

Skype hacking

FROM PAGE 20
Huq and Ahmed Ziauddin, a Belgium-based Bangladeshi legal expert, was published in a Bangla daily earlier this month, the defence had claimed Skype copied the formal charges from the latter.

The attorney general appealed to the tribunal to reject the defence prayers for reinitiating the trial against former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam and another Jamaat leader Sayeede.

Upon completion of the defence submission, Alam, on behalf of the prosecution, placed his arguments at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Reading out the formal charges and the defence-submitted copy, the attorney general said, "The formal charge is absolutely different."

What Ghulam Azam had done during the Liberation War in 1971 is well known and Ziauddin might have added some dates, he argued.

Once the members of the tribunal sign a paper, it becomes the property of the tribunal, not property of anyone else, he explained.

Earlier in the morning, defence counsel Mizanul Islam claimed the former chairman had copied the formal charge, which was sent from abroad.

At this point, Justice Kabir, who was a member of the tribunal-1 at that time, said, "I can clearly remember that Zaheer [former member of the tribunal-1 Judge AKM Zaheer Ahmed] and I made the draft."

The tribunal chairman also said the language and structure followed in the formal charge were common in the sub-continent and was not followed in the west.

Justice Kabir also said he did not know whether Justice Huq mailed it to anyone.

"Since you said you did it, we can assume you must have made the draft. But you did not know whether he [Justice Huq] had communication with anyone," Mizanul argued.

The attorney general said

in the petition it is seen the hacked Skype conversation had been recorded from the end of August this year.

"Someone had been employed to record the conversation or they might have bought Ahmed Ziauddin," he said, adding, that means they were aware of the alleged conversation long before but did not disclose it earlier.

They disclosed it at a moment when Sayeede's case was awaiting verdict, he added.

Alam prayed to the tribunal to issue a rule upon the defence as to from where and how the alleged conversation was collected.

Saying hacking is a crime he prayed to the tribunal not to show sympathy to the petitioners.

The attorney general made his arguments on two grounds.

Quoting some sections of the Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006, he said hacking is a crime and such petition based on hacking is illegal and should be nullified.

He added through the hacking the fundamental rights of the former chairman were violated as per the constitution.

The article (43) of the constitution says every citizen shall have the right, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, public order, public morality or public health – (a) to be secured in his home against entry, search and seizure; and (b) to the privacy of his correspondence and other means of communication.

Defence counsel Abdur Razzaq had pointed out orders on some cases in India regarding public interest saying the hacked conversation had public interest.

The attorney general countered the defence counsel's claim showing India's constitution.

He said the part-3 of India's constitution which protects fundamental rights does not have any provision like the constitution of

Bangladesh.

The attorney general reminded the tribunal's judges of the oath that says they will not do anything conflicting to the constitution.

After making his submission on legality of the petition, the attorney general began argument on the defence submission.

Countering the defence's earlier submission he said the tribunal chairman is empowered by section 11 (6) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 to make such conversation and he did not do anything illegal at all.

The 11 (6) of the Act says the chairman of a tribunal may make such administrative arrangements if he considers necessary for the performance of the functions of the tribunal under this Act.

The defence in their submission raised several questions over the activities of Justice Huq during the trial. They alleged the former chairman drew time limitation which was found in the alleged conversation.

Quoting 3 (a) and 3 (b) of the Act, the attorney general said the law had entitled them to do so to expedite the trial proceedings.

Regarding the defence's claim that they will be prejudiced and fair trial will not be ensured if the trial proceedings were not reinitiated, Alam said procedure of the trial under 10 (1) had been followed by the tribunal and the defence never denied it.

Executive president of Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee Shahriar Kabir and historian Prof Muntassir Mamoon yesterday visited the tribunal-1 and heard the hearing.

Shahriar told journalists the defence took up a strategy to waste time.

Meanwhile, war crimes accused Salauddin Quader Chowdhury yesterday filed a petition with the tribunal seeking an order whether any member of the tribunal or its current chairman is or has been privy to the conversations and the criminally collusive actions related to the tribunal's proceedings.

Power tariff

FROM PAGE 1
recommended the hike after evaluating the arguments of both parties in the hearing," said newly-appointed BERC Chairman Mohammad Imdadul Haque.

He said if power prices are increased in line with the committee's recommendation, it will eventually add to the sufferings of common people, especially farmers in the next Boro season.

But it will be difficult for the PDB to maintain uninterrupted electricity supply if power prices are not increased to reduce its losses, he said.

"That is why the committee recommended a power price hike, which is rational." And the BERC will give its decision soon, said Haque.

Earlier, the present government increased power prices for the sixth time from September 1 by 15 percent at retail level.

