

## NIZAMI'S WAR CRIMES TRIAL

# Defence cuts number of witnesses to 25

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence of Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami who once claimed 10,111 witnesses were needed to prove their client's innocence now want only 25 of them.

Abdur Razzaq, chief of the defence of war crimes accused Jamaat-e-Islami leaders, yesterday told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 that they needed only 25 witnesses to disprove the 12 out of 16 charges framed against Nizami.

The tribunal framed 16 charges against Nizami for his alleged involvement in crimes against humanity and genocide during the Liberation War. The prosecution produced 26 witnesses to prove the 12 charges and depended on documentary evidence for the rest.

Raising eyebrows of many, the defence submitted a list of 10,111 witnesses on July 22 last year. The prosecution termed the "huge list" part of the defence's dilatory strategies.

With the examination of the prosecution witnesses at the last stage, the prosecution submitted a petition to the tribunal last week for curtailing the number of defence witnesses, while the defence counsels said they themselves would submit a shorter list.

When the defence yesterday submitted a list of 25 witness, prosecutor Mohammad Ali said, "The onus of proving the charges solely falls upon the prosecution."

"There is no need of defence witnesses," he said, adding, even if the defence were allowed witnesses, that number should be limited like the war crimes cases already disposed of or awaiting verdicts.

Defence lawyer Tajul Islam, however, told The Daily Star the list was shortened as they believed 25 witnesses were enough, which was not understandable at the beginning of the trial when they had submitted the list.

"Besides, the prosecution have shortened the case," he added.

But, prosecutor Tureen Afroz told The Daily Star it was not the duty of the defence to disprove charges, their duty was to cast doubt on the charges framed against the accused.

"If they have an alibi, they can produce two or three witnesses," she said, adding, "They [defence] are senior lawyers. They also know it as well. I think they filed the application to make the trial process lengthy."

About alibi, Tajul said adducing defence witnesses did not depend on the presence of alibi as per the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973.

Tajul rejected the prosecution's allegation that the "huge list" was submitted to delay the case proceedings.

In other war crimes cases, the defence similarly submitted "huge lists" of witnesses, but the tribunals curtailed the lists.

## Litre of Light

FROM PAGE 1 sheds (1 ft by 1ft), silicon glue, chlorine, clean water and a rivet screw to produce at least 60 watts of light.

"We covered the Baineabadh slum in Mirpur, where 300 families are benefiting from the Botol Bati project," says Sajid. "We installed 250 of them between April and August 2013 under the project of GIZ (German development co-operation)." Sajid and his team plan to cover all the cities in Bangladesh eventually. "We distributed our leaflets with our contact information in several slum areas in case slum dwellers want us to install the light," adds Sajid. "We also provided installation cards to the users, so that they can contact us if needed."

Sajid took his idea forward and presented it as a social business plan in February 2012 at the South Asian Youth Leader's Summit (SAYLS), organised by SAYLS and the US embassy. His model won second place, after which he received a small grant from the US embassy to do

further research on its feasibility. His research work was also published in the UN habitats flagship campaign - "I AM A CITY CHANGER."

He also recently founded a youth based volunteer organisation called CHANGE (www.change.org.bd), where Botol Bati has become their official project. "We are now focusing on the cottage industries in Bangladesh, where Botol Bati has a huge demand," adds Sajid.

Sajid has received recognition through many international articles such as 'Plastic Bottle Lights up Slum (CNC World)', 'Alfredo Moser: Bottle Light Inventor Proud to be Poor' (BBC), 'A Litre of Light' (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change), 'Uncorking Bottled Light' (Searchlight South Asia) and more. CHANGE has already organised many workshops and seminars in different schools and universities to spread awareness and help more of the youth to join their cause.

## Gang of medicine smugglers

FROM PAGE 20 the name of exporting garment accessories such as buttons and zippers," ATM Habibur Rahman, director of the Rab's legal and media wing, told newsmen at a press briefing at its Uttara headquarters.

The gang was sending 12 cartons of tablets to Hong Kong through Expo Freight Limited, an air freight company. The consignment weighed 300kg.

Out of suspicion, the company with permission from Bangladesh Customs checked the cartons and found tablets in those instead of buttons as declared by its sender Mizanur Rahman.

When Mizanur was contacted, Chinese national Lieu Xing Hui answered the phone, raising the freight company's suspicion. The firm then informed the Rab about the matter.

