

MOLLAH VERDICT Govt to appeal this week

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government may file an appeal with the Supreme Court this week seeking death penalties to Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah for each of the six charges he faced at the International Crimes Tribunal-2.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told reporters yesterday that his office would move the appeal containing three grounds for challenging the verdict of International Crimes Tribunal-2 in the case against Mollah.

The Tribunal-2 verdict delivered on February 5 convicted the 65-year-old for five wartime criminal offences among the six charges filed against him.

In two of the five acts of crimes against humanity, at least 350 Bangalees were killed and a girl was raped. The tribunal awarded him life sentence (30 years) for the offences.

He also got 15 years' imprisonment for his complicity in three other criminal offences in which six people were killed.

He was acquitted of the sixth charge of killing hundreds of people at Keraniganj during the Liberation War, as the charge was not proved in the tribunal.

Yesterday, the attorney general said the tribunal should have awarded death sentences to Mollah for each of the charges.

The government would pray to the Supreme Court to award death penalty to Quader Mollah on the charge of killing people at Keraniganj too, he told newsmen at his office.

The government took the initiative for moving the appeal as the verdict of Tribunal-2 caused a stir among common people and prompted the youths to take to the streets that led to the Shahbagh protest.

The appeal would be lodged under the amended provisions of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, that empower the government, informants and complainants to appeal against any verdict of the war crimes tribunals.

The defence and the prosecution have time until March 6 to file the appeals and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court would have to dispose of the appeals within 60 days of their filing.

Bahrain

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Earlier, the Bangladesh government signed an agreement with the Malaysian government to send workers under a government-to-government process in November last year.

Accordingly, the government selected 10,000 workers, who will be sent to Malaysia to work in the plantation sector.

The move was taken to stop the intervention of middlemen and thus boost transparency.

The minister yesterday suggested the possibility of following the same procedure with Bahrain after a meeting with Nikolas Dendias, public order and citizen protection minister of Greece.

He urged the Greek minister to assist Bangladeshi people working in Greece in visa-related problems in the country.

Around 5,000 Bangladeshis are now working in Greece, said Mosharrif.

Of the United Arab Emirates' restriction on the recruitment of Bangladeshis, he said, "We do not have any specific information about its plan to recruit our workers."

In September last year, the UAE government imposed unofficial restrictions on the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers and the renewal of their visas.

The country later declared for the fourth time a general amnesty for illegal residents there, which ended on February 4.

Ghulam Azam

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Ghulam Azam said this while addressing a meeting of Rajshahi Peace Committee (an auxiliary force of the Pakistani army) at the local Municipal Hall on July 16, 1971.

In his speech, the war crimes accused blamed the Hindus for creating rift between Muslims by raising the issue of Bangalee and non-Bangalee.

Jamaat's mouthpiece daily Sangram published the report on July 19, 1971.

Saying that such statement proves Ghulam Azam was not non-communal, Simon said the former Jamaat chief had isolated the Hindus on religious grounds and made them a target of attack.

"As a result of the incitement we find that Hindus were eliminated and driven out of the country," Simon said.

Earlier, Ghulam Azam's son Brig Gen (dismissed) Abdullah Aman Azmi in his testimony claimed that his father nurtured non-communalism belief.

Simon said the pieces of evidence show Azmi's deposition was not true.

Ghulam Azam is facing five charges -- conspiracy, planning, incitement, complicity, torture and murder -- of crimes against humanity.

The prosecution has been placing closing arguments in the war crimes case against him for the last five days. The prosecution's arguments are based on newspaper reports, documents and statements allegedly made by Ghulam Azam in 1971.

In another meeting of a Peace Committee, Ghulam Azam had said those, who defy the integrity of Pakistan, had no right to reside in the then East Pakistan and they should leave the country.

Peace Committee organised the meeting at the Republic Square of Brahmanbaria on July 18, 1971.

Simon said by making such calls, Ghulam Azam provoked auxiliary forces to attack freedom mongers.

On August 14, 1971, during a symposium organised

MKA apologises

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reports published in three newspapers, Amar Desh, Sangram and Naya Diganta, in which the minister was quoted to have said, "After the delivery of the verdict of Bachchu Razakar, international crimes tribunal will deliver its second verdict within this week while the third one is on the [February] 14th."

He was speaking in Cairo. The tribunal then in a suo-moto rule issued a show-cause notice upon the minister in this regard.

