

# MADARIPUR BROTHEL EVICTION Sent back but not to home

SUBIR DAS and ZYMA ISLAM

The people who evicted around 400 sex workers from a 160-year-old brothel in Madaripur late last month believe they have done a good job by sending the women back home.

Nur-e-Alam Babu Chowdhury, mayor of Madaripur municipality, claimed that the girls could not get out of the brothel because of the madams, but they were now free.

"All the girls boarded a truck and left for home. They also bribed the truck driver not to tell anyone on the road that they were sex workers by profession," he claimed.

Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan, whose constituency is in Madaripur, told The Daily Star that the girls could now be rehabilitated in other businesses.

For his part, former municipality member Khalilur Rahman said a great service had been rendered to the sex workers by "freeing" them.

The real picture, though, is that the more than 300 sex workers are vulnerable and homeless now.

The madams, who are currently staying inside the brothel, said they could make contact with some of the sex workers over mobile phone and had come to know about the whereabouts of more than 300 sex workers.

But they were not sure about the fate of at least 60 others.

"Many of the girls were born right here in this brothel," said sexagenarian Mamata Rani, one of the seven madams (leaders), who used to run the brothel and supervise its insiders.

They claimed that the evicted sex workers had no home apart from this brothel.

They also alleged that policemen deployed at the entrance to the brothel were not letting the girls enter the brothel. The police, however, denied the allegations.

In the wake of threats of eviction, the High Court issued an order on July 22 asking the law enforcers to

let the sex workers continue their occupation for a year.

Meanwhile, a section of people under the banner of "Islah Qoum Parishad" and local bonik samity organised a human chain at Puran Bazar in Madaripur town on Saturday.

They demanded that the madams staying inside the brothel vacate the place, Mamata Rani said.

She added that they were under pressure to rent the structures perched on a nine-bigha area of land to the local traders.

While visiting the place on August 31, The Daily Star correspondents found that the walls, doors and furniture of the brothel bore the brunt of the destruction.

One madam led the correspondents to the back door of one of the rooms.

"The girls escaped through here, crossing this patch of rubbish, and went out through the back door of that shop there," she said, pointing out the route.

District Women Affairs officer Mahmuda Akhter Kona said a pretty good

number of underage girls were forced into sex slavery at the brothel. Kona and the other locals believe that the girls will now be able to "go home".