The elite force tested the tablets at its laboratory. They contained ephedrine, a chemical similar to methamphetamine, the main ingredient of Yaba, said Habibur.

The Rab-1 team then

tracked down the alleged smugglers and raided their den on Road-11 of Sector-3 in Uttara.

The detainees are Lieu Xing Hui 46, Rau Riu Aug, 46, Kui Haung Tu, 36, Jang Chau Liang, 40, Lin Lian Fu, 35, Lieu Xi Jin, 27, Yang Hi Cheng, 40, Mushfiqur Rahman Khan Sohel, 35, Raquibul Hassan, 34, and Muniruzzaman, 38.

The law enforcers also recovered a huge amount of tablets of different renowned Bangladeshi companies, an apparatus for producing fake medicine, liquor, six foreign passports, Tk 24,40,300 and some US currency notes from their possession.

The Chinese nationals have been here on work permits. Two of them are overstaying their visas. They collected the tablets with the help of the three Bangladeshis, two of whom are medical representatives of drug companies.

"Though the tablets are prescription drugs, the Bangladeshis bought those from pharmacies in bulk at prices higher than the

maximum retail price," said the Rab official.

According to the Narcotics Control Act, 1990, ephedrine is a controlled drug and special government permission is required for its export, import and storage.

A controlled drug also in other countries, ephedrine is not available for purchase in large quantities. The quality of Bangladeshi medicines is high and can be purchased easily from drug stores, which often sell medicines without prescription, mentioned Habibur.

Responding to a query by a reporter, he said till now they have no knowledge of illegal laboratories in the country where ephedrine is separated from tablets to produce meth and yaba.

The seized tables, including those in 12 cartons, have an estimated worth of Tk 2.5 crore.

The Rab-1 last night handed over the detainees to police and filed a case with Uttara Police Station under the special powers act against them for smuggling of medicinal drugs.

## Nahid under fire at JS over MPO demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling alliance MPs yesterday in parliament lambasted Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid for not listing three schools at each lawmaker's constituency under monthly payment order (MPO).

They demanded the minister bring the schools under the MPO system. Otherwise, they said, it would be a reason of debacle for the ruling alliance in the next general election.

Responding to the lawmakers, the minister said he took a list of three schools from each lawmaker but those were yet to be brought under the MPO due to fund crunch.

Their demand would be fulfilled if the finance ministry allocates Tk 1,000 crore to the education ministry, he added.

"It is impossible to bring the institutions under the MPO system without the allocation," Nahid told the House that began after a two-day recess with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

"We have been holding

meetings with the finance minister."

In response to a query regarding the ongoing unrest at Jahangirnagar University, Nahid issued a strong note of warning saying, "I request the teachers to solve the problems through discussion. It is not a healthy culture to realise any demand by keeping colleagues confined."

The minister also said the government would request the president to apply the law bestowed upon him if the teachers did not resolve the problem through discussion.

Expressing his resentment, Awami League MP Matiur Rahman alleged that the education ministry was yet to bring three schools in his constituency under the MPO system even at the fag end of the government.

"We may face defeat in the next election on this issue," he said.

Another AL MP Imajuddin Pramanik said, "We have passed a budget proposal of some Tk 2.22 trillion but the lawmakers would not get Tk 1,000 crore. It is not fair."

## Patients take

FROM PAGE 1 Traumatology and Rehabilitation (Nitor) to fix his broken thumb.

He was standing in the queue before the emergency drug store at Shishu Hospital.

"I need to buy this medicine 'splint thumb' but it is not available in the emergency drug store in Nitor and so I came here," Ratul said.

However, medicine shops in front of DMCH were open till 11:45am because of the prime minister's visit to the hospital yesterday.

After she left, the shops pulled down the shutters.

In Chittagong city, Rifat Sultana, mother of a 13-year old, searched for antibiotics for her son, who was suffering from fever.

Running from one area to another for hours, she could not find any of the city's 2,700 pharmacies open, reported our Chittagong office.

Swarna, aged 22 and awaiting childbirth, had to be shifted hurriedly from Jamalpur General Hospital to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital as the medicines required for her delivery were not available, reports our Jamalpur correspondent.

Similar cases were reported by correspondents across the country. People went from remote areas to the district towns to buy medicines but returned emptyhanded.

Responding to people's sufferings and following an assurance by the government that their demands would be met, medicine traders opened their pharmacies at 6:00pm.

