

# Capital punishment sought for Quasem

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution yesterday sought capital punishment for Jamaat-e-Islami leader Mir Quasem Ali as it held him mainly responsible for torture and murder of Bangalees at an Al-Badr torture camp in Chittagong during the Liberation War in 1971.

"The prosecution wants death penalty for 71's Bangalee Khan [Mir Quasem Ali]," pleaded prosecutor Tureen Afroz as she wrapped up the prosecution's closing arguments in the case against Quasem.

The three-member International Crimes Tribunal-2, led by Justice Obaidul Hassan, fixed today for hear-

ing the defence's closing arguments.

The prosecution may submit rebuttal evidence if they feel it is necessary after the defence arguments. The court would then either fix a date for delivering the verdict or keep the case waiting for delivery of verdict.

A member of the Jamaat-e-Islami's central executive council, Quasem, 61, faces 14 charges, including murders committed in Chittagong between November and December 16, 1971. Quasem, however, pleaded not guilty before the tribunal.

Tureen, who submitted arguments on legal aspects, said from the prosecution evidence it was "proved" that Dalim Hotel was the Al-Badr head-

quarters in Chittagong and Quasem had "controlled" the torture camp.

Quasem must take three types of responsibilities -- individual, joint and superior criminal responsibilities -- for the crimes committed, especially inside the torture camp, she added.

Tureen in her closing arguments cited a case against Duško Tadić, a Serb war criminal, before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

She said the tribunal had found Tadić guilty for his "knowing presence" at the crimes site that directly and considerably influence the commission of a crime, although evidence did not prove that the accused took part in the killings.

## Abduction all around

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Asked to comment on the allegation, Rab Media Wing Director ATM Habibur Rahman said a vested quarter was using the names of Rab and other law enforcement agencies in abductions.

"They do it to create confusion among the public, tarnish the image of the law enforcement agencies and to camouflage the motive," he told The Daily Star.

In Gazipur, Din Mohan Mandal, 50, and his brother Kedani Mohan Mandal, 45, had been picked up by some 10 people, who identified themselves as policemen, from their home in Kaliakoir upazila.

Din's wife Purabi Rani Barman said the abductors were in plainclothes and came in two private cars. Din owns a jewellery shop at Kaliakoir Bazar and Kedani is a farmer.

The family suspects the abductors were hired by land grabbers to press them to sell their land.

In Mymensingh, unidentified miscreants abducted two cousins from Panchgoan village in Bhaluka upazila.

The victims are Kamal Hossain Sabuj, 35, head tutor at a local coaching centre, and his cousin Abu Bakar Siddique Swapan, 28, an assistant tutor at the centre.

An armed gang of 8-10 broke open the door of Sabuj first and captured him. They stormed the house of Swapan and then took them away, said Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station, quoting family members.

The abductors came in a microbus and on four to five motorbikes, Azad added.

On Sunday, Nazrul Islam, councillor of ward-2 of Narayanganj City Corporation, and his four aides -- Tajul, Swapan, Liton and Jahangir -- were kidnapped from Adalatpara around 1:45pm.

They were leaving the court area

after Nazrul, former general secretary of Narayanganj Chhatra League, got bail in a case, said Nazrul's wife Selina Islam. They were in Nazrul's private car when abducted. Police found the car at Rajendrapur in Gazipur around 9:00pm on Sunday, but have yet to rescue the victims.

Around the time the five were kidnapped, senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar and his driver Ibrahim were abducted from the court area, family members said.

Police recovered Chandan's car from the capital's Gulshan around 10:00pm yesterday.

Selina claimed her husband and four of his aides were abducted by Rab members. But she did not clarify how she knew about Rab's involvement.

Contacted, Lt Col Tareque Sayeed Mohammad, commanding officer of Rab-11, denied the allegation. He said Selina told them about her husband's rivalry with some people.