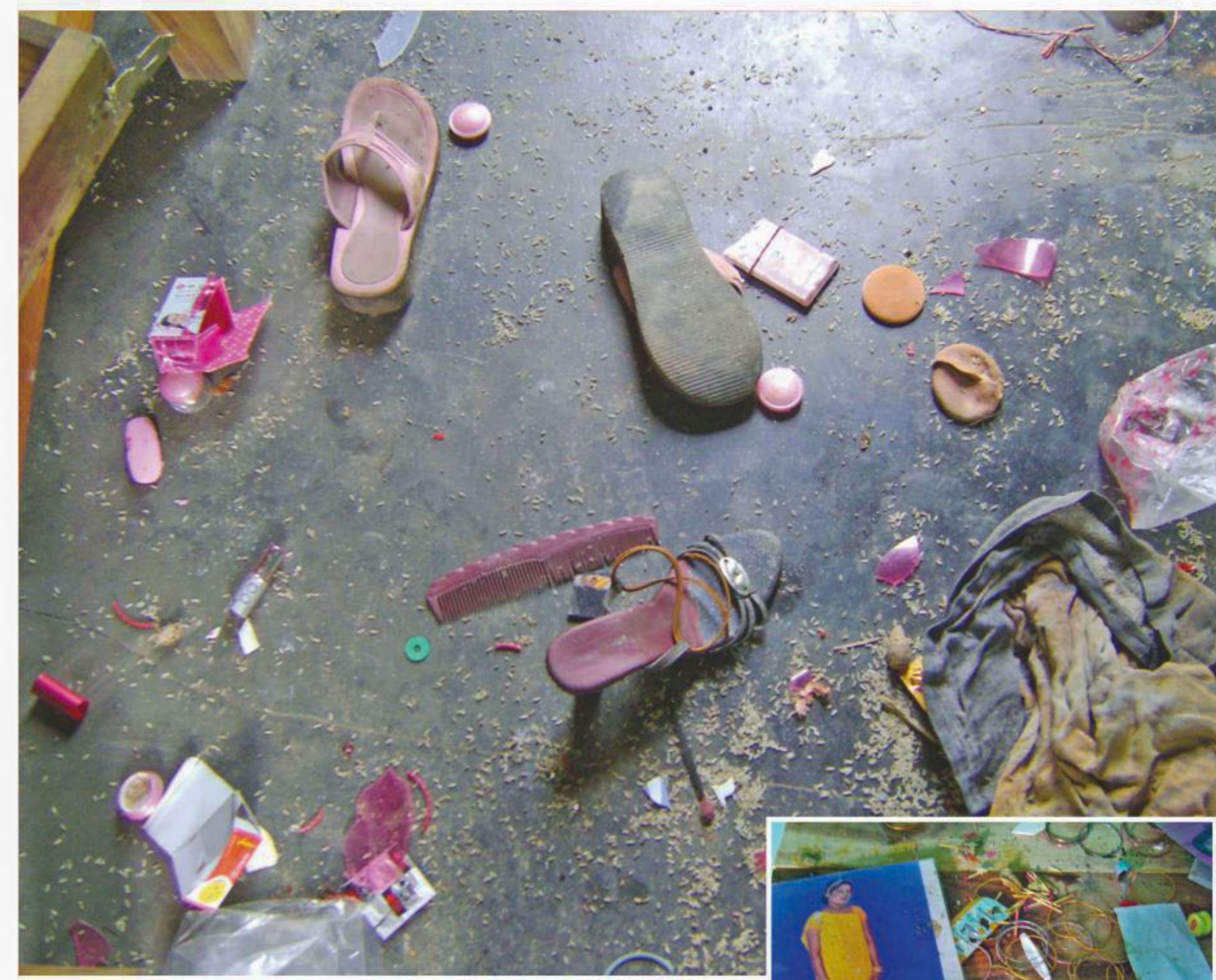
However, Nina Goswami, deputy director (legal aid) of Ain o Salish Kendra, said the girls trafficked into the brothel might not be welcomed back into society.

"If the madams had been involved in forcing the underage girls into sex slavery, they should have been brought under justice," she said.

Madaripur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Moniruzzaman yesterday said the law enforcers had so far arrested 16 people in connection with the attack on the brothel.

On August 27, activists of the Islamist organisation "Islah Qoum Parishad" along with certain influential quarters evicted the sex workers from the brothel to purge the town of what they called sin.

(Our Madaripur correspondent Nityananda Halder contributed to this report)



High-heeled shoes, comb, powder puff, lipstick -- things that belonged to sex workers -- lay scattered on the ground of the Madaripur brothel forced to shut down by Islamic zealots last month. Inset, photo of a sex worker, one of the 60 with no trace since the forced eviction.

