

No clemency

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demands at a press conference at BILIA Auditorium.

Shahriar Kabir, acting president of the committee, urged the government to amend article 49 of the constitution to add a section so that convicted war criminals would not get presidential mercy.

According to article 49, "The president shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves and respites and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority."

Justice Syed Amirul Islam, adviser to the committee, said genocide and crimes against humanity are grievous offences as per international laws and no country can pardon such offenders as per the Vienna Convention, 1986.

He added that Bangladesh should show respect to such international laws and convention as per the constitution.

Citing examples from the Nuremberg Tribunal in Germany, Shahriar, also an eminent war crimes researcher, said the tribunal was formed to try the Nazi war criminals of the World War II, whereas trials of seven Nazi organisations were also held alongside the Nazi leaders.

"We demanded that the government file cases with the international crimes tribunals at Dhaka against Jamaat and its associate killer forces immediately," he added.

"It wouldn't be possible to stop recurrence of genocide and killings of intellectuals if the political party [Jamaat] committing genocide [in 1971] is not banned," he said.

The veteran journalist further said many eyewitnesses and victims retreated from testifying upon receiving threats from Jamaat men.

He demanded enactment of a witness protection act to ensure security of the witnesses of the war crimes cases and ensure proper manpower and other requirements of the tribunals.

Committee leaders Prof Muntassir Mamoon, Ferdousi Priyabhashini, Kazi Mukul, among others, were present at the press conference.

The government formed the International Crimes Tribunal on March 25, 2010 to try the war criminals of the nine-month-long war. On March 22, 2012, a second tribunal was formed to expedite the trials.

The tribunals have so far delivered two verdicts, while seven other Jamaat and BNP leaders are facing trial.

Khairat's call

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ignoring the restrictions clamped by the authorities.

Earlier, the East Bengal Legislative Assembly met in session. With 80 of its 123 members present, Khairat Hossain asked for a discussion on the ban imposed on the Pakistan Observer. His suggestion was opposed by chief minister Nurul Amin who, however, told the legislature that the move had been taken in the public interest. If the step had not been taken, he stated, order would have broken down. The speaker of the assembly then rejected Khairat Hossain's demand and hence no discussion on the issue could take place.

On the same day, SH Qureshi, district magistrate of Dhaka, issued formal orders for an imposition of Section 144 the next day, making it clear that the restrictions would remain in force for thirty days. Government officials went into overdrive trying to explain the rationale behind the imposition of Section 144. Chief secretary Aziz Ahmed noted that intelligence reports had warned of plans by the protesters to storm the assembly building on February 21. He was being economical with the truth. The students did mean to besiege the assembly, but they certainly had no plan or intention of going inside it by force.

It is worth noting that following the tragedy of February 21, Nurul Amin would note that the decision about Section 144 had been made by bureaucrats and that he had no prior knowledge of it. It was revealing of the authority men like Aziz Ahmed exercised despite the chief minister being around with all his powers.

Jamaat men fight

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received bullet in his leg, said police and party activists. He was admitted to a local clinic.

Twenty others with minor injuries were under treatment at different hospitals, said Sylhet city unit Jamaat Assistant Secretary Fakhrul Islam.

Police had to fire around 50 gunshots and teargas canisters during the nearly 25-minute clash, said Abdullah Al Azad Chowdhury, additional commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police.

Azad said the clash ensued around 11:45am when over 250 activists of Jamaat and Shibir brought out a procession from Chouhatta and faced police resistance.

They were protesting against the deaths of three Jamaat-Shibir men killed in Cox's Bazar during a gun battle with police on Friday. Fifty people including a number of policemen were injured during the clash.

As yesterday's procession reached Naya Sarak, some 400 feet off Chouhatta, police barred the Jamaat-Shibir men, Azad added.

Infuriated by the police resistance, unruly Jamaat-Shibir men hurled brick chips at the law enforcers, forcing the police to retaliate to dislodge them, he said.

Meanwhile, the Barisal unit Nayeab-e-Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami was arrested from Port Road area in the city yesterday afternoon, reports our Barisal correspondent.

Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Shakhawat Hossain said they had arrested Bazul Rahman Bachchu in a case filed with the police station in connection with January 25 attacks on police. BAUFAL/JAMAAT OFFICE/VANDALISED A group of people ransacked the Baufal upazila unit office of

BSF kills 1

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Kussher Haat camp in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal fired three shots at him, leaving the youth injured.

