

ANGER RAGES OVER GANG-RAPE

# India PM appeals for calm

AFP, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday appealed for calm and vowed to protect women as police struggled to quell increasing outrage over sex crimes following the gang-rape of a student.

With much of central Delhi sealed off after a wave of violent protests, Singh said he understood the public's anger at the "monstrous crime" but added that "violence will serve no purpose".

"There is genuine and justified anger and anguish at this ghastly incident," Singh said in a televised address.

"I feel deeply sad at the turn of events leading to clashes between protesters and police forces. I assure you that we will make all possible efforts to ensure security and safety to all women in this country.

"As a father of three daughters myself, I feel as strongly as you. We will



Manmohan Singh

ensure justice is delivered," he added. His pleas for calm were echoed by the victim's father.

"Please pray for my daughter and do not resort to any violent activity. She needs your support and your prayers," the father, who cannot be named for legal reasons, told the Hindi-language News 24 network.

"My daughter is fighting for her life, but she is very strong and has a strong will to live."



A Protester in New Delhi

Protests have been taking place across India over the last week to denounce the police and government over the gang-rape of the 23-year-old student in the capital and the surge of violence against women.

Official figures show that 228,650 of the total 256,329 violent crimes recorded last year were against women, with the number of rapes in the capital rising 17 percent to 661 this year.

## Curfew imposed in Manipur

PTI, Imphal

Indefinite curfew was yesterday imposed in the entire Manipur valley as roads were blocked and tyres set ablaze as part of protests against the alleged molestation of a film actress by a Naga militant and the killing of a journalist in police firing, official sources said.

As soon as the 16-hour curfew clamped in Imphal East and Imphal West from 2:00 PM on Sunday ended this morning, people streamed out on to roads with the support of major social organizations and began blocking them and setting ablaze inflammable material, including tyres, the sources said.

## Russia's only Hindu temple faces demolition

TNN, New Delhi

A year after Russia sought to ban the Bhagavad Gita, the Iskcon Krishna temple in Moscow is facing closure by the Russian government. By January 15, 2013, Iskcon monks said their Moscow temple, the only Hindu temple in Russia, would be demolished by the city authorities.

As Russian President Vladimir Putin arrives on Monday for a day of talks with the Indian government, the temple issue is likely to figure in the discussions, not least because the issue has been pursued by the foreign ministry.

Indian ambassador to Russia Ajai Malhotra has asked the Moscow authorities to give an extension to a temporary temple which is set to expire on December 31, 2012, until they complete the construction of a Vedic cultural centre. Asked about the proposed demolition, Russian ambassador to India Alexander Kadakin dismissed fears of demolition.

However, Iskcon monk Madanmohan Das said the demolition order has not been revoked, so the temple is due to come down in January, because the authorities said it "violates the urban building code" and has no legal grounds for existence.

Last year's Bhagavad Gita trial had brought Lok Sabha to its feet and in a rare move, Parliament had collectively asked Russia to prevent the ban. The latest issue of demolition promises to put another wrinkle in the bilateral relations.

## Pak coal mine accident kills seven

AFP, Peshawar

Seven miners were killed when the roof of a coal mine collapsed in a tribal region of northwest Pakistan, officials said yesterday.

The accident happened on Sunday night in the Dowli area of Orakzai, one of the seven semi-autonomous tribal regions which are home to Taliban and Qaeda-linked militants.

The top local administration official, Khushal Khan, told AFP the bodies of the seven had been recovered and taken to their home town of Shangla.

Most coal mines in Pakistan are notorious for poor safety standards and facilities. Similar deadly accidents have occurred in the past.

## Plea for contempt charge

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tribunal-1, had regular meetings with the state minister for law and discussed government 'dictates' regarding judgment in an ongoing case.

"The conversation also gives us a clear indication of the fact that Qamrul acted under the authority of senior Law Minister Shafique Ahmed," he said. Quader claimed the law minister had influenced and prejudiced the tribunal's proceedings.

Quader's counsel Fakhru Islam said they had submitted the petition to the tribunal registrar's office. He added they would file another petition on the same ground against State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam.

The basis of their claim is hacked Skype conversation as reported by a Bangla daily earlier this month.

The war crimes accused said, "Over the past few weeks it has come to our attention that there is clear, undisputed and irrefutable evidence of criminal collusion amongst the recently resigned chairman Justice Nizamul Huq, Ahmed Ziauddin [an expatriate legal expert], State Minister for Law Qamrul Islam, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed, prosecutor Zead Al Malum and others."

The war crimes accused appealed to the tribunal to take necessary steps against the law minister.

Defence counsel Razzaq yesterday made daylong arguments pointing out some contents from a hacked Skype conversation between Justice Huq and Ziauddin.

The Daily Star could not quote the contents of the International Crimes Tribunal-2 has ordered not to publish or air the alleged conversation.

Razzaq claimed Justice Huq in the war crimes case against Ghulam Azam adopted some orders including 'charge framing' from Ziauddin and the trial therefore should be reinitiated.

On behalf of the prosecution Attorney General Mahbubey Alam termed the claim illegal saying the defence were making submission on hacked conversation when hacking is an illegal activity.

"Hacking is theft nothing else," Mahbubey Alam commented.

Ghulam Azam and war crimes accused Delwar Hossain Sayedee were produced before the tribunal yesterday.

Proceeding of the case was adjourned until December 26.

**CASE AGAINST AZAD**  
Proceeding of the case against Abul Kalam Azad is about to end, as the defence yesterday completed their arguments, while the prosecution completed their factual arguments.

