

War trials to be completed as quick as possible

Shafique tells Sangsad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday replying to a question told the parliament that the government had taken all-out measures to complete the trials of war criminals as quickly as possible.

He expressed the hope that the verdicts would be executed as soon as possible while answering queries of Manirul Islam MP from Barisal-2.

“After separation of the judiciary, the trial of the war criminals is progressing with the court’s own pace and there is no scope for the government to interfere in the trial process. The issue of completing the trials quickly does not depend on the government’s will,” said the minister.

“The International Crimes Tribunal and the Appellate Division have already given their verdicts on some of the war crimes trials following international standards. Trials of others accused of war crimes are also on the way.”

Responding to another question from lawmaker Golam Dastagir Gazi, the law minister said more than 31 lakh cases had been disposed of since the present government came to power.

Of the cases, 10,671 were disposed of in the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court while 1.35 lakh cases in High Court division and more than 29.7 lakh cases in the lower courts.

On the other hand, Local Government and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraful Islam yesterday told parliament that only five officers of different ranks had been forced to retire since the government assumed the office.

The officials – one secretary-level officer, one additional secretary-level officer, one joint secretary-level officer, and two others – had been sent to retirement for public interest, he added.

Replying to another scripted question, Ashraf said the introduction of a modern and up-to-date syllabus for Bangladesh Civil Service compulsory subjects would be completed soon.

Polls expense

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It also proposed that expenditures of countrywide electioneering by the chief of a political party would not be included in party expenditures.

The bill also proposed an amendment to the RPO to bar the people convicted under the International Crimes Tribunal Act from contesting the parliamentary polls.

The proposed amendments to the RPO also seek to empower the Election Commission to transfer government officials during polls.

A proposal to this effect says the EC may request transfer of any government officials or employees in the interest of fair polls. Such transfer would take effect as soon as the authorities concerned receive its written request.

A proposed change would give some more days to a registered political party to finalise its candidates.

A registered political party is now allowed to primarily nominate more than one candidate for each constituency. The party has to inform the returning officer about its final selection before scrutiny of nomination papers.

The proposed amendment says a political party in such cases would inform the returning officer about its final nomination after scrutiny and before withdrawal of candidacy.

If a political party finally nominates one such candidate, candidacy of other primarily nominated candidates would be ceased with immediate effect.

In defence of the proposed changes, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed said the amendments would contribute to holding free and fair polls.

The bill was sent to the parliamentary standing committee on law ministry for scrutiny. It is likely to be passed in the current parliamentary session, which is set to prorogue on October 24.

Tk 20 lakh for each dead

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The committee, formed on the instruction of the High Court instruction on August 29, fixed the amount at a meeting in Savar Cantonment based on basic salary, annual inflation, gratuity, pain and sufferings of victims.

Major General Chowdhury Hasan Suhrawardy of the army’s 9th infantry division presided over the meeting.

He said the committee would also propose Tk 10 lakh each for a victim who lost one limb and Tk 15 to 20 lakh each to a victim who lost two limbs.

The committee found that 1,142 workers had died and 221 were injured in the deadly collapse of the Rana Plaza, which housed five garment factories. Of

the injured, 150 would require long-term treatment.

However, it was left to the court to decide who would give the compensation.

The committee said financial help was not compensation. The compensation will be given by persons responsible for the incident. It may be factory owners, building owner, BGMEA or a government organisation responsible for ensuring safety in the factory.

The committee said for 25 years’ service, the basic wage of the workers would be considered Tk 5,000 a month plus an amount based on annual inflation, Tk 25,000 for burial, Tk 1,80,000 gratuity and Tk 500000 for pain and suffer-

ing as suggested by ILO and international trade unions.

The total cost for education up to the higher secondary level for children of each of the victims would be 10 percent of the earnings of the lost work years, which is around Tk 1,13,300.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) certified compensation package suggested bearing the cost of studies of the children of the victims up to the secondary level.

Jaglal Hayder, BGMEA representative on the committee, said the proposed compensation of around Tk 20 lakh for Rana Plaza victims was too high.

BGMEA Vice-President Shahidul Azim said the proposed compensation rate would need over Tk 300 crores.

Medicine traders threaten

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Protesters, however, opened their shops around 2:00pm, after the declaration.

ASM Monir Hossain, deputy secretary of the BCDS, said they would send a letter to the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) with their complaints, including the illegal seizure of drugs, and illegal detention of their fellow traders.

