

1971 WAR CRIMES Move against Pakistan at int'l court

ICT people in Dhaka term it 'flawed', 'conspiracy'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi organisation yesterday claimed to have filed a petition with the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, the Netherlands, seeking legal action against Pakistan for the crimes committed by its army during the Liberation War.

But the ICC, which has been governed by the Rome Statute, doesn't have jurisdiction over any events before July 1, 2002, when the statute came into force after ratification by 60 countries.

Besides, only the countries that ratified the Rome Statute or the United Nations Security Council or the prosecutor of the ICC are eligible to lodge any complaint with the ICC.

Meanwhile, people involved with the war crimes trial in Bangladesh have termed the move a "conspiracy" against the ongoing trial.

Asked, Mustafizur Rahman, a leader of Projonmo' 71, an organisation of martyrs' children, said, "We are aware of the matter. Actually, we have filed the petition to pressurise [the ICC] into bringing necessary amendment to its law so that it can deal with our appeal."

At a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, Azizur Rahman Aziz, who claimed to be the president of Projonmo' 71, said he appealed to the ICC on January 15 to investigate the crimes committed during the Liberation War in 1971 by the Pakistani

army and sought action against Pakistan.

"I, as the president of the organisation, have a collection of all proof including video footage, deeds and documents [of the crimes]," he said and asked for an international investigation into the atrocities.

About their organisation, Mustafizur said there are two factions of Projonmo' 71. One is being led by Azizur Rahman while eminent journalist Shaheen Reza Noor, also the son of martyred journalist Serajuddin Hossain, leads the other faction.

Contacted, Shaheen yesterday said Azizur is a "self-proclaimed president".

His initiatives went against the stance of Projonmo' 71 on the war crimes trial, he alleged.

"Our official stance is that war criminals, whoever they are and wherever they live, will have to be tried as per our local law and at our war crimes tribunals," he said.

Tureen Afroz, a prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunals, told The Daily Star that bypassing the tribunals, they had filed the "faulty petition" with an ill-motive to undermine the achievement of the ongoing trial process.

Around 30 lakh people were killed and over two lakh women were raped at the hands of Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators during the nine-month-long war in 1971.

Buffalo genome decoded

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"Bangladesh, with about two million buffaloes, is ninth in Asia in terms of buffalo population," said molecular scientist Md Moniruzzaman, who led Lal Teer's buffalo genome project and liaises with the BGI.

Talking to The Daily Star, he regretted that buffalo population has declined in Bangladesh over the years in tandem with the rapid mechanisation in farm sector.

Moniruzzaman, who spent several months in BGI's Shenzhen facility for the genome sequencing, said the accomplishment would help reshape Bangladesh's highly potential but largely neglected livestock and dairy sectors, as better breeds of buffalo would attract new entrepreneurs.

He pointed out that buffaloes constituted 30 percent of the cattle population and contributed more than 60 percent of the total milk yield

in India and Pakistan, whereas its contribution to dairy field in Bangladesh was very negligible now.

Lal Teer, which has a buffalo farm in Mymensingh and has been trying to produce better breeds through conventional breeding by importing semen from Italy in recent years, thinks that BGI's partnership and the subsequent success in buffalo genome decoding would usher in a new era in buffalo rearing in Bangladesh.

Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury has welcomed the private sector's initiative in frontier research in livestock. Talking to this correspondent over the phone yesterday, she also said the government was already promoting buffalo farming in "char" areas.

Bangladeshi scientist Maqsudul Alam, a professor of the University of Hawaii, who earlier decoded the

Texting stops

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their balance, a study suggests.

Researchers asked 26 volunteers to walk at a comfortable pace without a phone then monitored them as they read or text or typed a message.

A computer which tracked the body's movements revealed that texting altered the posture and changed the way people walked.

Hunched over with the heads

down, texters were less able to walk in a straight line and more likely to topple off balance.

