

Third BDR case

FROM PAGE 1

and awarded them jail terms ranging from a month to highest seven years. The courts acquitted 115 jawans from the charges. The mutiny trials, held under BGB's own law, were completed in October 2012.

Besides, a criminal case was filed in this regard on February 28, 2009. After over a 16-month probe, investigators on July 12, 2010, submitted two charge sheets, one for murder and another for illegal possession of arms and explosives.

The two charge sheets later resulted in two cases.

A Dhaka Court indicted 850 people in the murder case and 834 people in the blast case. Most of the accused in both the cases were the same persons.

The trial of the cases started on August 24, 2011.

On November 5 last year, the court in the murder case awarded death penalty to 150 members of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles, now Border Guard Bangladesh, and two civilians for their role in the massacre.

It also handed down life sentence to 161 people; rigorous imprisonment, ranging from three to 10 years, to another 256 people; and acquitted 277 in the biggest-ever criminal trial in the country's history.

The prosecution produced 654 witnesses in the case. The case is now pending appeals and death reference at the High Court.

In the blast case, the court is still recording testimonies of prosecution

witnesses.

The prosecution has cited 1,208 people as witnesses in the case, and testimonies of only 26 witnesses have so far been recorded.

Kajol, acting chief public prosecutor, said they would try to reduce the number of witnesses.

Md Akhtaruzzaman of the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka, who dealt with both the cases, felt embarrassed to proceed with the blast case, court sources said. But it could not be known why he felt embarrassed.

On February 9 this year, he sent the case to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka for the next course of action.

Akhteruzzaman, in the verdict in the murder case, expressed dissatisfaction over the performance of the prosecution, saying the court didn't get proper cooperation from the prosecution.

Anisul Huq, now the law minister, was the chief public prosecutor in the cases then.

In this regard, Kajol said, "It is his [judge's] personal opinion. We had been able to prove charges; that's why the court awarded death penalty to 152 accused."

Meanwhile, Md Jahurul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka fixed March 3 for recording testimonies of next prosecution witnesses at the makeshift courtroom in the capital's Bakshibazar area.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina talks with family members of the army officers, killed in the 2009 BDR massacre, after handing them over cheques as financial assistance from Bangladesh Association of Banks at her office yesterday. The assistance is given annually in cooperation with the Prime Minister's Office.

PHOTO: BSS

10,000 women

FROM PAGE 1

50 years as the late pir from India's Jainpur had requested them not to cast their votes in any election.

The ninth parliamentary election held in 2008 was an exception as some women cast their votes, thanks to awareness campaigns by media and the election commission. However, they again refrained from coming out to vote in the upazila elections held in 2009.

When this correspondent asked some female voters of the area whether they would cast their votes in the February 27 upazila polls, almost all of them avoided a direct answer.

"The [Jainpuri] pir had prohibited us from casting votes. We consider his request as an order for us," said Monwara,

a resident of Rupsha village.

Some other women of the village said they needed to ask their guardians before deciding whether or not to go to cast their votes.

However, local union parishad members Hajera Begum, Sajeda Begum and Jahanara Begum expressed the hope that they would be able to convince the female voters to cast votes this time.

Billal Hossain, chairman of Rupsha union parishad said that they were trying their best to bring the women of the area to voting centres.

Acting Upazila Election Officer of Faridganj Farid Uddin Ahmed said he was trying to make sure that women remain behind veils while casting their votes.

Tears never ran dry

FROM PAGE 1

His father Mujibur Rahman said, "With the loss of our son, we have lost everything. But the government has never cared to know how we parents are going about our lives."

He also demanded the quick execution of his son's killers. "We cannot rest in peace until we get justice."

The families of the other slain army officers and civilians made the same demand. In addition to the 57 top and mid-ranking army officers, 27 more people, mostly civilians, were killed in the two-day mayhem.

Representatives of the president and the prime minister, state minister for home, chiefs of three services and director general of BGB also placed wreaths at the graveyard.

