

# Qaiser once tried for war crimes, acquitted

## Defence argues at war tribunal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The defence of war crimes accused Syed Mohammad Qaisar yesterday said their client was accused in a case filed under the Collaborators Act, 1972 immediately after independence and was acquitted by a special tribunal.

It would be double jeopardy, if charge(s) were framed against Qaisar and he was tried for almost similar charges, from which he got acquittal in 1972, defence counsel Rezaul Karim told the International Crimes Tribunal-2.

The defence, however, could not show the certified copy of that verdict yesterday.

On November 10, the prosecution pressed 18 charges against Qaisar, a former state minister in military dictator HM Ershad's cabinet, accusing him of his involvement in genocide and crimes against humanity in Habiganj and Brahmanbaria in 1971.

According to the prosecution, Qaisar was involved with Muslim League, which opposed the Liberation War, and was the founder and leader of the "Qaisar Force", an associate organisation of the Pakistani army in 1971.

The prosecution told the tribunal that Qaisar was involved in an act of genocide that

left 108 people dead, at least 10 incidents of killing that left 47 people dead, two incidents of rape and five incidents of abduction, loot, arson and other crimes between April 27 and November 15, 1971.

But moving a discharge petition, Rezaul yesterday said his client was neither involved with Muslim League nor led any force named "Qaisar Bahini".

Qaisar would have contested the 1970's election with Muslim League ticket, not as an independent candidate, had he been involved with the party, Rezaul argued.

If their client had led the "Qaisar Bahini" with 500-700 members, it must have got media's attention, but the prosecution had not submitted any newspaper reports, he added.

Rezaul further said a special tribunal in Sylhet acquitted his client in Sylhet of the charges brought against him in 1972.

"If he [Qaisar] had committed crimes [in 1971], he couldn't get the acquittal," said Rezaul.

When the court asked him if the charges brought by the prosecution and the charges brought against Qaisar under the Collaborators Act were the same, Rezaul said that case was related to a similar charge.

# BNP lawmaker Khokon held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch of police yesterday arrested BNP Joint Secretary General and lawmaker barrister Mahbub Uddin Khokon in the capital.

Masudur Rahman, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, confirmed the arrest with The Daily Star.

Khokon, also secretary of Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association, was detained in front of Matsya Bhaban, said BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's adviser advocate Khandaker Mahbub Hossain.

DB police picked up Khokon around 4:15pm when he was going to Karwan Bazar after coming out of the High Court to attend an anniversary ceremony of a private television channel there, Hossain added.

"DB police have not yet said in which case Khokon was arrested," Hossain told The Daily Star.

On Wednesday night, law enforcers barred Khokon from entering Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday rejected both bail and remand prayers for former BNP lawmaker Sardar Sakhawat Hossain Bakul and BNP MP Shammil Akhter and ordered police to quiz them at the jail gate.

On Wednesday afternoon, law enforcers detained the duo when they were entering BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's Gulshan residence.

Bakul and Shammil were shown arrested in different cases filed with Bhatara and Banani Police Stations for vandalising and torching vehicles.

# Modi gets clean chit over 2002 Gujarat riot

AGENCIES

An Indian court yesterday accepted the clean chit given to Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi by special investigation team (SIT) over allegations by a victim's wife that he and 57 others were involved in a conspiracy behind the 2002 riots that killed some 2,000 people.

Metropolitan Magistrate BJ Ganatra told the court in Gujarat's main city of Ahmedabad that he accepted the findings of a 2012 official SIT inquiry that cleared Modi of wrongdoing.

Zakia Jafri, the widow of retired Congress party MP Ehsan Jafri, who was killed in the riots, filed a petition against the inquiry which was commissioned by the Supreme Court.

In her petition accused Modi, his ministerial colleagues, top police officials and members of the BJP of conspiracy in the riots.

The magistrate said insufficient evidence existed against Modi, who was chief minister of the western state of Gujarat at the time of the riots in which mobs went on the rampage leaving mostly Muslims dead.

The ruling is a boost to Modi, a Hindu nationalist with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), who leads in opinion polls just months before the general election but still divides voters over his role in the riots.

