import duty.

"Capital machinery and raw material are the main source of illegal transfers," said Mansur referring to Bangladesh, adding that the

real estate business such as sale of apartment and transfer mis-pricing were the other factors.

"The solution is to improve economic and political security so that people feel comfortable in their homes. At the same time, infrastructure has to be improved for better living. The people will not send money out of the country if general economic outlook is promising. There is no short-term solution," he said.

Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research associate of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the latest findings of the GFI were based on a more conservative estimation.

An earlier estimate from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) by Dev Kar suggests that Bangladesh lost about \$34.8 billion in 1990-2008; this would be equivalent to \$1.8 billion per year, said Khan.

The GFI said the illicit outflows measured were approximately 10 times the \$88 billion of net official development assistance (ODA) that went into these developing countries in 2010.

The report recommended increasing of transparency in the global financial system to reduce the outflow of illicit money from developing countries.

Sufferings on hartal eve

FROM PAGE 1

However, eight parties of the 12-party combine said they do not support the hartal which was called earlier under the banner of Islamist and likeminded 12-parties protesting some leftist parties' "conspiracy" against the pro-Islamist forces.

"In a release we have clarified our stance that we are not supporting this strike," Abdul Mobin, chairman of Islamic Party, told this newspaper.

Jamaat-e-Islami, a key component of the BNP-led 18-party alliance, was backing the Islamist parties to enforce today's shutdown, insiders in the 12-party combine said.

Contacted, secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon Zafarullah Khan said, "Last week we reached a unanimous decision that we would call a countrywide hartal if the leftist parties enforce a strike on December 18. But what can we do now if they [Islamist Party and others] refuse to back the strike?"

Commuters had to wait for hours at Farmgate, Shahbag, Moghbazar and Mirpur-10 intersections to catch buses to their destinations due to scarcity of public transport.

Different bus services stayed off the streets fearing vandalism and arson attacks on vehicles, a transport

worker of Bikolpo Paribahan said.

Today's hartal will be the third one in a span of eight days. On December 13, the BNP-led 18-party alliance enforced an eight-hour hartal across the country.

Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladeshesher Samajtantrik Dal and Ganatantrik Bam Morcha, a platform of left-leaning parties, enforced another nationwide daylong hartal on Tuesday to press home their demands including ban on religion-based politics and ensuring speedy trial of war criminals.

VANDALISM BY JAMAAT Activists of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir yesterday resorted to violence during hartal hours (6:00am to 2:00pm) in Bogra, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj and Pabna. They threw hand-made bombs at a police patrol van in Rajshahi and vandalised over 14 vehicles.

At least 15 Jamaat-Shibir men were detained by the law enforcers in the districts. In Pabna, pro-hartal pickets fought pitched battles with police after hartal hours, leaving 10 people including three policemen injured.

Of the wounded cops, Officer-in-Charge (investigation) Nure Alam and Sub-Inspectors Md Mahfuz and

Tarikul Islam of Pabna Sadar Police Station were hospitalised.

Critically injured Mahfuz was later shifted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Jamaat called the hartal in Rajshahi division demanding release of its central Publicity Secretary Tasneem Alam, who was arrested on Monday in the capital.

Rajshahi police said some Jamaat-Shibir men exploded around 10 hand-made bombs on and around the patrol van of Detective Branch of police in Kazla area.

None was injured in the incident as the law enforcers managed to get to safety before the bombs went off.

No inter-district bus operated during the hartal hours, while all the educational institutions and shopping malls remained closed.

In Bogra town, Jamaat-Shibir activists vandalised at least 10 vehicles. They also torched a cotton-laden truck near Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital. Police arrested town unit Jamaat Ameer Rafiqul Islam during a clash with pro-hartal pickets.

In Chapainawabganj, a group of Shibir men put electric poles and logs on Chapainawabganj-Sonamasjid highway at Biswa Road intersection, causing disruption to traffic.

Bogra Jubo League man stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Unidentified miscreants last night stabbed to death a Jubo League activist near his house in Fultola area of the town.

Victim Shamim Ahmed alias Bush, 28, son of Abdus Samad of the area, was an activist of Ward No-13 unit of Jubo League.

Quoting family members, police said 10 to 12 men had swooped on Bush around 8:00pm when he went out of the house. They indiscriminately stabbed him and cut his throat before leaving the spot.

Locals rushed Bush to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

According to police, Bush was one of the accused in Shahin Islam Shahin murder and five other cases filed with Bogra Sadar Police station.

Contacted, Aminul Islam Dablu, executive member of district unit Jubo League and also chairman of Bangladesh Rural Development Board, said they were trying to unearth the reason behind the killing.

Cambodia K Rouge court hit by fresh resignations

AFP, Phnom Penh

Cambodia's Khmer Rouge war crimes court suffered a new setback yesterday with the resignation of three international lawyers who have complained of political interference.

It is the latest in a string of departures from the UN-backed tribunal, which has long been dogged by allegations of government meddling and has completed just one case.

International lawyer Andrew Ianuzzi told AFP that three members of the defence team for "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea would quit at the end of the year.

"I'm leaving because I no longer wish to be a part of the (tribunal) and I don't think there's anything further I can do to meaningfully assist Nuon Chea," Ianuzzi said.

The three lawyers have previously said government interference had tainted the proceedings and their client would not receive a fair trial.

"The outcome will be exactly what the government wants. If (Prime Minister) Hun Sen says my client is a genocidal killer, Cambodian judges know what to do," Dutchman Michie Pestman, who is also stepping down along with co-lawyer Jasper Pauw, told AFP in June.

BSF to use

FROM PAGE 20

cultivated in Assam and Nagaland in India's north-east.

BSF officials have already started using the bomb on a trial basis.

It was first made by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). Later, the BSF started manufacturing the bomb in their factories using DRDO's formula.

BSF officials claimed that they had long been working to reduce the use of deadly weapons in tackling border deaths. But in their efforts to minimise the casualty, they found that infiltrators were dying even from shots of a light weapon.

The BSF used weapons to knock suspects unconscious. But it also killed people. So they looked for alternatives of checking the illegal entry of unauthorised persons.

According to statistics of the Bangladesh government, 260 Bangladeshis have been killed by the Indian border guards since 2006.

The BSF authorities, however, claimed that the number of border deaths had declined over the years. They also hoped that the "Chilli Bomb" would help reduce the border deaths further.