Bus crash

FROM PAGE 1
Identity of two other deceased could not be known immediately.

Nazrul Islam, a sergeant of Narsingdi Highway Police, said ten of the microbus passengers died on the spot while two others succumbed to their injuries on the way to Narsingdi District Hospital and Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Of the injured, 16 took treatment at local clinics and hospitals while two others were admitted to DMCH and Narsingdi District Hospital.

The condition of the lone surviving microbus passenger was critical, said the police official quoting doctors at Narsingdi District Hospital.

KM Firoz, officer-in-charge of Shibpur Police Station, told The Daily Star that the bodies were sent to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsies.

Labour and Environment Minister Razi Uddin Ahmed Raju, Narsingdi Deputy Commissioner Obaidul Azam and Narsingdi Superintendent of Police Khandaker Mohid Uddin visited the injured at the district hospital.

Oil spill

FROM PAGE 20
around 6.00am, which left a hole in the oil tanker, said Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Secretary Syed Farhad Uddin Ahmed.

The jetty was damaged due to the collision.

Farhad added that an oil-cleaning vessel, Bay Cleaner-2, of the CPA hurried to the spot and cleaned the oil slick by afternoon.

The oil tanker was headed for Chandpur with diesel and kerosene loaded from Jamuna Oil Company near the port area.

The CPA secretary said the spill could not spread much since the hole was soon repaired, although temporarily.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority has sent another oil tanker to the spot to have the oil transferred from the damaged one.

Upsets eclipse successes

FROM PAGE 1
Now, take the issue of the World Bank loan for the Padma bridge project. The nation swung between hopes and frustrations over the fate of the project.

In September, revival of the cancelled WB loan had rekindled the hope that the project would get underway, but soon uncertainty returned over the issue of investigation into the alleged corruption conspiracy in the project.

The loan agreement was revived after the government met the global lender's conditions that included resignation of the then communications minister Syed Abul Hossain, who had been repeatedly denying allegations of corruption in the bridge project. Prime minister's adviser Mashur Rahman, whose name also came up in the allegations, had to go on leave. However, uncertainty is still there as credibility of the investigation is brought into question by the Anti-Corruption Commission's not including Abul Hossain and former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury among the accused.

In politics, things grew volatile centring the electoral system for the next parliament. The Awami League-led ruling alliance and the BNP-led opposition stuck to their guns -- the former stoutly opposes the caretaker government system for holding the election while the latter firmly maintains it will not allow any election unless the system is restored.

Adding to people's worries, there were forced disappearances and secret killings. For these incidents, the government drew flak from human rights bodies at home and abroad. The death of 112 workers in a garment factory fire in Ashulia exposed inadequate fire safety and poor working conditions in the RMG sector, causing concern even beyond the boundary.

The Hall-Mark loan scam at state-owned Sonali Bank opened a Pandora's box of malpractices in the banking sector. Towards the end of the year, the law enforcers were faced with a serious challenge

as Jamaat-e-Islami and its student body Islami Chhatra Shibir carried out planned attacks on them.

Many viewed the attacks as the last-ditch effort by Jamaat to foil the ongoing trial of its top brass on charges of crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.

Observers say the recent resignation of the chairman of International Crimes Tribunal-1 following the hacking of his personal emails and Skype conversation with an expatriate Bangladeshi legal expert hardly augurs well for the trial. This has raised concern that there might be more plots afoot to derail the trial.

Against this backdrop, completing the trial of those accused of war crimes is now a daunting challenge for the government in its last year in office.

Early this month, as people were getting to grips with Jamaat-Shibir violence, the brutal murder of an innocent youth named Bishwajit Das in the capital by some Chhatra League activists jolted everyone to the core, and switched the nation's focus to the pro-Awami League student body.

A hush-hush approach to the investigation into the gruesome killing of journalist couple Sagar and Runi in February raised a huge outcry in the media and society. Mystery still shrouds the double murder with the government coming up with repeated assurance of justice.

Another massive scandal that rocked the nation this year involved seasoned politician and the then railway minister Suranjit Sengupta. The seizure of Tk 70 lakh from his assistant personal secretary's car at the BGB headquarters cost Suranjit his portfolio. He stepped down only to be made a minister without portfolio.

A foiled coup attempt in the army to overthrow the government was a surprise disclosure at the beginning of the year. For the first time, the military authorities officially exposed such an attempt, while many attempted coups and counter-coups in the defence forces in the 70s and 80s still remain a mystery.

Forced disappearance of many including a political leader was one of the much

talked-about issues this year. The disappearance of BNP leader Ilias Ali and others is still under a cloak of mystery.