His associates took him to Phulbari Health Complex. As his condition deteriorated, he was shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital, where he succumbed to his wounds around 8:00am.

Subedar Mohammad Ali, Kashipur company commander of 45 BGB Battalion in Kurigram, said they have sent a letter to the BSF in Dinhat of Cooch Behar protesting the killing.

Facebook hit

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flaw in Java software made by Oracle, which was alerted to the situation and released a patch the first of February, according to Facebook.

The hackers appeared to be targeting developers and technology firms based on the website they chose to booby-trap with malicious code.

"Facebook was not alone in this attack," the Northern California-based company said.

"It is clear that others were attacked and infiltrated recently as well."

The US intelligence community has concluded that America is the target of a massive cyber-espionage campaign that is threatening its competitiveness, The Washington Post reported just days ago.

Citing unnamed officials, the newspaper said the conclusion is contained in the National Intelligence Estimate, a classified report that represents the

JS may pass bill

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the country's Liberation War in 1971, a source in the prosecution of the war crimes trial told this correspondent yesterday.

A certified copy of the verdict has already been collected, he said, but it may not be possible to file the appeal this week. "Our target is to file it by next week."

As per the proposed changes in the law, the government will have to file the appeal within 30 days from February 5, the day the tribunal delivered the verdict.

"The appeal will be filed very much within time," said Mohammad Ali, prosecutor at the International Crimes Tribunal-2.

According to the proposed provision of the International Crimes Tribunal Act, 1973, the SC will dispose of the appeal within 60 days of its filing.

The government placed a bill in the House on Wednesday seeking amendments to the ICT Act to allow the state and complainants to

Jamaat yesterday morning, reports our Patuakhali correspondent.

Local Jamaat leaders said some people from a procession of Bangladesh Chhatra League, associate student body of ruling Awami League, attacked the office and set some files on fire.

Nareesh Chandra Karmaker, officer-in-charge of Baufal police, however said unidentified people attacked and set fire to the Jamaat office.

A fearless soul

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tirelessly. He spent several sleepless nights at Shahbagh. He would say they were now fighting for a war criminals-free Bangladesh," said his father Dr Md Najim Uddin.

A libertarian, Rajib graduated in architecture from Asia Pacific University in 2004. As a free spirit, he could not continue in a job for long. Mega Builders was his last workplace.

He was preparing to go abroad for higher studies in architecture, said his relatives.

Rajib was born in 1980. Till class-V, he studied at a school in Iran as the family lived there for his father's job.

He passed SSC from the Government Laboratory High School in Dhaka in 1996 and HSC from Kapasia Degree College in 1998.

Rajib was not an activist of any political party; he dedicated himself to the cause of war crimes trial, said his father.

"In his childhood, we took special care so he is well versed in the country's history, in particular, the Liberation War. He wanted to do something for the country," he added.

Rajib had designed the proposed memorial for freedom fighters at Kapasia, construction of which was scheduled to begin soon. His grandfather Mafizuddin Master was founder-president of Gazipur Awami League. His mother Nargis Haidar is women affairs secretary of Kapasia AL.

"In 1971, the occupation Pakistan army burnt down his ancestral home in its first assault on the area. As a member of this family, Rajib learnt to hate war criminals from his early days," said Khurrom Haidar, Rajib's maternal uncle.

Rajib married his university classmate, Anika, four and a half months back, but they were not living together.

consensus view of the US intelligence community.

The document, according to the Post, identifies energy, finance, information technology, aerospace and automotive companies as the most frequent targets of hacking campaigns that appear state sponsored.

Early this month Twitter said it was hammered by a cyber attack similar to those that recently hit major Western news outlets, and that the passwords of about 250,000 users were stolen.

The attack coincided with the revelation of several high-profile security breaches. The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal said that they had been hacked, and pointed to attackers from China.

It was unknown whether the cyberattack on San Francisco-based Twitter was related to high-powered hacker assaults on Facebook, the Times or the Journal.

appeal against any verdict of the war crimes tribunals.

