

CONTEMPT RULE HEARING 3 Jamaat leaders absent again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three top Jamaat-e-Islami leaders yesterday failed to show up before International Crimes Tribunal-2 for the third time in connection with a contempt of court rule issued against them.

Even though the prosecution had again sought arrest warrants against them, the tribunal gave the Jamaat leaders another chance to appear before the court on Wednesday.

Their defence lawyers had filed a time petition as well.

On February 7, the tribunal asked Jamaat acting secretary general Rafiqul Islam Khan, central executive council member Hamidur Rahman Azad, MP, and Dhaka city unit assistant secretary general Selim Uddin to explain as to why contempt of court proceeding should not be initiated against them for making provocative and derogatory remarks about the tribunal.

The tribunal issued the notice on the basis of reports published in The Daily Star and Bangla daily Prothom Alo on February 5 about a Jamaat rally held in the city the previous day.

Prothom Alo quoted Selim Uddin as saying: "There is no scope for the controversial tribunal to deliver any verdict, if the country is to be saved from a civil war."

The daily quoted Azad as saying at the same programme, "This tribunal cannot exist anymore."

The Daily Star in a report headlined "Jamaat warns of civil war" quoted Rafiqul Islam as saying, "Don't push the country into a civil war by delivering one-sided verdicts against our leaders. If anything happens to Quader Mollah, every house will be on fire."

Issuing the show-cause notice the tribunal asked them to appear before the court on February 20.

The tribunal extended time on February 20 and on February 26 after their coun-

sels sought time saying that they could not appear before the court due to "unavoidable situation".

When the court proceeding started at 10:55am yesterday, Abdul Hannan, of the Jamaat leaders' defence, told the tribunal that their senior counsels could not appear before the court due to the hartal and senior counsels "could not contact the leaders due to the prevailing situation".

He sought adjournment until Wednesday.

Jamaat enforced a 48-hour hartal across the country from yesterday.

Prosecutor Turin Afroz said hartals were a common phenomenon and the three leaders could not "disobey" a court order on the excuse of hartal. She then sought arrest warrants against them.

The tribunal said, "Hartal has become a culture of Bangladeshi politics, and if they [respondents] couldn't come for hartal, then the court will take action to bring them."

A member of the tribunal said, "What they [the three Jamaat leaders] had said, for which rule was issued upon them, is now being carried out."

The tribunal yesterday asked the lawyers to bring their clients. "If you [lawyers] fail, then you would have to surrender your power of attorney," said the tribunal.

Meanwhile, following another time petition, the tribunal adjourned the crimes against humanity case proceedings against Jamaat leader Muhammad Kamaruzzaman until Wednesday.

Defence witnesses would start testifying on that day.

The tribunal also allowed one more witness to defend Kamaruzzaman. Now, a total of five witnesses would testify for him.

The court, however, rejected a defence petition seeking cross-examination of the investigation officer of the case again.

Protect minorities

FROM PAGE 1

Crimes Tribunal-1 passed a verdict against Jamaat-e-Islami Nayeab-e-Ameer Delawar Hossain Sayedee for war crimes on Thursday, leaders and activists of Jamaat, its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir and local BNP men launched attacks on the Hindus in Noakhali, according to the March 2 report.

The opposition party men torched, vandalised and looted at least one temple and many houses at Begumganj of the district, sending the minorities into a panic, the report says. Jamaat-Shibir men also damaged six temples, torched 36 houses and vandalised 40 other houses after looting those at Alampur and Aladin Nagar villages in Rajganj.

Witnesses said Shibir activists Saddam and Alauddin and BNP activists Khalil and Ibrahim led the attacks.

An HC bench of Justice A H M Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Mahmudul Hoque yesterday issued another rule upon the government to explain in 10 days why it should not be directed to arrest and prosecute the criminals.

Home secretary, inspector general of police, deputy commissioner (DC) and superintendent of police (SP) of Noakhali, and officer-in-charge (OC) of Begumganj have been made respondents to the rule.

Deputy Attorney General Amit Talukder told The Daily Star that he had already informed the DC of Noakhali of the HC order and asked him to take steps.

