

BNP LEADER KHOKON'S TRIAL

2 witnesses testify on wartime killings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two witnesses in the war crimes case against Zahid Hossain Khokon yesterday testified how their fathers were killed during the Liberation War at Meherdia village in Faridpur.

One of the witnesses, Abdul Aziz Matubbar, now 63, saw war crimes accused BNP leader and fugitive Khokon shoot his father Asir Uddin Matubbar dead on May 31, 1971.

Idris Sardar, 56, the other witness, said he had seen Khokon dragging out his father Sofiz Uddin Sardar to a corner of their house the same day. He had later heard the sound of gunshots, Idris added.

"After they left the place, I went there and found my father dead. One bullet hit him in the chest and another in his ankle," said Idris.

Idris and Aziz, the sixth and seventh prosecution witnesses respectively, were giving deposition at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

Aziz told the tribunal he was working at a jute field on May 31 when he noticed Razakar commander Khokon and his associates along with Pakistani army on the east side of their village.

"I was running to escape when Khokon shot me. The bullet passed touching my right ear and I fell on the ground," Aziz said.

The impact of the bullet was so strong that Aziz lost one eye and became hearing impaired for life.

He said he had managed to hide in a nearby bush.

"My father took shelter in a mosque. Khokon dragged him out from the mosque and shot him dead," said the witness, adding, he had seen the incident from the bush.

On the same day Khokon and his associates allegedly killed Idris' father.

Idris said he and his father were talking on

the premises of their house. "Suddenly I heard the sound of shooting coming from the mosque," said Aziz who saw Khokon leading others to their house.

Asking his father to hide, Aziz also hid in a bush on the north of his house.

"They [Khokon and his associates] set fire to our house," he said, adding, "My father could not flee and they caught him."

"I saw Khokon drag my father to the north-east side of our house. Khokon was holding a rifle in his hand," he said.

"I heard the sound of two shots. One bullet hit in his chest and another in the ankle," said Aziz who later found his father dead.

Then they had burned down several other houses in the village and headed to the nearby locality, said the witness.

Defence counsel Abdus Shukur Khan cross-examined the witnesses before the proceeding was adjourned until today.

ICT-2

The International Crimes Tribunal-2 yesterday deferred to December 5 the charge-framing hearing in the case against war crimes accused Syed Mohammad Qaisar as his defence were yet to get formal charges and other prosecution documents.

Yesterday was fixed for charge framing hearing, but defence counsel Abdus Sobhan Tarafder said they had yet to receive the prosecution documents. Prosecutor Rana Dasgupta, however, said they had submitted the documents to the tribunal's registrar's office on Tuesday.

The tribunal then re-fixed the date.

Earlier on November 14, the tribunal accepted the charges brought against Qaisar, a former state minister in military dictator HM Ershad's cabinet.

The prosecution had earlier pressed 18 charges against Qaisar, an alleged Razakar

Jamaat leader shot dead in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Unidentified criminals gunned down a union level leader of Jamaat-e-Islami here yesterday evening, eight hours after a Jubo League leader's tendons in the hands and legs were cut allegedly by Jamaat men.

Protesting the killing, Jamaat called a daylong hartal for today in the district.

Abdul Hai Siddique Bulbul, 35, secretary general Jamaat's Newtown Union unit, died on the spot as the assailants shot him in his head around 7:45pm, Emdadul Haque Sheikh, officer-in-charge, of Kotwali police Station, told The Daily Star.

Witnesses said the victim was working at his cyber café near his house when he came under attack.

Earlier around 12:00 noon, some Jamaat-Shibir activists cut the tendons of Nazmul Islam, 30, organising secretary of Ramnagar union Jubo League, at Kuyada bazar.

Cats never evolved

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Carried out by Atsuko Saito and Kazutaka Shinozuka, the study tested twenty housecats in their own homes; waiting until the owner was out of sight and then playing them recordings of three strangers calling their names, followed by their owner, followed by another stranger.

The researchers then analysed the cats' responses to each call by measuring a number of factors including ear, tail and head movement, vocalisation, eye dilation and 'displacement' -- shifting their paws to move.

"These results indicate that cats do not actively respond with communicative behaviour to owners who are calling them from out of sight, even though they can distinguish their owners' voices," write Saito and Shinozuka.

The study, published by Springer in the Animal Cognition journal, suggests that the reason for cats' unresponsive behaviour might be traced back to the early domestication of the species.

