

'SRI LANKA WAR CRIMES'

Opposition seeks probe to resist UN inquiry

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan opposition parties on Friday asked Colombo to hold a credible domestic investigation to head off a UN probe into mass killings during the final stages of its ethnic war.

Two parties drawing their support from the majority Sinhalese community said they would not support the UN inquiry, set up to investigate widespread allegations of rights abuses and mass killings of civilians as the Tamil separatist war drew to a bloody close in 2009.

Sinhalese opposition parties oppose any foreign probe into the conflict and the government has vowed not to assist the UN investigation, which was set up this week in line with a US-initiated resolution passed

in March.

Sri Lanka's main opposition United National Party (UNP) and the Marxist JVP, or People's Liberation Front, both slammed the probe and called for the government to agree to a home-grown inquiry into the allegations.

"We do not approve this UN investigation, but we want the government to set up a domestic mechanism to go into the recent killings," said JVP leader Anura Disسانayake, adding that the local investigation should probe ongoing human rights abuses as well as alleged war crimes.

Rights groups have accused government forces and police of targeting dissidents despite the end of the war.

Sri Lanka's parliament will debate the proposed UN investigation over

two days and take a vote on Wednesday evening, deputy Speaker Chandima Kodikara told reporters Friday.

"Nine MPs have given notice of a resolution condemning the UNHRC (UN Human Rights Council) investigation," Kodikara said. "They want parliament to say that the UN move is a violation of Sri Lanka's sovereignty."

International rights groups say up to 40,000 civilians were killed by troops in the final stages of the war, which ended with the elimination of the top Tamil rebel leadership.

Colombo strongly denies that its troops killed any civilians, but instead says the defeated Tamil Tiger guerrillas used civilians as a human shield. Rights groups have accused both sides of targeting civilians.

Banish sexual violence 'to dark ages': Kerry

AFP, London

US Secretary of State John Kerry said it was time to banish sexual violence "to the dark ages" as an international conference on rape as a weapon of war wrapped up in London on Friday.

The four-day gathering of 123 countries, co-hosted by Hollywood star Angelina Jolie, has sought to break the taboo of wartime rape and tackle a culture of impunity that experts warn is only creating more victims.

After days of discussion and often gruesome testimonies, the summit produced a new protocol which aims to improve the documentation and investigation of attacks to bring more perpetrators to justice.

"It's time to ban sexual violence to the dark ages and history books where it belongs," Kerry said at the closing press conference alongside Jolie and her co-host, British Foreign Secretary William Hague.

"Make no mistake: we can end this, establish new norms, hold those who commit those acts accountable and no longer tolerate these horrific tactics," Kerry said as a "war veteran and father of two daughters", the issue was a "personal matter" for him.

Jolie, who has been campaigning on

the issue for two years and whose presence made the summit front page news, said it had been an "emotional experience" but she was encouraged by the progress made.

"We have all come together based on a common desire to end war zone sexual violence, and we have mapped out every area of action we need to take," the 39-year-old said.

The issue was now "on the top table of international diplomacy", she said.

Hague said the summit had given him "renewed optimism" and insisted that the army of people determined to end rape being used as a weapon "is not going to be disbanded".

Among those speaking at the summit were two doctors from the Panzi hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is renowned for helping treat survivors of sexual violence.

They warned of a dramatic increase in rapes on babies and young children in the area where they work, in Bukavu near the border with Rwanda.

"There is a normalisation of these crimes that directly affects children," Desire Munyali, a surgeon and paediatrician, told AFP.

"The number of sexual assaults on

children has risen. I've seen horrors committed on babies less than one year old, assaulted in a way that is impossible to describe."

His colleague Nadine Neema Rukunghu, a radiologist, said that despite a decline in hostilities in the area, the number of victims had not reduced.

"If anything it's worse, because the culture of impunity surrounding rape has the effect of contamination," she said.

"Even ordinary civilians are carrying out acts of sexual violence without any fear of being caught."

Rukunghu described how a two-and-a-half-year-old girl was brought into the hospital a month ago "completely open, and full of blood".

They never found the person responsible, something she finds deeply depressing.

The only solution is to improve the investigation into such crimes and impose "exemplary punishments", she said, adding that she hoped the London summit would have an impact.

"Five years ago, this subject wasn't discussed," Rukunghu said -- including by the Congolese government, "either through shame or complicit

Sardar Fazlul Karim passes away

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A class family of Barisal in 1925, he led a simple and humble life. He stood second in the matriculation exams, topped the merit lists in both the BA (honours) and MA exams in first class at the philosophy department of the DU. At the age of 21, he became a lecturer at the university in 1946.

