

Retrial sought

FROM PAGE 1
yesterday gave his submission before the International Crimes Tribunal-1 on Azam's petition for retrial of his case.

The petition was filed on December 19 after a Bangladesh daily this month published the "transcript" of alleged Skype conversations between former Tribunal-1 chief Justice Nizamul Huq and expatriate legal expert Ahmed Ziauddin.

Justice Huq resigned amid the controversy.

Defence counsels had filed three petitions to reinstate the war crimes cases against Ghulam Azam, Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami and Nayed-e-Ameer Delwar Hossain Sayedee.

The defence had been placing its arguments on the petitions for the last two days.

On Monday, Razzaq mentioned sections of the alleged Skype conversations. Razzaq claimed that different orders, including taking charges into cognisance, formal charges and refusal (voluntary abstention from trial proceedings) had come from abroad.

Quoting 46 (A) of the International Crimes Tribunal Rules of Procedure (Amendment), 2011, Razzaq in his submission on the second day, said the rule gave inherent power to the tribunal.

The 46 (A) was inserted after the rule 46 regarding powers and functions of the tribunal. It said nothing in these rules shall be deemed to limit or otherwise affect the inherent power of the tribunal to make such order(s) as may be necessary to meet the ends of justice or to prevent abuse of the process.

Razzaq said they were not asking to recall and re-hear any witness. Rather, they asked the court to recall orders on cognisance and formal charges as per 46 (A).

Chairman of the three-member tribunal Justice ATM Fazle Kabir then asked the defence counsel, "What will be the position of the case then?"

Razzaq said under that circumstances the case would be reinitiated.

"Where is the provision?" asked Justice Kabir.

According to 6 (6) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973: 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.

A total of 16 prosecution witnesses, including seven "seizure-list" witnesses and investigation officer Additional Superintendent of Police Matiur Rahman testified before the court and was cross-examined by the defence while Ghulam Azam's son testified as the first defence witness.

The defence counsel again asked for ensuring a fair trial and that the case be reinitiated.

Justice Kabir said the tribunal could review an order but could not recall it.

Razzaq is supposed to complete his argument today.

During yesterday's proceedings, Ghulam Azam fell sick. He was later sent to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, counsel for the war crimes accused BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury filed a supplementary petition with the tribunal office to summon Justice Huq to testify in connection with "criminal conspiracy committed by Law Minister Shafique Ahmed".

On Monday, Salauddin Quader filed a petition with the tribunal to initiate contempt of court charges against the law minister.

In the petition, Salauddin Quader claimed that Justice Md Nizamul Huq, former chairman of Tribunal-1, had regular meetings with the state minister for law and discussed government "dictates" regarding judgment in an ongoing case.

State Minister Qamrul acted under the authority of his senior Law Minister Shafique Ahmed, he had said. Quader claimed the law minister had prejudiced the tribunal's proceedings.

Gulf council to unify militaries

CNN ONLINE

The Gulf Cooperation Council will fold the military of its member states under a single command structure, Bahrain's foreign minister announced Tuesday, the state-run Bahrain News Agency reported.

The announcement came at the end of a GCC summit at a time of heightened tensions with Iran.

Foreign Minister Khalid Al-Khalifa told reporters in the capital city of Manama that the council's command would bring together "the Peninsula Shield Forces as well as the air and naval forces" of member states in the oil-rich region, BNA reported.

"It is an entity that will bring all efforts together under one umbrella," he said.

Three representatives of each of the six GCC member states have been working on a team since last year to map out the command structure, which Al-Kalifa said was in a preliminary stage.

The GCC, which comprises Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar,

encourages cooperation among members in a number of areas, including economy and security.

Al-Khalifa said Bahrain has had neighborly relations with Iran, but added that "certain differences" were noted in the GCC Summit's concluding communique.

That communique "underscored Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear power while stressing the need for safe nuclear plants which could pose a danger even in time of peace," BNA said.

Iran insists that its nuclear program is intended solely for peaceful purposes; a number of other countries, including the United States, have said they suspect Tehran seeks to build nuclear weapons.

Al-Khalifa added, "the GCC countries are keen to have sound relations with Iran."

The underlying concern is that Iran could meddle in Bahrain's internal affairs. Iran is an overwhelmingly Shiite state; Bahrain has a Shiite majority population, but its rulers are Sunni.