Earlier on Monday, the Bangladesh Chemist and Druggist Samity called the 16-hour strike following a protest by drug traders of Dhaka's Mitford,

Babubazar and Islampur areas over a mobile court drive in the areas on Saturday.

"We have withdrawn our strike after a fruitful meeting with the government," said Md Sadequr Rahman, president of the Samity.

In the meeting with the officials of the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) from 10:00am to 12:00noon, it was decided that the drug traders arrested on September 28 would be released before Eid-ul-Azha, the sealed shops would be reopened and the list of the medicines and appliances seized would be submitted by next week, Sadequr said.

He said the seizure lists would help traders realise the money, which they paid as fines for keeping those drugs at their stores, from the manufacturing companies.

DGDA will also provide them with the latest gazette notification of the list of approved drug manufacturers and importers, Sadequr added.

The medicine traders had claimed that they sold drugs of unauthorised companies because they were not informed about the government notifications issued in the last 20 years.

Talking to The Daily Star, Jahangir Hossain Mollik, chief of DGDA, said, "We have reached a consensus that the drive against fake and counterfeit medicines will continue."

Regarding the release of the arrestees, he said steps would be taken to ensure their bails before the Eid festival.

Sadequr, however, told The Daily Star that the traders would call an indefinite strike if the demands were not met as promised by the government.

## Central bank to call

FROM PAGE 1

Though Finance Minister AMA Muhith publicly said that tax exemption privilege for Grameen Bank would be capped for a certain period, no such provision was included in the draft law.

However, the cabinet secretary said the government would decide on the period for which the microlender would enjoy income tax exemption.

In the cabinet meeting, the finance ministry proposed retaining the Grameen Bank officials' power to file cases under the Public Demands Recovery (PDR) Act.

But a number of ministers objected to the provision, saying the authority could be used to harass borrowers.

The cabinet secretary said Grameen Bank officials would continue to enjoy the power to realise money from borrowers under the PDR act.

"But its execution will be monitored so that

borrowers are not harassed and the power is not abused." The government was yet to decide on which agency would monitor it, he said.

Suggesting a major change in the existing rules, the draft law says, both the government-appointed directors and the nine elected directors of Grameen Bank will not be able to stay in their posts for more than three years.

According to the existing rules, the government-appointed directors remain in their posts as long as the government wants.

The proposed law says three government-appointed directors will be able to convene a board meeting if all posts of elected directors are vacant.

Following a court order, the government decided to turn into law the GB ordinance, along with more than 500 ordinances promulgated during the military rule

between 1982 and 1986.

The cabinet secretary said those ordinances were given legality recently through the passage of two laws in parliament.

The proposed law also suggests stricter restrictions on the use of Grameen name.

If anyone uses the name of Grameen without written consent from Grameen Bank, he or she would face imprisonment up to one year or a fine of Tk 1 lakh or both, said the secretary.

According to the proposed law, the government's share in the Grameen Bank remains the same at 25 percent, while the remaining 75 percent belong to the borrower shareholders of the bank.

The draft law suggests increasing the Grameen Bank's authorised capital to Tk 1,000 crore from Tk 350 crore, and the paid-up capital to Tk 300 crore from Tk 50 crore.

## Fix what needs

FROM PAGE 1

also seen how unwilling the government was in going after the perceived culprits behind the Hall-Mark scandals and how an adviser to the prime minister was let off the hook lightly.

And yet reforms are not being done in these banks. The government takes a lenient view of the crimes being done there. They now need to be recapitalised. In other words this means as the politically strong thieves rob these banks we the taxpayers have to fill up their vaults only to be emptied out again.

Now let's look at the other example, that of Grameen Bank. Since its establishment in 1983 by Dr Yunus, the bank has been so inspiring that the government took special interest in it and participated in the bank's equity (initially it was 25 percent which had slid down to 3 percent before returning to the previous level recently). The government had offered special bonds for Grameen to raise funds.

Eventually, Grameen became a unique model of how a financial institution

can give millions of small loans to the poor (only in August this year it distributed Tk 584 crore in loans) and yet make profit (last year it clocked Tk 145 crore in net profit). It has proven how to manage a huge portfolio of millions of small loans and alter the lives of the poor. It can only remind us of the Bombay Dabwallahs who every day run millions of lunch boxes for Bombay office-goers to perfection.

