

Tailbacks, thanks to PM's reception

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A number of ministers, lawmakers, and military and government officials, diplomats and top AL leaders were present at the airport to receive Hasina. The premier left the airport at 6:10pm and directly went to her official residence, Gono Bhaban, via Jahangir gate.

The Daily Star correspondents talked to commuters, who suffered due to long tailbacks in Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Tejgaon, Nakhalpara, Bijoy Sarani, Mohakhal, Gulshan, Baridhara, Kuril, Uttara, Mirpur, Nakhalpara, Moghbazar, Paltan and Azimpur.

"As I reached Bijoy Sarani near parliament around 4:30 on my way to Farmgate, I saw people dancing in the middle of the street, and vehicles were struggling to make their way through. I had to wait there for more than 25 minutes," said Ziaul Haque, who works at a private organisation.

"Usually, it takes half-an-hour to reach my office at Farmgate by car from Asad Avenue. But today it took about 90 minutes," he said.

There had been tailbacks on busy roads from the airport to Gono Bhaban since 3:00pm.

But top traffic officials claimed that vehicular movement across the capital was normal.

Mir Rezaul Alam, joint commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (traffic), said there was no traffic congestion in the capital due to the ruling party's reception for the prime minister.

"The traffic is as usual today," he said.

But in reality, traffic jams in many parts of the capital were so severe that many commuters got down from vehicles and walked to their destinations.

Farhana Islam, who had left Nikunja around 4:30pm for her Chankharpul residence, remained stuck at Banani till 6:40pm.

"I remained stuck there for more than an hour." She finally got down from the vehicle and started walking.

Many ambulances carrying patients had been stuck on several roads for hours.

Md Tareq, a CNG-run autorickshaw driver, said he started for Mirpur from Uttara around 5:30 but could not cross Kuril till 7:40pm.

Fifty-year-old businessman Md Hanif Mia, who was on his way to Mouchak market from Uttara, said he had hardly seen such a severe traffic jam in the capital.

Vehicular movement on the road from Gono Bhaban to Jahangir Gate

came almost to a standstill, as ruling party leaders and workers marched through the road shortly after 5:00pm.

"We remained stuck at Mohakhal intersection for two hours from 5:00pm," said Md Farhad, conductor of a bus that plies between Abdullahpur and Gulistan.

Hundreds of vehicles remained stranded on the busy road for hours.

Seeing no sign of improvement in vehicular movement, hundreds of passengers, who were returning home from work, got down from the vehicles and started walking to their destinations.

"As my bus remained stuck in a traffic jam for 30 minutes at Mohakhal, I got down from the vehicle and started walking," said Rawshan Ara Rumana.

"It took me more than an hour to reach Farmgate," said the woman, who is in her forties.

Monowar Ahmed, who lives in Khilkhet, said he had to walk from Mohakhal up to Farmgate to catch a bus to Jatrabari.

"Though doctors asked me not to lift heavy objects, I had to carry my luggage weighing around 30kg all the way," he said.



PHOTO: PMO

Awami League leaders and dignitaries receive Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her arrival at Shahjalal International Airport yesterday.

Mir Quasem's trial

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of Jamaat's executive council, is now facing 14 charges, including those of murder, torture, abduction and confinement of people and complicity in crimes against humanity during the war in 1971.

Justice ATM Fazle Kabir, chairman of the three-member Tribunal-1, said a large number of cases were pending before the tribunal in comparison with those before the other tribunal.

"In the interests of speedy disposal of the case, let the case be transferred to Tribunal-2 as per section 11A (1) of the International Crimes Tribunal Act," he observed.

Seemingly perplexed, defence counsel Tajul Islam told the tribunal that nei-

ther the prosecution nor the defence had filed any petition to transfer the case.

The tribunal chairman said the transfer was a suo moto (its own) move.

Quasem was brought to the tribunal in the morning but he was not produced before the panel.

Tribunal-1 had indicted

NIZAMI'S CASE

Mizanul Islam, defence counsel in the war crimes case against Motiur Rahman Nizami, yesterday cross-examined Abdur Razzak Khan, investigation officer of the case.

Mizanul asked the IO whether he had filed the case against Jamaat-e-Islami leaders including Nizami as a part of "a conspiracy of the government".