CTG BY-POLLS
2 candidates appeal for review of EC decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Two independent candidates out of four whose nominations in the Chittagong-12 by-polls were cancelled have appealed to the Election Commission.

Candidates Jalal Uddin Ahmed and Tapan Chakraborty have filed the appeal, according to commission sources.

The hearing of the appeal is scheduled for today at the commission in the capital, Returning Officer of the by-election Farhad Ahmed told The Daily Star.

Farhad said he cancelled the nominations of the four after a scrutiny on Sunday since none of them were able to collect authentic signatures of 2503 voters, who make up 1 percent of the total.

The Chittagong-12 constituency (Anwara-Paschim Patiya) fell vacant following the death of ruling Awami League lawmaker Akhtaruzzaman Chowdhury Babu on November 4.

Voting is scheduled for January 17.

Abducted teen rescued in Bogra, 6 arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police rescued a teenager and arrested six of his kidnappers at Bejora Bridge area of Shajahanpur in Bogra around 10:00pm yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, police conducted a drive in Bejora Bridge area and found 15-year-old Sazzadul Haque, son of late Rezaul Haque of Jinjir Tola in Dhunat, in an abandoned factory.

They arrested Apu, 22, Samrat, 21, Posari, 21, Jahangir, 20, Sujon, 22, and Sanjoy, 21, at the factory.

Police, quoting the victim's family members, said the kidnappers on Tuesday lured Sazzadul to Bogra town with a job offer. They abducted him and kept him confined to the deserted factory.

The victim's father said the abductors had demanded Tk 50,000 in ransom yesterday morning following which he informed the police of the matter.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Mokbul Hossen, who led the drive, claimed that the kidnappers confessed to their crime before him.

Rajuk goes

FROM PAGE 20
Tk25 crore Uttara bridge project.

Md Nurul Huda, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk), said he decided to re-tender the project after receiving a written complaint from a prospective bidder about snatching of bidding documents.

"We are issuing a notice tomorrow [today] for the re-tender and any interested firm can bid for the project," he told The Daily Star.

A gang of thugs, allegedly backed by a contending bidder, snatched the bidding documents of Abdul Monem Ltd on the Rajuk premises on Monday, the last day for bidding.

Another construction firm Monico Ltd was obstructed from dropping their bid at the entrance of Rajuk office in Motijheel.

Asked about taking legal action against the thugs, Huda said, "As the snatching occurred out of my office premises, it is beyond my legal powers."

Witness M D Kalam, executive director of Abdul Monem Ltd, said the documents were snatched on the fourth floor of Rajuk Bhaban, where the Rajuk chairmansits.

Such an incident is unusual at Rajuk and police will be put on alert to prevent any trouble, mentioned the Rajuk chief.

The bridge will be built in Uttara 3rd phase, a residential area under development by the Rajuk.

No compromise

FROM PAGE 1
"But movements will continue till the restoration of the caretaker government system."

Khaleda also bitterly criticised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her family members for "corruption" in the Padma bridge project, saying the government "is absolutely corrupt".

She alleged former communications minister Syed Abul Hossain was being protected to save some "big fishes." "If Abul is caught, the names of sister, son and son-in-law [of Hasina] would be exposed. That's why Abul's mouth has been gagged."

On war crimes trial, the BNP chief said her party wanted the trial but it must meet the international standard. "We'll identify the real war criminals and they might as well be tried if the BNP is voted to power. But the war criminals that are in the Awami League will be tried first."

Senior leaders of the BNP-led 18-party alliance held similar rallies in other cities of the country, including Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna.

In Dhaka, thousands of leaders, workers and supporters attended Khaleda Zia's rallies at Gabtoli, Karwan Bazar, Jatrabari, Sabujbagh and Badda. In their hundreds, party activists on bikes escorted her car to the rally venues. Supporters were seen standing by the city streets in many areas, greeting her by chanting slogans as she passed.

Top leaders of the 18-party alliance were also present in all rallies. A large

number of law enforcers were deployed at all rally venues and the routes Khaleda took to reach there.

Hundreds of Jamaat-e-Islami leaders, workers and supporters taking part in the rallies chanted slogans demanding a halt to the activities of the International Crimes Tribunal.

At all rallies, Khaleda Zia focused mainly on caretaker system, alleged corruption in Padma bridge project and war crimes trial.

