

TESTIMONY IN WAR TRIAL

Qaisar had link with killings in Habiganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness yesterday linked war crimes accused Syed Mohammad Qaisar to a mass killing at a village in Habiganj that left at least eight people dead during the Liberation War in 1971.

Lokman Hossain, a resident of Lohaid village under Madhabpur upazila, said he had seen Qaisar when the Pakistan army shot one of his neighbours dead on May 15, 1971.

Lokman, 22nd prosecution witness in the case against Qaisar, told the International Crimes Tribunal-2 that this house was also looted the same day and he had "assumed" Qaisar and the army did it.

Earlier, Ful Miah and Omar Ali gave testimony about the massacre of May 15. Ful Miah testified that the Pakistani army accompanied by Qaisar had shot eight people at Lohaid, while Omar said the army had shot his uncle dead following a "signal" from Qaisar.

Qaisar, post-1971 a state minister in the HM Ershad regime, faces 16 charges,

including genocide committed in Habiganj and Brahmanbaria in 1971. The accused, however, pleaded not guilty before the tribunal.

Lokman, a 61-year-old ex-army man, said he had hidden under a haystack after hearing that the Pakistan army had entered the village around 9:30am on May 15.

At one stage, he had seen Qaisar along with some army personnel and Bangalees on a road before the house of his neighbour Abdul Gafur, said Lokman.

"Some Bangalees and Pakistani army men were beating up Abdul Gafur and at one stage the army men shot him dead. Qaisar Saheb was present there," said Lokman.

When the army left the area around 1:30pm, he went to the spot and saw Gafur's body there, said the witness. After hearing a scream from Gafur's house, he went inside and found the body of Gafur's father Abdul Aziz.

"When I returned home, I found everything scattered and assumed that the Pakistan army men and Qaisar

Bahini had looted our house," said Lokman during his 47-minute testimony.

The witness said he along with some other people had buried six bodies in two graves and he left the country for India that day. He had heard from India that two other bodies were also found the following day, added Lokman.

"We [villagers] were innocent people. We were punished for no crimes. I want the punishment of the accused," said emotion-choked Lokman as he identified Qaisar at the courtroom.

Defence lawyer Abdus Sobhan Tarafder completed Lokman's cross-examination with the suggestion that his client was "not involved" in any such crimes and the witness had given "false testimony being influenced."

Lokman denied it emphatically.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan, with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Shahinur Islam, adjourned



PHOTO: STAR

The wounded job-seekers at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital. Human traffickers had lured them on a boat heading for Malaysia where they endured torture and starvation.

Shab-e-Barat tonight

FROM PAGE 1

seeking blessings from Allah, the Almighty, for peace and progress of their families and relatives.

According to Muslim belief, on this night, Allah, the Almighty, decides the fate of all human beings for the coming year taking into account their past deeds.

People will visit the graves of their relatives and Muslim saints and offer special munajat on this night of fortune.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia issued separate messages felicitating Muslims on the occasion.

In his message, Hamid said the holy night opens up an opportunity for mankind to get special blessings and forgiveness of the Almighty Allah.

"I urge all to employ themselves

in the work for the welfare of mankind and building the country imbued with the magnificence of holy Shab-e-Barat," Hasina said.

Khaleda Zia, in her message, said, "On this holy night, it should be our resolve that we will all work for the welfare of mankind shunning violence, jealousy, bloodshed and conflict."

Islamic Foundation and other religious organisations have outlined elaborate programmes, including discussions, Hamd, Naat, Milad, Zikr and Doa on the occasion.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar, private television channels and radio stations will air special programmes.

The daily newspapers will publish special articles highlighting the significance of Shab-e-Barat.

ACC to sue

FROM PAGE 1

However, owner of the building Rana has not been mentioned in the ACC list as the plot was not registered to his name.

Rana's parents Abdul Khalek and Morjina Begum are going to face the ACC lawsuit as owners of the plot, according to ACC sources.

Apart from Savar mayor Mohammad Refatullah, Associate Professor of Khulna University Abdur Razzak, the architect of the building, former chief executive officer of Savar Municipality Uttam Kumar Roy and Mohamamd Ali Khan, a ward commissioner of Savar, are on the list of the ACC.

The ACC probe committee was formed on April 28 last year, four days after the world's worst garment industry disaster, to investigate how Rana had amassed his wealth and whether Rana Plaza was constructed following the building code.