The witness replied in the negative.

The defence counsel also asked questions on different documents showed as evidence by the prosecution.

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Tribunal-1 yesterday deferred passing further order on a show-cause notice served on Human Rights Watch (HRW) until October 4.

The deferral came after counsel Asaduzzaman, who appeared for the HRW, prayed for an adjournment, saying he was yet to get the power of attorney.

On September 2, the tribunal issued the show-cause notice asking the HRW to explain why contempt of court proceedings should not be initiated

against it for its report on the verdict on former Jamaat chief Ghulam Azam's war crimes case.

The board of directors of the HRW, its Asia Director Brad Adams and Associate for the Asia Division Storm Tiv have been made respondents to the order.

The HRW claimed on August 16 that the trial of Ghulam Azam at Tribunal-1 had been "deeply flawed" and that "it had not met international standards".

It added that the "judges had improperly conducted an investigation on behalf of the prosecution" and expressed concern over "collusion and bias among the prosecutors and judges".

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Honour for 60 more

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Of the awardees 44 are from India, four each from Pakistan and USA, two each from UK and Japan, one each from Egypt, Sri Lanka and Turkey, and an international organisation.

This will be the seventh phase of honouring foreign friends since the government began giving awards on July 25, 2011. So far 278 people have been honoured.

Former Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi was the first among foreign friends to be given the highest state honour -- Bangladesh Freedom Honour -- in recognition of her contribution to the War.

Her daughter-in-law Sonia Gandhi, now president of India's ruling Congress party, received the award on her behalf from late president Zillur

Rahman.

Officials said family members and relatives of the awardees have been invited to receive the awards on their behalf. If any recipient cannot travel to Dhaka, the award will be sent through the Bangladesh missions abroad.

The government is bearing all the expenses, including air travel and accommodation.

The prominent Indian awardees include former minister late VK Krishna Menon, Air Chief Marshal (retd) Swaroop Krishnan, former chief of the army staff of Indian Army Lt General Tapishwar Narain Raina, Commander 20 Indian Mountain Division Major General (retd) Lachman Singh Lehl, late ambassador Samar Sen,

noted singer late Suchitra Mitra and film actress Waheeda Rahman.

The Pakistani recipients are noted politicians late Abdul Wali Khan, late Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and late Master Khan Gul, and Prof Tariq Rahman.

Earlier on March 24, Bangladesh honoured 13 Pakistani friends for their contributions to the 1971 war.

Meanwhile, addressing a press briefing State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (retd) AB Tajul Islam said yesterday the nation would honour its foreign friends for their contribution to the War.

On a question about awarding Pakistani nationals, he said they would be awarded as individuals, not as representatives of Pakistan.

Kenyan MPs inspect mall massacre wreckage

AFP, Nairobi

Kenyan lawmakers investigating alleged security findings during the deadly assault on Nairobi's Westgate mall by Islamist gunmen inspected yesterday the charred wreckage, where searches continue for 39 people still missing.

The four-day bloodbath at the upmarket shopping mall, which Kenyan forces brought to an end today, left at least 67 people dead.

Politicians from both the parliament's national security and the defence and the foreign relations committee, visited the mall yesterday afternoon, entering the main hall, its floor littered with shattered glass and smeared in blood.

Shop owners reported their stores were looted during the siege, and photographs they posted on social media -- including from a luxury jewelry shop -- show shelves cleaned of goods.

The visit of the MPs launched the start of investigations, which will involve their quizzing of Kenyan security chiefs over the handling of the deadly raid.

"We have taken this matter extremely seriously," said Asman Kamama, head of the defence and the foreign relations committee.

"We want to promise you that as parliament we will investigate, establish and see whether the people who were directly in charge of our security slept on their jobs."

The Red Cross yesterday said the number of people still unaccounted for stood at 39, dropping from the previous figure of 61, after bodies were either identified, or those believed to have been missing were found to have not been at the mall.

SQ Chy verdict today

SALAUDDIN QUADER CHY

Present Status: member of BNP's Standing Committee

Status in 1971: Eldest son of of Pakistan Convention Muslim League president Fazlul Quader Chowdhury

Arrested: December 16, 2010

Indicted: April 4, 2012

Charges: 23 charges including genocide, killing, abduction, torture, confinement, looting, setting fire to homes and shops

Magnitude of crimes: Involved in the killings of 200 people including 111 Hindus on April 13, 1971

Prosecution Witness: 41

Defence Witness: four

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judgment delivery.