Besides, special prayers were offered at all central mosques in cantonments and at the regional, sector and battalion headquarters and other establishments of the border force.

Leaders of different political parties, including the Awami League and the BNP, also placed wreaths on the graves.

In a separate development, family members and well-wishers of the deceased army officers formed a human chain before the Jatiya Press Club, demanding justice. Such protests by army members' families are rare, and it means that their patience is wearing thin.

Under the banner of "Shocheton Nagorik Samaj," the demonstrators demanded that February 25 be declared "Military Mourning Day".

Five years ago on that day, Captain Tanvir Haider Noor's wife, Tasnuva Haider Noor, had broken down in tears in front of the Pilkhana gate, clutching a family photo showing her infant son and her young husband, who was killed in the carnage.

Her two sons, now eight and six and a half years old, along with other family members, came to the protest programme to demand justice for the killings.

Talking to this correspondent, Tasnuva asked, "Will we get the justice we want? Will the killers be executed?"

Colonel Gulzaruddin's nephew said, "We do not want justice to be politicised. Please execute the killers and give us peace."

A Dhaka court on November 5 last

year slapped the death penalty on 150 members of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles, now Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and two civilians for their role in the massacre. It also sentenced 161 others, including ex-BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and ward-level Awami League leader Torab Ali, to life imprisonment in the carnage.

Some 277 of the 846 accused were acquitted while the rest were given different terms in prison.

For the mutiny, 11 BGB special courts convicted 5,926 jawans and gave them jail sentences ranging from one month to seven years. These courts acquitted 115 jawans of the charges. The mutiny trials, held under BGB law, were completed in October 2012.



The arms and ammunition found by police on the roadside in Garo bazaar area of Tangail yesterday.

Eight to die for Alim murder

3 of the convicts still on the run

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday awarded death penalty to eight people including three siblings for killing Lalbagh ward commissioner Hazi Mohammad Alim 18 years back.

Soon after the judgment, victim's brother Badir Uddin Babla, who was also complainant in the case, expressed satisfaction and urged the government to execute the verdict immediately.

Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court delivered the verdict.

The court cancelled bail of five convicts and sent them to jail.

It also said the fugitives' punishment would be effective from the day of their surrender or arrest.

Alim, a local Awami League leader,

was killed allegedly for protesting criminal activities by the convicts in the area on February 8, 1996.

The convicts first shot him and then stabbed him to confirm his death, said Hazi Nazimuddin, another brother of the victim and also an eyewitness.

On the following day, victim's brother Babla filed a murder case with Lalbagh Police Station against the eight people.

Police pressed charges against the accused on April 30, 1997, and the court framed charges on May 21, 2000.

The convicts are Md Harun, Md Siraj, Md Shawkat, Md Shibli, Md Kamal and Syed Ahmad and his two brothers -- Rashid Ahmad and Farid Ahmad.

Of the convicts, Shibli, Shawkat and Kamal are on the run while the rest were present during the delivery of the judgment.

Restive Thailand

FROM PAGE 16

"The military will do everything for the country and the people... not for a particular side," he added.

Protest and government leaders bear "responsibility for the losses", Prayut wrote, a day after warning in a rare televised speech that the country risks "collapse" unless it pulls back from the brink.

Government supporters have accused opposition demonstrators of trying to incite the military to seize power, in a country which has seen 18 successful or attempted coups since 1932, but so far the army has remained largely above the fray.

Thailand has been bitterly divided since a bloodless coup by the military in 2006 ousted Yingluck's elder brother, Thaksin Shinawatra, as prime minister, unleashing years of political instability.

The latest unrest is the deadliest since more than 90 people died during protests by pro-Thaksin "Red Shirts" in 2010 that sparked street clashes and a bloody military crackdown.

Concerns are mounting that the Red Shirts could return to the streets of Bangkok to defend the government, bringing the risk of clashes between rival protesters.

Gunfire rang out early yesterday near a rally camp in a Bangkok park occupied by demonstrators.