According to Selina, Nur Hossain, councillor of ward-4, and Haji Mohammad Yasin, general secretary of Siddhirganj unit of Awami League, masterminded the abduction. She filed an abduction case against Nur, Yasin and four others yesterday.

Nur Hossain, also vice-president of Siddhirganj unit of AL, however, refuted the allegation. He said he would hold a press conference today to protest his innocence.

Meanwhile, demanding the safe return of Nazrul and his four aides, their friends and colleagues blocked Dhaka-Chittagong highway for over two hours since 10:30am yesterday, creating tailbacks.

They burnt tyres and logs on the road until police dispersed them around 12:30pm.

Talking to reporters, Golam Faruk, additional deputy inspector general (Dhaka range), said they were investigating the abduction and that they

were yet to find any clue or witness.

"We are not sure that they had been abducted," he said.

Nazrul is an accused in at least 15 cases. He was sentenced to death by a lower court in the advocate Babar Ali killing case, but was later acquitted by the High Court, said Syed Nurul Islam, superintendent of Narayanganj police.

Also yesterday, around 300 lawyers in Narayanganj blocked the Dhaka-Narayanganj link road around 10:00am demanding the safe return of Chandan Sarkar, halting traffic movement for about two hours.

They also submitted a memorandum to the superintendent of police of Narayanganj, demanding his intervention in rescuing Chandan within 24 hours.

Chandan's wife Archana Sarkar told The Daily Star that her husband had no enemy. "He lives a disciplined life. His movement is limited between the court and his chamber in Chashara Co-operative Market."

She demanded her husband's safe return.

In another incident in Gopalganj, locals caught a youth, Al Mamun Sardar, while he was trying to abduct a minor girl on Sunday evening.

It happened at Bhennabari under Sadar upazila.

Locals later rescued the girl and handed Mamun over to the police.

Zakir Hossain Mollah, officer-in-charge of Gopalganj Police Station, said Mamun so far abducted four children and trafficked them to India.

Meanwhile in Bogra, police yesterday rescued a trader, who was abducted from Faridpur on Saturday, and arrested two of his captors from Nandigram upazila of the district.

The arrested are Nazmul Hossain, 28, and Abdul Barik, 35.

Abu Daud, 60, had been abducted for money, as the abductors demanded Tk 5 lakh in ransom, police said.

## Army given 1,800 acres

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interests. It said the land would be considered non-reserved area.

According to the Forest Act, 1927, the government can de-reserve a reserved forest, if necessary.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who has the defence portfolio, approved the proposal for building the cantonment a few months ago, following demands from the army.

"The ministry has issued the gazette notification, but we are yet to hand over the land to them," said Abdul Awal Sarkar, divisional forest officer of Cox's Bazar, South.

Forest and Environment Minister Anwar Hossain Manju told The Daily Star that the land was given to the army way before he became minister.

"The prime minister has the jurisdiction [to give forest land in this regard] in the case of maintaining peace, stability and protecting our sovereignty," he said, adding, "It is not correct that the land has been given violating the law."

The minister said, "That [the land given to the army] is reserve forest and there are pieces of private land in the forest too." He said earlier the prime minister had decided that no trees would be chopped down from the reserved forest until 2015.

In 2009, Myanmar had mobilised a huge number of troops with heavy weapons along its border with Bangladesh. Bangladesh had to mobilise its army along the border in Ramu as well. The incident highlighted the

need for a fully-fledged cantonment there, sources claimed.

Myanmar's building new roads and barbed wire fences along the border, military installations, including bunkers, renovation of a nearby airport has led Bangladesh government to keep one brigade of soldiers in Ramu.

The land in question is under Rajarkul and Panerchhara forest range.

Of the 1,788.98 acres of forest land, 1,180 acres in Rajarkul, 264.55 acres in Khuniyapalang, and 344.43 acres of Umakhali would be considered non-reserved area, according to the gazette notification signed by Forest Secretary Shafique Rahman Patwari.

A major portion of the land is along the border with Myanmar.

## 720 Muslim Brotherhood

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said the move highlighted the extent of Egypt's counter-revolution.