She also displayed some photos that showed Sheikh Hasina and some other leaders of the AL and its allies hold meetings with war crimes suspect and Jamaat leaders Motiur Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed.

Addressing a rally at Karwan Bazar, Khaleda branded Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir as razakar, saying Muhiuddin was loyal to the Pakistan government till the last moment of the Liberation War.

In Jatrabari, she said the home minister was sentenced to 17 years in jail during the caretaker government.

"Election must be held on time. The Awami League can complete its tenure. But it must pass a caretaker government bill in parliament. The Awami League will be made to meet our demand," she said and reiterated that her party would not accept an election held under the present administration.

"We can trust even a snake but not the Awami League."

"Prove your popularity by holding election under a

neutral government. People will reject you and throw you out like a piece of torn cloth."

The BNP chairperson came down heavily on the Anti-Corruption Commission for "allowing corruption". "You are doing wrong. You will have to be accountable for this in future."

In Karwan Bazar, she said: "Why the Padma bridge project has not begun? Commission was taken in advance but the Anti-Corruption Commission did not find anything as it is loyal to the government."

Khaleda said the opposition parties resorted to street programmes to protest the misrule, looting and anarchies by the government. "The life of people has become unbearable and they want to get rid of this government."

She demanded the release of her party leaders, including acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, and added the more than 7,000 cases that the government had withdrawn would be revived in future.

CLASH OVER SEAT
In Jatrabari rally, two groups of BNP activists fought over sitting on the front row yesterday afternoon, witnesses said.

Supporters of BNP leaders Nabiullah Nobi and Salauddin Ahmed scuffled with each other and threw chairs at each other before Khaleda reached the rally venue at Shahid Faruq Sarak.

The clash spread panic among the rally-goers but the situation calmed down when top BNP leaders intervened.

2 key accused held

FROM PAGE 1
after a High Court bench returned their bail petitions filed in connection with the Padma bridge corruption conspiracy case.

They were brought to the ACC office for interrogation and then taken to Dhanmondi Police Station in the evening, said a source in the ACC.

On December 17, the anti-graft body sued seven people, including the duo, for conspiring to commit bribery in the Padma bridge project after a year-long enquiry into the corruption allegations in the project.

Meanwhile, the vacation bench of justices Md Rezaul Haque and Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo asked the accused petitioners to move the bail petitions to a regular HC bench after the vacation.

The HC will reopen on January 2 next year.

Mosharraf and Ferdous filed two petitions with the HC on December 19 seeking anticipatory bail in the cor-

ruption conspiracy case that the ACC filed with Banani Police Station.

The two accused appeared before the HC bench yesterday morning seeking anticipatory bail in the case.

The bench returned the petitions, as it could not hear those for constraints of time, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

He said the duo now cannot submit the petitions to the HC for anticipatory bail, as they have been arrested in connection with the case.

Now, the accused have to move bail petitions to the magistrate's court concerned, he said.

ACC Commissioner Shahabuddin said the graft body is trying hard to arrest the two other Bangladeshis accused -- Reaz Ahmed Zaber, executive engineer of

Roads and Highways Department, and Mohammad Mostafa, deputy managing director of

Engineering and Planning Consultant, a local agent of Canadian firm SNC Lavalin.

On the three Canadians accused in the case, he said the ACC will either send a team to Canada or bring the trio to Bangladesh for the investigation in the case.

He said it will take time, as the three are also facing corruption charges in Canada over the Padma bridge project.

The three accused are SNC Lavalin officials Mohammad Ismail, Ramesh Shah and Kevin Wales.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29 this year, 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.

Fog disrupts

FROM PAGE 20
They were delayed on average by one to three hours, said sources in the railway.

The rail communication network was like a cycle, said Jahirul Islam, director (traffic) of the railway. If a train was delayed, it would lead to other trains failing to be on schedule, he explained.

Against such a backdrop, he said, "We have no extra coach or locomotive to adjust to the schedule. It is not possible to resolve the crisis with our limited resources."

Visiting the capital's Kamalapur railway station yesterday, the Star correspondent found that Rajshahi-bound Silk City Express was one hour and 10 minutes behind schedule while Rangpur Express was delayed for an hour.

"If any train is late for more than 30 minutes, we list it under behind-schedule category," said Sardar Shahdat Ali, divisional rail manager (DRM) of Bangladesh Railway, Dhaka.