ATTACKS IN MUNSHIGANJ, BARISAL, DINAJPUR

In the latest development, a temple was set on fire at Louhajang upazila in Munshiganj around 10:00pm yesterday.

Seeing the fire, people in the neighbourhood rushed

to the place and doused it. But by that time many idols of Goalimandra Monipara Kali Mandir were damaged, said Anil Chandra Das, president of the temple's committee.

Local people said they suspected that hartal supporters were behind the incident.

In Barisal, unidentified miscreants tried to torch a Hindu temple at Alanj Bazaar of Hizla upazila, but were resisted. In another incident, police arrested three people in connection with damaging and torching of idols of Hindu goddesses at Sarbojonee Durga Mandir in Gournadi upazila of the district.

OC of Gournadi Police Station Abul Kalam Azad said police had raided different areas in the early hours yesterday and arrested Mizan Khalifa, 20, first year student of Dhaka Titumir College, Baharuddin Ahmed 31, a businessman of Dhaka and Aminul Islam, 18, student of Gournadi Kasemabad Madrasa.

"We have sent the arrestees to the court in the afternoon with a seven-day remand prayer for interrogation," the police officer said.

In Dinajpur, harvests of rice belonged to nine Hindu families were burnt to ashes and at least 50 trees were felled on the Dinajpur-Panchagarh highway at Birganj upazila allegedly by Jamaat-Shibir men.

Fire brigades rushed to the spot and doused the fire, Abdul Kader Zilani, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Sadar Upazila, confirmed.

Meanwhile, a monitoring cell has been formed at the Dhakeshwari National temple to collect information about attacks on minorities across the country and to take immediate action. People are requested to contact at phone numbers -- 02-9611353, 02-8616248 and 01711308148.

19 more killed

FROM PAGE 1

tricked hundreds of villagers into taking to the streets in the early morning, and launching attacks on law enforcers.

They clashed with law enforcers, attacked a police station and six outposts, vandalised and torched different offices. At least four people, including three women, died in Shahjahanpur upazila, three in Bogra Sadar and two in Shibganj upazila.

The violence that began around 4:00am came to a halt after four hours following news of troops deployment. However, army personnel were called back around 6:00pm.

People in different upazilas said they heard announcements over loudspeakers in the early hours on Sunday that Sayedee's image was seen on the moon.

Moved by the announcements, hundreds of people, mostly from Shahjahanpur, Kahalu, Shibganj and Dupchanchia upazilas, came out of their houses and started marching towards Bogra Sadar upazila headquarters, protesting the death penalty to Sayedee.

A few thousand people attacked Shahjahanpur Police Station near the Bogra Cantonment, around 6:00am.

"They beat up policemen indiscriminately in a surprise attack," Mahmudul Alam, officer-in-charge of the police station, told The Daily Star.

Police opened fire to bring the situation under control, said Bogra Superintendent of Police Mozammel Haq.

Four people died there. Atiar Rahman, an inspector of the police station, identified the four as Arjinba Begum, 45, Monjila Begum, 48, Achhia Begum, 45, and Abdur Rahman, 60.

The protesters set fire to the house of Momtaz Uddin, president of district AL unit, in the town.

The vandalism continued for nearly 50 minutes. Three more persons died in clashes in Bogra Sadar.

Their identities could not be known.

Section 144 was imposed in Bogra municipality from 7:00am to contain violence, and it would remain in force until further orders, said Arifuzzaman, nezarat deputy collector in Bogra.

In a statement, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) condemned attacks on the house of FBCCI director Momtaz Uddin, business establishments and the office of Rajshahi Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Joypurhat witnessed a spate of violence, as pro-hartal activists clashed with police in Panchbibi

and Sadar upazila. At least six persons were killed and 30 others were hit by bullets during the clashes.

The dead are Nasir Uddin, 18, of Bashkur village, Hasib Uddin, 50, of Baramanik, Forman Ali, 30 of Rasulpur, Abdul Hakim, 32, of Salaipur, Mojidul Islam, 35, of Kashra village, and Abdul Bari, 24, of Rahmatpur village.