The three-member International Crimes

Tribunal-2 headed by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge M Shahinur Islam asked the prosecution to complete their argument within 30 minutes tomorrow.

The tribunal would fix a date for pronouncing verdict after summation of the prosecution's legal arguments, Sahidur Rahman, conducting prosecutor of the case, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The tribunal indicted the expelled Jamaat-e-Islami member Azad, also known as Bachchu Razakar, with eight charges of crimes against humanity on November 4 and has been holding his trial in absentia as he is on the run.

Sahidur yesterday placed his arguments on the last four charges against Azad citing testimonies of 13 prosecution witnesses.

According to the fifth charge, Azad along with 10-12 armed Razakars attacked a house of Natibodia village in Boalmari of Faridpur on June 8, 1971. They abducted two women from the house and Azad and four-five of his accomplices raped them, says the charge.

Sahidur said the thirteenth prosecution witness, who is a sister-in-law of the victims, testified; "Bachchu Razakar and seven-eight of his cohorts raped them [victims] after confining them for one

and a half hours at one of the victims' house."

The sixth charge says Azad along with armed Razakars launched an attack on the Hindu majority village Fulbaria in Faridpur on June 3, 1971. They dragged Chitta Ranjan Das out of his house and Azad shot him dead.

Sahidur said three prosecution witnesses -- Chitta's wife Jyotsna Rani Das and his neighbours Dhala Matabbar and Nagen Chandra Mandol -- said they had witnessed the killing.

According to the seventh charge, Azad accompanied by 30 to 35 armed Razakars on May 17 launched an attack on the Hindu-majority Hasamdia village in Faridpur, looted and burned houses and shot seven to death.

Sahidur said four prosecution witnesses -- Sushil Kumar Podder, Abdul Mannan, Satya Ranjan Saha and Ashit Baran Saha -- testified on the charge.

Of them, Satya testified that he had seen Azad and Pakistani soldiers killing his father Shyamapada Saha.

The eighth charge says Azad along with seven-eight armed Razakars attacked the house of Guru Das of Ujirpur Bazarpara in Faridpur and abducted his daughter Anjali on May 18, 1971.

Two eyewitnesses -- Dev Kumar Das, brother of Anjali, and their neighbour Rawshan Ali Biswas -- testified on the charge.

## Abuse of law

FROM PAGE 1

the offence on the day when the BNP-led opposition parties were enforcing a hartal.

But Fakhru had other charges to face: He along with some of his senior party colleagues was sued for conspiring, provoking, aiding and abetting a cocktail blast inside the secretariat during hartal hour on the same day.

The investigation officer of the cocktail case submitted a charge sheet on May 31 against 29 people, including Fakhru, Hannan Shah, Mosharraf, Goyeshwar, Oli Ahmed and Partho. More surprise was in store. When the investigation officer could not trace the prime accused of the case, a Dhaka court questioned the legality of the probe.

Both the cases are now under trial.

In the torching case, Fakhru was released on bail on June 14.

Then came the December 9 road blockade. He was sued in fresh cases filed over blockade hour violence. What was his "offence" this time?

The statement of the case filed with Paltan Police Station on the eve-

ning of December 9 say Fakhru and his party colleague Ruhul Kabir Rizvi led a procession of around 200 to 250 unnamed people armed with sticks that morning. They stopped a Dhaka City Corporation vehicle and forced its driver, Ainal, to get down. The accused then beat the driver mercilessly in an attempt to kill him.

The case document further states that the accused persons vandalised the city corporation's garbage truck, causing a damage of around Tk 2 lakh. So, Fakhru and an unnamed 200 to 250 people were made accused in the case.

This time around the police did not take time to arrest the BNP leader, though. They did not need to look for the other unnamed accused either.

They arrested Fakhru on the evening of December 10 as he was leaving his Nayapaltan party office.

Fakhru's name was also mentioned, though not as an accused, in some other cases filed over violence during the blockade. Police, if they wish, can implicate him in those cases on charges of inciting the damage of vehicles.

Filing political cases against opponents is nothing unusual, at least not in this country. But the arrests of Fakhru come as a surprise as none of his predecessors in the two rival parties, the Awami League and the BNP, has had to face a situation like his in the last two decades.

Whenever they were in power since 1991, each of the two parties filed countless political cases against its opponent and arrested many senior and mid-level leaders in its mindless effort to suppress the opposition's anti-government movement.

In the rule of the game, however, one thing was unofficially agreed upon: None would arrest the rival party's president and secretary general. But now is a different time and things have taken a different turn.

Filing cases against Fakhru and arresting him twice within seven months may be compared with the situation that prevailed during the army-backed caretaker government when the emergency regime had launched a crackdown on politicians.

During the emergency rule, AL chief Sheikh Hasina

and her party's general secretary Abdul Jalil were arrested and put behind bars. BNP chief Khaleda Zia had suffered the same fate while her party's secretary general Khandaker Delwar Hossain, though luckily escaped arrest, had to undergo much harassment.

Nobody knows for sure what more is waiting for the opposition in the coming days as the ruling AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif, also special assistant to PM Hasina, on December 11 threatened of arresting Khaleda if necessary.

Interestingly, Fakhru was sued and arrested in "political cases" at a time when the government has been withdrawing numerous such cases filed against the ruling party men during the past BNP and caretaker rules. In the process of this wholesale withdrawal of cases, many ruling party men sued for murder and other serious crimes have been exempted from the charges, which the government deems "politically motivated".

And in so doing, the government has given a new meaning to the rule of law.



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