Dr Siobhan Schabrun from the University of Queensland said: "Texting, and to a lesser extent reading, on your mobile phone affects your ability to walk and balance."

"This may impact the safety of people who text and walk at the

genome of papaya in the US, rubber plant in Malaysia and jute in Bangladesh, yesterday congratulated the buffalo genome project team and hoped this would take the country's genomics science to a new height.

A couple of years back when the BGI and the Lal Teer embarked on the buffalo venture, BGI President Dr Jian Wang had said, "We believe this project will have significant contribution to the breeding and the understanding of water buffalo evolution."

Under the collaboration agreement, Lal Teer Livestock provided the BGI with the DNA samples from water buffalo for analysis.

The BGI, also credited for its epoch-making human genome mapping project, applied its state-of-the-art facilities to the sequencing job that included sequencing and bioinformatics analysis, includ-

ing genome assembly, annotation and evolutionary analysis.

According to available statistics, world's current buffalo population is 168 million, of which 161 million are in Asia with India, China, Pakistan and Egypt being the top four abodes of water buffaloes.

Scientists say genomic analysis allows not only the understanding of the species but also their economic importance (milk, meat, disease resistance in the case of buffalo).

The first genome project -- Human Genome Project -- was declared in 2003 and till date genomes of some 25 species (plants, animals) have been decoded.

Among the developing nations Bangladesh remains in the forefront of genomic research with its credit in genome decoding of four species already -- two varieties of jute, a fungi and buffalo.

Benefits taken

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sittings as opposition leader in the fifth parliament (1991-1995) and 45 of the 373 sittings in the eighth parliament (2001-2006).

Khaleda was elected either the PM or opposition leader since parliamentary democracy was restored in the country in 1991. But this time, she will enjoy neither of the status, as her party didn't contest the 10th parliamentary election held on January 5.

The Speaker on January 11 recognised Raushan Ershad, presidium member of the Jatiya Party, as opposition leader of the new parliament. And the president on January 13 convened the 10th parliament on January 29.

OPPOSITION LEADER'S BENEFITS

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Remuneration and Privileges) Ordinance, 1979 doesn't give any details about the salary and other benefits of opposition leader. It only says he/she is entitled to the same salary, allowances and other privileges received by a full minister.

According to the Ministers, State Ministers and Deputy Ministers (Remuneration and Privileges) Act 1973, the opposition leader is entitled to get a monthly allowance of Tk 53,100 and an official residence furnished at a cost of Tk 5 lakh.

He/she also gets allowances on taking up and laying down office, travelling expenses for himself/herself and the family, costs of transporting household items of 4,500 kg by freight train, steamer or vehicles, and costs of transporting two personal servants.

The opposition leader receives sumptuary allowance of Tk 6,000 a month, an

official car, a jeep for essential official purposes, house rent of Tk 45,000 a month if official residence is unavailable, and costs for supply of electricity, gas, water, telephone and the like at the residence.

He/she is treated as a very important person while travelling on official duty, and receives travel allowances for journeys abroad, medical facilities and discretionary grant of Tk 4 lakh a year.

The opposition leader maintains an office at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban and is entitled to have a private secretary, an assistant private secretary, two personal assistants, three office assistants and three peons.

Khaleda enjoyed all above facilities and benefits as leader of the opposition.

PERFORMANCE OF HER MPS

Under Khaleda's leadership, opposition lawmakers belonging to the BNP and its two allies -- Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party -- joined only 76 sittings in the ninth parliament, setting a new record of lowest attendance by opposition MPs.

In the eighth parliament, the AL-led opposition lawmakers skipped 223 of the 373 sittings, while the BNP-led opposition MPs stayed away from 163 of the 382 sittings in the seventh parliament (1996-2001).

The AL-led opposition MPs boycotted 135 of the 400 sittings in the fifth parliament that was dissolved a few months before the expiry of its five-year term.