"Satyamev Jayate! truth alone triumphs," the Gujarat chief minister tweeted on micro-blogging site Twitter after the verdict.



The petitioner Zakia Jafri broke down in the court room as the order in a seven-year long battle was pronounced. Zakia, her son Tanvi Jafri and their counsel later told the media that they plan to move a higher court against the order.

Zakia's husband was killed in the riots along with 69 others in one of the worst massacres at Gulbarg Society in Ahmedabad on February 28, 2002.

Her husband was burned to death along with 68 others when a mob stormed a residential complex housing Muslim families in Ahmedabad.

The riots across Gujarat were triggered by the death of 59 Hindu pilgrims in a train fire on February 27, 2002 that was blamed on Muslims. An inquiry in 2005 concluded the train fire was accidental.

## 2 AL men killed

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the chairman of Khedapara union, in this connection.

Quoting locals, Mir Rezaul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Monirampur Police Station, said Shofi along with 4-5 AL activists had an altercation with Faruque when they were pasting posters in Mazhiyali-Chanpur area for Khan Tipu Sultan, the party hopeful for Jessore-5 (Monirampur) constituency.

Soon after Faruque left the place, Rezaul said, a band of BNP-Jamaat activists numbering 15-20 suddenly attacked the AL men around 2:30pm.

The criminals then beat and stabbed Shofi mercilessly, leaving him injured critically.

The miscreants also attacked another party man, Arobindo Hazara, as he tried to save Shofi. Others, however, escaped unhurt.

The locals whisked them off to Monirampur Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared Shofi dead.

Local AL brought out a procession in the upazila headquarters protesting the killing.

The OC said the move was on to nab the criminals.

### INJURED AL LEADER DIES

Meanwhile, AL president of Godkhali union in Jhikargacha of the district, Robiul Islam, succumbed to his injuries at a private hospital in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

Unidentified miscreants stabbed him indiscriminately on the way from Godkhali Bazaar to his home at Babupara around 11:00pm on Wednesday.

Jhikargacha Police Station OC Kamruzzaman said Robiul was attacked in an internal feud.

## Attacked again

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guerillas during the war, said: "I feel like giving up the idea of an independent nation that Mujibur [Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman] had given me, but it is difficult to let go of the dream."

"I was 25 years old then. I gave valuable information to the guerillas that helped them blow up bridges and carry out operations."

Khodabaksh said his father had been very vocal against the arson attacks over the past few months and even publicly protested such violence. This might have brought the attack on him.

"They cannot make me vote for them by burning me," ranted the freedom fighter in his bed.

Meanwhile, the condition of Shahjahan, who was burnt when arsonists set fire to a CNG he was travelling by on Saturday, remained unchanged yesterday.

The 30-year-old from Mymensingh suffered 31 percent burns, and his pain is so much that anyone entering the Intensive Care Unit could hear him groan.

"He cried all night. He neither slept himself, nor let anyone else sleep," said his aunt, Ambia.

His wife or anyone else of his family was yet to see him.

"It is good that way -- I doubt his wife could bear to see him in this state. His lips are so swollen, the bottom lip is hanging down to his chin," said Ambia.

The pain in his throat was caused by flames and pollutants that damaged his respiratory tract, said burn unit resident surgeon Partha Shankar Paul.

Police constable Faizul Islam, who was burnt in an arson attack on a police bus on Tuesday, was having the same difficulties.

The authorities are ready to take him to Singapore if needs be, said Khan Muhammed Rajowan, deputy commissioner of Dhaka

# Egypt Muslim Brotherhood may radicalise after terror listing

AFP, Cairo

The military-installed government's listing of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group signals determination to uproot its vast grass-roots network, possibly radicalising the Islamists as they go underground, analysts said.

Security forces had already decimated the group following Islamist president Mohamed Morsi's overthrow in July, with more than 1,000 people killed and thousands more imprisoned, including the Brotherhood's top leadership.

The last major crackdown on the Brotherhood, by president Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s, led several members to break off and form more radical groups that are now seen as precursors to al-Qaeda.