Five of them were killed in Panchbibi and the other in Joypurhat sadar, said sources.

Jamaat-Shibir activists swooped on police in front of Joypurhat Palli Bidyut Samity office around 11:00am, prompting police to fire shots. One person was killed on the spot.

Another group of Jamaat men gathered at Panchbibi Bazar to lay siege to the Panchbibi Police Station. As they marched towards the police station, BGB and police personnel fired shots, leaving two persons dead.

Three of the injured later died at Panchbibi Health Complex.

Md Hamidul Islam, superintendent of police in Joypurhat, confirmed that three persons died in the clashes.

However, Fazlur Rahman, Jamaat ameer in Joypurhat, said six persons were killed during the clashes in Panchbibi and Joypurhat.

Section 144 was imposed in Panchbibi and Joypurhat sadar following the clashes.

OTHER DISTRICTS

Jamaat men launched attacks on law enforcers at Godagari upazila in Rajshahi, leaving at least two persons dead and 30 people injured.

The dead are Rafiqul Islam, 12, of Godagari municipality, and Mojahid Hossain, 45, activist of Jamaat municipality unit and Imam of Mohishalbari mosque, said Wahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Godagari Police Station.

Section 144 was slapped in the municipality for an indefinite period after the clash, said Godagari Upazila Nirbahi Officer Tuhinur Alam.

Witnesses said the clash erupted when more than 500 Jamaat-Shibir men barricaded the Chapainawabganj-Rajshahi highway with logs, and burnt tyres around 9:00am.

Another group of pickets chased law enforcers at the cinema hall intersection, damaged vehicles and threw brickbats at police.

At one stage, the pickets fired shots and threw cock-tails at the law enforcers.

In retaliation, police and BGB personnel fired over 100 rounds of rubber bullets to disperse the attackers, said OC Wahidul.

Pro-hartal activists also put up barricades on Chapainawabganj-

Rajshahi road at Abhoyer intersection, on Rajshahi-Naogaon road in Mohonpur upazila and Rajshahi-Natore road at Kharkhari around 9:00am.

In Jhenidah, Jamaat-Shibir men hacked to death a policeman and gouged out his eye at Sanatanpur police camp in Harinakundo upazila.

They attacked the police camp, forcing the on-duty policemen to retreat to the headquarters. They soon caught up with the policemen and hacked them indiscriminately.

The Jamaat activists hacked Constable Omar Faruque to death and gouged out his eye.

Several seriously injured policemen were admitted to the hospital.

Nearly 3,000 Jamaat-Shibir and BNP activists also brought out a procession in Harinakundo upazila.

Jamaat men vandalised establishments in the upazila and set fire to government offices. Police lobbed teargas canisters and fired rubber bullets to disperse them.

At least one person was killed and seven others, including three BGB members, were injured in a clash between BGB personnel and Jamaat activists at Raichhpur in Sadar thana, two kilometres away from Satkhira town.

Lt Col Abu Basir of BGB in Satkhira said Jamaat men attacked two BGB vans near the border around 12:00pm, prompting the BGB personnel to fire shots.

A Jamaat supporter was killed and three BGB members were injured in the incident.

A clash between Jamaat men and Awami League activists ensued at Nalta, when ruling party men tried to prevent Jamaat-Shibir activists from carrying out vandalism.

In Chittagong, clashes and gunfights between Jamaat men and Rab personnel left at least 14 people injured at Shekher Khil in Banskhali upazila.

Vehicular movement on Chittagong-Cox's Bazar highway remained suspended, as Jamaat-Shibir men barricaded the highway with logs.

Meanwhile, pro-hartal activists in Pabna put up barricades on the Dhaka-Pabna and Pabna-Kushtia highways after Fajr prayers. They also attacked the house of an AL union unit president and five shops at Ataikula.

Jamaat-Shibir men also felled hundreds of roadside trees and blocked the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf-Arakan road since Saturday night. They also swooped on law enforcers at Ukhia upazila in Cox's Bazar, leaving at least five policemen injured.