He also complained that the magistrate of the mobile court had refused to look at invoices and documents of the imported items, and fined the wholesale shops for not recruiting pharmacists.

“If the government does not reach a solution regarding the issues through discussion by Thursday, we will continue with our programme, and

decide the next course of action,” he said.

Meanwhile, at a press conference at the DGDA’s office in Motijheel, Maj Gen Md Jahangir Hossain Mollik said the superintendent of drugs conducts drives at different pharmacies in the country, collects medicine samples, and sends those for testing.

“The mobile court drive is only a temporary measure to increase awareness on the use and sale of fake, counterfeit and illegal drugs,” he said, adding that such drives would continue.

Regarding the allegations of the traders, Jahangir Hossain said pharmacies could not sell drugs without drug registration numbers.

Only 11 companies have permission to import surgical products, he

said, adding that other companies apart from these 11 were importing the items through illegal channels.

The drugstores in Mitford are required by law to recruit pharmacists as they have retail licences only, he added.

BCDS President Sadequr, however, said the country lacks pharmacists.

On Saturday, 94 people were arrested and 28 shops were sealed off on charges of selling fake and unauthorised medicines. Medicines worth Tk 5 crore were seized from about 500 shops and godowns at Mitford, the country’s largest hub of wholesale medicines.

Of the 94 arrestees, 22 are still serving various terms in jail, whereas the remaining 72 were freed after realising fines from them.

Raozan uneasy, tense

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They also killed noted philanthropist Natun Chandra Singha, founder of the herbal medicine factory Kundeshwari Oushadhalaya, at his home.

It was alleged that Salahuddin along with his band of Razakars led the Pakistan army to Kundeshwari and other two areas. He himself killed Natun Chandra.

Amid a sense of insecurity, locals were unwilling to say anything about the war crimes trial against him, today’s

verdict or the April 13 mass killing.

Though the law enforcers claimed to have tightened security ahead of the verdict, locals allege that police visited the areas only once yesterday morning.

Merry Chowdhury, wife of Asish Chowdhury who deposed against Salahuddin Quader before the tribunal, kept his silence when this correspondent wanted to know of her reaction.

Asish, who lost his father and brother on the black day in 1971, was con-

tacted at his workplace Kundeshwari Oushadhalaya. He too refused to talk.

Merry’s neighbour Sreepal Sarkar said the villagers had started feeling insecure as news about the imminent verdict came in the morning.

However, Prafulla Ranjan Singha, son of Natun, expressed his satisfaction over the trial undertaken after so many years.

Officer-in-Charge Enamul Hoque of Raozan Police Station said law enforcers were on patrol in the upazila.

Complainant to get 25pc

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related to the tasks of food law enforcement will not be entitled to the reward.

Earlier on September 9, the cabinet had approved the proposed food law with a provision of a maximum of five years’ imprisonment or a fine of Tk 10 lakh or both for persons guilty of food adulteration. The amount of the fine doubles if anyone repeats the offence.

Once passed into a law, the new act will replace the Pure Food Ordinance, 1959.

The Safe Food Act also has a provision for setting up of a unified authority, Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA), to fight food adulteration and attend to other food-related concerns of consumers. It proposed forming as many food courts as deemed necessary to prosecute adulterators.

The law proposed controlling the use of various toxic chemicals, such as formalin and DDT, in food items to ensure quality of food from production to packaging

and distribution.

The law will replace the existing system of food quality control that involves as many as 15 ministries and their agencies, said sources in the food ministry.

The draft proposed the formation of a National Pure Food Management Advisory Council, headed by the food minister and comprised of members from different ministries and government, private and academic organisations.

Rooppur nuke project

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of the Rooppur NPP, each of 1,000 MW capacity. The first unit is expected to be commissioned by the beginning of the next decade.

The groundbreaking ceremony is going to be held two years after Dhaka signed a crucial framework agreement with Moscow for the country’s maiden nuclear plant at a cost of \$1.5 to 2 billion. However, the cost has not yet been finalised.

Mostafizur Rahman, Pabna deputy commissioner, said the PM would lay the foundation stone of the project at the plant site at about 10:00am.

In the afternoon, the premier would address a

public meeting in Rooppur where she is expected to open some 30 development projects of the district, Mostafizur added.

