

Plea for

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defence witnesses testified for Mollah.

Yesterday, Mohammad Ali spoke about contradictions between defence witnesses and Mollah's alibi.

As per the plea of alibi, Mollah was not in Dhaka, rather at his village home in Faridpur during the entire Liberation War. But Mollah, as the first defence witness, had testified that he came to Dhaka in the last part of July, 1971, to sit for an examination, said Mohammad Ali.

In his testimony, Mollah said he had left Dhaka for his village on March 11 or 12 and during his stay at the village, he used to go to the house of Moulavi Mohammad Ishak Alah Dhalia Mia Pir as he was a tutor to his two daughters.

"The rest of 1971 and almost the entire 1972, I used to go to the market on Saturdays and Tuesdays and sit at Pir Saheb's shop and run the business," Ali quoted Mollah as saying.

Shushil Chandra Mondal, a resident of Quader Mollah's village and the second defence witness in the case, said, "He [Mollah] seldom came to the village and used to live at the house of Pir Saheb."

Ali said the testimony of Mollah and Shushil "contradicted" as Mollah claimed that he used to live in his village while Shushil claimed that Mollah used to live in Dhaka too unhappy.

The foreign ministry summoned the Turkish envoy in Dhaka and asked him to explain the NGO team's visit without informing the government.

Acting Foreign Secretary Mustafa Kamal also handed over an aide memo (diplomatic letter) to the ambassador in which Dhaka strongly protested Gul's letter and said it was an interference in the internal affairs of the country.

The aide memo categorically mentioned that Bangladesh government is determined to conduct the war crimes trial as there is overwhelming support from the people.

Ali urged the tribunal to place the charge of genocide with charge-4 and 5.

According to charge-4, a systematic attack and indiscriminate shooting by Quader Mollah and his cohorts killed hundreds of unarmed people in two villages, Khanbari and Ghata Char, of Keraniganj on November 25, 1971.

As per charge-5, the Pakistani army and around 500 Bangladeshi led by Quader Mollah raided Alubdi village of Mirpur and launched an attack on unarmed villagers, killing 344 people on April 24, 1971.

During charge framing, the tribunal had recorded the two charges as "murder as crimes against humanity".

Earlier, Ali placed his arguments on six charges against Mollah citing testimonies of the 12 prosecution witnesses.

The tribunal yesterday 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 January 2.

It also recorded the cross-examination of Faijuddin Ahmed, the 11th prosecution witness against Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahed, before adjourning that case's proceedings until January 3.

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Sayedee is waiting for the verdict of his case. He is facing 20 charges of crimes against humanity.

Mizanul yesterday claimed that his client was prejudiced by the former chairman of Tribunal-1 Justice Md Nizamul Huq.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until December 30. Mizanul would continue placing arguments on that day.

In the morning, chief defence counsel Abdur Razzaq completed placing his arguments on the retrial petition of war crimes accused Ghulam Azam.

Ghulam Azam is facing five charges for crimes against humanity, genocide and other grievous crimes committed during the Liberation War.

"If the price hike continues

Tension with Turkey

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh Ambassador to Turkey Md Zulfiqur Rahman, a day after Dhaka summoned Turkish Ambassador in Bangladesh Mehmet Vakur Erkul on Wednesday.

The foreign ministry sources told The Daily Star yesterday that content of the December 23 letter from the Turkish president is not acceptable and it is a clear interference in the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

Gul said the accused leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami are too old to stand trial and apprehended that it might cause a civil war in Bangladesh, the sources mentioned.

Dhaka was surprised to get such a letter and was going to send a reply to the Turkish president, but it was delayed because of the president's illness.

Subsequently, the visit of a 14-member delegation of Turkish NGO Cansuyu Aid and Solidarity Association from December 20 to 24 hiding their identity and misusing "on arrival visa" facilities and its inappropriate activities have made Dhaka too unhappy.

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Sohrab Hossain

FROM PAGE 1

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, some foreign ministry officials said the government could have sent back the NGO delegation but it refrained from doing so considering the excellent bilateral ties with Turkey and the recent exchange of visits at president and prime minister level.

They said the Turkish envoy has violated certain diplomatic norms and he can be expelled as he did not give prior information to the government about arrival of the delegation and subsequently he concealed information about its programmes and schedules.

The ambassador did not inform the foreign ministry about the delegation's meeting with leaders of BNP and Jamaat and others as well as its visit to the ICT. A senior official said during the meeting with acting foreign secretary, the envoy claimed that the delegation's visit was not sponsored by the Turkish government, but he failed to give a satisfactory reply when asked why he accompanied the team during meetings with the opposition leaders.

Asked, a senior official that despite the tension, the existing bilateral relations with Turkey will not be affected and "our cooperation in all sectors will continue".

However another foreign ministry source told The Daily Star last night that the Turkish president wrote the letter both to the president and prime minister on December 23 and the Turkish embassy sent it to foreign ministry and the ministry subsequently sent it to Bangabhaban and PMO.

