

WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL Prosecutor removal plea rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 yesterday said the chief prosecutor has the authority to decide whether prosecutor Zead Al Malum would remain in his prosecution team.

It observed that it depended on the chief prosecutor's "good conscience" whether prosecutor Malum would remain in his position.

The observation came yesterday following two petitions by war-crimes accused Ghulam Azam and Salauddin Quader Chowdhury to remove Malum. The three-member tribunal rejected the petitions with the observation.

The defence filed the petitions claiming that Malum, prosecutor of two cases, played a crucial role in the administration of justice, which was revealed in the alleged Skype conversation between former Tribunal-1 chairman and an expatriate legal expert.

Ghulam Azam sought to disqualify Malum while SQ Chowdhury's petition was

for removing Malum from his case.

Pointing out section 7 (1) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, Tribunal-1 said the appointment of a prosecutor is done by the government, not the tribunal.

SQ Chowdhury yesterday filed another petition before the tribunal to initiate contempt of court proceedings against expatriate legal expert Ahmed Ziauddin, who had allegedly conversed with the former Tribunal-1 chairman via Skype.

The Tribunal-1 said it would dispose of the matter in the chamber and adjourned proceedings of the case until January 23.

The tribunal also adjourned the proceedings of Ghulam Azam's case until January 21.

Meanwhile, defence counsel Mizanul Islam yesterday began placing his closing argument in the war crimes case against Jamaat Nayeb-e-Ameer Delawar Hossain Sayeedee.

BPL ticket prices slashed

SPORTS REPORTER

Ticket prices for the second edition of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) have been reduced.

The decision was taken at a meeting between the tournament's governing council and Game On Sports Management yesterday.

It came in the wake of a poor turnout at the stadium.

The new rates will come into effect from the seventh game of the tournament, which will take place in Khulna tomorrow.

For Western and Eastern Stands at Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium in Khulna, the ticket price has been revised to Tk 200 from Tk 350. For General Gallery at MA Aziz Stadium in Chittagong, the rate has been brought down to Tk 200 from Tk 350. For Southern and Northern Stands at Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka, the ticket price has been reduced to Tk 300 from Tk 500. At the same stadium, a ticket for Eastern Stand will now cost Tk 200, down from Tk 350.

PHOTO: STAR



Clockwise from top, teams from Viqarunnisa Noon School, Kashipur High School and Govt Laboratory High School pose with golden tickets.

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participants got disqualified in the first round. The qualifiers were Wasi Ahmed and Khan Aminul Islam from class 8 and Sadid Ahmed Shahriar from class 10.

From Viqarunnisa Noon School, the winners are AS Faruque, Farid Ahmed and Moazzem Hossain. From YWCA, Ferdous Khan, Khalilur Rahman and Abdul Mannan qualified for the divisional rounds.

"The eagerness of the students for Spelling Bee has been huge. Even from parents, the response has been great, but it would have been more if they knew more about this," says Quamrul Shaleen of Govt

Laboratory High School.

Excited about the prospects of his students participating in the competition, he expressed his support for the contest and for the English Club, an initiative by Champs21 to help students be more fluent and at home in English.

From Kashipur High School and College in Barisal, Faqrul Islam Zilane, Suraya Parvin and Hafsa Akter Bushra of class 10 and from Nooria Secondary School, Nurnave, HM Tanvir and Jumman Hossain of class 8 qualified to join other qualifiers.

The Online Rounds have started too with the Spelling Bee game on the champs21.com website where players can participate as many times as they want.

The finals are scheduled to be held in June. Participants from schools who have not made it to the divisional from the school rounds can also participate through the online game.



about the competition is available on www.champs21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh. Students who wish to participate in the event through the online rounds can visit the website and play the Spelling Bee Game.

Detailed information

Rice figures mismatch

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of Statistics (BBS), its own field surveys to judge the BBS figures and then doing various literature reviews.

BIDS was engaged by the food ministry to look into the issue as it felt that in

matters of food distribution, procurement and import, it could not quite match the agriculture production figures.

It rather became a paradox why food import requirement is so high if the production figures are correct.