Contacted, Shamsur Rahman Sharif Dilu, local lawmaker and also president of Pabna district unit AL, said the Rooppur people had been awaiting the nuclear power plant for about 52 years.

Meanwhile, a high-powered Russian delegation led by Sergey Kirienko arrives in Dhaka today. The delegation includes high government officials, nuclear energy experts, nuclear educationists and others.

Kirienko, also a former prime minister of Russia,

will also attend the opening ceremony of Atomic Industry Information Centre at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Novo Theatre in the capital today and the agreement signing ceremony between Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and NIAEP, a Russian nuclear power plant engineering, design and construction company, on development of engineering design of the Rooppur NPP.

Kirienko will hold several formal meetings, including a call on Sheikh Hasina. Besides, he will meet state minister for science and technology, BAEC officials and others during the visit.

Taiwan jails retired vice admiral for spying

AFP, Taipei

A Taiwan court convicted and jailed a retired vice admiral for 14 months yesterday for spying on behalf of China, the court said.

Taiwan has been hit by a string of spying scandals in recent years, reflecting the fact that intelligence gathering has continued despite warming ties with Beijing.

Ke Cheng-sheng, 70, was found guilty of collecting confidential Taiwanese military information and helping China develop an espionage network on the island, the district court in the southern city of Kaohsiung said in a statement.

This honour

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by the Awami League and professional bodies at the VVIP terminal lounge of Shahjalal International Airport.

Leaders of AL, its associated bodies and different professional organisations greeted the prime minister by presenting bouquets to her.

“This award is for all, all citizens of the country,” said the premier.

Recalling the “dark days” of the BNP-Jamaat regime during 2001-2006, Hasina, also the AL chief, said Bangladesh was on the verge of turning out to be a failed state at that time. “They [BNP-Jamaat] pull the country back whenever they come to power,” she noted.

After assuming power in 2009, the incumbent government engaged all its strength for the country’s balanced development, she mentioned. “Bangladesh is moving forward, and this award is proof of that.”

This year, she said, Bangladesh got the South-South Award for its achievement of MDG on poverty reduction much before the targeted timeframe of 2015 and ensuring food security for people.

Hasina added that her government won prizes and awards for the country every year, including the MDG Award, South-South Award, Global Diversity Award, the FAO Food Award 2013, in recognition of its achievements.

The prime minister returned home yesterday afternoon after completing her eight-day official visit to the USA for attending the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

250 varieties

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back garden at Chidham in West Sussex of the UK, grafting on new varieties every winter.

The tree’s fruits now include rare cooking apples such as the Withington Fillbasket, which originated in 1883, and Eady’s Magnum, from 1908, as well as more recognisable favourites.

Barnett, 40, said on Saturday: “I started working at a nursery with acres of land and around 90 varieties of apple trees in rows.

“I wanted to grow my own trees but I didn’t have the area to plant that number so I started a ‘family tree’ where I can have all the different varieties in a smaller amount of space. I add to it each year by budding in the summer and grafting in the winter.”

Over time the buds and branches grow to become part of the main tree and eventually produce even more varieties of apple.

Barnett added: “The tree has cooking, eating and cider apples on it but I normally only get a few of each variety of apple each year. It’s great to see all the different colours and sized apples on the tree this time of year.”

He has had to prop up some of the branches with planks because of the sheer weight of the fruit growing on the tree, which stands some 20ft high.

Barnett also has nine smaller family trees growing plums, pears, cherries and apples.

Verdict any day

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eminent journalists and three physicians in the last week of the nine-month Liberation War in 1971.

This is the second war crimes case in which the trial has been conducted in absentia, as the tribunal’s attempts to have the accused in the courtroom failed.

Mueen is now living in London while Ashraf in New York.

The first war crimes case conducted in absentia was against expelled Jamaat-e-Islami member Abul Kalam Azad. He has been awarded the capital punishment.

Yesterday, prosecutor Sahidur Rahman gave brief replies to the defence arguments before the three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam had kept the case waiting for judgment.

Before Sahidur’s submission, state-appointed defence counsels Abdus Shukur Khan and Salma Hai Tuny had completed their arguments and sought acquittal of their client claiming that the prosecution “failed to prove” any of the charges.

On September 25, prosecutor Syed Haider Ali sought death penalty for Mueen and Ashraf, as what he said the duo “deserved capital punishment for the crimes they had committed [during the Liberation War].”