Sardar Fazlul Karim became involved in progressive politics while he was yet a student. Perceived by the then ruling classes as an enemy of the state of Pakistan, he spent almost the entire twenty-four years of Pakistani rule in prison in four phases.

Karim was elected to the East Bengal provincial assembly on a Jukto Front

ticket in 1954 while in prison, but soon had to go underground once more when the ministry was dismissed three months after its electoral triumph.

In the 1960s, Pakistan's first military dictator Ayub Khan and his loyalist Bengali governor of East Pakistan Abdul Monem Khan made sure that Karim could never return to teaching. He was, in their eyes, a subversive element.

A philosopher, translator, essayist and political activist, he participated in a 58-day hunger strike by political prisoners demanding humane treatment. As a communist, he made it clear that politics needed to be pursued at the grassroots if the masses were to

matter in the state. There was in him a wonderful mix of Marxism, scholarship and humility. His work on Plato remains a point of reference for students of politics and philosophy in Bangladesh. And his conversations with the iconic Professor Abdur Razzaq are revealing of the broad intellectual canvas on which the idea of Bangladesh as a nation-state, indeed as a symbol of the richness of heritage, came to be based.

It was Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prof Abdul Razzaq who ensured that Sardar Fazlul Karim returned to Dhaka University as a teacher soon after the liberation of the country.

Destruction of fruits goes on

FROM PAGE 16

Gabtol checkpoint on Friday did not find formalin in his mangoes but a mobile court in an operation in Dhanmondi detected 65ppm of formalin in them the next day.

"Is there any problem with the testing kit?" he posed a question to The Daily Star.

Drives against adulterated fruits have been going on for the last three days at the checkpoints and inside the capital.

Such drives will be continued until the end of the mango season, Alam said.

Meanwhile, National Consumers

Association and the Dhaka University pharmacy department in a joint press conference at the Teacher-Student Centre on the DU campus demanded that import of formalin be stopped.

Formalin has become a national problem nowadays, and the government should take immediate steps to control the import, storage, distribution and sale of the toxic chemical, they said.

"Those who use formalin in industries or school or hospital labs should be permitted to import formalin, not anyone else. Its sales in the open market must be banned," said Professor ABM Faroque of the depart-

ment.

Meanwhile, hundreds of mango traders clashed with policemen, forcing them to open fire at Banerwar Bazar in Puthia upazila of Rajshahi yesterday evening, following a mobile court drive against formalin-mixed mangoes, reported our correspondent from Rajshahi.

The clash ensued as some 1,500 traders took to the streets and barricaded the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway at Banerwar Bazar around 6:00pm. The protesters damaged several vehicles, including a Dhaka-bound passenger coach, the police and witnesses said.

No one was reported to have been

Costs up further

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measure as, it says, the riverbank has been eroding at Mawa-Kandirpar point alarmingly, which, if not checked immediately, will hamper the project implementation.

The cost will be met from the Padma bridge project fund.

The army has already completed 75 percent of the work.

The purchase committee last month in a meeting decided that the existing planning process could not always be followed during the implementation of a mega project like Padma bridge.

For quick implementation, different strategies may be adopted depending on the case.

The planning ministry will issue

special guidelines on the Padma bridge project.

When the project was approved in 2008, the cost was estimated at Tk 10,161 crore. In the end of 2011, the cost was revised to Tk 20,507 crore.

After the World Bank cancelled its fund for the project over the allegation of a corruption conspiracy in 2012, the government decided to implement it with own resources.

In May last year, the Bridges Division estimated the cost at Tk 23,185 crore.

The cost will increase further, officials of the Bridges Division said. It will calculate the project expenditure afresh after the appointment of contractors for the river training and

supervision consultants, they added.

The Bridges Division may send a proposal to the planning ministry to revise the project at the beginning of the coming year.

The government has allocated Tk 8,100 crore for the project in the next fiscal year. The Bridges Division has notified the planning ministry of possible requirements of Tk 16,000 crore in total in fiscal years 15-16 and 16-17.

On May 22, the cabinet purchase committee awarded China Major Bridge Engineering Company the job of constructing the main bridge for Tk 12,133 crore, whereas the revised cost for that portion in 2011 was Tk 8,361 crore.

Syria TV says 30 killed in blast near Iraq border

AFP, Damascus

A bomb attack targeting a weapons bazaar in eastern Syria close to the Iraqi border killed 30 "terrorists" yesterday, state television reported.

"A big explosion hits a terrorist arms market in Mayadeen, killing 30 terrorists and wounding dozens of others," the television reported.

Just 80 kilometres (50 miles) from the Iraqi border, the town is under the control of rebel groups, including Al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate the Al-Nusra Front, that have been fighting the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

ISIL is the same cross-border group which has spearheaded an offensive in neighbouring Iraq this week that has seen militants sweep down from second city Mosul towards Baghdad.