The opposition MPs, who boycotted most House proceedings of the ninth parliament, availed themselves of all facilities in the last five years.

A lawmaker gets more than Tk 1 lakh as

Biswa Ijtema

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sermons by Islamic scholars and prayers.

Several million devotees in and outside the capital are expected to join Juma prayers today.

Md Nurul Islam, deputy commissioner of Gazipur, said they had taken an all-out security measures and ensured water supply and sanitation facilities.

"The number of toilet and washing facilities has been increased this year. About 4,000 toilets have been set up. We will also provide about 70 lakh gallons of water," he added.

Sonjit Kumar Roy, additional superintendent of police (south) in Gazipur, said five-layer security system by 10,000 uniformed and plainclothes policemen, and members of Rab and intelligence agencies will be in place at the Ijtema ground to ensure smooth holding of the congregation.

Standby airport transport service has been arranged for around 50,000 devotees expected

from 130 countries including China, the USA, India, Pakistan, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UK.

Civil Surgeon in Gazipur M Shah Alam Sharif said all kinds of leave to doctors and employees under health department in Gazipur have been cancelled from January 22 to 2 February.

Besides, 100 more physicians from 17 districts in Dhaka division have joined to perform duties.

An additional 50 beds have been arranged in Tongi Hospital.

State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan said a good number of troops from different law-enforcement agencies will be deployed at Tongi to ensure the foolproof security of the devotees this year.

Law enforcers will patrol the Ijtema venue round the clock and keep a strong vigil to prevent any unpleasant incident, said Asaduzzaman.

Indonesia jails bomb-maker in Myanmar embassy plot

AFF, Jakarta

An Indonesian court yesterday jailed an Islamic extremist bomb-maker for seven-and-a-half years for his role in a plot to attack the Myanmar embassy to avenge the killing of Rohingya Muslims.

Separiano is the fourth person to be jailed over the failed plot to bomb the mission in Jakarta, which came amid rising anger in Muslim-majority Indonesia at the plight of the Rohingya in mainly Buddhist Myanmar.

The 29-year-old was arrested in May the night before the attack was due to take place, carrying a backpack full of pipe-bombs as he rode a motorbike with another alleged plotter in Jakarta.

At a previous hearing the court heard he had plotted with other militants over Facebook and had attended sermons by firebrand cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, the alleged spiritual leader of the terror network behind the 2002 Bali bombings. Bashir is now in jail.

DRIVE AGAINST ILLEGALS

20 more Bangladeshis detained in KL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty more Bangladeshis were detained in Malaysia on the third day of a nationwide crackdown on illegal foreign workers.

With these detainees, a total of 275 Bangladeshis had been arrested in the operation started on Tuesday, reported Malaysian national news agency Bernama yesterday.

The Malaysian police have so far held some 1,757 illegal expatriates, including the Bangladeshis, to streamline the country's labour market.

Of them, 739 were Indonesians, 206 Myanmar, 135 Indians, and the rest were from other nationalities, said Saravana Kumar Marimuthu, deputy director of the Immigration Department Headquarters Enforcement Division in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Home Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said there would be no let-up in the crackdown on illegal immigrants.

He told Malaysian daily The Star when it asked him about the Malaysian Chinese Association's (MCA) call to postpone the crackdown till the end of the festival of Chinese New Year.

MCA President Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai on Tuesday said the postponement of the drive would prevent inconvenience to the people in the run-up to the celebrations.

Ahmad Zahid, however, reiterated that the authorities would step up the operation to flush out all illegal foreign workers from the country.

"We have given them (employers) ample time to register their illegal workers. They (employers) had three months from October 21 last year to January 20 this year," he added.

The crackdown has started following the end of the three-month programme to allow the employers to register their illegal workers and to apply for them to be legalised or to sort out any documentation that was pending.

EC decides to deploy army

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national election. Our experience of that election was not so good because violence occurred in many places. So, we have decided to deploy the armed forces," he said.