Recent genetic analysis has revealed that the common ancestor of the modern housecat was *Felis silvestris*, a species of wildcat that first came into contact with humans around 9,000 years ago.

As early societies developed agriculture, these cats moved in to prey on the rodents that were attracted to stores of grain. In the words of the paper's authors, they effectively "domesticated themselves".

"Historically speaking, cats, unlike dogs, have not been domesticated to obey humans' orders. Rather, they seem to take the initiative in human-cat interaction."

This is in contrast to the history of dogs and humans, where the former has been bred over thousands of years to respond to orders and commands. Cats, it seems, never needed to learn.

Hannan

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capital's Paltan Maidan on January 21, 2001.

CID Inspector Mrinal Kanti Saha, also the Investigation Officer (IO) of the cases, submitted two charge sheets to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka with a list of 107 prosecution witnesses.

During the investigation, 26 people including Mufti Hannan were arrested for their alleged involvement with the bomb attack.

The names of 20 people have been dropped from the charge sheets as no evidence of their involvement could be found.

According to the charge sheets, the accused carried out the blasts on the pretext that the CPB members were "atheists".

Asked about the charge sheets, the then CPB president Monzurul Ahsan Khan, also the complainant of the cases, told The Daily Star that he was satisfied with charge sheets despite the fact that it took 12 years for the police to do that.

Soon after the blasts, police arrested 12 people but the CID, in its final investigation report submitted on December 17, 2003, cleared the arrestees of the charges as no "correct, impartial and reliable" evidence was found against them.

Later the home ministry ordered a reinvestigation into the incident following an application submitted by the CID in 2005.

Top S.African court orders probe into Zimbabwe torture

AFP, Johannesburg

South Africa's top appeals court yesterday ruled that the country's authorities have a duty to investigate allegations of torture in neighbouring Zimbabwe.

Judge Mohammed Navsa of the Supreme Court of Appeal upheld a ruling that South African prosecutors had a duty under international law to probe the alleged torture of opposition activists in 2007.

South African police "are required to initiate an investigation... into the alleged offences," Navsa said.

The ruling is likely to strain ties between South Africa and the government of President Robert Mugabe, who described the initial court order as a "direct assault" on Zimbabwe's sovereignty.

It could also spell trouble for 17 implicated officials should they seek to travel to South Africa.

South African prosecutors had refused to investigate the allegations, citing political concerns.

Pretoria mediated after disputed polls in 2008 between Mugabe and his arch-rival Morgan Tsvangirai.

The Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC) and the Zimbabwe Exiles Forum filed the case to force South Africa to arrest and prosecute 17 Zimbabweans accused of torture in 2007 if they enter the country.

Latvian PM quits over store

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said he would "begin negotiations on the formation of a new government next week", ruling out an immediate election. The next parliamentary elections are set for October 2014.

The November 21 store collapse was Latvia's worst-ever peacetime disaster, leaving the Baltic state of two million people reeling.

"Considering the tragedy and all related circumstances... a new government is needed that has the clear support of parliament," Dombrovskis told reporters as he fought back tears.

"Therefore I have submitted my resignation from the post of prime minister," he said after a meeting with Berzins.

Latvia enters the eurozone on January 1, an unpopular move that Dombrovskis made a policy cornerstone for his administration.

He insisted yesterday that euro adoption played no part in his decision to leave and

denied media speculation Berzins had demanded he step down.

"I've given a great deal of thought to the political and moral consequence of what happened," Dombrovskis said referring to the disaster, adding would stay on as a care-taker prime minister until a new administration was formed.

Dombrovskis said that although he was not prepared to head another government himself, he wanted his centrist Unity party to be part of the future governing coalition.

"I'll probably resume my duties as a member of parliament but that matter requires more thought," he added, without elaborating.

Analysts said yesterday his surprise resignation only ramped up political instability as the country is poised for a currency switch.

"It's going to create a certain amount of chaos. Most probably Latvia will join the eurozone with a caretaker prime minister in charge," analyst Ivars Ijabs of the University of

Blockade extension

FROM PAGE 16

More than 29 lakh class-V students are sitting for the tests that began on November 20.

Shyamal Kanti Ghosh, director general of Directorate of Primary Education, told The Daily Star that it was quite difficult to notify all schools in such a short period of time.