Ministry says no decision

FROM PAGE 16

commissions and embassies abroad, the letter read.

Md Rafiqul Islam, an assistant secretary of the ministry, had sent the letter to Manzill in response to Manzill's legal notice.

Meanwhile, the ministry on Tuesday filed a case with Shahbagh Police Station against owners of two organisations who supplied the shields.

Shahbagh police said a ministry official filed the case against Mir Daud Ahmed, owner of M/s Amicon, and Mohsinul Hasan, who owns a jewellery shop at Eastern Point of Shantti Nagar, accusing them of embezzling money through fraud.

Assistant Commissioner Shiblee Noman of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star that the case docket had been sent to the Anti-Corruption Commission which would investigate into the alleged fraud.

Police said the two jewellers supplied shields for conferring state honour to the foreign friends but they resorted to fraud and supplied shields made of low quality and low quantity gold, silver and other metals.

On June 9, Manzill Murshid had received another letter from the liberation war affairs ministry in response to his legal notice. He then told journalists that the ministry had said new shields would be given to foreign friends since the previous ones were found to be of poor quality.

The Awami League-led grand alliance government between 2011 and 2013 awarded shields to 338 foreign friends and organisations for their outstanding contribution to country's Liberation War in 1971. Later, it was reported those were not made according to government specifications and only a fraction of the precious metals were used.

2 shot dead

FROM PAGE 16

PCJSS, however, refuted the allegation.

Around 10 to 13 armed criminals waylaid the two when they came to Atharo Mile area for organisational activities around 10:30am.

The armed men opened fire on them at point blank range when they came to the area for their organisational activities, thus leaving them dead on the spot, said Md Awal, sub-inspector of Naniachar Police Station, quoting locals.

Both the groups were desperate to establish supremacy in the area, said SI Awal.

Police went to the spot and recovered the dead bodies.

Niran Chakma, press and information secretary of UPDE, blamed the PCJSS's armed cadres for the killing.

However, Sajib Chakma, assistant information secretary of PCJSS, denied the allegation, saying their members were not involved in the murder.

Back from

FROM PAGE 1

THE ESCAPE

The sailors' escape is a tale of courage and risk.

"We convinced our translator he could keep the ransom money UN pays if he helped us escape. From then on our lives depended on how much we could trust him," Haque said as he described their escape.

The translator provided the captives with a mobile phone to communicate with UN officials, who baited the translator with a promise of \$ 200,000.

"It took a month to formulate the plan. On the fateful night we broke out through a window," Haque said.

The men then walked for miles through the jungle before being met with a car arranged by the translator. The car dropped them somewhere where another group of people met them.

"It was a dark night, the waiting men signaled at us using torch lights and we just followed the light. They led us out of the pirates' territory," Haque said.

The escaped sailors were then taken to a village where the fisheries minister received them, Haque said.

A special aircraft of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in Kenya flew them to Nairobi from where the men were brought back home yesterday.

Meanwhile the Maritime Piracy and Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP) which assisted in their release, has agreed to \$200 per month to the rescued men to help their rehabilitation, according to a statement released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

NGOs worried

FROM PAGE 16

the cabinet approved the draft law in principle, leaving certain weaknesses in it. This will pose risks to a smooth and unhindered development of the NGO sector, they said.

The proposed law empowers the NGO Bureau to close down an NGO, file and conduct cases and appoint an administrator, which is illogical, said the organisations.

The NGO Bureau may have the power to stop activities of the approved project or cancel the NGO's registration with it as maximum punishment for serious violations of the law, read the statement.

In case of a specific crime, the responsibility for taking action may be given to the Anti-Corruption Commission or law enforcement agencies.

Empowering the NGO Bureau to close down an NGO or stop its all voluntary activities is in conflict with the existing laws of the land, it said.

Referring to the incorporation of the individual in the definition of foreign grants, the NGOs said it would unnecessarily expand the NGO Bureau's scope of activities and create risks of mismanagement, harassment and irregularities through misinterpretation and misuse of the law.

They also termed negative the proposed restriction on receipt of foreign grants by individuals from a number of professions and organisations, and said such a provision is irrelevant.

Amendments could be brought to the existing laws if any weakness is found in those.

The NGOs said it is appropriate and necessary to give the NGO Bureau the responsibility for inspection and audit. But it will be inappropriate to give it the task of project evaluation.