In September, Islamic zealots destroyed Buddhist temples, monasteries and houses in Ramu of Cox's Bazar over a fake Facebook photo. Apart from this, the Rohingya issue came into focus once again as the government declined to shelter Rohingyas fleeing violence in the Rakhine state of Myanmar.

It was a challenge for the government to make the international community understand Dhaka's position amid huge pressure to allow the Rohingyas in.

Grameen Bank and Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus also remained issues of concern for the global community. In particular, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed displeasure over the issues of Grameen Bank, Prof Yunus, and the secret killing of labour organiser Aminul Islam.

From Aminul's killing in April to the devastating fire in the garment factory in November brought many fresh challenges for the country's highest export-oriented garment industry.

The upcoming year inherits many such challenges from the outgoing one. The most important of the issues is a polls-time government.

The visits to India by opposition leader Khaleda Zia and the ruling alliance component Jatiya Party's chief HM Ershad were at the centre of discussion in the context of the next election at the end of 2013 or at the beginning of 2014.

The country lost many of its worthy sons this year. They included popular writer Humayun Ahmed, iconic actor Humayun Faridee, famed architect Muzharul Islam, eminent educationist Khan Sarwar Murshid, noted economist and leading civil society member Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, veteran journalists Ataus Samad and Fayed Ahmed, painter extraordinaire Safiuddin Ahmed, business icon Samson H Chowdhury, Nazrul Geeti proponent Sohrab Hossain and ace filmmaker Shubhash Dutta.

Don't favour war crimes accused

FROM PAGE 1
for "clemency" to the accused, the minister said it is not possible for her government to keep any request from any one for clemency to any war criminals.

The government has expressed this view to the Turkish envoy in Dhaka, she added.

The foreign minister mentioned Ankara had officially said it had no intention at all to interfere in any internal affair of Bangladesh.

And, the Turkish foreign ministry had told Bangladesh ambassador in Ankara that it was just a letter from the president of a friendly country to the president of another.

But Dipu Moni said it would not be possible for the government to take the matter lightly as the ongoing trial

is "very important and highly sensitive" for Bangladesh.

The December 23 letter has created a stir in Bangladesh because, she said, the people have been waiting for last 40 years for the trial of those accused of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War, 1971.

"It is the expectation of the people of Bangladesh that nobody should recommend in favour of the persons who have been accused or who might be convicted for war crimes."

According to sources, the Turkish president in his one-page letter also requested Zillur Rahman not to give death sentence to Ghulam Azam and other Jamaat leaders who are behind bars on war crimes charges.

On this issue, the foreign

minister noted different countries in the world, including Turkey, had awarded death sentences to war criminals.

Replying to a question whether a diplomatic tension has been created between the two countries, she said no.

On a recent visit of an NGO team from Turkey, Dipu Moni said Ankara had clearly stated that it was not any official delegation. The government was inquiring further into the matter.

The visit of a 14-member team 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 reportedly made Dhaka unhappy.

Cold spell may

continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People across the country have suffered badly in the last few days as a cold wave is sweeping over different parts of the country.

The situation worsened as yesterday's temperatures dropped in the capital and in most parts of the country.

According to the Met office, the cold wave may continue until Monday.

The temperature in Dhaka was 10.5 degrees Celsius on Saturday and 9.6 degrees Celsius yesterday, the Met office said.

Dense fog coupled with the cold wave has disrupted movement of launch and ferry services across the country, causing immense sufferings to passengers.

Around 61 launches from different parts of the country usually report to Sadarghat terminal in Old Dhaka by noon daily.

Yesterday, however, only 19 reported until midday due to poor visibility. Arif Uddin, a deputy secretary of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, told The Daily Star.

Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi and Paturia-Daulatdia routes remained stalled for 10 hours till yesterday morning due to dense fog on the Padma river.

Sirajul Haq, manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) at Mawa, said ferry services between Mawa and Kawrakandi were suspended from 10:30pm Saturday to 9:30am yesterday.

Five ferries on the Mawa-Kawrakandi route carrying over 1,000 passengers were bound to anchor mid-river due to poor visibility, reports our Munshiganj correspondent quoting Sirajul.

Abdul Baten, BIWTC manager at Kawrakandi, said no ferry left the terminal after 9:00pm Saturday till resumption of the ferry services yesterday.

Over 500 vehicles had to wait at Mawa and Kawrakandi terminals following the disruption.

The authorities suspended ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route for six hours from 2:00am yesterday, reports our Manikganj correspondent quoting BIWTC Manager (Commerce) Ashraf Ullah Khan.

Five ferries anchored mid-river in the Padma due to thick fog, the managers said.