"It shows that it's not just the Islamists who are being targeted, it's also liberal groups like us. And (the government) will continue all the way to close down all democratic forces," Abd Allah said. "What else did you think a military coup would do? It's something expected from a military regime that has killed thousands of people, and imprisoned thousands more. And it's just the beginning."

Lawyers and rights campaigners said the sentences in both court cases resulted from rushed proceedings that infringed basic local and international law.

Mohamed Elmessiry, an Amnesty International researcher who attended the hearings, said: "In each trial, the defence were not able to present their case, the witnesses were not heard, and many of the accused were not brought to the courtroom. This lacks any basic guarantees of a fair trial -- not only under international law, but also Egyptian national law."

"The trials themselves are a death sentence to any remaining credibility and independence of Egypt's criminal justice system."

Amnesty has previously said the 529 case was the largest batch of simultaneous death sentences in the world in living memory -- a record now

beaten by yesterday's developments.

Both cases form the latest instalment of a government crackdown in which at least 16,000 people have been arrested and more than 2,500 killed since the removal of the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi from the presidency last July.

Prosecutors said the defendants in both cases were Brotherhood members who collectively killed two police officers during an explosion of nationwide violence last August. The 529 defendants were accused of lynching a policeman in Matay, a town in Minya province, southern Egypt. On the same day, the 683 others -- including Badie -- were said to have killed an officer in the nearby town of Adwa.

But many of the defendants in both trials have said they were not present during the attacks, and some said they were not even supporters of the Brotherhood. In some cases, they said they were not even in Minya province and that they were reported to the police by informants acting on personal agendas.

One of the defendants' lawyers, Mohamed Abd-El Fatah Ali, showed the Guardian the roughly 6,000 pages of court documents from the case and argued that the judge could not have had time to read them.

"There's no human who could read this amount of newspaper pages, let alone legal documents containing testimonies, in order to find the para-

graph that relates to this case and these defendants in the time allowed," said Ali, who was also fined by the judge and referred to court himself for boycotting an earlier session. "That would take three months."

Families alleged that some defendants were not even mentioned in the documents.

In issuing the sentences, Youssef ignored an international campaign in which more than 1.5 million people signed a petition hosted by the online activists Avaaz, calling for a re-trial.

### Hindu houses

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A victim filed a case with the police station in this regard. A special operation was underway to nab the culprits, said DC Tofazzal Hossain Miah.

The district administration and police have been put on alert. Additional police force has been deployed at the remote village.

The district administration suspected that a religious fanatic group was responsible for the attack. Soon after the attack, the upazila nirbahi officer visited the spot and distributed Tk 1,000 among each of the victim families.

Yesterday, the DC gave Tk 5,000, two bundles of corrugated tin and 20 kg of rice to each of the families.

## Jubo League man shot dead in Laxmipur

UNB, Laxmipur

An activist of Jubo League, the youth wing of Awami League, was gunned down by unidentified criminals at Anandipur in Ramganj upazila here yesterday evening.

The victim, Saiful Islam, was the son of Mofizul Islam of Fatehpur village and activist of Jubo League's Karpura union unit.

Saiful's brother Firoz Alam said a gang of criminals fired several shots at Saiful on his way back home from Laxmipur sadar around 7:30pm.

He died on the spot.

The body was sent to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

### War crimes

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of four cases were conducted in the absence of the accused.

Sanaul Huq, a senior investigator of the agency, said, "We took the issue seriously as we have recently seen that accused went into hiding soon after the investigation began."

On April 1, the Tribunal-1 issued an arrest warrant against war crimes suspect, Syed Mohammad Hasan of Kishoreganj district, following a prayer from the agency.

Investigations are currently going on against Hasan over his alleged involvement in several war crimes committed in Tarail upazila in 1971. The agency feared that Hasan went into hiding too.

In the Tribunal Act, there is no provision for the investigation officer to arrest an accused during the ongoing probe.