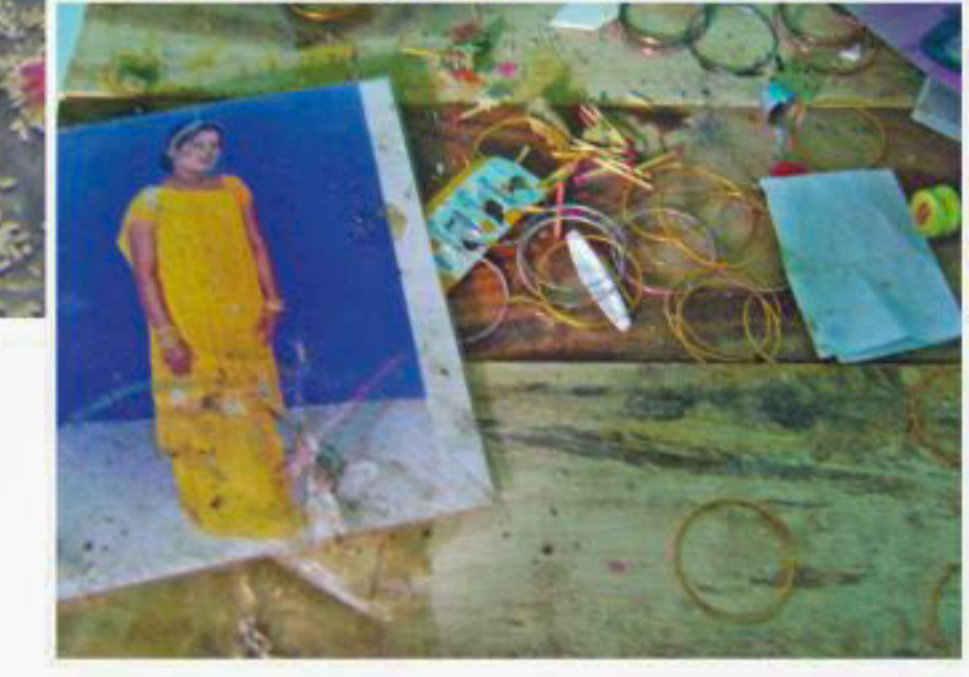


PHOTO: ZYMA ISLAM

## 3G, over to you

FROM PAGE 1  
3G licence, we are now ready to move to the rollout phase."

State-run Teletalk launched 3G last year on a test basis but failed to create enthusiasm among users due to inconsistent service. Citycell, the oldest operator, did not participate in the auction because of a fund dearth.

The auction started with a base price at \$20 million per MHz and the first call was at \$21 million. However, prices did not go up further and were settled at the first call as the government offered four licences for four private operators.

The government raised \$525 million (Tk 4,081 crore) from the auction, selling 25 MHz of the 40 MHz spectrum it had planned to offer.

Grameenphone will pay \$210 million, with the other three operators paying \$105

million each. Teletalk will shell out \$210 million for the spectrum it is using currently.

"The price was very business friendly. It was not our objective to earn a huge amount from the auction," Sunil Kanti Bose, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, told reporters after the auction at Ruposhi Bangla Hotel in the capital.

"The 3G services will play a vital role in socio-economic development," he said. With a population of more than 153 million, Bangladesh at present has only eight million internet users, and most of them use narrowband mobile internet.

The operators will also get the opportunity to roll out 4G or long-term evolution (LTE) services with the same band of spectrum without needing any per-

mission, Bose said.

However, some of the operators, who purchased 5 MHz, may face spectrum constraints in the long run, he added.

In a statement, Robi said its bid was based on "an exhaustive process" that included a detailed study of the business case for the 5 MHz spectrum.

"It will be our endeavour to delight customers with best 3G services backed by rich content from our global portfolio," Airtel said in a statement.

The operators will have to roll out the 3G services in the divisional cities by the next nine months, according to a condition of the licence.

The government approved the 3G licensing guideline early last year but the auction got delayed twice due to tax-related disputes between the government and the operators.

## Alim played key role in war crimes

FROM PAGE 1  
Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta said Peace Committee and Razakar men used to inform Alim about detention of anyone and asked the victims' families to go to Alim for their release.

Rana said this while placing closing arguments in the case against Alim for the second day yesterday.

Citing testimony of the prosecution witnesses, the prosecutor said families of the victims were even asked to give Alim money to change his mind. The victims were killed either by the collaborators or by Pakistani army following his directive, he added.

During his three-hour-and-45-minute arguments, Rana covered seven charges citing testimony of at least 13 prosecution witnesses.

He also cited some documentary evidence and statements of two prosecution witnesses, who died later,

and the tribunal accepted their statements as evidence.

Alim, a former BNP lawmaker, is facing 17 charges of war crimes committed in Joypurhat during the Liberation War in 1971.

Rana mentioned the testimony of Mozammel Hossain, a victim and eyewitness, to prove the third charge. The witness testified that the Pakistani occupation army in a single incident killed at least 22 Awami League supporters in Joypurhat as per a list prepared by Alim.

Rana also placed the testimony of second prosecution witness Saidur Rahman to prove the sixth charge. The witness said Syed Ali Doctor, a cohort of Alim, had confined 13 people, who were leaving the country, to his house and informed Alim on May 7, 1971.

Alim along with the Pakistani troops had gone there the next day. Three of

the detainees were handed over to the Pakistani army who were killed following Alim's instruction, said Saidur.

The rest were kept detained at the waiting room of Akkelpur Railway Station. Alim showed up again two days later and handed over the 10 detainees to the Pakistani army after holding a meeting with the Peace Committee. All but one were killed, he added.