The government has moved to bring the changes in view of the ongoing mass movement at Shahbagh in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

The existing provisions of the law do not allow the government to appeal against inadequate sentence in war crimes trial, and it allows appeal only in case of acquittal.

A person convicted by a war crimes tribunal, however, has the right to appeal against the conviction.

In defence of the proposed changes in the law, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed termed the existing provisions on appeal discriminatory.

Amid such a situation, parliament is scheduled to pass the bill today. The bill provides that the changes will have retrospective effect from July 14, 2009.

Nerve-racking

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confidence. The popular Spelling Bee mascot, "The Bee" was also present. Only the students who failed to spell the words correctly broke down in tears.

Eventually, 11 contestants qualified for the next round including Supriya Sharmin Tushi and Tamanna Tabassum students of classes VII and X from Govt. Laboratory High School Comilla; Rubaiyat-al-Mahim and Mohammad Mohinuddin students of classes IX and X from Comilla Zilla School; Erona Kabir Ena and Nowshin Sharmily students of Class X from Nawab Faizunnesa Govt. Girls' High School; Muntahina Islam Khan and Sariha Noor Azad students of Class IX from Our Lady Of Fatima Girls' High School; Shahriar Mahmud Bapon (Class X, Comilla Modern High School); Md. Aminul Hasan (Class VIII, Police Line High School) and Md. Mahibur Rahman (Class IX, Ibn Taimiya School and College).

Students of classes VI to X can take part in the contest by registering and playing the Spelling Bee game on champs21.com. The bulk of the qualifiers will be selected via the online game. Contestants can play the game as many times, as they want and only their best score will be considered. The top scorers in the online game will qualify for the next round.

The online round ends on February 28. The winner of the Spelling Bee gets Tk 5 lakh worth of education insurance from Metlife Alico and an all-expenses-paid trip to the USA. The second and third runners-up will get Tk 3 lakh and Tk 2 lakh worth of education insurance respectively.

For more information, log on to www.champs21.com, the first e-learning portal of Bangladesh.

6,000 sued

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magistrate.

The indefinite ban on all gatherings (Section 144) was imposed in the beach town following a battle between Jamaat-Shibir men and police on Friday afternoon. At least three of its activists were killed and 50 others, including several policemen, were injured during the clash.

Jamaat-backed "Mukti Parishad", called for the hartal demanding the release of war crimes accused Jamaat Nayeab-e-Ameer Delawar Hossain Sayedee.

Additional members of police, Rapid Action Battalion and Border Guard Bangladesh have been posted at different key points of the district to avert any untoward incident.

Police sued over 6,000 people in four separate cases filed with Cox's Bazar Model Sadar Police Station in connection with Friday's clash.

District Jamaat Ameer Md Shahjahan and the party's Secretary GM Rahim Ullah are among those accused of preventing police from discharging their duties, arson and vandalism of vehicles and bringing out procession without permission from the authorities concerned.

Four sub-inspectors of the police station filed the cases mentioning names of 200 Jamaat-Shibir men yesterday, said Md Jasimuddin, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Afghan forces banned from calling Nato air strikes

AFP, Kabul

Afghan ground forces will be barred from calling in Nato air strikes after an attack killed a number of children this week, President Hamid Karzai said Saturday.

"I issue a decree, from tomorrow none of the Afghan forces are allowed to ask for foreign air support under any conditions," he said in an address to young officers at a military academy in Kabul.

"Our forces ask for air support from foreigners and children get killed in an air strike," he said.

This was apparently a reference to an attack during an overnight raid by combined Afghan and Nato ground forces on a Taliban hideout in a remote eastern region on Wednesday.

Initial reports said 10 civilians, including five children and four women, were killed when the air strike was called in.

Three Taliban commanders, including a notorious al-Qaeda-linked militant leader called Shahpoor, were also killed in the raid, Afghan officials said.



The 11 divisional round qualifiers out of the 118 who took part in the Comilla zonal activation round of The Daily Star Spelling Bee contest powered by Horlicks.

PHOTO: STAR

Grief turns into strength

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was to see the war criminals hanged.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visited his residence in the capital's Pallabi yesterday afternoon and vowed to bring the murderers to trial.

Meanwhile, through separate statements, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and International Committee for Democracy in Bangladesh (ICDB) expressed their solidarity with the movement.