Nur Hossain

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They also arrested two of his aides, Shamim and Rafiq.

A team of anti-terror squad, led by Assistant Commissioner of Police Anish Sarker of Bidhannagar, arrested Nur Hossain at a flat in Koikhali near Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport, Kolkata-based journalist Subroto Achary, who works for Somoy TV, told The Daily Star.

Law enforcers also recovered a firearm, several mobile SIM cards, and a laptop during the raid, Subroto said quoting a police official.

The trio have been kept at Baguihati Police Station in Kolkata. They are likely to be produced before a court today.

Kolkata police could hold a press conference in this regard today.

Contacted in the wee hours today, Mamunur Rashid Mandal, investigation officer of the seven-murder, said they had heard about the arrests in Kolkata. "But we are yet to get official information from Kolkata police," he added.

Narayanganj Awami League leader Nur Hossain allegedly fled the country around two days after the abduction and gruesome killing of the seven people on April 27.

On April 27, the seven people, including Narayanganj panel mayor Nazrul Islam and senior lawyer Chandan Sarkar, were kidnapped from the Dhaka-Narayanganj link road.

Three days later, six bodies were found floating in the Shitalakkhya. The other body was recovered from the river the following day.

Family members of Nazrul had claimed that Nur masterminded the abduction and killing.

Cricket in the time

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) in search of possible solutions. There was also no rush for tickets.

With general disinterest as the backdrop, Mushfiqur Rahim's men however have no scope to let down their intensity when they meet an under-strength India led by Suresh Raina as the challenge ahead is far more demanding than usual. There will be more expectation on the Tigers as the series will be played in the absence of stalwarts like MS Dhoni and Virat Kohli. In terms of experience Bangladesh are far ahead than this India side, so fans will look forward to seeing the hosts taking full advantage to erase memories of their dismal show in the Asia Cup and the ICC World Twenty20 earlier this year.

Despite their recent bad form -- they lost all their seven ODIs this year -- Bangladesh are a good one-day unit but out-of-form players like dashing opener Tamim Iqbal must ensure that the bad patch is behind him to comply their captain's expectation of answering the slight of India sending a second-string side. The overall head-to-head is 22-3 in favour of India but the record should not be considered, at least for the series.

Additionally, cricket lovers will pray that rain will not upset the series further, although some rain is forecast for this evening.

Tareque remanded

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ropes used in dumping the bodies in the Shitalakkhya were used by the elite force.

The committee members examined sacks and ropes at the Rab offices. They also checked register books at the two offices to learn how many vehicles had left the two offices on April 27 and when those returned.

The team also grilled some Rab personnel who were on duty on that day.

Also yesterday, Mortuza Zaman Churchill, a bodyguard of prime accused Nur Hossain, gave confessional statement to a Narayanganj court, said court sources.

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2 'robbers' killed in 'shootout'

STAR REPORT

Two alleged robbers were killed in "gunfight" with police in separate incidents in the last two days.

The deceased are Islam Morol, 45, of Satkhira and Abul Bashar, 45, of Noakhali.

On information that a gang of 16-17 robbers were preparing to rob a passenger bus in Chhoyghoria on the Satkhira-Jessore road, a police team went to the area around 3:45am on Friday, said Inamul Haque, officer-in-charge of Satkhira Sadar Police Station.

Sensing the law enforcers' presence, the robbers hurled bombs and opened fire on them, prompting police to retaliate, Haque added.

Morol sustained bullets during the gunfight and fell on the ground while his cohorts managed to flee.

Police took Morol to Satkhira Sadar Hospital where the duty doctors declared him dead.

"One shooter gun and three machetes were recovered from the spot," said Haque.

The body was handed over to Morol's relatives after post-mortem on Friday.

Morol was accused in 11 robbery cases in Satkhira and Kolaroya police stations, said Haque. Another case was filed against him and 16 unidentified people in connection with this incident.

Meanwhile in Noakhali, Abul Bashar, an alleged top terror and the chief of Bashar Bahini, was killed in a "gunfight" with the police at Jogikhal area of Begumgonj upazila early yesterday.

Police arrested Bashar on Friday morning, said S M Ashrafuzzaman, acting superintendent of police in Noakhali.

Based on his information, police went to Jogikhal with him to recover arms.

When they reached the spot, associates of Bashar opened fire on the police in an attempt to snatch away Bashar. As police retaliated for self-defence, Bashar was caught in the line of fire and died on the spot, he said.

Police recovered a light gun and some bullets from the spot.

Bashar had 10 cases filed against him, including those of robbery, rape and killing, said the acting SP.

The body was sent to Noakhali Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Rape Culture: What changed in India?