On Alamgir's behalf his counsel Mustafizur Rahman Khan yesterday said his client did not mention any date of deliveries of verdicts but the newspapers published reports "manipulating" his statement. Alamgir never intended to harm the image and dignity of the tribunal, he said, adding that the minister offered unconditional apology if any portion of his speech hurt the administration of justice.

Like four other previous notices, the Tribunal-2 yesterday disposed of the show-cause notice, asking "responsible persons" to be more careful in making comments about sub-judice matter.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan did not proceed against the Awami League leader since he offered "unconditional and unqualified apology" for his comments.

The court said it expects that people, especially ruling party leaders and ministers, would restrain themselves from trying to foretell results of cases "for upholding independence of the tribunal and fair justice".

The tribunal yesterday said, "A responsible person should be restrained and careful in making any comment on a sub-judice matter..."

"It too should not be forgotten that in the name of exercising one's right to freedom of speech, one cannot conceivably affect another person's right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according

by the Central Shanti Committee on the 25th Independence Day of Pakistan at the Curzon Hall, Ghulam Azam said if Pakistan existed, then only the rights of Bangalee Muslim would sustain.

Daily Azad published a report on it. The prosecutor said such statements were tantamount to provocation.

Three days later Ghulam Azam at Lahore Airport told journalists that there was only one path left for Pakistan since "India was sending in armed insurgents and also because India was supplying arms and ammunition to the miscreants [freedom fighters]", and that path was replying by the force of arms.

The report was published on August 18, 1971, in the daily Purbadesh.

The prosecutor told the tribunal that by saying this Ghulam Azam gave a clear indication of serious incitement.

Simon said the accused made the opening speech on October 3, 1971 at the meeting of the Majlis-e-Shura of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Dhaka where he used religious sentiments to incite the commissioning of crimes.

The war crimes accused had called upon his party activists and followers to prepare themselves for the highest possible sacrifice to protect Pakistan and said protecting Pakistan was a holy responsibility.

Simon argued that such a call made by the accused amounts to inciting the Pakistan army and its auxiliary forces to commit war crimes during the Liberation War in 1971.

The proceeding of the case was adjourned until today.

Earlier, defence counsel Gazi MH Tamim prayed that Tribunal-1 adjourns the days proceeding as senior lawyers failed to go to court due to some unavoidable circumstances.

The Tribunal-1 rejected the prayer as it considered "unavoidable circumstances" as a common phenomenon on hartal days.

to law."

With almost similar observation, the tribunal disposed of four similar notices it had issued against Awami League leader and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of Parliament Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, minister without portfolio Suranjit Sengupta, and the editor and a reporter of Bangladesh Protidin.

The tribunal issued a similar notice against BNP standing committee member MK Anwar for his alleged comment over the tribunal and the matter is still pending with the tribunal.

It also asked Jamaat-e-Islami acting secretary general Rafiqul Islam Khan, Central Executive Council member Hamidur Rahman Azad, also a lawmaker, and its Dhaka city unit Assistant Secretary General Selim Uddin to appear before the court tomorrow and explain why contempt of court proceeding should not be initiated against them for their comments about the tribunal.

Radicals

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March 1. Meanwhile, unknown people have issued phone threats to many participants of the Shahbagh movement.

"I received a call from an unknown number around 1:45pm on Friday. The caller said he knows well that I join the Shahbagh rallies every day," said a girl wishing not to be named.

She quoted the unknown caller as saying, "You know, Islam and Prophet Mohammad are being insulted at Shahbagh. So you'd better not go there." Many of her friends also received such calls.

Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Media and Community Service of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said they were yet to receive any such complaint. He suggested filing general diary with police.

4 killed, 50 hurt during hartal

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Mohammad Salahuddin, Manikganj unit general secretary of Khelafat Majlis, one of the eight so-called Islamist parties that enforced the shutdown with BNP's support, claimed the victims had been its activists. The party has called a daylong hartal in Manikganj for today in protest.

Interestingly, a BNP press release claimed two of its upazila level leaders were among the dead. In protest, the party will demonstrate in Dhaka tomorrow and across the country on Thursday.

Locals, however, told The Daily Star that the victims had no political link.

The dead are Alamgir Hossain, 35, a farmer; Nasir Ahmed, 30, a husk trader; Nazimuddin Mollah, 26, an expatriate, of Gobindol area in the upazila; and Shah Alam, 20, an Alim student of Muslimnagar Rashidia Madrasa in the upazila.