Rana also referred to the testimony of Zahidul Islam and Abdus Sobhan Sardar to prove the charge.

He cited the testimony of AKM Mahbubur Rahman, a victim's family member, to prove the seventh charge. Ignoring earnest requests, Alim had denied release of three members of their family detained by the Pakistani army and their collaborators, the witness said.

Mahbubur said his rela-

tive Kashem had talked to three Peace Committee men, who advised him to go to Alim. But when Kashem went to Alim, he turned down the request.

Rana also mentioned the testimony of Mostafizur Rahman, son of one of the three victims.

The prosecutor also placed his arguments on the eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh charges. As the prosecution could not produce any witness to prove the fourth and fifth charges, they did not make any submission regarding those.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam heard the arguments before adjourning the proceeding.

The prosecution are set to place further arguments today.

## Global

FROM PAGE 16  
equivalent of almost a million square miles.

In a rebound from 2012's record low an unbroken ice sheet more than half the size of Europe already stretches from the Canadian islands to Russia's northern shores, days before the annual re-freeze is even set to begin.

The Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific has remained blocked by pack-ice all year, forcing some ships to change their routes.

A leaked report to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) seen by the Mail yesterday, has led some scientists to claim that the world is heading for a period of cooling that will not end until the middle of this century.

If correct, it would contradict computer forecasts of imminent catastrophic warming. The news comes several years after it was predicted that the arctic would be ice-free by 2013.

Despite the original forecasts, major climate research centres now accept that there has been a "pause" in global warming since 1997.

The leaked documents show that governments who fund the IPCC are demanding 1,500 changes to the Fifth Assessment Report as they claim its current draft does not properly explain the pause.

The IPCC says it is "95 percent confident" that global warming has been caused by humans -- up from 90 percent in 2007 -- according to the draft report.

However, US climate expert Prof Judith Curry has questioned how this can be true as that rather than increasing in confidence, "uncertainty is getting bigger" within the academic community.

Long-term cycles in ocean temperature, she said, suggest the world may be approaching a period similar to that from 1965 to 1975, when there was a clear cooling trend.



Shuvo Biplob Russel Asif

## 4 bloggers indicted

FROM PAGE 1  
42, a resident of the capital's Pallabi area, and Asif Mohiuddin, 28, an ex-student of a private university.

Shuvo, Parvez and Biplob were arrested on April 2, under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, in different areas in the capital on suspicion of making derogatory comments about Islam.

Police later filed a general diary against the trio for uploading "contents insulting to Islam" on social media platforms.

Asif was arrested on April 3 at an Uttara hospital where he had been undergoing treatment for fatal stab injuries he had sustained in an attack on January 14.

The arrests coincided

with a countrywide hate campaign by so-called Islamist groups who alleged that "atheist bloggers" were behind the Shahbagh movement that demanded death penalty to war criminals.

There was fierce criticism on social networking sites, with many users observing that the government had made the arrests in fear of angry reactions from the

Islamist groups.

After investigations into the cases, the Detective Branch of police pressed charges against the four on April 17, accusing them of hurting religious sentiments by the contents posted on Facebook and different blogs.

The court accepted the charges on June 2.

## Witness testifies

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Tohurul Alam Mollah, 62, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1, "Allahu Akbar was the last utterance of my father. These words still haunt me."

The tribunal led by Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim with member Justice Anwarul Haque had given the witness a break before he completed his testimony.

With his father, his cousin and maternal uncle, who were also killed on April 17, 1971, had taken shelter at the mosque thinking it a safer place, the witness said.

Tohurul added he along with a friend had witnessed the incident hiding in a nearby bush. "I tried to run to my father. But my friend [Fazlur Rahman] held me tight and did not let me to go," said the witness.

Tohurul said he had later

gone to India to receive warfare training and taken part in different operations in Pabna.

Near the mosque where his father was killed there was an abandoned house where Bangalees were tortured, he added.

The witness said during the war he was a first year student of the then Jinnah College, now Iswardi College, and was assistant general secretary of Chhatra League, student wing of Awami League.

The Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Nezame-Islam contested the 70's general election in Pabna.

"In an election rally, I heard an announcement that Islami Chhatra Sangha president Motiur Rahman Nizami would deliver a speech," the witness said.

He added they had taken

preparation for independence war after Bangabandhu's March 7 address.