Bangladesh imported 5.5 million tonnes of food grain in 2010-11 and 3.4 million tonnes in 2009-10.

BIDS studied the food chain from production to consumption, checked on acreage, yield, gross production, waste and availability of grains for human consumption.

It also checked the figures generated by the BBS through its agriculture census, agriculture sample survey and statistical year book and then crosschecked them with images generated by Bangladesh Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation (SPARSO).

Such crosschecks revealed that although there is not any significant change in yield, there was a remarkable difference in

the area of land cultivated with rice.

Such area variation led to official calculation of 2.5 million tonne higher production.

For example, in 2008, a 60 percent higher area was shown in sample survey than in agriculture census for HYV Aman cultivation. While the sample survey shows 7.7 million acres of land under HYV Aman cultivation, the census shows only 4.8 million acres of grain.

Such less reporting by government inflates availability of food.

BIDS also felt that a major weakness of the BBS estimate is that it does not take into account the food people take outside home, which has an impact on total consumption.

Again it was found that BBS estimate of consumption is underreported because of exclusion of outside home consumption.

While the BBS figure for

2010 shows that consumption of rice per person a day was 416 grams, BIDS claims it was 462 grams.

Dr Mahabub Hossain, executive director of Brac and an agriculture economist, told The Daily Star that the BIDS revelation that Aman cultivation area is overestimated is true. "But the waste, feed and seed figure given out by the government is not correct."

And the BIDS estimation of consumption is also not correct."

He said BIDS had taken farmers with larger landholdings as its samples which were not representative and its model to show income elasticity on consumption is also not correct.

"So, the thin surplus that the BIDS estimates is not that thin, but it obviously is not as good as the government shows," he said.

The government's production estimate makes about 3.4 million tonnes surplus, which is very high and not realistic," Dr Hossain said. "If the government's estimate was correct then per head rice consumption would have been 200 kg a year which is not anywhere in the world. Even the BBS' Household Income and Expenditure Survey shows consumption at 160 kg a year."

Asked about the BIDS study, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday that she was not aware of what the BIDS study came up with.

"Food production in the country has increased in recent years...that's our satisfaction. We never tend to inflate food output figures."

Bikers suffer

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said Nazmul Haq, convener of the council.

He said they will continue the strike until their demands are met.

Their demands include a 3.4 percent increase in commission on sales of diesel and 4 percent on sales of petrol and octane following price hike of fuel.

Other demands of the pump owners include a rise in tank-lorry fare and necessary steps against adulteration of fuel.

The shutdown caused immense suffering to vehicle owners and commuters in the capital.

Enamul Haq, 25, who was waiting with his motorbike in front of a petrol pump in Nilkhel, seemed desperate to have the vehicle refuelled.

"My motorbike has run out of fuel and I have to get it refuelled immediately." But the petrol pump manager did not allow refuelling the motorbike, he said.

"I didn't know about the strike," said Haq, who had to walk his motorbike for nearly a kilometre to reach the pump at about 11:40am.

Around 4,500 petrol pumps remained closed and 30,000 tank-lorries stayed off the streets across the country following the strike that began at 6:00am.

This correspondent found a number of petrol pumps in the capital closed in the morning.

The filling stations were selling only compressed natural gas (CNG), not any diesel, octane or petrol.

Meanwhile, some petrol pumps sold fuel to motorcycle owners on a limited scale following the news of a meeting between the authorities and the strikers.

The strike also hit Chittagong, as 174 petrol pumps in the port city, Cox's Bazar, Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban remained closed, and tank-lorries were off the streets.

The filling stations that usually supply both petrol and CNG were providing only gas.

Abu Tayab, owner of a petrol pump at Panchlaish in Chittagong, said many vehicle owners left empty-handed from his pump Alhaj Md Yunus & Co since morning.

Asked about the people's sufferings due to the strike, he said, "We also feel sorry about that. But we are helpless as the government has not paid heed to our demands for years."

Tayab said ambulances and vehicles of fire brigade and other emergency services were provided with fuel at the filling station, as they are out of the purview of the strike.