Nothing went wrong with Grameen operations until the government suddenly felt that it must be targeted and ripped apart for reasons only it knows. One reason might be the prime minister's animosity towards Yunus. But to get at Yunus, why Grameen has to be ripped apart is a big question.

Grameen was a perfectly running organisation, unlike the state-owned banks. The government in its bid to discredit Yunus had instituted a commission to investigate the "wrongs" in Grameen. So far, this commission has found nothing in its interim report.

So the question arises: when Grameen was running

on solid ground, why this sudden move to bring it under the Bangladesh Bank fold? Outwardly, one may argue that the central bank should oversee the activities of all banks and so should it of Grameen. This might be a naive view of the matter. Why should the government shake up a wrong tree? In our view it is just another attempt to choke an organisation which has performed tremendously well, enough to earn the Nobel and an organisation the international reputation of which the government is unaware of.

The government should better go after the bad boys -- the state owned banks -- to put them back on the right path rather than grab a good boy and break its backbone. It makes no sense to focus on a respectable organisation which does not deal with big loans and big thieves who are bleeding the state-owned banks rather than the sick financial institutions.

We still believe the government should let Grameen function as it so far has and undertake the task of reforming the state banks.

## 8 dead in US bus crash

AFP, Washington

Eight people were killed when a bus packed with members of a church group blew a tire and slammed into oncoming traffic, officials in the US state of Tennessee said Wednesday.

A statement from the Tennessee Department of Safety said the bus carrying

18 people veered into an opposite lane and collided with an SUV and a tractor-trailer before overturning.

A preliminary toll of fatalities said six people traveling on the bus had died along with one person traveling in the SUV and one aboard the tractor-trailer, which burst into flames following the collision.

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A further 14 people were injured, including four people who were airlifted from the crash site on Jefferson County's Interstate 40 freeway, Tennessee Department of Safety spokeswoman Dalya Qualls said in a statement to AFP.

## Tourist killed in Nepal plane crash

AFP, Kathmandu

A small plane crashed into a hill in a tourist city in western Nepal yesterday, killing the pilot and the only passenger, a Chinese tourist, a police official said.

The ultra-light aircraft was flying over a lake in Pokhara when it slammed into the hill near a Buddhist

monastery, Surendra Bahadur Shah, a local police chief told AFP.

"Villagers told us about the crash at 9:30 am local time. The weather was bad, it was cloudy," he said.

The passenger, a 33-year-old Chinese tourist called Zun Liu, and the pilot, who also owned the plane, were both killed in the crash, he said.

## Contempt plea filed

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member Salauddin Quader Chowdhury for committing crimes against humanity and genocide during the Liberation War in 1971.

Following the verdict, Mahub said that if voted to power, his party would try those involved in the trial.

The prosecution yesterday submitted copies of four dailies -- the Prothom Alo, Janakantha, Bangladesh Pratidin and Kaler Kantho -- which published Mahub's comments.

It said the Prothom Alo quoted Mahub as saying,

"If the nationalist force comes to power, they will try those who are war criminals in the real sense. Those who were tried out of ven-

geance and the cases which were prepared on the basis of fairytale must go. And those who were involved in the farcical trial, Inshallah [if Allah wishes], they will also be tried on the soil of Bangladesh."

Moving the petition, Prosecutor Zead Al Malum said Mahub made the remarks at a press conference of Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, an organisation of pro-BNP lawyers. These were intended to taint the tribunal and its trial process, and to undermine the confidence of people in the integrity of the tribunal.

He said the comments were made also to threaten the security of all the related parties including the chief

Justice, judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, the tribunal judges, members of both the defence and prosecution, officials of the tribunal registrar's office, investigators, witnesses, victims and journalists of the electronic and print media covering the trial.

"Such statements are bound to create doubts about all proceedings of the tribunal and smooth functioning of a free and fair judicial system," the prosecutor added.

Mahub was one of the public prosecutors at a Special Tribunal that in the early 1970s conducted the trial of collaborators of the Pakistan army under the

Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunal) Order, 1972.

Forty years later, he became a lawyer for war criminal Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Delawat Hossain Sayedee and Abdul Quader Mollah.

Earlier on June 9, the International Crimes Tribunal-2 sentenced Jamaat lawmaker Hamidur Rahman Azad and acting secretary general of the party Rafiqul Islam Khan to three months' imprisonment and fined each of them Tk 3,000, as they were found guilty of contempt of court. They had made derogatory and provocative remarks about the tribunals and the ongoing trials.