UK deplores

FROM PAGE 1

across Bangladesh over the past few days.

He called for all parties to exercise restraint and resolve their differences through constructive and peaceful dialogue.

"Bangladesh has struggled hard and at great cost to achieve its independence and create a tolerant state where every citizen can live without fear of religious persecution and follow their individual faiths," Robert Gibson said.

"This great achievement risks being undermined by the callous and unacceptable actions of a few."

The British envoy noted that while every citizen has the right to mount a peaceful protest, intimidation and imposition of strikes disrupt the lives of all citizens and hamper the operation of legitimate business. "This is sending a negative signal to the international community and those wishing to invest in Bangladesh."

He further said, "The UK will continue to call for all parties to exercise restraint, moderation and respect for the rule of law; and to resolve their differences through constructive and peaceful dialogue. To continue to subject the country to unnecessary disruption and violence risks undermining Bangladesh's democratic credentials and stability."

Independence

FROM PAGE 20

of their outstanding contributions at national level.

The nominees are: M A Hannan (posthumous), Mohammad Shamsul Haque (posthumous), Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Mohammad Abdul Hamid, freedom fighter Dr Mohammad Mosharraf Hossain, Lt Col (retd) Kazi Sajjad Ali Jahir Bir Protik, renowned economist Swadesh Ranjan Bose (posthumous), Satya Saha (posthumous) and Dr Mohammad Abdul Hamid Mia.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hand over the awards to the distinguished persons at a function at the city's Osmani Memorial Auditorium on March 25, said an official release.

Smartphone

FROM PAGE 20

blackspots, women in urban India are using their smartphones for protection after a notorious gang-rape in New Delhi.

After outrage and protests erupted, four businesswomen set up Safecity.in, a website for victims of harassment to channel their anger.

The site encourages them to "Pin the Creeps" by reporting incidents of harassment and abuse -- ranging from catcalling to rape -- which are added to an online map and sent to those requesting alerts.

Mumbai-based Elsa D'Silva, a founder of the site, said social media had allowed women to speak out and warn others of dangerous areas, even if they are reluctant to give their name or make a complaint to the police.

"Now you feel more empowered to do something about it, even if it's just sharing your experience," said D'Silva. "We're not going to keep quiet any more."

The website has linked up with new mobile app SafeTrac, developed by tech firm KritiLabs and downloadable for free, which has an SOS button to alert emergency contacts and lets relatives or friends track the user's journey.

It joins a host of similar apps designed to reassure women, especially those working late and travelling alone -- that is, if they can afford mobile Internet access.

A government commission, set up to prevent sex crimes after the Delhi attack, recommended the development of mobile phone apps for sending distress signals to the police.

India's IT trade body NASSCOM has opened a contest to find the best app for women's safety. Separately, free app Stipator (Latin for "bodyguard") won an award for social innovation last month from NASSCOM.

JUSTICE MIZANUR

Probe starts for 'misconduct'

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Supreme Judicial Council has started investigating the alleged misconduct of High Court Judge Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan, Supreme Court sources said yesterday.

Constituted by the chief justice, the council last week issued a notice asking Justice Mizanur to explain to it about the allegation raised against him.

The sources, however, could not say how much time Mizanur has been given and whether he has to appear before the council.

The allegations of misconduct came when the judge distributed a report, published in the daily Inqilab on February 17, among the judges of the High Court (HC) and the Supreme Court (SC).

SC employees Jamadar Siddiqur Rahman Hawlader and Nurul Alam Babu carried the envelopes with the report to the recipients the following day.

The report was on the alleged blog posts of Shahbagh movement activist Ahmed Rajib Haidar and it termed him an atheist.

Rajib was brutally murdered near his Palash Nagar residence in the capital's Pallabi on February 15.

Asked about the council's proceedings, SC Registrar AKM Shamsul Islam yesterday told The Daily Star that he did not know anything in

this regard.

Meanwhile, the SC authorities yesterday transferred Siddiqur from the chamber office of Justice Mizanur to a section office of the apex court.