As many as 55 intercity trains, 42 mail expresses and 60 passenger trains travel to and from Dhaka, he said.

Train communication between Dhaka and northern districts had been severely disrupted, said Abu Taher, director general of

Bangladesh Railway. The trains that ply Dhaka-Chittagong route and Dhaka-Sylhet route had not experienced much trouble, he added.

Signs and signals were not clearly visible amid thick fog and that was why train crews operated the vehicles very slowly, Taher said.

Shortage of locomotives, manpower and coaches and closure of 153 railway stations had worsened the situation, officials said.

It is very urgent to increase the railway's capacity to deal with such situations, Jahirul said.

According to the railway's manual, at least 25 percent of the engines and coaches should be kept in reserve to tackle any crisis. At present, the railway has no spare resources, said DRM Sardar Shahdat Ali.

Law enforcers often stopped trains for checking, which was another reason for trains being delayed, he said. He suggested that the law enforcers should allow trains to move at the time of checking.

Many passengers were seen waiting at Kamalapur railway station yesterday noon.

Express, around 3:30pm said the arrival time of his train was 2:40pm.

"Now railway officials at the station cannot say exactly when the train will arrive."

Heavy rains flood Iraq capital; 4 killed

AFP, Baghdad

The worst rains to hit Baghdad in 30 years left four people dead and many of the Iraqi capital's residents struggling to cope with heavy flooding yesterday as the government declared a national holiday.

Patients reported long and difficult journeys to hospitals, shopkeepers complained of a lack of business and several roads were immersed in water, in some cases as much as waist-high.

In the predominantly-Shia northeastern district of Sadr City, the area surrounding Fatima al-Zahra hospital was completely flooded, and patients said trips that normally took 15 minutes had taken them as long as two hours.

ACC sues 2 Sonali officials, 3 others in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed three cases against five people, including two ex-officials of Sonali Bank, for misappropriating Tk 62.9 crore.

Md Sirajuddin, deputy assistant director of ACC filed the cases with Narayanganj Sadar Model Police Station.

Former managing director Abdus Samad and senior officer Sirajul Haque of Foreign Exchange Branch of the state-owned bank's Narayanganj branch have been accused in all the three cases.

The other accused are Syed Mohsin Uddin Sohel, owner of AS Knitwear, Dulal Shaha Sanjoy, managing director of the knitwear, and Ranjan Kumar Dhar, managing director of Square Attire.

Manjur Kader, acting officer-in-charge of the police station, said the cases were lodged based on information collected by ACC Constable Abdul Kader.

According to the case statement, Sohel took Tk 15.6 crore from the foreign exchange branch on September 5, 2005, against back to back letter of credit (LC). The amount was never paid and including the interest it now stands at about Tk 22.6 crore.

In another case, Dulal Shaha took Tk 15.5 crore on October 21, 2004 against back to back LC. Due to non-payment, the amount, including interest, stands at about Tk 23.2 crore.

Ranjan Kumar of Square Attire took Tk 10.3 crore on June 15 the same year in the same way. He too did not pay back and the amount, including interest, stands at about Tk 17 crore.

MKA blasts Khaleda for calling him Razakar

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday blasted BNP chief Khaleda Zia for questioning his role during the Liberation War.

"She [Khaleda] has no right to question my role during the Liberation War," said the home minister while talking to journalists after attending a governing body meeting of Police Staff College at Mirpur-14 in the capital.

Addressing a rally at Karwan Bazar in the city earlier in the day, the BNP chief called the home minister a "razakar". She claimed that Muhiuddin had served the erstwhile Pakistan government until its last day.

Muhiuddin yesterday said had the opposition leader changed her stance of opposing the war crimes trial, it would have been better for her as well as the nation.

On the killing of journalist couple Sagar-Runi, the minister said the progress of investigation into the killing would be made public soon.

Sagar, a news editor of TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Rumi, a senior reporter of ATN Bangla, were brutally killed in the early hours of February 11 at their flat in the capital's West Rajabazar.

Journalists of different associations had been demonstrating since then demanding trial of the killers.

Central African rebels seize another town

AFP, Bangui

Rebels waging an offensive in the Central African Republic seized another major town Tuesday, a military source said, bringing them a step closer to the nation's capital.

The rebel coalition known as Seleka, an alliance of three groups, reached Kaga-Bandoro, the fourth regional capital they have captured during their offensive that began on December 10.