As per the rules of procedure framed by the tribunals, the prosecution on receipt of the requisition from the investigation officer places the motion for an arrest before the tribunal and the tribunal, in its open session, hears the motion and issues the arrest warrant.

When the procedure to issue an arrest warrant takes place at the tribunal, the accused are alerted and, obviously, they go into hiding, said Huq.

"We are afraid that in future we won't be able to place any accused before the tribunal and all trials will be held in absentia," he added.

The letter of the agency reads: "The investigation officer may arrest an accused person at any stage of investigation without warrant of arrest if the investigation agency is satisfied that a prima facie charge has been established against the accused person and the person arrested shall be produced before the tribunal within 24 hours (excluding travel time) after his arrest. The local law enforcing agencies shall assist the investigation officer in securing his arrest and escorting the arrested accused to the tribunal."

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday told The Daily Star that he was yet to get the letter.

According to the agency, war crimes convict Abul Kalam Azad alias Bacchu Razakar escaped 'mysteriously' hours before his arrest warrant was issued.

The trial proceedings against another war crimes accused Jahid Hossain Khokon had already been completed in his absence.

Tribunal-1 could set a date any day for delivering the verdict in the war crimes case against Khokon, believed to be living in Sweden.

The trial proceedings of the intellectual murder case were held in the absence of the accused. Two war crimes convicts, Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman Khan, were awarded capital punishment in the case.

### Get ready

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government, Modi said, "You are rolling out the red carpet for vote bank politics. If people come from Bihar, they are outsiders to you. If people come from Odisha, they are also outsiders to you. But if some Bangladeshis come, your face seems to be shining. This country cannot run like this. We won't allow you to destroy the country for the sake of your vote bank politics."

Modi had raised the immigrant issue in Assam, when he appeared to have drawn a distinction between the Hindu and Muslim immigrants.

"We have a responsibility towards the Hindus who face harassment and sufferings in other countries. Where will they go? India is the only place for them. Our government cannot continue to harass them. We will have to accommodate them here," he said. The Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) manifesto also mentions that India is a natural home for the persecuted Hindus.

While the BJP has always kept on its agenda the issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh, Modi's comments on the issue during electioneering has raised concerns. The question now arises whether he is seeking to benefit from a perceived polarisation or he really meant it.

All opinion polls to date have put Modi as the frontrunner, but then such surveys are notoriously unreliable.

## 200 Bangladeshis

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the ambassador, adding that Dhaka had so far sent back two lists of 20 people confirming their Bangladesh nationality.

"We received one list of 12 people on Thursday and another of eight today (Monday). The Thai authorities have instantly been sent the lists to complete the necessary formalities," said Imtiaz.

He said they were yet to receive any response from Dhaka regarding repatriation of the people verified.

Imtiaz said it would take at least a week to complete all formalities. "We will be able to begin the repatriation as soon as we get the tickets from Dhaka," he said.

An official of the foreign ministry said the detainees' families would first be asked to pay for the tickets, and if they are unable the government would arrange funds to bring the

Bangladeshis home.

Meanwhile, Additional Secretary of Ministry of Home Affairs Shafiqul Islam said they had already forwarded the notices regarding the nationality verification in 22 districts and police were working on it.

He said the government would make arrangements for repatriation after completing the verification.

Another home ministry official said the verification would take some time as the police and local administration needed to check whether the detainees were originally Bangladeshi or Myanmar Rohingyas, who often take the sea to Malaysia.

Sources at the Thai embassy in Dhaka told The Daily Star that the detainees were not being given adequate food in the detention centre and that many of them had become sick due to torture.

## Duty cuts for RMG exports

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are not subjected to any discriminatory duty vis-à-vis China's, the largest apparel manufacturer, or other competitors.

"Bangladesh and China are afforded identical tariff structure to the US market under the most favoured nation status," he said.

But, in practice, Bangladesh pays 15.62 percent duty on garment exports, whereas China pays only 3 percent.