Defence counsel Tajul Islam asked the witness if he had filed any case in connection with his father's killing or brought any accusation against Nizami.

The witness said, "No."

Earlier, the defence completed cross-examining the 19th prosecution witness in the case.

The defence have meanwhile filed a petition with the tribunal seeking discharge of ATM Azharul Islam from the war crimes charges.

The tribunal fixed September 18 for hearing the petition. Earlier, the prosecution placed submission for indicting Azharul for his alleged crimes against humanity committed during the war.

## No tax dodging by Yunus

FROM PAGE 1  
government before receiving the money as a "public servant" in honorariums, awards and royalties from foreign sources between 2005 and 2011.

It said the banker to the poor also didn't have the government's consent for accepting those awards and money.

The findings come more than a year after the cabinet asked the NBR to look into whether the tax exemption that Prof Yunus had enjoyed as a wage earner was legal.

The NBR has recently sent a report to the cabinet after conducting a probe into Prof Yunus' incomes from overseas sources since August 2, last year.

The report might be placed at today's cabinet meeting.

Yunus Centre, the Nobel laureate's secretary, has said that Prof Yunus remits earnings from books, speeches and prizes back to Bangladesh through formal banking channels.

According to tax laws, if a Bangladeshi remits his personal income through formal banking channels, the income is tax-free -- a fact the NBR has acknowledged in its report to the cabinet.

The NBR report also included different non-tax issues that Prof Yunus had clarified in detail many times in the past. The microcredit pioneer termed all the accusations

baseless.

The NBR was asked to submit a report on the amount of money Prof Yunus brought home from abroad as a wage earner during his stint as the Grameen Bank MD, and the amount of income on which he received tax exemption.

The NBR report shows Prof Yunus earned Tk 50.61 crore between July 2004 and June 2011 in honorarium from 133 foreign organisations, awards from 10 organisations and royalty from 13 organisations. And he got income tax exemption worth Tk 12.65 crore.

It, however, admitted that Prof Yunus didn't take money from Grameen

Bank for his foreign visits after he crossed the age of 60. Though he didn't take permission from the board, he kept the Grameen Bank chairman informed about his visits, the reports said.

Sources close to Prof Yunus told The Daily Star yesterday that the economist had always informed the board about all his activities and taken permission from it during his tenure as the bank's chief executive.

The NBR has not advised the finance ministry to recover the money which has been given to Prof Yunus in salary and allowances in the last 10 years before his removal from the bank.

It, however, suggested that the ministry take steps to recover the money that had been spent for purposes other than his salary and allowances during the period.

In July 2004, Bangladeshi nationals were exempted from paying taxes on all incomes from foreign sources, according to the NBR report.

Since the Grameen Bank MD was a "public servant", he needed to take approval of the government before receiving honorarium, awards and royalties from any domestic and foreign organisations, or making any foreign visits, said the

report.

But neither the bank's MD nor any of its other officials or employees gets salaries from the government budget.

Legal experts said the ordinance that governs Grameen Bank does not expressly or implicitly provide that the bank's MD would be regarded as a "public servant".

In the 10 years up to his removal in May 2011, Prof Yunus withdrew Tk 52.93 lakh in salary and other benefits. The amount came down to Tk 38.81 lakh sans allowances, meaning the economist took home about Tk 30,000 in monthly salary.

issue of Prof Yunus' holding the position of MD for 10 years after he crossed the retirement age though the issue had been settled long ago between Bangladesh Bank and Grameen Bank.

It said the Grameen Bank Ordinance was breached by transfer of funds from Grameen Bank to Grameen Kalyan, one of its associated organisations, since the microcredit bank can only lend landless people. The NBR claimed that the fund transfer was illegal.

The report said Grameen Bank, a tax-exempt organisation, tried to evade taxes by transferring funds to Grameen

Kalyan.

However, Yunus Centre earlier said Grameen Bank transferred the fund in line with agreements between the Bangladesh government and donors.

The NBR also checked income tax documents of the bank's 13 associated organisations, and said eight of them had enjoyed various income tax facilities illegally.

But officials confirmed that companies bearing Grameen names have always submitted income tax returns and paid taxes. Some companies only availed themselves of the tax exemptions because the opportunity was available.