Witnesses said the clash erupted around 9:00am when pro-hartal activists attacked an Awami League procession led by its district unit General Secretary Abdul Majed Khan at Kashimnagar. At least 10 AL leaders and activists were injured in the clash.

In retaliation, AL activists vandalised the upazila BNP office.

At this, pickets put barricades with logs on the road at Gobindol. The sticks and machetes-wielding hartal supporters brought out a procession in the area pro-

testing the vandalism, added the witnesses.

As police rushed to the spot and tried to disperse them, a chase and counter-chase took place, leading to nearly a three-hour sporadic clash.

The hartal supporters used the microphones of several mosques to mislead villagers, said Mizanur Rahman, additional superintendent of police of Manikganj.

Police fired around 200 gunshots and teargas shells to bring the situation under control. Hartal supporters responded by throwing brick chips and attacked police with bamboo sticks, prompting the law enforcers to open fire, leaving the four people dead.

In port city Chittagong, the hartal was largely peaceful except for a few stray incidents.

Two scooters were torched at Hazari Lane and Kapsagola in the city, said Mohiuddin Selim, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Traffic was almost normal and offices and roadside shops were open. Big shopping malls, however, did not open.

In Cox's Bazar, at least 18 people were hurt, including five by bullets, as the BNP-Jamaat men clashed with Awami League activists in the district's Pekua upazila.

The clash began when Chhatra League men intercepted Jamaat-Shibir activists picketing in Ashrafal Ulum Madrasa area around

10:00am, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

BNP activists rushed to help the Jamaat-Shibir men after an announcement through the loudspeaker of a local mosque, witnesses said, adding that 20 gunshots were heard during the clash.

Police detained two BNP men from the scene.

In Joypurhat, hartal supporters burnt a microbus carrying newspapers early in the morning. They stopped the microbus at Komargram village under the sadar upazila, around 7km from the district town.

Police said the pickets burnt the vehicle and about 5,000 copies of newspapers to ashes and fled the area after exploding two cocktails.

Meanwhile, in Dinajpur, police Sub-inspector Farhad Hossain received head injuries when pickets hurled bricks at him at Ranirbandar. He was admitted to Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital.

The hartal in Rajshahi was marked by stray incidents of arson and picketing. No pro-hartal activists were seen in most of the area and business was almost normal.

Some pickets barricaded the Rajshahi-Naogaon road at Poba for one hour, torching tyres since 11:00am. They damaged three battery-run auto-rickshaws and burnt another, but fled when police arrived at the scene.

In Khulna anti-hartal activists chased some pro-hartal activists and vandalised a house where the latter

took shelter, said Sonadanga Police Station Officer-in-charge Muzazzaman.

During the incident, locals attacked a group of Chhatra League workers, leaving five people injured. Vehicular movement was normal and shopping malls and businesses were open.

The strike passed off without any untoward incident in Sylhet.

Meanwhile, a man, who was bullet hit during Friday's violence in the district was declared clinically dead, doctors and family members said.

Victim Abdur Rahman along with 20 others were bullet hit near Chouhatta area as police fired gunshots when Muslim fanatics attacked the Central Shaheed Minar on Friday.

Also yesterday, the burnt body recovered from a Jamaat adherent-owned computer centre in Tangail was identified as Sumon Saha, 27.

The computer centre was torched by a group of people on Saturday.

Later that day, Ishtiaq Ahmed Rajib, general secretary of Tangail BCL, filed a murder case against 70 to 80 unidentified Jamaat-Shibir men.

Claiming that Sumon was an AL activist, Rajib in his case statement said the Jamaat-Shibir men exploded a bomb inside the computer centre, leading to Sumon's death, said Abu Obaida, officer-in-charge of Tangail Model Police Station.

THREATENING IMAM CU student arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday detained a Hizb ut-Tahrir man at Hathazari upazila in Chittagong for threatening to kill the imam who led the namaz-e-janaza of blogger Ahmed Rajib Haidar.

Farabi Shafiq Rahman, a fourth-year student of physics at Chittagong University, was detained around 7:30pm near the second gate of the university, said Assistant Superintendent of Police (Hathazari Circle) AFM Nizam Uddin.