The tribunal, however, said the witness, if able, would be allowed to be produced later.

'Mentally ill'

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that Morjina was beaten to death in the presence of police.

He said the mob beat up the two women before police reached the scene, and Morjina succumbed to her wounds two hours after she was taken to the health complex.

Rakibul, officer-in-charge at Kaliakoir Police Station, said they filed a murder case against 400 unidentified villagers. He said Josna is receiving treatment at the health complex.

Abdul Baten, superintendent of police in Gazipur, said he was unsure whether Morjina was killed in the presence of police.

Asked whether a committee will be formed to probe the role of police in the incident, he said, "It will come out during the case investigation."

Witnesses said the locals later took the two women to the house of Dalil Uddin in the area and informed police. Five policemen led by Saiful went there and took the two into custody.

As the law enforcers were taking the injured women to the upazila health complex, some unruly locals snatched the two from the policemen. They beat Morjina to death and attacked Josna, leaving her seriously injured.

Some video clips taken by witnesses show that Morjina was encircled by scores of villagers and several youths in uniform of Sinabah High School beat her with sticks.

However, sub-inspector Saiful refuted the allegation.

Until now, Fakhrul has been made accused in 20 of the 38 cases filed against hundreds of opposition men in connection with arson, vandalism and rampage during the roadblock.

He has been facing two more cases on charges of torching a vehicle in front of the Prime Minister's Office and throwing cocktails inside the secretariat during a hartal called by the BNP-led opposition on April 29 last year.

The same way he was earlier implicated in 16 more cases filed with different police stations in Dhaka on charges of violence during the blockade.

Quader criticised some transport owners for increasing the fare immediately after the price hike.

"I came to know that many bus services, including BRTC buses, started realising extra fare, which is not ethical," he said and warned against charging beyond the increased rate.

The latest hike came nearly a year after the government increased intercity bus fares by Tk 0.15 per km on January 1 last year.

Explaining this year's hike, Obaidul Quader said the costing committee, headed by Bangladesh Road Transport Authority Chairman Ayub Rahman, last week proposed increasing the fare by 23 paisa but he did not accept it considering the passengers' burden.

"Today, they came to the meeting but left the matter to me. I think 10 paisa increase will be reasonable for all parties," he added.

Transport owners who attended the meeting came down heavily on Mozammel Haq Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Jati Kalyan Samity, as he opposed the fare hike.

On January 3, the government increased prices of diesel and kerosene by Tk 7 a litre, and octane and petrol by Tk 5 a litre in efforts to reduce subsidy cost. The hike took kerosene price to Tk 68 a litre, and octane and petrol prices to Tk 99 and Tk 96 a litre.

Arrest culprits

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government to explain in two weeks why it should not be directed to take action against Monir and Masum as per the Code of Criminal Procedure.

The HC bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Mahmudul Hoque came up with the order and rule after hearing a petition.

Advocate Manzill Murshid filed the petition on behalf of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh.

The home secretary, inspector general of police, commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, officer-in-charge of Bangshal Police Station and the investigation officer of the case have been made respondents to the order and rule.

Ankhi is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital with 12-13 percent burn injuries to her face and other parts of the body.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Samanta Lal Sen, chief coordinator of the burn units of the country and the physicians in charge of Ankhi's treatment, yesterday said they had decided to conduct the first operation on her burn injuries today.

Ankhi's brother Mohiuddin told this correspondent that they were very worried as the accused were not yet arrested.

From the hospital bed, she was enquiring everyday whether the accused had been nabbed. "I want to get my life back," Mohiuddin quoted Ankhi as saying.

BUS FARE HIKE

CHITTAGONG UP BY

TK 23.2

(232KM FROM DHAKA)

RAJSHAHI UP BY

TK 26

(260KM FROM DHAKA)

KHULNA UP BY

TK 30

(307KM FROM DHAKA)

BARISAL UP BY

TK 27.7

(277KM FROM DHAKA)

SYLHET UP BY

TK 25.5

(255KM FROM DHAKA)

RANGPUR UP BY

TK 31

(310KM FROM DHAKA)