They felt that the word "evaluation" should be dropped from articles 10(1) and 10(3) of the draft law.

The NGOs called upon the authorities concerned and the parliamentary committee to have discussions with experts and representatives of NGOs before the proposed law is passed in parliament.

They said everyone wants to see transparency and accountability in the NGO sector. But, at the same time, there should not be any law that will hamper the NGOs' contribution to promoting development, human rights and good governance.

The statement was issued by, among others, Sultana Kamal of Ain O Salish Kendro, Rasheda K Chowdhury of Gonosakhorota Obhijan, Khushi Kabir of Nijera Kori, Shaheen Anam of Manusher Jonno Foundation, Sara Hossain of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and Rizwana Hasan of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association.

Iftekharuzzaman, Executive Director of Transparency International Bangladesh, signed the statement on behalf of the NGOs.

Survivors tell of horrific attack

FROM PAGE 1

"The traffickers hacked many people in front of our eyes with sharp weapons and dumped the bodies in the sea. If searched, the bodies of many people will be found [in the sea]," said Zahidul Islam, a survivor from Sujanager upazila in Pabna, at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital.

Zahidul along with 28 critically injured Bangladeshis and two traffickers -- both Thai nationals -- were taken to Teknaf from St Martin's Island around 2:00am yesterday. All of them were bullet-hit. They were undergoing treatment at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital. Bodies of the five were also taken to the hospital for autopsy.

The Coast Guard took the remaining 281 Bangladeshis, who were on the 120-foot trawler during the firing, to Teknaf from St Martin yesterday afternoon and handed them over to Teknaf police.

Moktar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, said police would hand over the survivors to their families after completing necessary formalities.

The trawler with 333 people, including four traffickers, on board set off for Malaysia from Moheshkhali coast in Cox's Bazar on Monday night. On Wednesday morning, the boat

stopped around 12 kilometres south-east off St Martin's Island to take more passengers from the Myanmar coast, which was not far from the spot, according to the survivors.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the survivors said the traffickers started loading the boat with Bangladeshis from about two weeks ago before finally setting out for Malaysia.

"I was boarded on the trawler from Teknaf 15 days ago. Then the traffickers took other people on small boats and put them on the trawlers at different places," said Mizan, 26, from Narsingdi's Raipur.

Once they were put on board, their miseries began.

"They used to give us food only once a day. Around 4:00pm every day, we would be given some flattened rice and molasses only. No more food until the next day. If we felt thirsty and couldn't endure it, they would give us only a small cup of water," said Rahim, adding that the traffickers would often beat them if they wanted something.

Rahim, who hails from Raipur, Narsingdi, said a scuffle broke out on Wednesday morning when they protested the torture.

"Within a moment, it turned into a clash," he said.

The traffickers then talked to their accomplices in Myanmar through mobile phone and within a very short time, they arrived in three boats and started firing at us, he said, adding one of the traffickers jumped off the trawler and swam to one of the boats in the meantime.

"A number of miscreants from the boats then boarded our trawler and stared hacking away indiscriminately. They dumped some bodies in the sea before leaving," Rahim continued.

Meanwhile, Cox's Bazar police yesterday arrested two people from a hotel in the town based on information from the survivors. The arrested are Prakash Pal and Jahangir Alam.

One survivor named Mujib Mia identified them as members of the trafficking gang, saying that the duo had put him on the trawler.

Earlier, the Coast Guard detained three human traffickers -- Thai nationals Sang and Mong and Myanmar national Abdul Gafur -- after towing the boat to St Martin's Island from the Bay at 5:00pm Wednesday.

A case has been filed against the trio for trafficking people to Malaysia and killing five Bangladeshis, said Lt Kazi Harun-ar-Rashid, commander of Coast Guard's Teknaf station.

The carnival begins

FROM PAGE 1

Neymar scored his 33rd when Pletikosa got both hands to his penalty but could not stop the ball from going in and Oscar wrapped up the win in the dying minutes.

Earlier, the D-day for Brazil finally arrived after 64 years in mixed circumstances. Nearly half the world's population, well over 3 billion spectators, watched soccer's premier event and got a glimpse of the country that in two years will host the Summer Olympics.

The opening ceremony for the World Cup got underway at Arena Corinthians. American star Jennifer Lopez added a dash of glamour to the colourful ceremony in a vivid contrast to the violent anti-tournament protests in the city.