Two people were slightly wounded, officials said. A rally spokesman said that gunmen had attacked the camp but it was not possible to verify his account.

The Red Shirts, mainly drawn from the rural north and northeastern provinces, have held back from demonstrations in the capital since November when several people died after clashes broke out near one of their rallies at a stadium in Bangkok.

They have stepped up their rhetoric in recent days as Yingluck comes under growing pressure.

"We must be ready to come to Bangkok within 24 hours for one purpose... to protect democracy," senior Red Shirt leader Nattawut Saikua said at a press conference yesterday.

The Reds will stage rallies over the coming weekends in the northeast as a show of strength, he added.

Yingluck has been summoned by an anti-corruption panel to hear neglect of duty charges tomorrow that could lead to her removal from office, although it is unclear if she will personally attend the hearing.

Bribery made it easy?

FROM PAGE 1

had communicated with the attackers over a cellphone from the prison van.

Rakib also admitted that the JMB militants maintained contact with each other using mobile phones inside the prison.

Most of the JMB convicts are in four prisons in Kashimpur of Gazipur where use of cellphones is rampant, said jail sources.

The prison authorities set up cellphone jammers at the jails to prevent use of mobile phones. But the jammers are often kept deactivated to facilitate the use of cellphones by the JMB militants and high-profile politicians.

"Some jail officials, prison guards and intelligence personnel deployed in jails are involved in this," said a prison guard at the High Security Prison where Rakib was an inmate.

"About 200 cellphones are used in the prison. One can earn Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000 just by proving a cellphone to an inmate," he added.

Miscreants on Sunday ambushed a police prison van at Trishal and killed a police constable to snatch the three JMB men -- death-row convicts Salahuddin alias Salehin and Rakib and life term convict Mizan alias Boma Mizan.

Five hours into the ambush, police recaptured Rakib from Sakhipur upazila of Tangail. The JMB man was killed in a "shootout" with police just 14 hours after his recapture.

Law enforcers, however, are yet to trace the two other JMB men.

Police suspected that the two may have been hiding in the forests and hilly areas under Sakhipur, Mirzapur and Ghatail upazilas of Tangail. The joint force is conducting drives in the areas to hunt down the militants.

The home ministry's probe team yesterday visited the ambush spot and talked to locals.

Asked about use of cellphones by inmates, Inspector General (prisons) Brig Gen Syed Iftekhar Uddin

said, "We're probing the incident. Stern action will be taken if we find proof of any such illegal use of cellphones."

Meanwhile, Rakib was buried yesterday at his family graveyard in Bangshi Belto village under Melandah upazila of Jamalpur in the presence of police. His body was taken there on Monday night, reports our Jamalpur correspondent.

ARMS, BOMBS SEIZED

Police yesterday recovered firearms, bullets and bombs from Ghatail upazila of Tangail, suspected to have been dumped by the fleeing JMB militants on Sunday.

Locals noticed a plastic bag around 11:00am in a bush in Garobazar area of Ghatail, 25 kilometres off Trishal upazila headquarters.

In information, a police team went to the scene, opened the bag and found six 7.65 pistols, eight magazines, 41 bullets and four crude bombs.

"The bullets, magazines and bombs were wrapped in clothes. Five

of the pistols are US-made and the other German-made," said Fazlul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Ghatail Police Station.

Hasibul Alam of Tangail police said the recovered weapons and bombs will be sent to the experts of Criminal Investigation Department to see whether the arms were used during Sunday's ambush.

JMB PLANED TO FREE MORE

The three JMB militants had planned to set free some other JMB leaders as part of their bid to revamp the outfit, Rakib told interrogators hours before he was killed.

"Our next plan was to launch more ambushes like the one in Trishal and set free more of our fellows. If obstructed, we would kill anybody," an interrogator of Rakib told this newspaper quoting the JMB man.

The militant said he was fleeing through Sakhipur upazila of Tangail as someone was supposed to meet him in Mirzapur upazila on Sunday afternoon and take him to a safe place.