Delaney's comments came at the press briefing following the seven hour-long opening meeting of the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (Ticfa).

"The meeting has been very productive, pragmatic. Every stakeholder came with problem-solving attitude. It's a great start," he said.

The American trade negotiator also touched upon the progress made by the country with regards to the action plan for winning back Generalised System of Preferences status from the US, suspended on June 27 last year on grounds of unacceptable standards of labour rights and workplace safety.

"In the meeting we tried to locate where we are now in the action plan. We believe that there has been a lot of progress in a number of areas, but considerable work still needs to be done for regaining the GSP status."

Delaney highlighted two areas where the country needs to act fast -- implementation of the amended labour laws and completion of factory inspections.

At the press conference, Commerce Secretary Mahbub Ahmed, who led Bangladesh in the forum, said some Sub-Saharan and Caribbean nations receive lower duty benefits from the US on grounds of being "vulnerable countries".

"Bangladesh is also in a vulnerable position for climate change, so we have also sought lower duty from the US," he said, adding that the US agreed to look into the matter.

At the meeting, the two sides also discussed ways to boost US investment in Bangladesh, which has been on a decline over the last few years, Ahmed said.

Dan W Mozena, US ambassador to Bangladesh, who was present in the talks, ruled out any political tension between the two countries.

"The bilateral relation is becoming stronger, broader, deeper," he said, while citing the security dialogue held last week as a case in point.

## Tigers' coach Jurgensen quits

FROM PAGE 1

his resignation letter to the board yesterday morning.

He however, stated that he was willing to coach the national side until the end of a three-match ODI series with India in June. The board has yet to accept his resignation.

According to the BCB, the Australian was unhappy about the comments 'for the need of a new coach' made by some of its directors to the media and cited it to be the main reason behind his resignation.

"He has submitted his resignation letter. We could not discuss it in detail during the board meeting today [Monday], since the president is not well and could not attend the meeting. In his letter he said that he was not happy about some of the comments made in the media regarding his position and that's why he is quitting," said Akram Khan, BCB's head of cricket operations yesterday.

Rumours of the coach being sacked began circulating ever since Bangladesh's disappointing performance in the World T20. More recently, a website quoted an unnamed BCB official as saying that the board was in search of a batting coach and that Jurgensen's position was in jeopardy.

BCB president, Nazmul Hassan Papon, too had spoken of making changes in the team management following the T20 World Cup, but he never publicly spoke of the need for a new head coach. Papon, in fact, during a press conference earlier this month said that he did not have any intentions of bringing a new head coach. As such, the resignation has surprised many board members.

"When a team performs badly, there's plenty of criticism. It used to happen with us as well, when we played. But the fact remains that we

never had taken an official decision against him and honestly speaking, in an issue like this, I never expected a resignation letter," said Akram.

BCB director Jalal Yunus echoed Akram's sentiments. "I personally believe that he has resigned mainly due to the speculation in the media. He could have at least communicated with the CEO before taking the decision. We could have negotiated. But this happened all of a sudden."

When asked if the directors, who spoke of the need for a new coach to the media, crossed a line, Yunus said, "This is a normal practice. These things will take place but that does not mean that we are removing the head coach or the fielding coach or any one for that matter."

Akram however had a different opinion.

"At the end of the day it's the board president who takes the decision. And I think this kind of individual comments should be restricted. These have affected both players and staff members in the past as well," he said.

At the moment, the BCB is waiting for the president to take a final decision on the matter. If the president does approve the resignation, Bangladesh face the stiff task of finding a new head coach with just six months left to the 50-over World Cup; the intensity of which the BCB is well aware of.

As Yunus put it, "Finding a good coach all of a sudden is going to be difficult. It takes time. Coaches come to Bangladesh, they gain experience and move for better offers. Let's see what happens."

Jurgensen first joined Bangladesh as their bowling coach in 2011. The following year, he replaced Richard Pybus, as the interim head coach. A series of good performances in 2013 led to the Australian earning a contract till the 50-over World Cup in 2015.