Siddiqur said the authorities verbally asked him to work at the court-keeper section, but he did not know the reason for his transfer.

President Zillur Rahman on February 25 ordered Chief Justice Md Mozammel Hossain to constitute the council to investigate the allegation.

Comprising the chief justice and two other senior SC judges, the Supreme Judicial Council investigates allegations of misconduct of any judge and makes necessary recommendations to the president.

This is the second judicial council to probe allegation against an HC judge.

Mizanur was appointed as an additional judge of the HC on July 29, 2002 and his job was confirmed two years later.

Earlier in 2004, HC Additional Judge Syed Shahidur Rahman was removed from office on the basis of the first ever judicial council's probe into a judge's misconduct and its recommendations.

Shahidur was charged with taking a bribe of Tk 50,000 to give bail to an accused in a women repression case.

Dispute ends

FROM PAGE 20

talks with the rebellious players who agreed to the conditions offered by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and would be available for selection for the first Test starting March 8.

"The players agreed to sign the contracts," Jayasuriya told AFP after meeting the players in Colombo. "There is no question of higher pay or anything like that. We all agreed that we must put country first before anything else."

Jayasuriya met the players after a Saturday deadline passed with Sri Lanka's 23 international players failing to enter into employment agreements with SLC, the sport's governing body on the island.

Former skipper Kumar Sangakkara was dropped from a practice match

against the visiting Bangladesh team on Sunday because he failed to sign his employment contract before the Saturday deadline.

Following talks with Jayasuriya, Sangakkara said he was obeying a gag order imposed by SLC.

"The board has told us not to talk to the media," he told reporters outside the SLC.

His reluctance to speak indicated he had agreed to be a contracted player, as they are only allowed to speak to the press after permission from the SLC.

Players had originally insisted they needed a 25 per cent share of all payments made by the International Cricket Council for tournaments, as well as a business-class ticket for a spouse to travel on tour.

Khaleda 'cancels'

FROM PAGE 1

Indian state media PTI reports that Khaleda has abruptly cancelled her proposed meeting with Pranab, casting a shadow on his first foreign visit which began in Dhaka yesterday.

However, BNP is yet to issue a formal statement.

The media yesterday quoted BNP Vice-President Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury as saying he had informed the Indian high commission in Dhaka that Khaleda would not be able to go to Sonargaon Hotel to meet Pranab as the courtesy call coincides with a Jamaat shutdown.

Khaleda met Pranab in November last year when she paid a nine-day visit to New Delhi.

India then said it was ready to do business with any party in power in Bangladesh. She, too, assured Indian leaders that her party, if voted to power, would not allow insurgents and terrorists to use Bangladesh territory.

It then seemed the BNP chief was making a "new beginning" in ties with New Delhi, changing her anti-India stance.

Pranab, then finance minister, had called on the BNP chief in Dhaka in May last year.

The PTI report says as per the original itinerary, Khaleda was supposed to have called on Pranab at his hotel suite this afternoon. But the revised schedule given to the media yesterday didn't include the meeting.

BNP sources yesterday

said the party a couple of days ago communicated Khaleda's decision to the Indian government, the report added.

Shamsur was understood to have cited to Indian officials security reasons for her calling off the meeting with Pranab in view of a two-day general strike called by BNP's ally Jamaat-e-Islami.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Shamsur said they were still in talks with Indian side about arranging the meeting, "but possibility of holding the meeting is slim."

He added the BNP had not cancelled the scheduled meeting on security ground.

"Instead, we have just informed the Indian side about tomorrow's [today's] hartal programme," Shamsur, a former foreign secretary added. "We have not asked them [Indian side] for cancellation of the meeting."

But he declined to make any comment whether the Indian side cancelled it.

Jamaat has called the hartals to press for a halt to the trials of its leaders for 1971 war crimes. BNP, protesting "the recent killing of people by the government," has also enforces a shutdown tomorrow, the last leg of Pranab's visit.

Meanwhile, BNP's Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday at a press conference alleged death threats were being issued against Khaleda through some blogs and Facebook.