Shahan Ara, principal of Ideal School and College, Motijheel, told The Daily Star that there were scheduled tests for class-II, -IV, -VI, -VII and -IX today and they have to reschedule them this morning because they heard about the extension of the blockade rather late.

Unsure whether they would be able to publish the results on time, she said, "The violent political programmes may jeopardise the entire academic calendar."

The opposition's agitation programmes had put the education sector in disarray at the crucial time when almost all schools and colleges were scheduled to have their final and half-yearly exams.

Guardians were particularly upset with the messed up academic calendar.

"I have to take my daughter either by a rickshaw or an auto rickshaw as there is an exam tomorrow [today]. But I have a feeling of

extreme insecurity seeing violence on the streets. I am scared," said Tahmina Rahman Rimi.

Mother of a class-I student of Shaheed Anwar Girls' High School and College, Tahmina told The Daily Star, "We are more concerned about our children's future and our lives than the game of thrones in politics."

Selina Parvin, a mother of primary terminal examinee of Sherpur, Bogra, did not even know that her daughter's exam was rescheduled until The Daily Star correspondent told her about it.

She said, "My daughter is losing interest in studies due to repeated changes in the exam schedule."

A father of a school-going child said students prepare for an exam and once they come to know that the test has been postponed, it breaks their hearts.

"We have been requesting not to hold such programmes but to no avail. The politicians are playing their game with our children's future," he said.

Earlier this year, several board exams of the secondary, higher secondary, JSC and JDC had to be postponed due to opposition-sponsored shutdowns. Even freshmen exams at universities were also affected.

UN delegates due Dec 6

FROM PAGE 1

Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia on holding the next parliamentary election in a "free, fair, inclusive and credible" manner, a highly placed source told The Daily Star yesterday.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is sending the "political mission", comprised of senior officials from the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and experts, with the mandates to encourage dialogue among major parties to ensure an environment "conducive to credible and peaceful election", according to diplomatic sources.

This will be Fernandez-Taranco's third visit to Bangladesh in twelve months since he first came here on December 10 last year, followed by the second trip on May 10 this year.

During his stay in the capital, he will meet the two top leaders, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad, Foreign Minister Mahmud Ali and Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque.

He will also hold talks with the members of civil society and international community to foster dialogue among political parties ahead of the next national election.

Diplomatic and political circles in Dhaka consider Fernandez-Taranco's visit as crucial. He will come apparently to help the political parties break the standoff over the polls-time government.

The UN official will report to the UN chief on the outcome of his Bangladesh visit.

AL candidates

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nominations for candidates in Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions, which have 129 constituencies.

Of the 129, the party had won some 100 seats in the 2008 parliamentary polls.

Sources said the party gave the nod to some new faces excluding controversial lawmakers of the ninth parliament.

The Awami League, however, prepared two lists of candidates. One would be used if the main opposition BNP joined the polls and the other if it did not.

Sources said the party would sacrifice a number of seats for Jatiya Party in Rangpur, the home of Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad. Awami League aspirants in those seats would not get party tickets, they claimed.

Some 3,000 party nomination seekers collected nomination forms for the 300 constituencies.

After finalising all candidates today, the Awami League would then sit with its allies and like-minded parties to talk about seat sharing in the 10th parliamentary election.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the main opposition BNP was boycotting the election in fear of defeat and out of sympathy for its major ally Jamaat-e-Islami.

"The High Court declared illegal the registration of Jamaat-e-Islami [with the Election Commission] and the government has nothing to do with it. BNP wants to stay aloof from the election since Jamaat cannot join it," she said.

The HC cancelled Jamaat's registration with the EC on the grounds that the party's constitution clashes with the country's constitution and that it does not believe in the supremacy of the people of the republic.

At the meeting at her Dhanmondi office, Awami League President Hasina also called upon BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to participate in the election scheduled for January 5 and prove her

party's popularity.

She condemned the BNP-led 18-party opposition for what she said was killing people, setting fire to vehicles and damaging and removing fishplates of railway tracks in the name of movement.

Hasina said the BNP chief would have to take the responsibility for the killings. "In future, she [Khaleda] will be identified as the principal accused of the killings."

The PM continued that no one would be allowed to foil the election as people wanted it to be held in due time.

The election will be held in a credible manner in time as per the constitution, she said, asking people to exercise their franchise.