The CEC did not elaborate on the timeframe and the number of army personnel to be deployed during the polls.

The EC at the meeting, however, proposed to the principal staff officer of the Armed Forces Division (AFD) to deploy forces for five days beginning from two days ahead of each phase.

Principal Staff Officer of AFD Lt Gen Abu Belal Muhammad Shafiul Huq, who was present at the meeting, agreed to the proposal, meeting sources said.

The meeting was chaired by the CEC and attended by four election commissioners, top officials of the home ministry, police, Rapid Action Battalion, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), Coast Guard and intelligence agencies.

In the first phase, elections to 97 upazilas will be held on February 19.

At the meeting, officials of the intelligence agencies suggested that special security measures should be taken in the areas mostly inhabited by minorities to avert pre-election violence.

Officials of the law-enforcement agencies have agreed to the suggestion and assured the EC of taking necessary measures to that end.

The intelligence agency officials also claimed they had primary information that BNP-Jamaat would contest the upazila polls, though these elections are officially non-partisan.

On the basis of the intelligence reports, the EC and other government officials believe the upazila polls will be inclusive, participatory and credible, according to the EC officials.

The meeting also decided to appoint presiding and polling officers for the polls through proper screening so that officials with political connection are not selected.

Police officials said they would have to

remain busy with different programmes like the SSC and HSC examinations, cricket matches and national days [21st February, 26th March]. So, police might give less attention to the polls compared to previous elections, said the EC officials.

In response to reporters' questions, the CEC said upazila chairman and other elected representatives of local government bodies would be allowed to contest the upazila polls, but they would be barred from enjoying government facilities during electioneering.

UPAZILA ELECTIONS

Elections to 117 upazila parishads will be held on February 27 in the second phase, announced the CEC yesterday.

The last date for filing candidacy is February 2, nomination papers would be scrutinised on February 4, and the last date for withdrawing nomination is February 11, he added.

The EC will hold elections to all 487 upazila parishads across the country in six phases. As part of its plan, the commission on January 19 announced that elections to 102 upazila parishads would be held on February 19 in the first phase.

Besides, the EC considers holding elections to 74 upazila parishads in the third phase on March 15, 72 in the fourth phase on March 25, 65 in the fifth phase on March 31, and 57 in the final phase on May 3, said the EC officials.

ELECTIONS POSTPONED

The EC yesterday postponed elections to four upazila parishads due to complexity over boundary demarcation.

Elections to Rangpur sadar, Gangachara, Pirgacha and Kawnia upazilas were scheduled to be held on February 19. But the Local Government Division on Tuesday in a letter informed the EC that it needed to demarcate boundary of these upazilas again.

Besides, the EC has deferred election to Pirganj upazila of Rangpur, which was scheduled to be held on February 19, because the by-election of Rangpur-6, which Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina relinquished, will be held on February 20.

BCB chooses

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a promotion. If India, England and Australia (who according to the proposal cannot be relegated) form the three lowest teams in the top tier, then Bangladesh will have to face the fifth-ranked side.

The impossibility of the situation is that the progress that Bangladesh have so far made has largely been due to them playing top-ranked opposition. If the proposal is adopted they will be playing against lower-ranked opposition and so scope for improvement outside the top eight will be improbable. The cricket eco-system is a fragile one with the few countries at the top needing to play each other -- with all the different conditions each country offers -- to stay competitive. The proposal will also remove power from the ICC and therefore any semblance of accountability of the top boards. It stands to harm cricket as a whole, but Bangladesh, and Zimbabwe, will be the swiftest and most tragic casualties.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan Papon hinted that when voting in favour of the draft proposal they took the long-term future of the game in account, citing reasons such as appeasing the powerful boards in order to gain future favours. What he and the BCB may have missed, however, is that with this draft proposal there may not be a long-term future for Bangladesh cricket.

3 robbers killed

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Sonadia union around 4:00am yesterday.