Now analysts fear a similar process could unfold, with a new generation of activists breaking from the Brotherhood's more cautious leadership, most of whom are imprisoned with little communication to the outside world.

"It is impossible to dismiss the idea that at least a fringe group of the repression's victims will choose counter-violence and join the jihadists," said Francois Burgat, a Beirut-based expert on Islamist movements.

The decision to list the Brotherhood as a

terrorist group came after the deadly bombing of a police station on Tuesday that killed 15 people and was claimed by Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, an al-Qaeda inspired group spearheading attacks in the Sinai peninsula that have killed scores of police and soldiers since Morsi's overthrow.



The group has no known link to the Brotherhood, and jihadist groups have long criticised the Brotherhood's refusal to take up arms and its embrace of elections, seen by radicals as un-Islamic.

But the government blamed the

# Web privacy as important as human rights: UN

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The UN human rights chief, Navi Pillay, has compared the uproar in the international community caused by revelations of mass surveillance with the collective response that helped bring down the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Pillay, the first non-white woman to serve as a high-court judge in South Africa, made the comments in an interview with Sir Tim Berners-Lee on a special edition of BBC Radio 4's Today programme, which the inventor of the world wide web was guest editing.

Pillay has been asked by the UN to prepare a report on protection of the right to privacy, in the wake of the former National Security Agency analyst Edward Snowden leaking classified documents about UK and US spying and the collection of personal data.

The former international criminal court judge said her encounters with serious human rights abuses, which included serving on the Rwanda tribunal, did not make her take online privacy less seriously. "I don't grade human rights," she said. "I feel I have to look after and promote the rights of all persons. I'm not put off by the lifetime experience of violations I have seen."

She said apartheid ended in South Africa principally because the international community co-operated to denounce it, adding: "Combined and collective action by everybody can end serious violations of human rights ... That experience inspires me to go on and address the issue of internet [privacy],

which right now is extremely troubling because the revelations of surveillance have implications for human rights ... People are really afraid that all their personal details are being used in violation of traditional national protections."

The UN general assembly unanimously voted last week to adopt a resolution, introduced by Germany and Brazil, stating that "the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including the right to privacy". Brazil's president, Dilma Rousseff, and the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, were among those spied on, according to the documents leaked by Snowden.

The resolution called on the 193 UN member states "to review their procedures, practices and legislation regarding the surveillance of communications, their interception and collection of personal data, with a view to upholding the right to privacy of all their obligations under international human rights law". It also directed Pillay to publish a report on the protection and promotion of privacy "in the context of domestic and extraterritorial surveillance ... including on a mass scale". She told Berners-Lee it was "very important that governments now want to discuss the matters of mass surveillance and right to privacy in a serious way".

Berners-Lee has warned that online surveillance undermines confidence in the internet, and last week published an open letter, with more than 100 free speech groups and leading activists, to protest against the routine interception of data by governments around the

# US sending missiles, drones to Iraq

Reports NT Times

AFP, Washington

The United States is sending Iraq dozens of missiles and surveillance drones to help it combat a recent surge in al-Qaeda-backed violence, the New York Times reported yesterday.

The weapons include a shipment of 75 Hellfire missiles purchased by Iraq, which Washington delivered to the country last week, the Times reported.

The daily wrote that 10 ScanEagle reconnaissance drones -- smaller versions of the larger Predator drones that once were frequently flown over Iraq -- are expected to be sent by March.

Administration sources told the Times that the delivery comes as the Iraqis had virtually run out of Hellfire missiles.

The shipments are being sent as Baghdad confronts the worst wave of Islamic militant violence in half a decade.

Recent attacks, including the bombing Wednesday of a market near a church in Baghdad, have killed at least 44 people across Iraq, in the worst bloodletting since 2008 when the country was just emerging from a brutal period of sectarian killings.

Militants frequently attack places where crowds gather, including markets, cafes and mosques, in an effort to cause maximum casualties.

Experts say widespread discontent among Iraq's minority Sunni Arab community is a

# Wildcat strike hits Lufthansa flights to Paris

AFP, Bobigny

Lufthansa flights to and from Charles De Gaulle airport in Paris were disrupted yesterday after workers staged a wildcat strike against planned job cuts, but were set to slowly resume.