Party leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Toifal Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Kazi Zafarullah, Obaidul Quader, Alaudin Ahmed and Syed Ashrafur Islam were also there.

Mushfiqu

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this year, was extended at a meeting of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) at its headquarters in Mirpur yesterday.

The appointment will make him the fifth Bangladeshi to lead the Tigers in World Cup.

Mushfiqu, who took over the reins from Shakib Al Hasan in 2011, has so far led Bangladesh in 24 one-day internationals and 12 Tests. Under him Bangladesh have won 11 ODIs and one Test match. He will now have the opportunity to work closely with national coach Shane Jurgensen, who too was rewarded a contract till 2015 in July.

While Mushfiqu's role has been confirmed, it is still not certain as to whether Mahmudullah Riyad will continue his role as vice-captain of the side as the BCB has yet to announce Mushfiqu's deputy.

People driven up the wall

FROM PAGE 1

carried out on the Dhaka-Gazipur highway in the past month."

Both the Awami League and the BNP are fighting for power in their own interests, but the common people are having to pay for this, said Abdul Haque, a vendor at Gulistan.

"Frequent hartals in the last one month have already gobbled up Tk 20,000 of my Tk 50,000 capital. I am looking at a very uncertain future," he observed. Abdul could open his shop only three times in the last 10 days.

Mohammad Soheli, a 30-year-old vendor at Gulistan, said if the current political situation does not improve, he and his co-workers would have no choice but to mug people on the streets.

"My two daughters, who worked in a garment factory at Shanir Akhra, lost their jobs when it downsized its staff last month," said Salauddin, a day labourer of Shanir Akhra, whose family often skips lunch to eke out a living.

"This dealt a heavy blow to our family, as my monthly income has come down to Tk 3000 from Tk 8000."

Alamgir Hossain, a day labourer of Matuail area, said he does not understand Awami League, BNP or Jatiya Party. He just wants peace because the violence is going to make him a beggar.

EC presses for tight security

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For discussing law and order in the country, the EC will hold a meeting today with the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division, the inspector general of police, and the chiefs of law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

The decision on the duration of army deployment will be taken at the meeting scheduled for 11:00am at the EC Secretariat in the capital.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Benazir Ahmed called on the chief election commissioner in the morning and told him that police had taken all measures to ensure security for the EC Secretariat.

The commission yesterday sent five more letters to different ministries and divisions, seeking their cooperation in holding the election.

The EC wrote to the Cabinet Division, asking it not to transfer any government officials related to polls without consulting the commission till 15 days after the publication of election results.

In another letter, the EC told the division to ensure that the government officials, who will perform electoral duties, can work impartially and properly.

The commission also asked the LGRD ministry to make sure that no candidate uses government vehicles, establishments or other facilities in electoral campaigns.

"We have asked the ministry to cooperate with our field-level election officers," said a deputy secretary at the EC, asking not to be named.

The commission sent another letter to the Banking Division for issuing a circular on all banks to check all nomination papers for loan defaulters.

The electoral rules bar a loan defaulter from contesting the polls.

Besides, if a person is under 25 or declared insane by a court or convicted of more than two years' imprisonment or is holding any office of profit of the government, he or she cannot participate in the election.

The EC in principle decided not to allow the advisers to the prime minister, chairmen of upazila and union parishads and the three district councils in Chittagong Hill Tracts to contest the polls for holding offices of profit, said a source at the EC.

They have to resign their posts to contest the election. The final decision on the matter will be taken today, said the source.

In the letter to the law ministry, the EC proposed increasing the number of electoral inquiry committees across the country to monitor violations of the electoral code of conduct during campaigning.

In the ninth national election, 80 committees were set up across the country. This time the EC has proposed raising the number to 140.

The 10th parliamentary election is scheduled to be held on January 5 next year.

Spain gives Britain 'assurances' in Gibraltar bag row

AFP, London

Britain said yesterday it has received assurances from Spain that there will be no repeat of an incident in Gibraltar where Spanish officials searched British diplomatic bags.

The British embassy in Madrid lodged a formal protest with the Spanish government on Monday following what it described as a

"serious infringement" of diplomatic protocol.

"We requested an urgent explanation of this incident from the Spanish government and sought assurances that there will be no further interference with the UK's official correspondence," Europe minister David Lidington said.

"We have now received that explanation from the Spanish and have been assured that we will not see a repeat of these actions."