On August 14, the tribunal kept the case waiting for verdict.

After the pronouncement of the date, the prosecution said they had been able to prove 17 of the charges beyond reasonable doubt.

"We hope he [Salauddin] will get the capital punishment," said prosecutor Zead Al Malum.

The defence counsel on the other hand claimed that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges and hoped Salauddin would be acquitted.

If convicted, Salauddin might have to walk the gallows.

Although BNP's ally Jamaat-e-Islami had observed hartal on previous verdict days, the main opposition BNP could not

decide whether to go for similar programme for Salauddin till the last evening.

Wising anonymity, several BNP leaders said the party members were not comfortable on the issue and no meeting had been held in the last two or three months in this regard.

However, the party's standing committee member Moudud Ahmed said BNP would give its reaction after the verdict.

The two tribunals dealing with the crimes against humanity cases have so far delivered verdicts in six cases since the establishment of the first tribunal in March 2010 and the second in March 2012.

The Tribunal-1 awarded the former Jamaat ameer Ghulam Azam 90 years' imprisonment and its Nayeb-e-Ameer Delawar Hossain Sayedee the capital punishment.

The Tribunal-2 sentenced expelled Jamaat member Abul Kalam Azad

and its General Secretary Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Assistant Secretary General M u h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman to death penalty, while its another Assistant Secretary General Abdul Quader Mollah life term.

The Appellate Division of Supreme Court last month extended Quader Mollah's punishment and awarded him capital punishment.

Law enforcers arrested Salauddin on December 16, 2010 at Banani in the capital in connection with torching a car in Moghbazar area on June 26. On December 19, he was shown arrested following a warrant issued by the tribunal.

The prosecution pressed 24 specific charges against Salauddin on November 14, 2011. On November 17, 2011 the tribunal took the charges into cognisance.

Salauddin was finally indicted on 23 charges on

April 4, 2012.

According to the formal charges, as a member and leader of Convention Muslim League, a pro-Pakistan political party, and also as an individual, and member of a group of individuals, Salauddin had committed crimes against humanity, genocide and other crimes in different places of Chittagong district during the Liberation War.

The prosecution produced 41 witnesses, including an "eyewitness" who claimed to have seen Salauddin shoot and kill Nutan Chandra Sinha, founder of herbal medicine brand Kundeshwari Oushadhalaya, in 1971.

The defence was able to bring four witnesses, including Salauddin and his cousin, to prove their client innocent and that he was not in the country during the war.

Both the sides placed closing arguments between July 28 and August 14 of this year.

Salauddin was finally indicted on 23 charges on

The charges against Salauddin say he was involved in killing more than 200 people, including Nutan Chandra Sinha.

Nutan was one of among 111 people killed on April 13, 1971 by Salauddin, his accomplices and the Pakistani soldiers. Nutan was killed around 9:30am but the killing that day actually started around 6:00am and went on until 5:00pm in five places.

The people killed that day were mostly Hindus of Raojan's Moddha Gohira Hindu Para, Jogot Mollo Para, Unsattur Para and Sultanpur village.

Many were also injured that day and their houses were looted and torched, read the charges.

Pro-liberation people including a large number of Hindus were also forced to leave the country due to the atrocities committed by Salauddin and his accomplices, the charges say.

Cap on Grameen's

Demo stopped after govt assurance

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Khondoker Mainur Rahman, member secretary of the Diploma Engineers' Parishad, said the meeting decided to increase diploma engineers' quota to 50 percent from the existing 33 percent for promotion to the post of assistant engineer from sub-assistant engineer.

Besides, the meeting agreed to drop the post of "supervisor", the entry-level position held by diploma engineers. From now on, the position will be "sub-assistant engineer", he added.

Regarding the postponement of demonstrations for 15 days, Mainur said, "We gave the authorities 15 days to meet the assurances made by them in the meeting."

Talking to The Daily Star, Education Secretary Kamal Abdul Naser said the meeting discussed the demands of the students and diploma engineers.

city.

Facing resistance from