J-Lo, wearing a carnival-inspired and revealing green outfit, appeared from a trapdoor along with rapper Pitbull to sing the official World Cup song with Brazilian singer Claudia Leite.

The festivities began ahead of the opening game of the four-week long tournament.

But it didn't start without a trouble as military police in the city clashed with masked anti-World Cup protesters demonstrating against the huge cost of staging the tournament.

The clashes came after police fired

tear gas and rubber bullets to break up an earlier, smaller protest near a Sao Paulo subway station.

A crowd of more than 60,000 people, including 12 foreign heads of state, watched the tournament's opening match.

"The world is going to see multitudes cheering for soccer -- but also demanding that our country change," Helen Santos, a school teacher, said as she walked home in Rio de Janeiro. "The world needs to see that we're a serious country. We're not just a nation of soccer, but a country striving and demanding the government provide better education and health care. The world needs to see the reality of Brazil, not just the sport."

TEAMS

BRAZIL: Julio Cesar - Dani Alves, Thiago Silva (captain), David Luiz, Marcelo - Oscar, Paulinho (Hermanes 63), Neymar (Ramires 88), Luiz Gustavo, Hulk (Bernard 68) - Fred

Yellow card: Neymar (27), Luiz Gustavo (88)

CROATIA: Stipe Pletikosa - Darijo Srna (cap), Vedran Corluka, Dejan Lovren, Sime Vrsaljko - Ivan Perisic, Luka Modric, Mateo Kovacic (Marcelo Brozovic 61), Ivan Rakitic, Ivica Olic - Nikica Jelavic (Ante Rebic 78)

Yellow card: Vedran Corluka (65), Dejan Lovren (69)

Myanmar

FROM PAGE 2

Physician Abdus Salam at the hospital said Dil was undergoing treatment at the surgery department and that he was not out of danger.

Meanwhile, a three-day meeting between Border Guard Bangladesh and BGP ended yesterday in the Myanmar city of Nay Pyi Taw, in which Bangladesh raised six issues, including border firings, the killing of BGB member Mizanur Rahman in BGP firing on May 28, and drugs trafficking, according to a BGB press release.

Myanmar, on the other hand, urged Bangladesh to take steps to contain armed groups, especially Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO).

An insurgent group in the Arakan state of Myanmar, RSO is detrimental to peace and stability in the border areas, the press release says.

Bangladesh handed over a list of around 40 yaba makeshift factories located inside Myanmar territories along the border, which are producing yaba tablets mainly to smuggle those to Bangladesh, said a source in the home ministry.

Both sides agreed to curb activities of armed groups and criminals in the border areas and to maintain direct communication (through telephone/cell phone) between the forces.



RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

for INNOVATIONS IN PUBLIC HEALTH EDUCATION

As part of the Next Generation of Public Health Experts Program, funded by USAID, the James P. Grant School of Public Health at BRAC Institute of Global Health is offering fellowships for innovations in public health education.

The fellowships provide an opportunity for research fellows to develop innovative ideas for improving the quality of, and access to, public health education.

Innovations for improving quality of public health education can involve: 1) new courses on subject areas not currently reflected in standard curricula; 2) creative teaching methods; 3) new ways of evaluating student performance.

Innovations for improving access to public health education might involve: 1) making public health education more accessible to under-represented communities e.g. rural health practitioners; 2) integrating public health training in health professional curricula e.g. nurses or dentists; 3) continuing education or short-course opportunities for full-time workers.

Eligibility: Any part-time or full-time employee of a public or private public health institution in Bangladesh.

Location: Fellows will be based at their home institution but will have four required meetings at the James P. Grant School of Public Health, BRAC Institute of Global Health, BRAC University

Duration: 6 months: September 2014 - February 2015

Stipend: Up to \$5,000 per fellow based on full participation and satisfactory deliverables.

Application: A two-page proposal describing a proposed innovation in public health education and how the fellowship would be used to develop this innovation together with a CV, and a completed Application Form (available at: http://sph.bracu.ac.bd/images/FELOWSHIP/application_form_research_fellowship_6_03.pdf)

Application deadline: Rolling admissions deadline, applicants are encouraged to apply by July 20, 2014.

For proposal submission and further inquiries: Ms. Khadija Leena, Email: leena@bracu.ac.bd, or call at +88 (02) 9827501-4
Ext: 6009 or visit: <http://bigh.bracu.ac.bd> or www.jpgrph.org