Sources said the Turkish president in his one-page letter, written in Turkish language and attached with English translation, requested Zillur not to give death sentence to Ghulam Azam and other Jamaat leaders.

President Gul said they came to know former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam is being tried at the International Crimes Tribunal. It is learnt that this 90-year-old leader might be sentenced to death. Some other elderly leaders are also facing trial, which is a matter of great concern.

According to the Turkish president, if these leaders are punished, it might affect Bangladesh's socio-economic advancement and cause social instability and bloodshed.

Dhaka considered Gul's letter as the first ever intervention since the ICT was formed in 2010, the sources said.

The two-page letter also mentioned the visit of the Turkish NGO delegation which it said misused the "on arrival visa" facility.

"Bangladesh believes that it is not the job of a friendly country to create any problem or confusion about an issue and hopes that this type of incident will not happen again," the letter stated.

In 2009, Dhaka unilaterally offered "on arrival visa" for tourist, investor, business, official, diplomatic and special passport holders, while Ankara approved on arrival visa only for official and diplomatic passport holders from the middle of this year.

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Power tariff

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was already so high that a further increase would prompt people to refrain from paying bills.

It was the responsibility of the regulatory commission to protect consumers' interests and ensure their affordability but it had failed to do so, he said.

Shamsul, head of the electrical and electronics engineering department of Daffodil International University, blamed the energy ministry for adopting ways to have the power tariff increased.

"We have to rein in the power price hike," said Mohammad Hatem, senior vice-president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The garment sector would otherwise see unrest, he said, "no matter we raise their wages or not as workers' cost of living has gone up due to the [previous] power hike."

In a written statement circulated at the hearing, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association said the cost of power went up by 32 percent in the last one year.

"If the price hike continues

RESULTS COMPARISON

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The veteran musician, who dedicated most of his life in preserving songs of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam, had been suffering from old-age complications.

He was admitted to a capital's hospital on November 29 following complicated neck pain.

Born in Ayeshtola village near Ranaghat of Nadia, West Bengal, on April 9, 1922, Sohrab Hossain was one of those who made Nazrul songs popular among younger generations.

The government honoured this Sangeet guru with the Independence Day Award, one of the highest civilian awards in Bangladesh, in 1980.

War tribunal's

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tribunal received it on December 18, sources said.

The government established the International Crimes Tribunal on March 25, 2010, for holding trial of those who committed crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War. A second tribunal was formed on March 22 this year to expedite the trial.

Presently, nine Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP leaders are facing charges of crimes against humanity at the two tribunals.

The government attached officials of the High Court and lower courts with the tribunals to run its regular activities. At present, the tribunal has a registrar and a deputy registrar to execute the administrative work.

Under the new organogram, there will be six bench officers, six assistant bench officers, six personal assistants, six Jamader, six drivers and 12 support staff for the judges of the tribunals.

It will also include a registrar, two deputy registrars, one senior law research officer and other officers and employees for the tribunal's registrar office.

Nasiruddin, the current registrar, said they proposed recruiting two law research officers and one senior law research officer but the government approved just one senior law research officer.

"The matter of two law research officers is still pending," he added.

On several occasions, tribunal judges and officials said the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 was a new law and to understand the law it was necessary for the judges to look into the process and orders of different tribunals.

The registrar said the researcher would follow the proceedings of war crimes trial all over the world and would assist the tribunals to improve their standard.

It will be a great relief if the commission sticks to its earlier decision that it would not raise the tariff in the next one year," said Shahedul Islam Helal, a director of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

"The commission is not looking at people's interests," he said, adding BERC should reject this proposal along with those of other distributors.

"It will be a great relief if the commission sticks to its earlier decision that it would not raise the tariff in the next one year," said Shahedul Islam Helal, a director of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Emdadul Haque, chairman of BERC, said the distribution companies would have to give logic for price hike.

The BERC technical committee that had analysed the proposal said there was no reason to raise the power tariff for REB as the operating revenue would be higher

in fiscal 2012-13 than its revenue need.

REB supplies power to about 91 lakh consumers across the country through 70 associations.

It now buys electricity from the Power Development Board (PDB) at Tk 4.26 a kilowatt-hour which was Tk 3.25 a unit before the price rise in September. However, the cost of per unit power comes at Tk 6.49 after it is supplied to consumers.

The hearing was held in less than four months after the commission increased, through an interim order, the retail tariff for all distributors by an average of 15 percent.

The regulatory commission raised the tariff when the distributors claimed they were facing financial strains following the rise of bulk tariff by 16.92 percent.

It will hold hearings on the proposals of PDB and West Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd on December 30 and those of Dhaka Electric Supply Company and Dhaka Power Distribution Company the following day.

The final decision, whether the tariff would be increased, will come after that.

RESULTS COMPARISON

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BOARDS	PASS RATE 2012	PASS RATE 2011	GPA-5 2012	GPA-5 2011
Dhaka	85.02	81.45</		