Screaming 'rape victim' in van video prompts reflection in India

AFP, New Delhi

A screaming woman locked in a van sparks scant reaction from passersby in a social experiment in New Delhi, as India once again faces up to a series of gruesome rapes and murders.

Experts and activists said the video posted on YouTube pointed to a general apathy in India about violence against women despite outrage in some quarters over the gang-rape and lynching of two girls in the country's north.

"There's still an apathy about what's happening to women, an insensitivity on the issue, although attitudes are changing," said women's activist Ranjana Kumari.

The video, which has been viewed more than 1.2 million times since it was posted last week, shows a white van parked in a secluded area of Delhi with the windows blacked out at night.

Although the screams of a woman are clearly heard coming from inside, a handful of men are seen walking and cycling past. Some stop to listen before

calmly moving on.

Finally, a young man tries to break into the van, clearly upset about the 'staged rape' occurring inside. An elderly man is also seen attacking the van with his stick.

The video was posted by a group called "YesNoMaybe" in what they said was a social experiment in the wake of the horrific attacks on the two girls, aged 12 and 14, late last month in Uttar Pradesh state.

The attacks reignited anger over violence against women with small-scale protests held in the state capital and in Delhi, while a political row erupted over a perceived lack of law and order in Uttar Pradesh.

Since then, the media has highlighted a string of alleged rapes and hangings of women in Uttar Pradesh, the country's most populous state.

The attacks came just 18 months after the fatal gang-rape of a student on a bus in Delhi, a case that made global headlines and left India reeling over its treatment of women.

Former POW Bergdahl stable after return to US

AFP, Washington

The American soldier freed in a swap with the Afghan Taliban is in stable condition after five years in captivity but has not yet reunited with his parents, military officers said Friday.

Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, who returned to the United States in an overnight flight, was undergoing medical treatment and speaking to psychologists at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

The 28-year-old soldier "looked good" upon arrival, Major General Joseph DiSalvo told a news conference.

He joked that Bergdahl appeared "a little bit nervous" before a two-star general like himself, "just like any sergeant would."

Officials said Bergdahl's reintegration process involved slowly increasing his chances to make choices and have control, something he was denied during his time in the Taliban's hands.

Bergdahl was able to walk into the hospital without problems, and doctors were encouraged by his stable condition, said Colonel Ronald Wool, a physician at the medical center.

"Overall, we're pleased with his physical state," he said.

"We allowed him to get settled in to the hospital and into his room and his environment, and we are going to be planning more comprehensive testing and consultation."

The only American in uniform to be held by insurgents in the Afghanistan war, Bergdahl will eventually face questions from investigators about the circumstances of his disappearance and whether he deserted his post.

But first, he will receive more medical attention, as specialists gradually try to help him shift from a prisoner's survival mode to more "normal" behavior, officers said.

"We ... work to normalize the behaviors, letting them know that copious skills they used in captivity, although functional in that environment, may not be functional now," said psychologist Colonel Bradley Poppen.

Under the military's "reintegration" rules for freed prisoners of war, the soldier can decide when to meet family, but officials declined to specify a date for his parents' first visit, to safeguard their privacy.

Amid a media frenzy over his case, Bergdahl's parents, who live in Idaho, appealed to be left alone while they try to help their son.

Uruguay stunned

FROM PAGE 1

In the 54th minute, Costa Rica were level with 21-year-old Campbell, who spent last season on loan at Olympiakos from Arsenal, firing in a superbly controlled drive from Cristian Gamboa's cross.

It got better three minutes later when Duarte dived bravely at the feet of Christian Stuanito to head in a free-kick for a 2-1 lead.

Substitute Urena latched on to a fine pass by the influential Campbell in the 84th minute to make it 3-1 before Pereira became the first player sent off at these finals for a wild lunge on Campbell.

TEAMS

URUGUAY: Fernando Muslera - Maxi

Pereira, Diego Lugano (cap), Diego Godin, Martin Caceres - Cristhian Stuani, Walter Gargano (Alvaro Gonzalez 60), Egidio Arevalo, Cristian Rodriguez (Abel Hernandez 76) - Edinson Cavani, Diego Forlan (Nicolas Lodeiro 60)

Yellow card: Diego Lugano (50), Walter Gargano (56), Martin Caceres (81)

Red card: Maxi Pereira (90+4)

COSTA RICA: Keylor Navas - Cristian Gamboa, Oscar Duarte, Giancarlo Gonzalez, Michael Umana, Junior Diaz - Bryan Ruiz (cap) (Marco Urena 83), Celso Borges, Yeltsin Tejeda (Jose Cubero 75), Christian Bolanos (Michael Barrantes 89) - Joel Campbell

Referee: Felix Brych (GER)