Students and teachers of University of Asia Pacific and Institute of Architects, Bangladesh, yesterday joined the movement. Rajib was a student of the university and a member of the institute.

Spearheaded by a group of bloggers and online activists, the demonstration started on February 5, hours after Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah was given life imprisonment in a war crimes case.

The 12th straight day of the demonstration passed with protesters venting outrage at

the murder of Rajib, known in the Bangla blog community as Thaba Baba.

Since the morning yesterday, the intersection had been swarming with tens of thousands of people wearing black badges and echoing the demand of the protesters.

While the body arrived at Shahbagh, a shadow of shock engulfed the whole area.

Rajib's first namaz-e-janaza was held at the intersection, now known as Projommo Chharta, around 5:50pm yesterday.

Before the janaza, Rajib's uncle Alam said, "The body belong to neither any party nor any individual.... I have come here to hand over the body to protesters."

The second namaz-e-janaza was held at Palash Nagar in Pallabi around 7:45pm. The third one is scheduled for today at Kapasia Pilot High School in Gazipur.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, media personality Asaduzzaman Noor, law-

Arms, nuke deals

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Former chief of army staff Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said China had so far been Bangladesh's consistent source for weapon purchase at a nominal interest rate with longstanding and comprehensive defence cooperation deal.

Making a huge arms deal with Russia all on a sudden without any public discourse was a big shift from that stand, said Rahman, also a vice-chairman of the main opposition BNP.

He said even the armed forces were not notably involved in making the decision, nor was there any international tender.

Brig Gen (Rtd) Sakhawati Hossain, a former commissioner of election commission, said it was not clear whether the weapons would be purchased keeping the local requirement in mind.

Russia having significantly lost arms market in India, Middle East and east,

west and north African countries, was now looking for new markets, he said, adding that there was no specifically laid down defence policy at the political level for the armed forces that function on certain principles.

Former ambassador Harun-ur-Rashid said an apparent negligence shown by the US to the incumbent government of Bangladesh might have prompted it to incline to Russia.

Any credit against an interest rate higher than 1.5 percent is considered hard commercial loan, he said.

"I am puzzled what national interest has been given priority in these deals," he said, "I wonder why these were not even discussed."

He said Russia wanted to contain the influence of China, Japan and the US in South-East Asia.

Harun, however, said Bangladesh's access to Russia with its readymade garment products would

Rajib was targeted

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death penalty for war criminals, according to a web post on Sonarbangla, a blog run by Jamaat-Shibir activists.

An image of Rajib's Facebook page was also posted on the same blog.

On February 11, a Sonarbangla blogger with a pseudonym, Sporsher Baire (Out of Touch), wrote about the organisers of the ongoing Shahbagh movement.

Rajib was also named on the site.

After Rajib was brutally murdered in Mirpur in Dhaka on Friday, the Facebook page was not found on the site.

The Daily Star, however, had captured an image of this blog page.

Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission blocked the Sonarbangla blog yesterday morning.

The Bloggers and Online Activists Network has been demanding that the government block the page since it launched the protest on February 5 hours after an international crimes tribunal awarded Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah life term for war crimes.

Ahmed Rajib Haider used to write as Thaba Baba on different blogs. In his last Facebook status posted Friday afternoon, he called for banning the institutions owned by the Jamaat-e-

Islami, an ally of the BNP-led 18-party opposition, in Bangladesh.

But mysteriously, most of the writings by Thaba Baba are not available on the internet from yesterday. A few of his writings are available, but whether those were written by Thaba Baba is not clear.

According to different bloggers' posts in Facebook, Shibir cadres have continued campaigning against the activists of the movement.

For example, a person named Dhansiri Wahid in his status on Facebook termed several of Shahbagh activists as atheists.

"It is a duty of all Muslims to kill those atheists," he said.

Wahid named Thaba Baba, Asif Mohiuddin, Bami Shial, Arif Jebotik, Doctor Aizu, Nijhum Majumder and other bloggers, saying he wanted to kill them himself.

Another Facebook account holder Farabi Shafiri Rahman in a post said the imam who conducted the namaz-e-janaza of Rajib yesterday at Shahbagh would also be killed.

This person also suggested throwing Rajib's body to tigers at the Mirpur Zoo.