The charges against the duo are related to abducting and killing of 18 intellectuals. The victims were: Dhaka University teachers Prof Mofazzal Haider Chowdhury, Prof Munier Chowdhury, Prof Giasuddin Ahmed, Prof Sirajul Haque Khan, Dr Abul Khayer, Dr Faizul Mohiuddin, Prof Rashidul Hasan, Prof Anwar Pasha, Prof Santosh Chandra Bhattacharyya, journalists Serajuddin Hossain, Syed Najmul Haque, ANM Golam Mostafa, Nizam Uddin

Ahmed, Selina Pervin, Shahidullah Kaiser, and physicians Fazle Rabbee, Alim Chaudhury and Mohammad Martuza.

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 and 2 holding war crimes trials have so far delivered judgment in six cases. The Tribunal-1 is set to deliver the verdict in the case against BNP leader Salauddin Quader Chowdhury today.

The Tribunal-2 also kept the case against another BNP leader Abdul Alim waiting for judgment on September 22.

The court took 25 days to deliver the verdict in Azad’s case after the proceedings had been completed and 41 days, the highest so far, in Mojaheed’s case.

If convicted Mueen and Ashraf could get the death penalty. The International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 only allows a convict to appeal to the Appellate Division of Supreme Court against conviction and sentence within 30 days of the date of the verdict delivery.

BACKGROUNDS OF MUEEN AND ASHRAF

Mueen, son of Delwar Hossain Chowdhury and Diljan Begum of Chandpur village in Dagonbhuiyan upazila of Feni district, was a student of Dhaka University (Bangla department) until the independence, according to the prosecution.

He was a staff reporter of daily Purbadesh and a central leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of Jamaat-e-Islami, said the prosecution.

During the Liberation War, Mueen as the operation-in-charge of Al-Badr intellectual killing mission, was directly involved in the killings of the brightest children of the soil to cripple the soon-to-be-independent Bangladesh, alleged the prosecution.

After the war, he went to Pakistan and then to London where he has been the chairman of Tottenham

Mosque, vice-chairman of National Health Service, and a director of Muslim spiritual care provision in the National Health Service, they said.

Ashraf alias Naeb Ali Khan, son of Ajahar Ali Khan and Roimunnesa of Chhotovata village under Muksudpur upazila of Gopalganj district, was enrolled in Islamic studies of Dhaka University and obtained his Bachelor in Arts degree in 1970. He was a central leader of Islami Chhatra Sangha, according to the prosecution.

They said, during the war Ashraf, who was also a member of Al-Badr high command, acted as the chief executor of the intellectual killing mission.

He had also served as the commander of Gazi Salahuddin Company of Al-Badr and directly took part in the planned killing, they alleged.

He was now in New York and had been serving as a member of Islami Circle of North America, according to the prosecution.

The investigation agency, designated to the prove war crimes, started to probe the alleged crimes of the duo on September 25, 2011 and submitted its report to the prosecution on October 9, 2012.

On April 25 this year, the prosecution pressed 16 charges of war crimes against the accused. The tribunal on May 27 decided to hold the trial in absentia and appointed two defence counsels for them. On June 25, the court framed 11 charges against them.

The prosecution produced 25 witnesses, including two investigation officers in the case, while the defence could not produce any as they “didn’t get cooperation from the accused family members and relatives.”

The prosecution and the defence placed their arguments in between September 23 and yesterday.

Kuwait warns stateless residents over protests

AFP, Kuwait City

Kuwait’s interior ministry yesterday warned stateless residents against demonstrating to mark the international day of non-violence on October 2, warning it will deal firmly with protesters.

Online activists have been urging stateless residents of the oil-rich Gulf state, known locally as bidoons, to demonstrate

peacefully to renew their demands for Kuwaiti citizenship and basic rights like education and healthcare.

The ministry “will deal firmly, in accordance with the law and procedures, with any gatherings or rallies,” said an official statement, which described the stateless people as “illegal residents.”

Kuwaiti riot police have dispersed previous protests by bidoons with force, using

stun grenades and tear gas, arresting hundreds who are now on trial for holding illegal gatherings and assaulting police.

Bidoons were born and raised in Kuwait and claim they have the right to Kuwaiti citizenship, but the government says only 34,000 of a total of over 106,000 qualify for consideration, while the rest hold other nationalities.

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