Farabi made the threat in a blog post. The imam conducted the prayers on February 16 at Shahbagh.

Rajib, an activist of the Shahbagh movement, was brutally murdered at Mirpur in the capital on February 15.

Yemen president in Aden trip as clashes rage

AFP, Aden

Yemeni President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi was paying a surprise visit to Aden yesterday as witnesses said clashes raged between police and protesting southern separatists amid calls for civil disobedience.

Hadi was in Aden on an "inspection visit", his first since becoming president in February 2012, and would meet local officials and military leaders, the state news agency Saba reported.

A security official in the main southern city told AFP that Hadi was visiting to "closely check the situation in Aden following the unrest".

Protests have intensified in south Yemen since the killing of five people in clashes between police and pro-independence demonstrators on Thursday, when the deeply divided country marked a year since the ouster of strongman Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Witnesses said hardliners from the Southern Movement clashed on Sunday with security forces in the southeastern city of Mukalla after they blocked roads with burning tyres and rocks.

"The army is using live ammunition against protesters," said Nasser Baqazuz, an activist from the separatist group. One policeman was wounded in the confrontation, according to witnesses.

Resistance all over

FROM PAGE 1

The shutdown failed to gain support in any divisional headquarter.

Trains operated on schedule but long-distance buses were off the roads fearing attacks from pickets. Operations of local buses and other vehicles were as usual.

In the capital, the Projonmo Chattar reverberating with slogans as the anti-hartal demonstration started around 9:30am.

The Shahbagh youths on Saturday night called upon the nation to reject the hartal terming it "anti-people" and "anti-state" and a plot to save war criminals.

People of different professions and also school goers started gathering at Shahbagh early in the morning.

A mass procession starting from Projonmo Chattar marched through Matsya Bhaban, Jatiya Press club, Purana Paltan and Dainik Bangla intersection and returned to Shahbagh by the same route.

People regardless of religion, cast and creed, leaders and activists of different student bodies, commuters,

pedestrians and office goers joined the youths-led procession.

Meanwhile, pickets set a human hauler ablaze in the city's Jatrabari area in the morning. Around the same time, another group exploded handmade bombs at Janopath intersection, damaging a pickup van of Rapid Action Battalion.

In Rajshahi, locals chased a group of Islami Chhatra Shibir men who had tried to torch a vehicle.

The demonstrators of Ekattur Mancho marched through different roads in Rajshahi with national flags. They chanted slogans demanding death penalty for war criminals and ban on Jamaat-Shibir.

In Rangpur, youths brought out a mass procession and paraded through the main streets demanding ban on Jamaat-e-Islami and execution of war criminals.

Sharfuddin Ahmed Jhantu, mayor of Rangpur City Corporation, led another procession rejecting the hartal.

Anti-hartal processions were also brought in Chandpur, Sylhet,

Brahmanbaria, Noakhali and Joypurhat.

PROJONMO CHATTAR

After the procession, the activists took position at the Shahbagh intersection like previous days and stayed there till night.

People from all walks of life gathered at the venue wholeheartedly to express solidarity.

The mass signature campaign, which began on February 22, continued yesterday. At 10:00pm yesterday, when the campaign ended for the night, more 80,000 signatures have already been collected.

Imran H Sarkar, a key organiser of the movement, said if Amar Desh acting editor Mahmudur Rahman was not arrested immediately, the Shahbagh youths will announce tougher programme from today's Mirpur rally to be started at 3:00pm.

The Shahbagh movement that started on February 5, hours after the Jamaat leader Quader Mollah was sentenced to life in prison, for as passed its 20th consecutive day yesterday.

Jamaat's new ploy

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The report, warning of Jamaat's new ploy to create anarchy, was submitted to the government yesterday, said a highly placed source.

Meanwhile, Mahbul Alam Hanif, a special assistant to the prime minister, told The Daily Star last night, "We have information that Jamaat may go for very provocative acts to instigate violence by burning religious materials and blaming others for that."

Hanif, also joint general secretary of the ruling Awami League, said, "We urge people and Islamist political parties not to be misled by Jamaat's heinous acts."

On Friday, activists of Jamaat and its student body Islami Chhatra Shibir and their sympathisers attacked law enforcers and journalists, burned and tore the national flag and vandalised Shaheed Minars, reacting to the mass movement for capital punishment to 1971 war criminals.

The countrywide violence that day left at least four people killed and nearly 1,000 including 14 journalists injured.