Five launches that left Dhaka for Barisal on Saturday night reached the destination four to five hours late, said Lokman Hossain, port traffic officer of Barisal River Port.

Hartal

FROM PAGE 1
a day after the announcement of fuel price hike," BNP spokesperson Tariqul Islam told journalists after a meeting of alliance leaders with party Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office.

Speaking at a mass contact programme on December 26, Khaleda had said that they will enforce hartal if the government hikes fuel prices.

Tariqul said they will form human walls at all divisional and district headquarters on January 15 protesting the disappearance of Chowdhury Alam and Ilias Ali, and the killing of Bishwajit Das.

The coalition will demonstrate across the country on January 6 protesting the price hike of essentials and demanding release of its arrested leaders. It will also hold a countrywide mass contact programme on January 23.

"We will drum up public support through democratic programmes that will force the government to accept our demands," said Tariqul.

Empowerment

FROM PAGE 1
Awami League does not have central working committee. On formation of the committee, it will exercise its powers," another source said.

Asked whether it runs counter to the party charter, advocate Rahmat Ali, the chief election commissioner at the council, said the council can do it. The council did nothing against the party constitution.

The AL council as per the constitution was supposed to elect nine members to complete the formation of AL parliamentary board. But the council empowered Hasina to pick three or four members to complete the formation, the sources

added.

AKM Mozammel Huq, who was an election commissioner at the council, said the council elected some leaders, including Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Obaidul Quader as members of the board.

"Another three or four members will be included in the board to complete its formation."

AL president and general secretary are ex-officio members of the parliamentary board. They also act as its president and general secretary respectively.

The parliamentary board nominates party candidates

in the parliamentary elections, scrutinising their applications.

The AL council has also empowered newly elected President Sheikh Hasina and General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam to choose other members of the AL central committee, which is supposed to be comprised of members elected by councillors as per the charter.

The AL charter mandates the councillors to elect all leaders, including a treasurer, 13 members of presidency, its highest policymaking body; 31 secretaries, including three joint general secretaries and seven organising secretaries.

Lobbying on for vital posts

FROM PAGE 1
insiders say.

They add, immediately after Hasina reached her official residence Gono Bhaban on Saturday evening after being re-elected, several outgoing central leaders visited her aiming to get her attention. Some of the leaders spent hours at Gono Bhaban that evening.

The same leaders accompanied by others from different districts and upazilas started visiting Gono Bhaban since early yesterday. The leaders congratulated Hasina with bouquets for being re-elected as the party chief for the seventh time.

Meanwhile, re-elected AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam also went to Gono Bhaban to discuss formation of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the highest decision making body of the party.

Hasina and Ashraf were re-elected on Saturday through the party's 19th council held at the Institution of Engineers Bangladesh. The councillors

have empowered the party chief to complete formation of the fully-fledged committee as per her choice.

No-one as of yesterday however could confirm as to when the committee would be announced.

SENIOR LEADERS' COMEBACK?

Since the beginning of the council on Saturday, the topic whether the AL stalwarts like Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed and former organising secretaries Saber Hossain Chowdhury and Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed would be brought back to the party dominated discussion among the grassroots leaders.

Many councillors talked among themselves at both the inaugural and council sessions about it and came up with the opinion that senior leaders should be brought back for their expertise and experience ahead of the next parliamentary election. These leaders were dropped from the party at its 18th council on July 24, 2009 for their role during the last military-backed caretaker

government.

Councillor Abdur Rashid Bhuiyan from Nandail in Mymensingh said they demanded bringing back the senior leaders at the council session.

Outgoing AL Organising Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim however claimed there were no such demands from the councillors at that session.

FORMER LEADERS NOT INVITED

Some of the former mid-ranked leaders known as reformists were not invited to the council. They included former organising secretaries Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Mahmudur Rahman Manna and central leader Abu Sayeed.

Sultan, former president of Bangladesh Chhatra League, and Manna were veteran student leaders during 1980s.

Contacted, both Sultan and Manna said they did not get any invitation.

Talks run rife among the party rank and file that senior leaders like Amu, Tofail, Abdul Jalil, Saber and

Sultan, among others, might return as members on the next committee.

Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, outgoing organising secretary, however said he does not think there is any such possibility of bringing them back.

COUNCILLORS HAPPY TO RE-ELECT HASINA

Many of the councillors said they were happy to elect Hasina as the party chief again. They think there is no alternative to her in the party. But several councillors expressed negative views on Syed Ashrafur Islam being re-elected as the general secretary.

"She is the daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. She has immense potential to contribute to the country as well as the party. We are happy to have her elected again," said councillor Abdur Rashid from Mymensingh.

However, a councillor said they would not come to the council had they known Ashraf would be re-elected. Many others echoed the same.