

# Sayeeda Warsi hails Shahbagh movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, UK's senior state minister for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, yesterday hailed the youth demonstration at Shahbagh as a unique and peaceful movement.

While appreciating the young generation for placing their demand against war criminals in a peaceful manner, Warsi also said the demand for death sentence might be a little extreme.

She was addressing a views-exchange meeting at Prothom Alo office in the capital.

"Bangladesh can work towards exposing the war criminals instead of demanding death penalty for them as this could make martyrs out of the war criminals instead of letting them serve their time in prison," Warsi said.

She further said Bangladesh should focus more on productivity rather than allow partisan politics to influence their ethics.

Speakers at the meeting explained how the failure to render transparent and accountable justice has led the youth to demand death penalty for war criminals.

"People haven't seen justice being rendered, which means the public institutions did not perform according to public expectations. The slogans chanted in Shahbagh are for change; we should not confine these slogans into the spirit of the movement," said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

Speakers also said the demonstrators at Shahbagh fears presidential clemency for the war criminals and that they [war criminals] would be granted freedom if another party came to power.

Robert Winnington Gibson, British high commissioner to Bangladesh, and Mahabub Hossain, executive director of Brac, among others, spoke at the meeting which was moderated by Matur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo.



Bangladeshi expatriates in London gather in front of Bangladesh High Commission to show solidarity with the demonstrators at Shahbagh demanding a ban on politics of Jamaat-e-Islami and a secular Bangladesh on Sunday.

PHOTO: INSHRA SAKHAWAT RUSSELL



A wood sculpture titled "Projonmo Bir Stambha" (monument for the heroes of the generation) was placed at Shahbagh yesterday celebrating the youth movement which began there on February 5 to demand death penalty for war criminals. Sculptor Munshi Nazrul Islam Sujan, standing beside the makeshift stambha, is a former student of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## KAMARUZZAMAN'S TRIAL FOR WAR CRIMES Tribunal rebukes defence for absence during hartals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday warned defence counsels of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman that it would close the cross-examination of a prosecution witness if the defence remains absent during future hartals.

Only one junior member of Kamaruzzaman's defence team was present yesterday, fixed for recording the cross-examination of Abdur Razzaque Khan, the 18th prosecution witness and investigation officer of the case for the third day.

It was the only case in the day's cause list.

When court proceedings started at 10:50am, prosecutor AKM Saiful Islam, Razzaque, defence counsel Shazzad Ali Chowdhury and some journalists were present while Kamaruzzaman was also brought in.

Shazzad then sought an adjournment, stating that senior counsels could not appear for "unavoidable circumstances". "A lot of vehicles are plying the city. Why could they not appear?" asked the tribunal.

Replying to a question, Shazzad said Kafil Uddin Chowdhury, who usually cross-examines prosecution witnesses, was not in Dhaka.

On February 14, the tribunal wanted to

fix Sunday for recording the cross-examination but Monday was fixed upon Kafil's plea.

"If you do not come at your own will, we have nothing to do. No further chances will be given to you. You have to come whether there is hartal or not.

"If you do not come for hartal, we will not allow you further adjournment. We will stop the cross-examination," said the tribunal.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with member Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Judge M Shahinur Islam then adjourned the case proceedings till today.

On several occasions, the tribunals adjourned proceedings on hartal days as senior defence lawyers usually do not appear citing security reasons.

But for the first time on Wednesday, when no hartal was declared, the tribunals had to adjourn proceedings as some defence counsels did not show up citing security reasons after Jamaat-Shibir unleashed terror in the capital that morning.

Meanwhile, the prosecution yesterday submitted a petition seeking the tribunal's direction for limiting the defence witness list, numbering 1,354, to defend Kamaruzzaman.

The tribunal is expected to hear the petition today, said Saiful Islam.

## HALL-MARK SCAM HC orders arrest of chairman on non-compliance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked law enforcers to arrest Hall-Mark Group Chairman Jasmine Islam if she did not surrender before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court within two days in 11 corruption cases as per a lower court order.

The HC also directed the government not to let Jasmine leave the country.

On Sunday, Judge Mohammad Zahirul Haque of the Senior Special Judges' Court of Dhaka asked the Hall-Mark chairman to surrender before the CMM court in three days.

Jasmine has to surrender within two days as one of the three days has already passed, Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder told The Daily Star yesterday.

The HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Mahmudul Hoque also summoned Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) public prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kazal to appear before it tomorrow for his explanation as to whether his office opposed the bail of Jasmine in the lower court.

Jasmine was granted bail on February 7 by the court of Judge Zahirul Haque on condition that she and her company would repay Tk 2,600 crore, which her company has swindled, to Sonali Bank. The court however cancelled Jasmine's bail in the 11 corruption cases filed by the ACC following an HC order on February 17.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam represented the government and Rokanuddin Mahmud appeared for Jasmine Islam.

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