After a complete no-show by employees in the morning, all those on the afternoon shift turned up, said a spokesman for the Aeroports de Paris authority, which owns and manages the airport in the northeastern suburb of Roissy.

"Six or seven flights should leave from Roissy depending on aircraft availability," he said.

Lufthansa spokesman Peter Schneckenleitner said in Frankfurt that there could still be "irregularities" due to "a rise in the number of Lufthansa personnel taking sick leave in Paris."

Schneckenleitner said two flights from Frankfurt would leave for Paris in the afternoon as scheduled.

A total of 11 flights were due to depart from Roissy Thursday and an equal number scheduled to arrive.

The Aeroports de Paris had earlier said all the flights would be cancelled. But the situation changed after two Lufthansa officials held

talks with unions and persuaded them to go back to work, a French union member said.

In a joint statement, several unions had earlier complained of a "general malaise" among Lufthansa workers at France's main airport.

Lufthansa, under tough pressure from low-cost rivals, has embarked on a savings drive to boost profitability and earmarked 3,500 job cuts around the world, including 199 in France.

Since the announcement, workers have been "tired and depressed" and several have taken medical leave, leading to understaffing levels of more than 20 percent, said Franck

## Russia too won't

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him about Moscow's decision.

Earlier, the European Union, the Commonwealth and the US said they would not send observers if the election was not held in a transparent and inclusive manner.

The BNP-led 18-party alliance is boycotting the polls, saying it would not join the race if a nonparty caretaker government was not installed to oversee the election.

### EC DEFENDS ITSELF

The EC yesterday said downloading of candidates' affidavits was taking too long because of heavy pressure on the website.

"The number of visitors on the commission's official website has sharply risen, after publication of news reports based on them. That is why it is taking too long," said the EC in a statement.

"The commission has not stopped making public the information of affidavits and will not stop it. Besides, anyone can collect the information from the returning officers concerned."

The statement came after news reports that people were facing trouble accessing the wealth statements of the candidates on the commission website.

Some believe such glitches were intentional and aimed at hiding the information.

Embarrassed by the revelations that many Awami League leaders have amassed huge wealth in the last five years, the ruling party pressed the EC to stop making public the wealth statements of the candidates.

### BALLOT PAPERS

The EC will send ballot papers to 146 constituencies of 59 districts amid tight security.

The commission yesterday issued two circulars to the returning officers giving different instructions about receiving ballot papers and their duties and polls results management.

It also sent a letter to the home ministry, requesting it to keep helicopters ready for carrying electoral materials and election officials in remote areas.

### POLICE PROMOTION

Also yesterday, the commission approved the promotion of 617 policemen of constable and assistant sub-inspector levels.

Under the law, any transfer or promotion of government officials during election period must be approved by the EC.

# Sixty hurt in Argentina piranha attack

AFP, Buenos Aires

Piranhas on a Christmas Day feeding frenzy injured some 60 people in the Argentine city of Rosario, officials said yesterday.

Those injured in the attack Wednesday by the ferocious fish included a girl who lost part of a finger, Health Undersecretary Gabriela Quintanilla told reporters.

Quintanilla said the attack occurred Wednesday off the coast of Rosario, some 310 kilometers (200 miles) north of Buenos Aires.

A medical official, Gustavo Centurion, said the attack which began at mid-morning on Christmas Day was "very aggressive."

"There were some people that the fish literally had torn bits of flesh from," he said.

The region has been hit by a heat wave with temperatures soaring to some 38 degrees Celsius (more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit) prompting thousands to seek relief in the waters of the Parana River, which is packed with carnivorous fish.

# Nine die in Russian plane crash

AFP, Moscow

A Russian cargo plane crashed into a military warehouse complex in Siberia yesterday, killing all nine people all board, the emergencies ministry said.

The Antonov An-12 military transport plane, flying from the Siberian city of Novosibirsk with cargo on board, crashed into storage warehouses at a military unit near Irkutsk, another Siberian city.

A defence ministry spokesman said the airplane destroyed the roofs of two buildings where auto parts were stored.