Last month, another blogger Asif Mohiuddin was stabbed at Uttara in the capital by some unknown people but he survived. Asif is a friend of the activists of Shahbagh movement.

maker Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and, relatives of Rajib, among others, attended the janaza.

PM's son Sajeeb Wajed Joy, too, went to the funeral prayer and expressed solidarity with the movement.

Syed Emdaduddin, Dhaka University central mosque imam, administered the Shahbagh janaza, participated by hundreds of thousands.

After the second janaza, the body was taken to Rajib's Pallabi residence and then to the mortuary of Birdem Hospital.

"Rajib will be laid to rest at his family graveyard at Kapasia in Gazipur tomorrow [today]," Imran H Sarker told The Daily Star last night.

Most of the posts of the online activist were on the Liberation War and Jamaat's activities.

His family members, friends and Shahbagh protesters allege Jamaat-Shibir members had killed Rajib as he was playing a major role in the movement.

open up markets in the central Asia, including Belarus and Kazakhstan.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, in his opening remark said it was natural that Bangladesh was trying to reach out as many countries as possible to serve its national interest.

But it was important to look into what rationale had prompted the deals with Russia, he continued, "Because I do not subscribe to the view that a country, which was a true friend to Bangladesh during its Liberation War, should be compensated in other means."

Former ambassadors Mahmood Hasan and Ashfaqur Rahman, and Shahedul Anam Khan, editor of Oped and Strategic Affairs at The Daily Star, among others, also spoke at the discussion moderated by CFAS Chairman M Serajul Islam.

16 PCJSS men

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Protesting the incident, the PCJSS yesterday brought out a procession in the town and held a protest rally before the new court building.

Speaking at the rally, PCJSS leaders demanded the administration immediately rescue the abductees unhurt.

They also blasted the government for not implementing the CHT peace accord fully.

Contacted, Michael Chakma, secretary of the Rangamati unit of Gonotantrik Jubo Forum, the youth body of the UPDE, refuted the allegation against their organisation.

"Our men are not involved in the abduction. The PCJSS often issues false statements against our organisation to tarnish the party's image," he added.

UN chief

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It was the first fatal exchange between troops in the region since the two armies agreed a ceasefire on January 16. A flare-up along the LoC in early January saw a total of five soldiers killed, three from Pakistan and two from India.

Cross-border trade and transport links were also suspended for several weeks although they have since resumed.

Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir. Each administers part of the territory but claims the whole of Kashmir.

14-party vows to avenge

Rajib's killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday vowed to avenge the murder of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haidar by ensuring capital punishment to war criminals and banning Jamaat-Shibir.

They made the pledge at a gathering in Tongi before bringing out a procession to Uttara.

"Rajib, your bloodshed has strengthened the movement. We swear we will ensure that these traitors, Jamaat-Shibir-Razakar, are hanged till death," Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the main opposition BNP still seemed confused about its alliance with Jamaat.

"I would like to thank Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir [acting secretary general of BNP] through this rally for exposing the true character of his party. By his words, he has proven that they are the protector and defender of the war criminals," he added.

Apart from Uttara, procession was organised at two other points in the capital.

Myanmar army 'torture' Kachin rebel suspects: UN

AFP, Yangon

The United Nations yesterday raised concern over the Myanmar army's "arbitrary arrest and torture" of men accused of being Kachin rebels, and urged further efforts to end hostilities in the far north.

UN special rapporteur on rights in Myanmar Tomas Ojea Quintana welcomed recent talks in China aimed at stopping the unrest in Kachin state that has undermined wider political improvements in the former pariah nation.

But he stressed the impact on local communities of the heavy fighting, which has displaced tens of thousands since a 17-year ceasefire between the army and rebel Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in broke down in June 2011.

Following a visit to the prison in state capital Myitkyina, Quintana said he was "concerned about the ongoing practice of arbitrary arrest and torture during interrogation by the military of Kachin men accused of belonging" to the KIA.

The envoy, who was speaking as he concluded a wide-ranging visit to Myanmar Saturday, said a large military presence in Kachin has meant that "serious human rights violations" continue.

The Myanmar government last month announced a unilateral ceasefire but the violence went on, with government troops capturing a key outpost and edging closer to the rebels' headquarters near the Chinese border.

8 detained

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of the detainees.

Rajib was found dead on the road near his house at Palash Nagar in