Sensing danger, all but the two members of the gang fled the scene. Locals beat up Haque and Madhu severely, leaving the two dead on the spot, said police quoting witnesses.

Haque was accused in seven cases, while Madhu in four on charges of murder, robbery and extortion, Syed Md Fazle Rabbi, officer-in-charge of Hatiya Police Station, told The Daily Star.

In Comilla, a gang of robbers entered the house of Golam Hossain, a former UP

member, at Lalai village in Sadar Dakshin upazila early yesterday, reports our correspondent quoting police.

The thugs beat up Hossain's son and wife and took away the keys of cupboards at gunpoint. Confining the two to a toilet, the burglars tried to loot gold ornaments.

Hearing the family members crying for help, locals went to the spot and caught Mohammad Yunus. However, his accomplices managed to escape the scene, said the OC of Sadar Dakshin Police Station.

The angry mob beat Yunus to death on the spot.

Ex-judge under graft probe

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The three-member investigation team came to know about the former judge's present abode while scrutinising his travel documents, sources in the ACC told The Daily Star yesterday.

Serving as a judge of a special tribunal, Motahar in November last year dropped the charges against Tarique, elder son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, of involvement in the laundering of Tk 20.41 crore to Singapore.

The ACC began the inquiry on receiving graft allegations against the retired judge, in the first week of this month, of amassing huge movable and immovable wealth illegally and laundering money abroad during his service term, Harun-ur-Rashid said.

At the same time it instructed the Special Branch of police and the immigration authorities not to let Motahar leave the country.

Meanwhile, the ACC interrogated two stenographers of two Dhaka courts to get information about his wealth, said Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, public relation officer of the ACC.

Abul Hossain of the Speedy Trial

Tribunal-4 and Nurul Islam Mollah of the Special Judges Court-3 in Dhaka were quizzed from 9:00am to 12:30pm yesterday at the ACC's Segunbagicha office. Motahar had served as a judge at these courts.

Harun declined to give the findings of the interrogation "for the sake of investigation".

Badal Dewan, who had worked as a bodyguard of the ex-judge, and driver Sohrah Hossain will be quizzed on January 27, Pranab added.

Motahar, who retired in December, had sentenced Tarique's friend and business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun to seven years in prison and fined him Tk 40 crore as he was found guilty of laundering the amount.

Tarique spent a portion of Tk 20.41 crore from Mamun's Singapore account, which he mentioned in his wealth statement and therefore he could not be charged, Motahar said in the judgement.

"He [Tarique] did not conceal any information of this transaction in his wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission on June 7, 2007. So, the charges against him could not be brought under the Money Laundering Prevention Act-2002. Therefore, he is acquitted," he said during the

BNP forms

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secretary of BNP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

There has been a lot of pressure on the party from home and abroad regarding the involvement of the BNP-led 18-party alliance men in the communal attacks during and after the January 5 parliamentary election.

By forming the probe bodies, the BNP wants to give a clear message to all that it is against any communal attack. Besides, the party also plans to inform diplomats in Dhaka about recent raids against the alliance activists, according to BNP insiders.

"The BNP has formed the committees with professionals from different communities to make sure that the fact and miscreants behind the attacks were identified. The teams will also collect data on the brutal attacks of the joint force on the alliance men. The committees will submit their reports to party high-ups," mentioned Shamim.

A seven-member committee, led by BNP standing committee member Zamir Uddin Sircar, will visit Sirajganj, Bogra and Gaibandha districts. BNP chairperson's adviser ASM Abdul Halim will lead a five-member committee to Nilphamari, Dinajpur and Thakurgaon.

Another seven-member body headed by Ruhul Amin Gazi, convener of Bangladesh Sammilito Peshajibi Parishad, will travel to Satkhira, Jessore, Kushtia and Meherpur, while BNP chief's adviser Shaukat Mahmud will lead a six-member committee to Comilla, Chandpur, Laxmipur and Chittagong.