Members of Jamaat and like-minded parties also chanted slogans against the organisers of the Shahbagh movement, which has been

calling for death penalty for all war criminals and a ban on Jamaat-Shibir.

Some of the Gonojagoron Manchas, set up across the country to express solidarity with the Shahbagh movement, were also vandalised.

In the wake of Friday's violence, the government high-ups think now there is no alternative to banning Jamaat for involvement in crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971, said party sources.

The AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the highest decision-making body of the ruling party, would soon meet to discuss the issue.

"The government is seriously considering banning Jamaat within its tenure," said Hanif, adding that Law Minister Shafique Ahmed had been reviewing all the legal aspects of the matter.

The PM's special assistant said a concrete decision on the issue would be made at the next ALCWC meeting.

AL Organising Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star that legal issues would be reviewed to make a decision about the financial and business institutions of the anti-liberation forces.

Banning Jamaat was now a matter of time, he added.

Thousands isolated by Australian floodwaters

AFP, Sydney

Thousands of people on Australia's east coast were cut off yesterday by floodwaters which have claimed two lives, while violent thunderstorms and a series of reported "mini-tornados" destroyed homes south of Sydney.

State Emergency Services (SES) said the worst of the flood crisis in the north of New South Wales state appeared to have passed, with the waters mostly beginning to subside by Sunday afternoon.

"The rivers up north have pretty much peaked or are peaking," an SES spokeswoman told AFP. "Everything is pretty much on the way down."

The Macleay River peaked lower than had been forecast in the town of Kempsey, 350 kilometres (215 miles) north of Sydney, and the town escaped major flooding.

Further south in the town of Port Macquarie some low-lying areas were inundated by the low pressure system which travelled down the coast and has swollen river systems from Sydney to Queensland state.

'Evil forces' desecrated national flag

Says BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two days after Jamaat-Islami and its sympathisers desecrated Shaheed Minars and the national flag, the main opposition BNP yesterday blamed "the anti-democratic evil forces" for the incidents.

In a statement, BNP said "Police and Rab personnel with cadres of Jubo and Chhatra League attacked the processions of Olama Mashayekhs on Friday, leaving several persons dead and many others, including journalists, injured."

BNP said the ruling Awami League is trying to stay in power "through a conspiracy" and hurting people's feelings and sentiments in the process.

On Friday, Jamaat and its sympathisers unleashed a wave of terror across the country after the Juma prayers, and attacked law enforcers and journalists, burnt and tore the national flag and vandalised Shaheed Minars to counter the mass protests for capital punishment to the 1971 war criminals.

They defiled the national flag in Chandpur and Bogra, and vandalised Shaheed Minars in Feni and Sylhet.

Talking to The Daily Star on Saturday, a few BNP leaders slated the incidents but refrained from making any comments about the attackers.

Several dead in Vietnam explosions

AFP, Hanoi

Several people were killed when twin blasts tore through a residential street and destroyed three houses in south Vietnam early Sunday, police said, with reports putting the death toll at around 10.

"We have been informed of two explosions this morning that killed about ten people... but we need to check the exact number of the victims," a local policeman told AFP following the blasts, which left many more victims trapped in rubble, according to reports.

The policeman said authorities were investigating the cause of the explosions in a district of the southern metropolis of Ho Chi Minh City, adding that they were believed to have been accidental.

State mouthpiece Tuoi Tre newspaper reported on its website that a family of seven was among those killed and many people remained trapped in the rubble.

Fire at Ekushey

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doused the blaze after half an hour. Monir Hossain, assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said they were yet to determine the cause of the fire.

Go tough

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do politics in Bangladesh, he added. Tofail said Jamaat was banned following the birth of Bangladesh but later Ziaur Rahman allowed them to do politics. "The consequences will be same whether Jamaat is banned or not."

"We will not ban political parties based on religion. We will take action against Jamaat-e-Islami that committed heinous crimes in 1971," AL MP Sheikh Fazlul Karim said, adding the party has now become a militant organisation.

He said anti-liberation force Jamaat cannot be pardoned for its crimes during the Liberation War and that a process is underway to ban the party.

He also urged the government to take action against national daily Amar Desh and Naya Diganta for hurting people's religious sentiment, creating anarchy. Independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim demanded that the government take stern action against the evil forces engaged in conspiracy to destabilise the country.